

FROM IRREVERENT TO REVERED: HOW ALFRED JARRY'S *UBU ROI* AND THE
"U-EFFECT" CHANGED THEATRE HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

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For decades, theatre history textbooks and other influential studies on theatre history have positioned *Ubu Roi*, Alfred Jarry's 1896 avant-garde "classic," as the beginning or originator of the historical avant-garde and precursor to the playwrights considered as part of Martin Esslin's "Theatre of the Absurd." Much of this reputation is built on inaccurate accounts of the premiere production, put down by those involved or in attendance, who had particular aims in reporting the event in the ways they did. Those accounts would end up being put to use as the base on which various scholars would establish the premiere of *Ubu Roi* as the ignition of the historical avant-garde. This dissertation is a poststructuralist historiographical study in which I analyze the various statements made, first by participants and witnesses to the premiere production, and then by scholars and critics who take those accounts as factual, that place *Ubu Roi* on a path to legitimization and inclusion in the Western canon. In my research, I examine initial accounts of the premiere production, early post mortem accounts of Jarry's life, the proliferation of the character Ubu in early twentieth century French society, French and English critical and biographical studies of Jarry and *Ubu Roi*, anthologies and edited collections of *Ubu Roi*, and reviews and other related materials of several key French revivals and over fifteen English-language revivals of the play.

I mark the emergence of three specific strategies that grew out of tactics Jarry employed at the premiere. I demonstrate how the conflation of Jarry with his character Ubu, made possible by his extraordinary performance of self at the premiere, the notion of the production's innate

ability to produce scandal, and the idea of Jarry's implementation of a "revolutionary" dramaturgy, are all used to make *Ubu Roi* the example *par excellence* of avant-garde drama. I unite these three strategies under the title "U-Effect" to describe the subject position assumed by those scholars and critics that privilege *Ubu Roi* as the epitome of the theatrical avant-garde. With this as my guiding mode of critique, I examine such issues as the practice of writing Jarry's biography, how the inclusion of *Ubu Roi* in anthologies of drama and histories of the avant-garde has affected the construction of theatre history, and how productions of the play reinforce, maintain, or subvert the play's power in scholarly and cultural discourse. Encouragingly, some recent studies have challenged *Ubu Roi*'s seat at the head of the avant-garde, and in this study I underline how scholars have posed those challenges. It is important to expose the process through which *Ubu Roi* has attained its chief position in the avant-garde in order to be able to see more clearly whether there are other narratives that may provide students of theatre history—if not a complete image or story of the avant-garde—at least a more nuanced, and varied one.

For Sarah, always.

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Finally, two notes on the text. Where there is a reliable translation of a scholarly work or text of Jarry’s in English, I have used it; anywhere else, the translations are my own, unless otherwise noted. I also take full claim to any errors or faults in the study.

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INTRODUCTION

The story goes that when Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* had its final dress rehearsal, its *répétition générale*, on December 9, 1896, the audience of Aurelien Lugné-Poe's Théâtre de l'Œuvre at the Nouveau Théâtre in Paris had never seen anything like it before. Audience members supposedly rioted after hearing the first word—"merdre," a bastardization of the French word for "shit"—and the riots lasted for fifteen minutes to a half hour, depending on whose account one reads.¹ The commotion only subsided when Firmin Gémier (the actor charged with the task of portraying the grotesque title character, Père Ubu) danced a jig to get the audience's attention back on the stage. The rioting apparently recommenced, however, and continued throughout the performance, occasionally interrupting the performers enough to make them hold before moving on.² Contemporary historians have called into question this received narrative, placing in doubt how sensational the premiere performance actually was. For example, according to Frantisek Deak, in his *Symbolist Theater: the Formation of an Avant-Garde*, "as far as the scandal was concerned, the audience's behavior was within the customary behavior of the opening night audience" (228).³ Taking another approach is Alastair Brotchie, who in his 2011 biography, *Alfred Jarry: A Pataphysical Life*, argues that Jarry orchestrated the event to create scandal and controversy.

¹ Among others, Roger Shattuck asserts the rioting lasted for half an hour (207) in his *The Banquet Years*. Alastair Brotchie tends toward the leaner side of 15 minutes (243) in his account of the production in *Alfred Jarry: A Pataphysical Life*.

² Many contemporary scholars, including Keith Beaumont and Jill Fell, as well as Alastair Brotchie, assert that while there were some interruptions to the final dress rehearsal, the main rioting did not occur on December 9, but on the evening of the premiere performance, December 10. They argue that Madame Rachilde's recollection of the event in her 1928 memoir of Jarry, *Alfred Jarry, le surmâle de lettres* is incorrect, and that it led to many early scholars reconstructing the event incorrectly.

³ In his 1986 book, *France, Fin de Siècle*, Eugen Weber reports that in the milieu of *fin de siècle* Paris, "many a first—and only—night ended in chaos" (159). Weber's statement supports the idea that the premiere was not such an outstanding and unusual occurrence.

One element of the premiere that has not been overly sensationalized, however, is the debate the play sparked in the Parisian literary magazines. After the premiere, critics writing for literary magazines from both the avant-garde and the legitimate, institutional perspectives launched full-scale defenses and attacks of the play's form and merits.⁴ *Ubu Roi* was lauded and excoriated for Jarry's flouting of the Aristotelian unities, his scatological language, his absurd plot, and his "protagonist"—that monstrosity of a character—Ubu. The debate raged for weeks, and while many critics disputed the play's merits at the time, it is clear now that a significant piece of art had been added to the French avant-garde. The way Jarry's play appeared to antagonize and demonize the conservative bourgeoisie, or for that matter, nearly any form of establishment, made it a polarizing piece, and one only a select few—"connoisseurs," as Günter Berghaus calls them—could appreciate (*Historical Avant-Garde* 35).

Over a century later, the play appears in numerous anthologies, has been the focus of some twenty critical book-length studies in French and English (as well as dozens of essays), is positioned in many studies of the historical avant-garde and Modernism as an initiator or primary leaping point of both movements, has had performances in celebrated mainstream venues such as the Lincoln Center Theater, and appears in theatre history syllabi across the United States.⁵ In short, *Ubu Roi*, Jarry's iconoclastic, avant-garde "classic" has become a legitimate text, heavily cited and studied in academia and other firmly established legitimate cultural institutions.

⁴The term "avant-garde" is a complicated, often misunderstood term. I use the term avant-garde in relation to art. I acknowledge and agree with scholars who assert that avant-gardes exist outside of the realm of art, but for my purposes, art is the area in which I focus my attention. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines avant-garde as "the pioneers or innovators in any art in a particular period" ("avant-garde"). This broad definition suits me, for in my study, I will discuss the hindrances implicit in claiming a very specific model of an avant-garde. I will argue that part of the reason for my study is due to generations of scholars looking at the historical European avant-garde as having a single, specific drive.

⁵ I understand that the term "historical avant-garde" is a complex term that defines a contested period. In order to avoid diverting too far from my task by untangling various definitions and periodizations for the historical avant-garde, for the purposes of my study, I take the historical avant-garde to be the period from December 10, 1896 to the height of Surrealism in the 1930s. By the end of the study, I hope to have made it clear that scholars should not accept the premiere of *Ubu Roi* as the beginning of the historical avant-garde without question.

My engagement with the play began in one of those theatre history classrooms. In the Fall of 2003, my sophomore year at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, Dr. W. Douglas Powers introduced the play to me in my “Theatre History II: 17th Century-Present” course. On an in-class video day, we watched a recording of the 1976 BBC2 version of *Ubu Roi*, which starred Donald Pleasance and Brenda Bruce as the first couple of grotesque comedy, Pa and Ma Ubu. The performance astonished me. It was a farce like no other I had ever seen. I was in love.

In the fall of my junior year, I had the opportunity to become more familiar with Jarry and *Ubu* through my “Dramatic Theory and Criticism” class. Each student had to present on a playwright and play in the Modernist mode. I leapt at the chance to present on Jarry and *Ubu Roi*. Drawing much of my inspiration from the sensational narrative spun by Richard Shattuck in his, *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France, 1885 to World War I*, I was compelled to uphold the script as one of the most iconoclastic among theatrical works and its author as one of the most revolutionary figures in theatre history. I continued to hold this celebrated view of Jarry and his play through the rest of my undergraduate career.

While pursuing my MA in Theatre at Villanova University, I furthered my understanding of the play. At the end of my first year, I did a dramaturgical file for *Ubu*, including an “initial” response, a production history, a visual file of production photos and images inspired by the play, and areas of research about the reception of the play by literary and theatre scholars and the play in performance. Later, in the second year of my masters, I wrote an article-length paper on the negotiation of masculinities at work in the play. At this time, I still accepted the received narrative of the play’s sensational premiere; none of the research I had read did anything to trouble the notion that the premiere performance of *Ubu Roi* was a chaotic, riotous event.

It was not until the first year of my doctoral studies that I came across scholarship suggesting that the premiere was anything other than an earth-shattering, history-shaping affair. Inspired by the methodology advocated by Dr. Scott Magelssen in his Spring 2010 “Theatre and Performance in Cultural Contexts II” course, I wanted, for my final paper, to examine and attempt to revise the received narrative of the *Ubu* premiere. In preparation for that project, I read Thomas Postlewait’s 2009 *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*. I realized that in his second chapter, “Cultural Histories: The Case of Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*,” Postlewait had done the research and published the work I wanted to do. No matter, for finally I was dissuaded from believing the sensationalized narrative that I had read and rehearsed for six years.

By shedding light on the material conditions surrounding the premiere and on the narrativizing of the event, what Postlewait did was allow me to understand that what I knew—or thought I knew—about the premiere of *Ubu Roi* was not based in verifiable evidence, but instead generated by a hundred years of scholars processing (writing about) the event in various ways and for various purposes. Postlewait’s notion of “artistic heritage” struck me as key to how I would consider the play in this dissertation project. Briefly, Postlewait defines the artistic heritage as “the artistic milieu of the event, the kinds or genres of drama, the canons, the aesthetic ideas and institutions, the artistic ideologies that may influence the work, the crafts of playwriting and theatre production, the mentors and models, the rhetorical codes and styles, the rules and regulations, the available poetics, and the cultural systems” (14). I have since moved away from considering the play’s history through the lens of its artistic heritage, though I am certainly grateful to have read Postlewait’s treatment of the narrative of the *Ubu* premiere. His work has allowed me to see the historical journey of the play from an angle I would not

otherwise have pursued. In the pages that follow, I explore the history of *Ubu Roi* in connection to the way the play has been marshaled over the past 115 years. Where in his book Postlewait directly confronts the event, I examine the conditions and historical maneuvering that led Postlewait (and, in turn, me) to feel the need to address how the premiere of the play has been historicized.

In this study, I track the process of legitimization of *Ubu Roi*.⁶ I tease out how such an initially iconoclastic play went from supposedly shocking and offending legitimate cultural institutions to being privileged and celebrated by those same institutions. I identify and endeavor to understand what moves were made, and by whom, to push the work and its author, into such a privileged place. I parse the close-knit relationship between Jarry and the character of Père Ubu, woven by Jarry biographers, and argue that the Jarry-Ubu connection has become a vital contributor to the play's rise to legitimacy. I argue that this connection, forged in part in Jarry's introduction of the play at the premiere, along with the performance's supposed revolutionary dramaturgy and ability to arouse scandal have historically been taken together to create the "U-Effect," a way of knowing theatre history that privileges the premiere of *Ubu Roi* as the originator of the historical avant-garde.⁷ To go about this exploration, I look particularly at

⁶ The term legitimate takes a privileged place in my study. The *OED* listing for "legitimate" includes the following definition: (n): "2b. Normal, regular; conformable to a recognized standard type ... the legitimate drama: the body of plays, Shakespearean or other, that have a recognized theatrical and literary merit." To legitimize something, then, is the process of making something regular and conformable, standardized. *Ubu Roi* eventually obtains the status of legitimate, and part of the work I do here is to track when and how this happens. I also intend to use the word in another sense. Definition 2a. of the *OED* reads: "Conformable to law or rule; sanctioned or authorized by law or right; lawful; proper." *Ubu Roi* will become a culturally sanctioned text that exercises a good deal of influence over theatre history; a result of being authorized by culture is that culture can deal out consequences for lack of familiarity with the text.

⁷ My term, "U-Effect," is a shortened form of "Ubu-Effect." By using this name, I signal Bertolt Brecht's invention of the "Verfremdungs-Effekt," or, "V-Effekt." I use the term "U-Effect" to try to capture in a memorable fashion the idea that a significant amount of theatre history written after the *Ubu* premiere situates the 1896 production as a seminal moment because it was not until then that this particular manner of looking at theatre had existed. The "U-Effect" is a subject position ascribed to by the attendees at the event who read the premiere as an earth-shattering affair, and by those who follow in that reading. Contrary to what the word itself may suggest, the "U-Effect" does not stand for a cause-effect form of history-making; rather, it is a discursive term that I use historiographically to

French and English scholarship on the play and Jarry. I evaluate how these studies have contributed to the cultural value and valuation of the play and its author. This work will happen in Chapters 1 and 2 of my study.

After looking at how the play has gained legitimacy through scholarship, in Chapter 3, I investigate its production history, and argue that stagings have been informed by and contribute to the process of legitimization through their varying relationships to the “U-Effect.” While I provide an overview of a dozen or so English-language productions, I offer extended readings of three key productions: William Gaskill and Iain Cuthbertson’s Royal Court Theatre production of *Ubu Roi*; Peter Brook’s 1977, 1978, and 1980 production of *Ubu*; and Lincoln Center Theatre’s 1989 *Ubu*.⁸ In sum, I ask under what conditions these productions were mounted and how they were received by critics and by audiences, and how those readings were shaped by the “U-Effect.”⁹

In my conclusions section, I consider how the “U-Effect” has impacted theatre history students of my generation. I cite several examples of theatre history textbooks and collections of dramatic theory that feature *Ubu Roi* and Jarry’s theoretical writings as part of their narrative of the historical avant-garde and/or Modernism. I also extend the work I have done in the study to discuss briefly how the figure of Ubu and the play itself has been marshaled to create new comedic types or genres. Numerous scholarly studies have been written on the adaptation of the character of Ubu or the play *Ubu Roi* into a new comedic type or genre, respectively. By tying

stand for a group of statements. In their interrelations and negotiations, those statements spark a perspective on Western theatre and the avant-garde that position *Ubu Roi* as a significant piece of that history. The “U-Effect” is also not a fixed, constant position. As statements are made, certain elements of the “U-Effect” are brought into relief over others, and the elements of the “U-Effect” are allowed to mutate, to accept more statements under their parameters, and to ignore others.

⁸ In its initial incarnation in Paris, Brook’s *Ubu* was presented in French. When the production toured to London and New York, the company made the production more accessible by adding sections of English dialogue throughout.

⁹ I have obtained data on audience reaction by examining length of runs, and critics’ and scholars’ accounts of audience reactions.

the goals of these studies back to the work I have done in previous chapters on the “U-Effect,” I make clear the groundwork that goes into using such a character/text for such a purpose and why one might choose to orient a new type or genre around that character or text. In conclusion, then, I seek to reveal what the proliferation of these studies that have done this work means for the text of *Ubu* and for notions of the avant-garde.

As important as it is to define what I have done, it is equally important to identify those things that fall outside the scope of this project. Most notably, I am not attempting to revise the received narrative of the premiere production of the play. That work is beyond the scope of this study, and has already been initiated by others.¹⁰ Instead, I look specifically at the choices that have been made in writing the history of Jarry and *Ubu* and how that history has informed key productions; I am closely examining how that narrative interacts with and influences perceptions of the historical European avant-garde and Western theatre history.

I also delimit my study in terms of languages and materials I use. I look only at French-language studies and English-language studies. Unlike *Ubu*’s irrational and incongruent sailing from Poland to Paris, I chart a chronological course of the exchange of scholarship and performance between the French and English speaking academies and theatre worlds. I have also avoided a discussion heavily weighted in the theory of the avant-garde, such as that conducted in Peter Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. I recognize the value of thinking deeply about an avant-garde’s theoretical composition, though I stick to the various constructions of what is broadly considered the avant-garde in theatre from *Ubu Roi* through the “Absurdist” (Beckett, Genet, Ionesco, etc.). In following a chronology, I understand that I am a participant in the

¹⁰ Michael Kirby, the first in my knowledge to challenge *Ubu Roi*’s position in the historical European avant-garde, offers an alternative view of the historical avant-garde(s) in his *A Formalist Theatre*. Frantisek Deak has given scholars a great start to revising the history of *Ubu*’s opening night in his *Symbolist Theatre*. Inspired by Deak, Thomas Postlewait has put his re-reading to work on expanding the argument to re-examining/revising cultural histories of plays or events in *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*.

creation of a totalizing, seemingly teleological historical narrative. Even so, I hope that this chronology has a value in exposing how the play's power in theatre history has grown steadily over the most frequently marked measure of change, time.¹¹ I also have not been able to travel to Paris during my time on this project to access the full French archive of Jarry scholarship and performance materials of *Ubu Roi*, as it exists in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. As a result, I have not viewed many of the initial pieces of criticism of *Ubu Roi* and reviews of the early French biographies in their original versions. I have instead relied on the work of scholars, both French-speaking and English speaking, who have reprinted or translated in whole or in part those works.

My own historicity is also a limitation. I am writing in a particular historical moment, and that differs from the periods that I am writing about. This leaves, in Lyotard's terms, a *differend* between me and my object(s) of study. I cannot fully understand why decisions were made to legitimize Jarry's plays, just as those scholars who brought Jarry to legitimate culture could not anticipate my critique of those moves. I am interfering in the past, and interpreting it from a subjective perspective. As Henry Bial and Scott Magelssen argue in the introduction to their book, *Theater Historiography: Critical Interventions*, "even on the rare occasions that facts and events themselves are verifiable, the narratives through which we order those facts and events are necessarily subjective. Interpretations of the past are thus always already shaped by the values, judgments, and desires of the present" (1). The current conditions under which I am working affect the reading and interpretation that I perform on the historical data and limit how I view the material. Likewise, the current conditions in which I am working have determined my theoretical framework and methodological approach I have taken in this study.

¹¹ I also attempt to avoid references to time as my gauge of "progress" or "development" of the power of *Ubu Roi* as much as possible; instead, I attempt to use the concept of space to describe the process of the "U-Effect" wherever I can.

In *Writing up Qualitative Research*, Harry F. Wolcott reminds authors that methodology is not method: “Methodology refers to underlying principles of inquiry rather than to specific techniques” (93). The “underlying principles of inquiry” in my study could most easily be termed post-structuralist theatre historiography.¹² Scholars working in this tradition of theatre history have sought to show that theatre history is not a “truthful representation of a single reality,” but a “problematic, multi-layered, palimpsest-like textuality, having at best a tenuous connection with the elusive actuality that it purports to describe” (Southgate 49). To borrow the words of Odai Johnson, in my study I work to open up the history of Jarry and his play by “looking below, beyond, beneath, by running [my] fingers over the rough edges, prying open the ellipses and perforations” (“Unspeakable Histories” 115). I also want to use post-structuralist historiography to show how knowledge formations create a history for the play that it may not necessarily want, require, or deserve. The reputation of the play is tied to complex systems of power, and it is my goal to unveil those systems and explicate how they have worked to position *Ubu* in the contemporary world. My methodology draws on the work of Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, and the New Historians, as well as literary theorist Barbara Herrnstein-Smith.

Through Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, and his notion of heterotopias, I have come to glean a strong sense of his arguments regarding systems of power and how they are forged, negotiated, and maintained, particularly in relation to the writing of history. Accordingly, much of my investigation revolves around examining the power relationships that were and are involved in the process of legitimizing *Ubu Roi*. How did systems of power influence the writing of Jarry’s biography and the reproduction of a life story that was, from the start, rife with anecdotal tales which sensationalized the

¹² I am dependent on the work of Michel Foucault, who, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, articulates his poststructuralist method of historiography. His discontinuous history frees the writing of history from a linear, cause-effect model.

grandeur of his daily existence? For Foucault, power is “the name one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society” (*History* 93). Power is omnipresent, for Foucault: “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And ‘Power,’ insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the overall effect that emerges from all these mobilities” (93). Moreover, power always has a purpose: “there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives” (93). The network of power relations at play in the generation of *Ubu*’s legitimacy is a major object of my study. In the pages that follow, I analyze the push and pull of the system of literary power in generating legitimacy for a once thoroughly “illegitimate” play text.

Knowing how Foucault’s discourse formations function can help one to gain an understanding of how legitimacy is granted. Discourse (discursive) formations are the structures that support and maintain systems of knowledge. Foucault posits that they work under the surface of our conscious understanding of knowledge, which exists on a layer of discourse. These formations work to determine and contain the practice and production of knowledge and ideas. For Foucault, discursive formations determine the categories and groups that we create for each object within our knowledge. Discursive formations do not hold a unified, coherent structure; they are riddled with contradictions. In fact, contradictions are what give discursive formations their shape. Foucault has observed discursive formations thusly:

Behind the visible façade of the system, one posits the rich uncertainty of disorder; and beneath the thin surface of discourse, the whole mass of a largely silent development (*devenir*): a “presystematic” that is not of the order of the system; a “prediscursive” that belongs to an essential silence. Discourse and system produce each other—and conjointly—only at the crest of this immense

reserve. What are being analysed here are certainly not the terminal states of discourse; they are the *preterminal regularities* in relation to which the ultimate state, far from constituting the birth-place of a system, is defined by its variants. (*Archaeology* 76, original emphasis).

The variants of the discursive formations are those contradictions against which the regularity of the formations may be viewed.

While discursive formations work at a subterranean level to maintain an illusion of smoothness and absoluteness, they are observable on the surface level of discourse due to the effort it takes to attempt to cover their contradictions. A contradiction in a discursive formation “constitutes the very law of its existence: it is on the basis of such a contradiction that discourse emerges, and it is in order both to translate it and to overcome it that discourse begins to speak . . . and, because it can never . . . entirely escape it, that discourse changes, undergoes transformation, and escapes of itself from its own continuity” (*Archaeology* 151). In my study, I demonstrate the premiere of *Ubu Roi* as a contradiction to the discursive formations of *fin de siècle* France. Additionally, numerous moves in scholarship and production after *Ubu Roi*’s premiere serve as contradictions to the newly reorganized discursive formations, and I mark where they fall throughout the play’s history.

In order to address his conception of discourse formations, Foucault employed a method of discontinuous history. With discontinuous history, which takes history as nonlinear, non-cause and effect, I am able to pose and answer questions such as, “Where is the threshold at which Jarry’s sensationalized biography becomes subject to a false exterior shell of sedimented ‘Truth?’” “Where is the threshold at which that biography merges with the character Ubu?” Foucault argues that “history must be detached from the image that satisfied it for so long, and

through which it found its anthropological justification: that of an age-old collective consciousness that made use of material documents to refresh its memory” (*Archaeology* 7). To take the anecdotes of Jarry’s life as a total narrative or total history is to practice continuous history and ascribe to Jarry a place on a teleological model. Moreover, if the constituted historical body of Jarry has been knotted to the history of *Ubu Roi*, as I argue that early scholars have done, Foucault’s idea of discontinuous history needs to be applied to explode that bond and understand how that act assisted in the process of legitimization of the text.

I have also explored the function of writing biographies of Jarry and of when and why they appeared. Michel de Certeau has delivered a useful way of thinking through this process. In the sub-section, ‘The Place of the Dead and the Place of the Reader,’ in “Chapter 2: The Historiographical Operation,” of *The Writing of History*, de Certeau explains: “writing speaks of the past only in order to inter it” (101). He clarifies that this is to make a space for the living: “Writing makes the dead so that the living can exist elsewhere ... it receives the dead that a social change has produced, so that the space opened by this past can be marked and so that it will still be possible to connect what appears with what disappears” (101). In light of de Certeau’s comments, it seems unsurprising that the first few biographies of Jarry appear in 1928, 1932, and 1934, a time when Surrealism was beginning to catch on in a larger public and needed space to live and breathe on its own. Perhaps Jarry needed to be buried to make room for Surrealism; but at the same time, Jarry and Ubu could be “marked,” as de Certeau claims, to maintain the ties between him and his perceived descendents. De Certeau’s concepts allow me a way to express the development of Jarry’s legend and the corresponding legitimacy of *Ubu Roi* while pointing up the historiographical work at play in the process.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau theorizes the playing out of power relationships through the implementation of strategies and tactics. Strategies, according to de Certeau, are the tool of institutionalized power, and they assist that power in asserting its dominance over space. A strategy is defined by de Certeau as “the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power ... can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats ... can be managed” (*Practice* 35-36, original emphasis). De Certeau uses the example of the mapped organization of a gridded city such as New York as the implementation of strategies to dominate and control the city’s inhabitants. Within the space of a theatre and its spaces of analysis or history (literary journals, academic scholarship written about theatre, trajectories of theatrical development defined according to literary or theatrical criticism), strategies are the tools of the dominant forces that, when deployed, help define how a work or event is perceived. Tactics, on the other hand, exist outside of the power structure proper. They are the tool of the weak. In the example of the city, tactics are employed by the city’s inhabitants at “moments of opportunity” to challenge the dominant power of the city-organizers; the inhabitants will take shortcuts around the planned route to a particular destination in order to reach their destination on their terms. As such, tactics are characterized by an “absence of a proper locus” (*Practice* 37). More precisely, de Certeau avers that tactics are “procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time—to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation...” (*Practice* 38). Tactics operate in relation to time; their lack of tethering to a proper space gives them the mobility to surprise the strategies of power at opportune moments. Jarry makes the most of the moment of opportunity of the premiere of *Ubu Roi* by intervening

with tactics situated outside the dominant epistemology of theatre, to assault, and perhaps to affect a re-negotiation of the governing strategies comprising that dominant knowledge of theatre history.

In my study, I use de Certeau's conception of strategies and tactics to create my account of how Jarry's ideas went from being thought of as anti-establishment in the 1896 production to being institutionalized years later. I assert that Jarry's textual and production choices were tactics that he employed to combat conventional theatre practices and philosophies. After several decades of later artists using tactics similar to Jarry's to combat their own dominant conventions, scholars writing about Jarry and those after him described those tactics. In the act of describing the tactics to define them and control them for cultural understanding, the scholars turned the tactics into strategies, tools for exerting their dominance on the theatrical practices and philosophies of the theatre.

The New Historicist approach to literary criticism is also concerned with the expression of power in the creation and consumption of literary and artistic products. New Historicism is informed not only by Foucault, but also by Marxist cultural theory. In writing this study, I have found inspiration in the five key points that H. Aram Veeser, in the anthology *The New Historicism*, articulates that New Historicist discourse tends to assume:

that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices; that every act of unmasking, critique and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes; that literary and non-literary "texts" circulate inseparably; that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths, nor expresses inalterable human nature; that a critical method

and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe. (xi)

For me, the writing of Jarry's biography and the history of the Ubu plays is tied up in a fabric of material conditions and practices that shape the reception of that history. My study is wrapped up in that same network (or, a similarly constructed one), where I critique that structure and I am simultaneously complicit in upholding it because my language to comment on the structure must participate in maintaining it. New Historicism allows me to look at the material conditions of the process of legitimizing *Ubu Roi* by guiding me through the contingent layers of "texts" that make up the material backdrop of *Ubu*'s production. New Historicism limits my study in that I recognize at the outset that I am undermining my own work by participating in the system of cultural (re)production that has created the legitimacy of the text. I further reinforce that legitimacy by studying it and writing more words about it for the public's consumption.

It warrants mentioning as well that my work is also informed by the notion of the contingency of value, as explicated by Barbara Herrnstein-Smith in her book, *Contingencies of Value*. One of the problems that I observe in the reception of Jarry's plays is that critics tend to treat the texts as having a singular, fixed value. I agree with Herrnstein-Smith when she asserts that (aesthetic) value is always contingent, "the product of the dynamics of a system, specifically an *economic* system;" there are no clear-cut distinctions between an artwork's exchange value and its intrinsic value (30, original emphasis). So when literary theorists perform their analyses of *Ubu Roi* or Jarry's life, their evaluations are—contrary to what the "Johnny One-Note" narrative usually presented might suggest—"always compromised because value is always in motion" (9). With changing social and cultural conditions, the value of *Ubu Roi* changes, necessitating different interpretations and troubling the evaluations performed. In this project, I

follow Herrnstein-Smith's call for change and take into account the contingency of the material conditions of my subject's contexts and mine.

The lack of noting contingency, or, in many cases, intentionally covering it over, has led to situating various literary and artistic works in a cultural canon. Frank Kermode discusses the phenomenon of stealing contingency away from a work of art by periodizing it. In the chapter "Canon and Period" in *History and Value*, Kermode argues that by periodizing, or making something old, one simultaneously makes that thing new and relevant. Harold Bloom, in *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, and Charles Altieri, in *Canons and Consequences: Reflections on the Ethical Force of Imaginative Ideals*, discuss the cultural authority of the canon and its active role in maintaining cultural currency for its contents. In his *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*, John Guillory asserts that the institution most responsible for generating and maintaining cultural currency of the canon is the academy. Throughout the play's history, much of the attention on it has been generated by the academy. I attend to this detail in my study in order to demonstrate how the play has become important in legitimate culture.

The process of mapping the legitimization of the play begins in Chapter 1. Here, I describe the process of *Ubu Roi*'s rise from obscure origins to paramount, legitimate status in French culture, and the play's transfer to the English language by examining the 1896 production, French- and English-language critical and biographical treatments of Jarry and the play. I also cover three important French revivals of the play in 1908, 1922, and 1958. Significantly, it is in this first chapter that I coin the term "U-Effect" to describe the phenomenon caused by Jarry's implementation of three specific tactics in the premiere performance: exceptional performance of self; an unfamiliar, even radical dramaturgy; and stacking the house

with a diverse audience to create a scandal. I trace how these tactics, initially copied by Jarry's admirers, eventually are emptied of their subversive value and are transformed into de Certeau's strategies as critics and scholars draw on them to describe productions they see making use of them. Through early anecdotes and biographies of Jarry, the construction of his life would become tied to the character Ubu. I track this connection as it solidifies further in 1950s biographies. I argue that the play reaches legitimate status in France by the early 1930s. I complete the chapter by examining initial English-language translations, and end with Roger Shattuck's now canonized study, *The Banquet Years*, where he sets in place for English-language scholarship all kinds of assumptions accrued in French through the "U-Effect."

At the outset of Chapter 2, I describe as a group three early 1960s English-language studies, Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Leonard Cabell Pronko's *Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theater in France*, and George Wellwarth's *The Theatre of Protest and Paradox*, all of which position *Ubu Roi* as the initiator of what would become the "Absurdist" avant-garde of the 1950s. I argue that these studies affect the broader canonization and legitimization of the play in the Western canon, which I explore in the middle part of the chapter. I show that as the play became canonized, due to the power increase of the "U-Effect" based on Esslin's, Pronko's, and Wellwarth's studies, treatments of the play diversify, taking up different approaches to the text and examining different elements of it. As the twentieth century turned to the twenty-first, the play had established itself within the Western theatrical canon, widely translated into English and anthologized into collections focusing on Modernist and avant-garde works alone, and also into collections of Western and world drama. I use the final section in this chapter to lay out various contemporary scholarly studies of the historical European avant-garde to observe how they converse with the "U-Effect," which was generated and maintained by all of those studies. I

argue here that though many contemporary studies rely on and confirm the power of the “U-Effect,” as they equate the premiere of *Ubu Roi* with the beginning of the historical European avant-garde, there have been in the last 30 years several contradictions to the “U-Effect.” Yet those have been slow to affect any change to the dominant subject position, from which *Ubu Roi* is the paramount play in the historical European avant-garde canon.

In the third chapter, I provide a production history for English-accessible professional productions of *Ubu Roi* and adaptations. While one of my main goals in doing this is simply to document the play’s rich production history, I also describe how the productions and the critics reviewing them interact with the “U-Effect” and the play’s legitimacy in culture. I case study the Royal Court Theatre’s 1966 production, *Ubu Roi*, Peter Brook’s 1977, 1978, and 1980 *Ubu*, and the Lincoln Center Theater’s 1989 *Ubu*, to show the reception of landmark productions of the play, and how powerful a force the “U-Effect” was in the creation and reception of those productions. I have chosen these productions because they are the most widely reviewed productions in English, my native tongue. I also survey a dozen or so other professional productions of *Ubu Roi* and adaptations. Some productions attempt to re-create or mimic the 1896 production by using puppet-like acting or sparse settings. These productions attempt to position the play as a frozen text to be studied and observed, but not to be altered. Other productions, such as Andrei Serban’s at LaMama ETC in 1970, tear the text apart and use it as a leaping-off point for investigations of the actor’s work and his/her relationship to the spectator. Still other productions use seemingly mainstream conventions, some with popular and critical success, and some not. I argue in this chapter that the “U-Effect” is called upon in various ways by each individual professional production and/or its reviewers. Where productions call on the “U-Effect” to attempt to bolster their production values and practices, critics invoke it in order to

authorize or sanction a production based on those values and practices. The major view of the critics that I point out in this chapter is that they feel if the production cannot replicate the performance tactics or the reaction of Lugné-Poe's production, (and some critics admit this is not even possible in contemporary times), then the production is unworthy of the text, whose volatile energies must be handled correctly in order to be effective. As unfair as they are, these comparisons to the 1896 production have dominated critics' reviews of performance throughout *Ubu*'s production history.

It was one of the most explosive theatrical premieres that has ever happened. It caused riots and it changed the course of theatrical history—or so it is said. Yes, the 1896 premiere of *Ubu Roi* at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre has indeed changed the course of theatre history, but not necessarily for all the reasons scholars and teachers ascribe to it. It can be said with some certainty that the production did elicit a forceful reaction from the audience at one, or both of the performances, but the audience's reaction cannot be verified to be worthy of calling it a "riot." Due to the proliferation of accounts of the production that spectacularized the proceedings, we have been handed a narrative that positions the play's premiere as an unprecedented event in theatre history. Taking the controversial production as the initiator of the historical avant-garde, for a long time, we have understood the avant-garde to be based on an antagonistic, provocative model. As I show in my study, this does not have to be the case, and noted scholars such as Michael Kirby and Christopher Innes, among others, have already made attempts to redress this inaccuracy of theatre history.

By tracing the writing of the play's history, I have exposed how *Ubu Roi* attained such a prominent position in theatre history. I admit that the biographies of Jarry and scholarly assessments/utilizations of the play have led me to innumerable useful insights and conclusions.

However, I am a theatre/performance scholar, so I have been attracted to and have drawn from as many performances as I feasibly could. Performances of *Ubu Roi* and of plays by admirers of Jarry have done just as much for the play's legitimacy as have works of scholarship. Since past scholarship has left what I consider an inconceivable gap where the play's production history should stand, in my study, I especially highlight how the English-language production history of the play has contributed to *Ubu Roi*'s rise to legitimacy. And at any rate, seeing a production of the play is what led me here in the first place.

Having made the journey through the now-contested history of the *Ubu Roi*'s ascent to the pinnacle of Western dramatic literature, I have become more self-aware about my relationship to the play. In the past, I would get upset and bewildered when a colleague had not heard of the play or its history. After working on this research, I have discovered that my reaction was a conditioned response taught to me by the "U-Effect." When I first learned the play and about its position in theatre history, the scholarship I read equipped me with a set of perceptions to further perpetuate the notion that the play is an almighty entity that commanded every theatre history student learn about it. I, and those that gave me that reading, had fallen in love with the glamorous aspects of the event reported by biased sources. Now that I see the presence of the "U-Effect," I do not love the play any less. Rather, I now view the text and production through a more allowing, familiar lens. I know that the play has its flaws and is by no means a perfect piece of drama (as if there is such a thing). I also revel in the ability to recognize and navigate what I understand to be the play's dubious history. I hope that in reading this study, that understanding will transfer to you, and, counter to the "U-Effect," several or many new interpretations of this play's place in history and the avant-garde can share power in theatre history.

CHAPTER 1

*“La Bombe Comique”*¹³

“His life and work united in a single threat to the equilibrium of human nature.”
 Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years* (189).

In his 1958 study, *The Banquet Years*, Roger Shattuck sets in place numerous assumptions for English-language students and scholars about Alfred Jarry and his most famous work, *Ubu Roi*. It is my goal in this chapter to demonstrate that Shattuck’s suppositions are not strictly original to him and his context, but are grounded in decades of constructed history. In his oft-referenced book, he culls together over 50 years of tradition in Jarry studies and scholarship on *Ubu Roi*. Therefore, in this chapter I begin at the beginning, as it were, of the “myth of *Ubu Roi*.” I detail here what moves were made, when, and by whom, in order to take *Ubu Roi* from a schoolboy’s joke into a thoroughly interpreted, heavily cited piece of canonical literature accessible to English- and French-language scholars alike.

I will begin by briefly contextualizing the premiere production within several key cultural processes in *fin de siècle* Paris. Discussing these contextual factors will help establish the groundwork for how the production would create confusion both during the performances, and after, through the reaction in the literary press. As I establish the pre-conditions for the performance, I will introduce the tactics Jarry used to create a controversy out of the Théâtre de l’Œuvre production. In the first section, I will lay out the context in which the *Ubu* premiere is situated. I will navigate the confusion of the premiere, noting the sparseness of clarity on the part of critics to account for what actually happened. In describing the controversy following the premiere, I also set forth my conception of how the play was wrested from the hands of iconoclast Jarry and ultimately given credence by the academy.

¹³ My chapter title comes from the title of Gérard Damerval’s 1984 study, *Ubu roi: La bombe comique de 1896*.

In the subsequent sections, I describe the complex campaign that ultimately led to the play's legitimacy and canonized status. I detail the process of turning each of Jarry's three tactics into strategies. To do this, I investigate the spread of anecdotes of Jarry's life, the appropriation of the Ubu character in other literature and in French popular culture, major revivals of *Ubu Roi*, the dramaturgy of successive avant-garde artists, and the published biographical and critical analysis of Jarry and the play through 1960. Through this exploration, I reveal how, once those tactics are written about in the same space, they merge to incite the proliferation of the "U-Effect." From that point, even taken separately, they function as the strategies that guide the construction of history surrounding Jarry and *Ubu Roi*, leading the play to its position within the French theatrical canon and as a legitimate piece of French culture. Having established the play's legitimacy in the French language, the final work I do in this chapter is to outline the play's transfer to the English language. Just as I noted in the opening paragraph of this chapter, Shattuck's history is based on evidence and critical lenses available to him. *Ubu Roi* was also the product of a very particular context; I describe that context in the following pages.

A. Context, Publication, Premiere Performance, and Confusion of Event

The December 10, 1896 premiere of *Ubu Roi* did not occur in a vacuum. The production was mounted within a distinct set of cultural conditions that made possible the various production techniques and their reception. Most scholars point out that *Ubu Roi* had initially been conceived as a schoolboy joke, a loose collection of stories parodying one Professor Hèbert of the lycée at Rennes. Some of these tales had been established even years before Jarry made it to the lycée. Scholars note that Jarry took ownership of the assemblage of stories and heavily edited it before placing the newly structured script in Aurelien Lugné-Poe's hands in January

1896. True, marking this development of the text underlines an acknowledgement of the production's contingency, that the play had existed in some form and served a different purpose prior to the Œuvre production. It does not, however, demonstrate the recognition of various key contextual factors specific to the premiere for the Théâtre de l'Œuvre that would have some influence on both production practices and reception perspectives. I argue that the context of the production must be fully attended to in order to understand its reception; though, my coverage of the context of the production is admittedly selective. Below, I describe three important cultural phenomena that played a role in shaping the events on December 9 and 10, 1896. These contextual factors created the conditions for a controversy to arise out of the performances, and directly affected how the production was received in the days, weeks, and years afterwards.

The daily existence of many artists of *fin de siècle* Paris, as well as other cultural centers in Europe, was governed, in part, by anxieties over the modern world. In his *Modernism at the Barricades: Aesthetics, Politics, Utopia*, Stephen Eric Bronner argues that members of the avant-garde, such as Jarry, engaged in specific strategies to supplement their artistic work in order to respond to the newly configured global landscape. Those men and women “experimented with multiplying experience, broadening the possibilities of perception, exploding the habitual, and transforming the way in which people relate to one another” (6). In Jarry’s case, exceptional performance of everyday life—holding people up at gun point for no reason, eating meals in reverse order, drinking alcohol almost exclusively while claiming that water is poisonous—became an alternative and supplementary tactic to achieving social transformation in his literary and artistic works.¹⁴ While this kind of outrageous daily praxis was not singular to Jarry, his biography is used frequently as an exemplar for the entire Modernist movement. When Jarry

¹⁴ Noted theatre scholar Christopher Innes agrees with Bronner. In *Avant-Garde Theatre, 1892-1992*, Innes argues that philosophically, the avant-garde corresponds to anarchism, and that the basic principle of *fin de siècle* anarchism is best described as “extreme individualism” (5).

brought this performance of self into the Nouveau Théâtre in the same space as the premiere production of *Ubu Roi*, he contributed to the conditions creating a controversy of the event.

The tradition of Symbolist performance is also an important element in the context of *Ubu Roi*'s December 1896 premiere. From 1887, the Théâtre de l'Œuvre and its predecessor, the Théâtre d'Art, had been presenting Symbolist plays. The production of many of those plays, as Frantisek Deak argues in *Symbolist Theater: The Formation of an Avant-Garde*, served as "a dramatization and theatricalization of discourse on contemporary art" (228). Deak notes that the premiere of *Ubu Roi* presented more of the same; *Ubu* was a continuation of the Symbolist theatre. Deak contends that the dramaturgy of the Théâtre de l'Œuvre production may not be unequivocally revolutionary; within the context of Symbolist performance, the dramaturgy is not so extraordinary. However, the reviews and accounts published about the premiere tell us that the play was not received as a mere continuation of Symbolist theatre, and much of the early scholarship/criticism on the play dubs it radically different and striving for transformation. With the introduction of scatology, his own primitivism, and a greater sense of indeterminacy in meaning of the scenography and action, Jarry skewed what for many critics and audience members represented the standard Symbolist dramaturgy. The nature of the play's dramaturgy became one of the most contested issues in the weeks directly following the event, and in the years and decades after. Therefore, the question over the play's dramaturgy would be one that supports the controversy.

Before the controversy over *Ubu Roi* began, a national scandal was dominating French discourse. The Dreyfus Affair involved the conviction and exile of a Jewish army officer, Alfred Dreyfus, as a German spy. In *The History of France*, W. Scott Haine argues that the driving force of the scandal was the public's exposure to it through newspapers and magazines, whose

reporting of the event frequently had overtones of anti-Semitism. “What turned the Dreyfus affair into a crisis that threatened to divide the nation and destroy the Republic,” Haine argues, “was the power of the press” (126).¹⁵ Haine reports that at the time of the affair’s unfolding in the mid-1890s, the number of daily newspaper sales in France had grown to around three million. The pervasiveness of newspapers and niche magazines and their power to promote and maintain controversy would play a key role in the historical context after the *Ubu* premiere. The scandal of the production played itself out in the print publications with numerous critics attempting to sway their readership’s perception either for or against the play. With the Dreyfus affair alongside anarchist activities creating quite a stir in 1896, Parisian culture was primed for an artistic/philosophical scandal. These three contextual factors expose the notion that the premiere production of *Ubu Roi* occurred in a specific context, and they underpin the controversy.

I argue that Jarry turned a moment of opportunity in this milieu into his advantage by bringing to the premiere production three production practices, or de Certeau’s tactics, all of which related directly to the contextual factors. In deploying them, Jarry attempted to explode the dominant foundations of theatre. In relation to the first contextual factor, Jarry brought his extraordinary performance of self into the theatre, thus complicating the audience’s reception of a standard theatrical event. Jarry took advantage of the second contextual factor and attempted to fill the theatre with as many diverse parties as he could in order to fill the space with multiple opposing viewpoints; he deliberately tried to create a scandal (Besnier; Brotchie; Sutton).

¹⁵ In his book, *France, Fin de Siècle*, Eugen Weber also argues that the press stoked the fire of this national controversy. He argues that print news, in this instance, served as “the artillery of thought, or at least of passion” (239). Weber cites a French author, Jean-Louis Bredin, on the subject, who had asserted that without the mass print sales, Dreyfus might have remained in prison a lot longer. On the other side of the coin, Bredin also pondered whether, without politically oppositional press, Dreyfus would have been sent to prison in the first place (Weber 240).

Finally, he staged his play in a space wherein Symbolism had been the reigning dramaturgy. Jarry toyed with the dramaturgy by introducing scatology, his own brand of primitivism, and a greater sense of indeterminacy into the production. He attempted to confuse or mystify the spectators, who were perhaps prepared for something entirely different from what they saw. Examining the aftermath of the production, one can observe that these tactics, outrageous self-performance, the attempt to create a scandal, and an unusual or unfamiliar dramaturgy, employed in the premiere production, contributed to the controversy that sparked a new subject position, or new way of understanding theatre. I will explore the controversy after establishing the play's own pre-history.

The December premiere of *Ubu Roi* was not the play's first appearance in Parisian literary circles. When scholars and critics point to the premiere performance of *Ubu Roi* as an igniter or catalyst of the avant-garde/Modernism, many neglect to mention that the text of the play had been available prior to the now infamous performance. Portions of the play appear in Jarry's 1895 text *Caesar Antichrist*, which combined poetry, heraldry, mathematic symbolism, woodcuts, and dramatic text.¹⁶ Jarry also published the play in serialized form in Paul Fort's *Le Livre d'Art* in the April/May and May/June issues, and in book form through the publishing arm of the *Mercure de France* in June of 1896, giving the reading public no less than six months' exposure to the script before the play's premiere.¹⁷ That scholars gloss over this fact points up two important threads that I will unravel. The first is that literary critics had already had the chance to respond to the play in the literary magazines by the time the play premiered in

¹⁶ Kimberly Jannarone has described *Caesar Antichrist* in her article, "Jarry's *Caesar Antichrist* and the Theatre of the Book," as "Theatre of the Book." Jannarone argues that Jarry has created a "complex combination of existing systems that lives on as its own form of theatre" (121). Through the "play," he attempts to establish a new kind of theatrical space-page as stage where there is "no divide between the text and the stage: to put down the book would be analogous to exiting the theatre" (123).

¹⁷ The character of Père Ubu appeared first in Jarry's literary debut, "Guignol," in 1893 (Dubbelboer 1).

production in December 1896.¹⁸ The second issue, and the one that is at the crux of the matter I am taking up here, is the locus of scholarship on *Ubu Roi*. When theatre historians look at *Ubu Roi*, the one facet discussed over any other is the first word, “*merdre*,” and the power that word, among other production choices, supposedly had *in performance*. I will not dispute this privileging of live performed event over text. However, in proceeding directly to the event, many scholars omit an important, albeit small, part of the play’s history. Excluding the history of the play pre-production leaves out the possibility that the audience would have brought preconceptions to the premiere. In what follows, I outline the value in noting those preconceptions and highlight some pre-production reviews of the script. Then, I mark the points of confusion over what happened on the evenings of the production and discuss how the exchange of reviews in the literary journals turned into a controversy. Finally, I show how that controversy eventually led to turning the tactics Jarry used in conceiving the event into what I will term the “U-Effect.”

In his *Performing Opposition: Modern Theater and the Scandalized Audience*, Neil Blackadder argues that many of the audience members in attendance at the *repetition générale* (invited final dress rehearsal) were familiar with *Ubu Roi*, had already formed opinions about it, and had engaged in discussion about how it would be/should be performed, prior to arriving at the theatre. Furthermore, those pre-formed opinions, or “horizon of expectations” shaped the progression of the evening, creating some of the chaos that became the confusion over the event (53).¹⁹ In “Theatre Audiences and the Reading of Performance,” Marvin Carlson notes the importance of audience expectations running counter to performance practices as actively

¹⁸ I am, of course, aware of the marionette production that Jarry mounted with Henri and Charles Morin in the Morins’ attic in 1888.

¹⁹ Blackadder uses Hans Robert Jauss’s conception of “horizon of expectations” as found in Marvin Carlson’s article “Theatre Audiences and the Reading of the Performance.”

altering the performance event. He contends that “theatre, as a social event, encourages ... active resistance; not a few demonstrations and even riots have arisen from performances (like *Hernani* or *Ubu Roi*) failing to play the game according to the rules many in the audience expected” (85-86). Blackadder and Carlson both support the notion that despite the slight recognition of *Ubu*’s history prior to the premiere, that pre-history played an important part in the performance. Therefore, the audience’s preconceived ideas played a significant role in determining the outline of the event that ultimately becomes the leaping off point for many scholars’ discussion of the play, and more broadly speaking, of the avant-garde and/or Modernist performance.

Lewis Franklyn Sutton provides a substantial summary of those pre-production reviews of the script in his dissertation, “An Evaluation of the Studies on Alfred Jarry from 1894-1963,” and Noël Arnaud quotes numerous passages in his 1974 study *Alfred Jarry: d’Ubu Roi au Docteur Faustroll*. The reviews were all favorable; this may have something to do with who was on the press list to receive copies from the *Mercure*. From the list that Alastair Brotchie provides in his *Alfred Jarry: A Pataphysical Life*, only one copy went to a potentially negative reviewer (135-136). I briefly mention some highlights of those reviews in order to demonstrate the praise the play received before it was ever considered significant due to performance. Gustave Kahn “was struck by the ‘joyous quality’ and the irony of the play. Jarry, a ‘buffoon with the digging voice of a ventriloquist,’ is particularly effective in creating simplifications: the actions in the play are simple, spontaneous and commanded by the lowest instincts, as with the ‘modern bourgeoisie’” (Sutton 30).²⁰ Henri Bauër was one of the play’s greatest champions, of both the book’s publishing and of the premiere performance. His review of the published text for the *Echo de Paris* on November 23, 1896 celebrated the script’s irreverence:

²⁰ All quotes from Sutton’s dissertation appear in French; therefore, the translations from his study are mine.

It is an extraordinary farce, of excessive language, of enormous crudeness, of racy imagination hiding a biting and aggressive wit, overflowing with haughty contempt of humans and material things; it is a smack-in-the-mouth philosophico-political pamphlet, which spits in the face of the idle fancies of tradition and master inventors ... it is a contribution to the Phenomena and Acts of Gargantua and his son Pantagruel. (qtd. in Sutton 30)²¹

Bauër does not short Jarry any praise here. However, in the post-production reviews, the detractors—of which there was a significant majority over supporters—are just as likely to venture toward hyperbole in order to tear the play apart. It was not long after Bauër's review appeared that he and the other supporters of the script would get their chance to defend it against the onslaught of attacks.

In the weeks following December 10, 1896, a debate raged in the Parisian literary magazines. *Ubu Roi* had premiered at Aurelien Lugné-Poe's Théâtre de l'Œuvre on the tenth, sparking a firestorm of reactions from critics in both defense of and attack on the play. Thus began the controversial and (now) contested history of one of the most infamous plays in the Western world.

I offer here a brief overview and general summation of the major confusion of the happenings at the performances. Historically, there has been confusion over which performance derived the more aggressive reaction: either the *répétition générale* on December 9, or the actual opening performance on December 10. Some accounts even give other dates, such as the month of November, December 11, or 1897 or 1898, dates on which no performance occurred, as the date for the most scandalous performance. Most accounts posit that the main reaction began with

²¹ In referencing Gargantua and Pantagruel, Bauër seems to take Jarry as a literary descendent of Rabelais, a connection that is made frequently in scholarship on the script and Jarry's œuvre.

Ubu's first word, "*merdre*," (often translated as "shittr," "pschitt," "she-it"), but some scholars disagree with that narrative. Once the reaction began there is disagreement over how long it took place before the performance was able to re-commence (estimates range between 15 and 30 minutes). Some scholars stress how out of the ordinary the audience response was, while others argue that the reaction was within customary behavior at an opening. Finally, there is often little consideration given to Jarry's part in executing a potentially controversial affair. From the above description of the major points of confusion, it is clear that the premiere of *Ubu Roi* serves as, in Michel Foucault's terms, a "space of dissension" in the history of Western theatre, encompassing a controversy in the event itself, and a contested historical narrative of the event. Below, I describe the production as space of dissension in order to flesh out my understanding of it as a controversy.

Rhetorician Kendall R. Phillips models a post-structuralist view of a controversy. In his article, "Rhetoric and Controversy," Phillips defines controversies vis-à-vis Michel Foucault's conception of discursive formations. He first boils controversies down to the core: "controversies must be understood as specific, localized intersections of discursive sites and momentary opportunities" (493). Then he applies Foucault to them: "Following from Foucault's notion that discourse formations are not whole and unified but penetrated with contradictions, I contend that controversies arise from those areas of overlap between distinct formations. . . . Those antagonistic points at which different formations struggle for dominance . . . may be seen as the precondition for controversies" (493). Those antagonistic points, or contradictions, are, again, what compel discourse to cover up its incoherence and necessitate a shift in discursive formations. They "operate as the limit points of discourse, the points where the coherence and enforced regularity of 'normal' discourse encounters the incongruity of changing symbolic and

material conditions . . . point[s] where the enforced consensus is disabled and various new discourses may emerge within this ‘space of dissension’” (Phillips, “Spaces” 334). In the instance of the opening of *Ubu Roi*, the event became that site, that space of dissension, that contradiction, from which new discourse(s) emerge(s).

The space of dissension of the performance opened with Jarry’s ten-minute introduction to the play. Before he even opened his mouth, the audience witnessed a bizarre sight. He greeted the house with a white-powdered face, hair plastered to his head, and was dressed in a large black habit, collarless white shirt and large white Pierrot’s cravat. He sat on a cane-bottomed chair at a small table covered in a coal sack, and began to speak (Brotchie 161). His speech was delivered in his customary two-pitched alternating, quiet, monotonous voice, and he ended his speech by stating, “the action, which is about to start, takes place in Poland, that is to say Nowhere” (Hartigan 174; *Selected Works* 76). From this moment, Jarry introduced a paradox into the performance that it is left up to the audience to decode, placing the audience at a primary position of meaning making for the performance. Ryan Hartigan argues that Jarry’s statement reveals the “productive contradictions” possible in the performance (175). To paraphrase Bert O. States, these contradictions allow a theatre audience to engage in the imaginative process of filling in the blank spaces of the performance by “seeing with the ears” and “hearing with the eyes” in order to create images and meaning of the visual and aural gaps Jarry created (*Great Reckonings* 52-53). The unavoidable contradiction of Jarry’s paradox immediately propels the audience into a scramble to re-articulate and redefine its knowledge of French theatre, which it does through its reaction(s) to the production.

I was not at the premiere performance; I cannot verify the actual facticity of any account of the production. However, I believe that when examining the unfolding of the event—as

distorted and obscured the narratives may be—one can glean that many people were in some way affected by the performance, and their reactions were multiple and varied. Moreover, many of those reactions were based on the play's appropriateness for the French stage, even though it was produced by Lugné-Poe's Théâtre de l'Œuvre in the Nouveau Théâtre, which was a "théâtre d'à côté."²² The play's appropriateness and merits, or lacks thereof, were not ultimately determined in the theatre—the responses both in support of and against the play disallowed a single judgment of worth. This mixed reaction left the performance open to being read as a paradigm-shifting event, or just another Symbolist performance, as Frantisek Deak argues, one with a reception not unlike many other openings in France's rich theatrical history, or a total joke on Jarry's part.²³ The identity of the premiere was left fluid enough in the moment that it allowed for antagonistic readings, remembrances of the evening that make the play into more—or less—than it might have been. Out of this opening, this undefined identity, a new subject position using new discourse was made possible, within which the production's attendees and participants could situate themselves. Scholars, critics, and fans of Jarry who align themselves with the stories of those attendees who operated from this subject position also place themselves in that position, thereby privileging the site of the premiere as paramount. Hence, issuing forth from this subject position are future narratives that take this event as the beginning of the theatrical avant-garde or Modernist performance.

Despite the wealth of critique (positive, negative, and ambivalent) of the play, none of the magazine and journal reviews of the production recounted in detail the course of events of the

²² Literally, a "theatre on the side," or off the boulevard, but more commonly known as an amateur theatre or "little theatre" used as a proving ground for more "legitimate" stages.

²³ According to Deak, in his *Symbolist Theater: the Formation of an Avant-Garde*, "as far as the scandal was concerned, the audience's behavior was within the customary behavior of the opening night audience" (228).

premiere.²⁴ Critics writing in both support of and attack on the play obscure the events of the evening in order to best situate their point of view and persuade their audience of their authority.²⁵ Louis Claveau, reviewing for *Le Soleil*, wrote, “It is completely useless to review the wild imaginings played this evening at the Théâtre de l’Œuvre under the title of *Ubu Roi*. The author, M. Jarry, without a doubt wanted to pull a good prank on the public. It is unfortunate that the director of the Œuvre, M. Lugné-Poë, had lent his hand and wasted his time on this hoax which is anything but artistic” (qtd. in Sutton 31). Claveau disregards giving an account of the evening because he believes it is a big joke on the public. Georges Vanor wrote for *La Paix*, “I will not attempt to untangle whatever idea may be hidden amid this insanity, to free a few symbols from among these scatological adventures which the actors stammer out in Auvergnat [dialect], without a doubt because they are Poles” (qtd. in Sutton 34). Reducing the play to insanity, Vanor does not bother reporting how the performance went, other than to speak to the obvious choice of dialect for the actors. Once again in favor of the play, Henry Bauër argued in the *Echo de Paris*, “[t]his enormous, strangely suggestive figure of Ubu blows the wind of destruction, and is the inspiration to contemporary youth who collapse the traditional compliance and age-old prejudices” (qtd. in Sutton 34). Bauër, ever the cheerleader for the play, attempts to demonstrate its potential social effects. He, like those against the play, foregoes giving an accurate account of the evening. One of the confusing elements of the performance leading to the

²⁴ The critics attended the official premiere performance on the evening of the tenth. While it is difficult to determine exactly how different the two performances were, the most accepted narrative claims that this is the performance in which the audience reacted immediately to “*merdre*” (Brotchie 162).

²⁵ As I will note many comparisons made between *Ubu Roi* and *Hernani*, I think it is important to distinguish the two premiere productions at this point. While *Hernani* experienced a reaction in the press, the production had a much longer run, thereby naturally allowing the germination of more fodder: “After an initial three nights of calm, a shouting and shoving match raged for the remaining 36 performances between the romantics and the reactionaries in the audience, drowning out the actors. In the end, most of the Parisian press hailed the romantics as the victors, chiefly for outlasting their opponents” (Zarrilli, *Theatre Histories* 274). With the run of just two performances for *Ubu*, generating as much press as it did seems to suggest that the battle outside the theatre was equally, if not more, significant than any potential rioting that happened in the Nouveau-Théâtre.

myriad of readings of its meaning was the implementation of a primitivism in the dramaturgy advocated for by Jarry.

The dramaturgy that Lugné-Poe employed in the production was influenced by Jarry's wishes for the play's performance. In January 1896, Jarry had written to Lugné-Poe with a number of suggestions on how the play could be staged. Those suggestions included a mask and special voice for the actor playing Ubu, and using a plain backdrop and hanging a placard to describe the scene, as Jarry thought this had "far more 'suggestive' power than any stage scenery" (*Selected Works* 68). The suggestiveness that Jarry sought in the scenery, and, as I detail below, in the costumes, was a move toward primitivism. He desired that the simplicity he suggested for the physical production elements reflect an equally simple and instinctive response in the audience.

Jarry elaborated on the primitivist suggestions he gave Lugné-Poe in an article he published in the *Mercure de France* in September 1896 titled "Of the Futility of the Theatrical in the Theatre."²⁶ In the article, written on theatre practices broadly construed, Jarry argues for a mask to cover the actor's entire head, thus to replace it by the "effigy" of the character. Jarry suggests that if the mask captures the eternal nature of the character, lighting it in very specific ways can attain universality in expression. He notes that by nodding and lateral movements of the head, using six particular positions, the actor can display every expression possible, and "they are simple expressions, and therefore universal" (*Selected Works* 71). Further, Jarry describes universal gestures: "An example of universal gesture is the marionette displaying its bewilderment by starting back violently and hitting its head against a flat. . . . Behind all these accidentals there remains the essential expression, and the finest thing in many scenes is the

²⁶ The article is translated in various wordings. My preferred translation is "On the Uselessness of the Theatrical in Theatre," however, for the sake of accuracy, when I cite a translation of the essay, I use the translator's title.

impassivity of the mask, which remains the same whether the words it emits are grave or gay” (71). For Jarry, “essential expressions” created a conduit for an instinctive response, a recognition on the part of the audience of the basest aspects of each individual. The simplicity of achieving essential and universal expressions with masks is important for Jarry, and exposes his interest in conveying a symbolic primitivism to his audience.

In his *Avant-Garde Theatre, 1892-1992*, Christopher Innes argues that primitivism is the common impulse of all the avant-gardes over that 100-year period. For Innes, primitivism in avant-garde theatre appears as both exploring dream states or the instinctive and subconscious levels of the psyche, and a focus on myth and magic leading to ritual and ritualistic patterning in performance (2-3). He argues that both types, exploring the subconscious, and myth, are connected, because “symbolic or mythopoeic thinking precedes language and discursive reason, revealing fundamental aspects of reality that are unknowable by any other means” (3). Jarry’s concern for the universal expression or gesture through mask work and the voice shows his desire to have the spectator access his/her imagination (at that time, he would have lacked the terminology to state he was striving after access to the spectators’ subconscious) to complete the meaning of the signs of performance. In performance, most of the characters appeared in masks, Gémier used a special voice for Ubu, the setting was handled much to Jarry’s specifications, and the dramaturgy resulted in confusion for much of the audience.

The confusion and mixed reaction may have been due to the success of the primitivist techniques employed in production, as Jarry himself asserted; the techniques may have opened readings to individual audience members that they were seeing in the characters reflections of themselves, inciting them to disparate reactions. In his essay, “Theater Questions,” Jarry writes that he intended to confront the audience with their basest aspects, and he is not surprised that

“the public should have been aghast at the sight of its ignoble other self” (*Selected Works* 83). In showing the public the primitive, base elements of itself, Jarry incited an array of responses, which had the effect of a collective confusion.

As I have shown, the controversy over the play revolves around the three tactics Jarry employed in performance: his outrageous self-performance, his attempt to scandalize the audience, and his dramaturgy. Eventually, after a number of others following Jarry use tactics similar to these, scholars and critics writing about their performances will appropriate the tactics and use them to describe the performances. In practice, this act of appropriation on the part of scholars and critics will turn the subversive tactics employed by the artists into the dominant strategies of the new subject position, or the way of knowing theatre I will refer to as the “U-Effect,” conceived in the controversy over the production.

Although the controversy over *Ubu Roi*’s premiere happened during and immediately after the event, the “U-Effect” remained nascent for twenty or so years. The tactics Jarry employed, or ones very similar, were recycled by his adorers and artists (such as Guillaume Apollinaire, Tristan Tzara and the dadas, André Breton and the Surrealists), who looked to *Ubu Roi* for inspiration, to peck at the foundations of dominant theatrical convention. As I will make plain, it is only when critics and scholars reference those three production techniques in the attempt to describe and define the performances of *Ubu Roi* and the dada and Surrealist performances that followed, that Jarry’s tactics become the strategies of the “U-Effect.” By writing them down and making them serve the power of legitimate, institutionalized culture in the form of theatre criticism and theatre history scholarship, scholars unwittingly steal away the subversive quality of those production techniques as tactics and transfer it into dominant power as strategies, capable of mapping their power onto the written space of theatre history. All three

of Jarry's tactics as strategies are necessary to put the "U-Effect" into action. Without all three, the "U-Effect" cannot sustain itself. These three elements, melded together in the crucible of *fin de siècle* Paris, have allowed the process of theatre history to receive *Ubu Roi* in a very particular way. I have a hard time imagining avant-garde theatre as it is currently configured in history books if the three tactics-turned-strategies of the "U-Effect" do not interact precisely as they have; without all three, there is no *Ubu Roi* in the classroom today and the historical avant-garde likely looks considerably different than its current configuration.²⁷

I am certainly not the first to assert that Jarry created his own controversy (Besnier; Brotchie; Sutton). I am, however, the first to posit the notion that out of Jarry's construction of the event, a new subject position, the "U-Effect," was minted. I am the first to track how that subject position, through scholars' and critics' assumption of it, came to dominate discourse on the theatrical avant-garde and to create the narrative of how the historical avant-garde developed and yielded the avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s. Much of that discourse was generated on the authority vested in accounts written years later by attendees of the production.

The premiere of *Ubu Roi* was preserved through the memories of those who attended one of the two performances. Because so much of what I consider in the following sections is the construction of the memories of the artists and biographers I reference, I must make one more note before moving on. It is common knowledge that memory is not the most reliable source of information. As such, when attendees and participants of the *Ubu* premiere offered their recollections of the event, most of them twenty-five or more years later, it would not be surprising if they misremembered a detail or two about the performance. This is also not to discount the possibility that the already existing narrative about the event may have influenced

²⁷ Though I do argue that the "U-Effect" is the product of a very particular set of negotiations and interrelations of strategies, it is important to note that the "U-Effect" is not always the same. It changes with the addition or negation of various statements by future scholars and practitioners.

and reshaped their memories to a significant degree.²⁸ The possibility for incorrect or inaccurate information about the performance(s) in the remembrances of those who were there will emerge as I discuss those Jarry biographies and memoirs recounted years after the fact.

B. The Making of Jarry's (After)Life and Ubu's Rise

In July 1906, Jarry's close friend and benefactor, Alfred Vallette, printed 600 copies of Jarry's adaptation of *Ubu Roi*, *Ubu sur la Butte*, through the publishing arm of the *Mercure de France*, the literary journal Vallette edited. This was an attempt to help Jarry raise money to pay some of his creditors nagging him because of his alcoholism-induced debts. The effort ultimately failed—not even the modest number of 600 sold out (Brotchie 339). It seems as though the impact of the play had drifted away, much like Jarry, who was largely unnoticed, except to those who cared most for him, and those to whom he was in debt.²⁹ The fate of the *Ubu* print speaks to the work that would need to be done to elevate Jarry and *Ubu Roi* to the position they ultimately attained. In this section, I describe the beginning of that ascent, detailing the initial appearances of *Ubu Roi* and the character Ubu in the years following Jarry's death.

After Jarry's death on November 1, 1907, the next appearance of the play in production was the following year, when Firmin Gémier, the original Ubu, revived the play at the Théâtre Antoine on March 28.³⁰ Keith Beaumont provides a description of the performance in his 1987

²⁸ Many of the written accounts later published by participants, or those who were present, postdate 1920: Symons (1897, 1907), Tailhade (1921), Yeats (1922), Rachilde (1928), Lugné-Poe (1931). The flush of accounts beginning in the 1920s may be possible because only at that time had the play been made significant enough through repeated enunciative statements necessitated by the proper functioning of the “U-Effect” strategies.

²⁹ Jarry did see the play produced one other time after the premiere. He and Claude Terrasse produced a marionette version for their Théâtre des Pantins in 1898. The production was mounted in Terrasse's garden behind his house at the rue Ballu, just south of Montmartre (Brotchie 197).

³⁰ The venue may seem like an interesting choice, but Gémier, who was a protégé of André Antoine, had actually succeeded Antoine as director of the theater in 1906. (Forman 121, 238)

study, *Jarry, Ubu Roi*.³¹ Beaumont depicts the set as done according to child's conventions, in an apparent attempt to recreate the 1896 production, but in his words, "lacking the flagrant incoherence and incongruity" of the Théâtre de l'Œuvre's (64). In her *Dada and Surrealist Performance*, Annabelle Melzer summarizes the reports of the performance. Due to the splendid detail of her description, it is appropriate to quote her summary at length here.

This time the directorial concept was Gémier's own, but for all of his being a fine actor, Gémier had none of Jarry's eccentric daring. The performance was pallid, the audience calm and fairly indifferent. The décor had been tempered into a geometric vista of harlequin-squared meadows in whose midst rose a Slavo-Arab palace, its dome echoing the pear shaped head of Ubu. Mère and Père Ubu entered from opposite sides of the stage at a trot, collided and remained stunned for an instant, arms akimbo. Gémier with his stomach padded as in the original production had, however, forsaken his mask for two puffed cheeks and a conical skull. In the third act Ubu trades this costume for the resplendent garb of a hussar. Mère Ubu was fat in a flowered Indian dress, her face and hands painted red, alongside a wind-up-toy Captain Bordure. Wenceslas sported [sic] sign which read 'Roy' [king] and the Czar was a jack-in-the-box, emerging on cue from his packing crate marked 'FRAGILE.' Bougrelas' royal family wore grotesque masks but strangest of all was the conclusion: 'All the characters, living and dead, revived, and spread out in a single line; and down to the young Bougrelas, they

³¹ Beaumont does not cite the source of his description, but it likely comes from P. Lie's "Notes sur la Seconde Représentation d'*Ubu Roi*," from the *Cahiers du Collège de 'Pataphysique* No. 20, June 1958. Beaumont's description and general tone matches Lie's almost identically.

draped themselves over the neck of the [Phynancial Horse] and slept, heads bent and quite clearly snoring.’³² (119)

Following this description, Melzer argues, “Gémier had forced *Ubu* to grow up and in so doing, had robbed the play of its most vital parts” (120). She observes that the elements in the play from the first production that had inspired the dadas and surrealists had vanished. In her judgment, these are not inherent in the text, but a result of either superior sensitivity or dumb luck on Jarry’s part in crafting the premiere production, and Gémier simply did not claim this same understanding. She concludes: “Eliciting a shocked response in an audience is either the product of a very fine understanding of a particular society at a particular moment, or a haphazard stroke of well-placed defiance. . . . The ‘merdre’ of 1896 was no longer startling when uttered by the chubby king in 1908” (120). Melzer develops a keen hypothesis for why theatre’s power to shock is so fleeting and happens so infrequently.

However, she ignores from this hypothesis that in late March of 1908, outside the small avant-garde circle in which Jarry traveled, nobody really knew or cared much about Jarry. As Sutton notes in his dissertation, since *Ubu*’s premiere in 1896, his reputation had fallen into disrepair:

The years immediately following Jarry’s death are marked by a decline of his literary reputation. Indeed, this decline began some time before his death, perhaps as early as 1902, when his physical deterioration began to be apparent and took its toll of [sic] his literary output. The posthumous publications which appeared soon after his death did little to improve Jarry’s reputation as a man of letters. They

³² The quoted text within Melzer’s text is from Lie’s article, “Notes sur la seconde représentation d’*Ubu Roi*,” *Cahiers du Collège de ‘Pataphysique*. No. 20, pg. 51.

were received with much the same public indifference as that which greeted his other works, with the exception of *Ubu Roi*. (44)

Jarry may not have been remembered or known by Gémier's audience, and if he was, his memory was probably not held in high regard. In considering how Jarry's other works were received, if one wants to believe Melzer, one must proceed as though Jarry caught lightning in a bottle for the premiere of *Ubu Roi*, and Gémier could not, or did not desire to replicate that.

Whether or not Gémier's audience was familiar with Jarry and/or the play before attending the revival, it was greeted with a different dramaturgical strategy than that employed at the 1896 premiere. In his "Notes sur la seconde représentation d'*Ubu Roi*," P. Lie claims that Gémier had cut and revised the play in order to "flatter and have fun with the audience, and to let them in on the play" (51). Far from wanting to shock and offend the audience, if we are to believe Lie, Gémier tried to make the play more accessible to it. Gémier's focus on using a child-like approach in design seemed intentionally to omit Jarry's grotesqueness and vulgarity, and his addition of gags to make the play more accessible to the audience tempt Melzer to call the production a museum piece, and I agree (Melzer 120). Having directed in the Théâtre Antoine no less than twenty times before, I believe that Gémier wanted to charm his audience with a piece of theatre that he loved, but had different intentions for than Jarry. He wanted to give the public something interesting to look at from a distance, and to allow the public to understand the play enough so that it could appreciate the value of staging it. Gémier's production has been curiously downplayed in scholarship of Jarry and the play.

What makes this production historically insignificant in the received narrative of *Ubu Roi* is that it allows for a reading of the play that it is not scandalizing.³³ Because his audience was

³³ In arguing this, I may be undercutting the fact that there is not a substantial amount of documentation of this production extant. A few production photos, a cartoon drawing of the production, and a review are all presented in

probably not looking for the scandal (they may not have even known about it), and because Gémier tried to honor the original but did not recreate it, the production did not achieve what the 1896 production had. The results of Gémier's production suggest that the script does not inherently contain the tactics Jarry urged Lugné-Poe toward in 1896, which means that what had happened in the Théâtre de l'Œuvre production was a product of something more or other than inherent energies in the script. Gémier's production challenges the narrative that those influenced by the "U-Effect" would have constructed. Despite their shared intentions with Gémier to elevate the play's status as an important text, those scholars writing years after Gémier's revival still devote little space to his production. No attempts to bury Gémier's revival after the fact take away from what he attempted to do with it. Gémier's production has much more value as it pertains to the process of *Ubu Roi*'s legitimization than it does in relation to its quality as a theatrical product.

I argue that Gémier's production represents the first attempt to canonize the play. Eleven years and three months removed from the premiere production, and five months after Jarry's death, Gémier may have felt the need to remind Paris of Jarry's cultural impact by re-staging the controversial piece, even if his revival would end up being far less than controversial. Similar to the traditional English phrase of "the King is dead; long live the King," Gémier preserves a palpable afterlife for Jarry through surrogation; while Jarry is dead and buried, his presence is maintained by the performance of his play. The surrogation Gémier enacts here seems to make sense under Joseph Roach's conception of surrogation for preserving the memory of dramatists. In his book, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, Roach argues that in the English tradition, building monuments or enacting rites for actors serve as stand-ins (surrogates) for "the

Lie's article for the *Cahiers*. Outside of that source, I have not found any other that presents material original to that production. That said, I believe that the move to omit Gémier's production from the history of the play is almost unavoidable due to the power of the "U-Effect."

memory of the dramatic poets, who in turn represent the sanctity of secular memory, which in its way defines the legitimating authority of the culture at large” (105). I see Gémier’s move as an adaptation of the process Roach describes wherein Gémier memorializes Jarry and provides a surrogate for him through reviving *Ubu Roi*. By producing the play and showing that he feels *Ubu Roi* is a symbol of Paris’s cultural memory, Gémier grants the play authority as a piece of culture, thereby attempting to canonize it. Preserving the play as Gémier does, he attempts to shift *Ubu Roi*’s status from a malleable text to one that is frozen; Gémier tries to lock in the memory of the premiere in memorializing it through a surrogate, stand-in performance. So, even while Gémier tried to freeze the value of *Ubu Roi* as a potential canonical text, he undermined his goal in allowing the reading of the play that it did not necessarily inherently contain the three tactics employed in the 1896 production, as the audience did not respond the way the premiere production audience did. Outside of Gémier’s production, others were working to try to bring Ubu to light, through very different means.

While Gémier’s production may be considered a museum piece with little invention and not much value beyond its effect of honoring Jarry, it did place Père Ubu on display after a near decade of virtual anonymity. After Jarry’s death, Jarry the author disappeared into literary obscurity, but Ubu and Jarry/Ubu began to emerge as formidable presences in French culture. Jarry’s performance of self quickly attained legendary status within the avant-garde scene, and meanwhile, references to Ubu exploded in French culture. Here I describe the shift of one of Jarry’s tactics into a strategy of the “U-Effect,” the melding of Jarry’s personality and behavior with the character Ubu.

Some had begun to see appearances of Ubu in the world as early as the summer of 1896. André Fontainas, an associate of the *Mercure*, reported to Jarry in a letter in July that he had

observed in Brittany a man whose behavior had struck him as very Ubu-esque, causing him to make the hyperbolic leap to assume the man was Ubu himself:

I think I've come across him here, unless some Englishman has assumed his delightful appearance: white trousers topped with a pullover in sickly dandelion-yellow and purple stripes, a peaked cap and a pipe clamped in his mouth, he strides erratically across the dunes . . . and pounds away at that idiotic game of GOFF. He strikes the ball confidently but automatically, his thoughts seem elsewhere, dwelling on past glories, campaigns against some chimerical Tsar, or Bougrelas. (qtd. in Brotchie 136)

Noël Arnaud argues that from this point on, Ubu “will always be *the other*” (218, original emphasis). While these references to Ubu in the real world dissipate for a number of years after Ubu's initial appearance, it is important to note that Ubu seemed to be easily transferrable into real world situations. Those familiar with the character could easily recognize him in those *others* whose behavior and persona they saw matching his. Nevertheless, seeing Ubu in others is only one aspect of Ubu's ascension to power; it is through Jarry's performance of self that Ubu is said to have been fully realized.

The connections between Jarry's personality and the character of Ubu extend at least as far back as the premiere production. Because Jarry desired Gémier to use a special voice or accent for Ubu, Lugné-Poe advised the actor to “imitate Jarry's speech, on two notes, this will be funny. Do not be afraid to stress, like he does, articulating with the exaggeration of . . . a crush-box for humanity” (*Acrobaties* 176). The audience was able to hear Jarry, giving the introduction to the performance, and Gémier's imitation of Jarry, as Ubu, consecutively, perhaps sealing an association between the two in that moment.

Outside of the premiere production, Jarry made it easy to connect his identity with Père Ubu's; he frequently referred to himself as the character. In at least one published instance, Jarry addressed himself as the character. The third volume of Jarry's *Œuvres Complètes* includes a letter he wrote to Rachilde in August of 1907, signed "Ubu" (683). Brotchie (*Alfred Jarry: A Pataphysical Life*, 2011) includes a letter from Vallette to André-Ferdinand Herold in July of 1897 in which Vallette refers to Jarry as Père Ubu. Brotchie argues that at this point even, among Jarry's circle, he and Ubu were synonymous (192). In many of the moments Rachilde describes in her 1928 biography, as she is talking to Jarry, she refers to him as Père Ubu. These associations of Jarry with Ubu have, looking back, made the hybridizing of the two personae undeniable and inevitable.

While those close to Jarry knew him as Ubu, few outside of his closest friends would know of him or the connection he shared with the figure he created. The greater public was not exposed to this identity until Guillaume Apollinaire published "*Contemporains pittoresques: feu Alfred Jarry*" ("Contemporary Picturesques: The Late Alfred Jarry") in *Les Marges* in November of 1909.³⁴ Apollinaire's article contributed significantly to Jarry's reputation as an "extravagant personality full of mischief and merriment, a '*mystificateur*' and '*chahuteur*'" (Sutton 45). In the article, Apollinaire recounts a series of stories about Jarry, including a description of one late night in which a stranger stopped him and Jarry on the street to ask for directions. Jarry pulled out his pistol, demanded the stranger step back six paces, and then proceeded to give him the directions he desired. Another story Apollinaire told was of Jarry's supposed habit of drinking a large glass of equal parts absinthe and vinegar before bed, with just a drop of ink to top it off. A third story Apollinaire circulated, which was eventually argued to be false by Madame Rachilde

³⁴ This article was so popular it would be republished in the *Mercure de France* on December 16, 1909, again in *Les Marges* in January of 1922, and in his book *Il y a...* in 1925 (Sutton 45).

in her biography, was that Jarry ate raw lamb.³⁵ All of these outrageous actions could just as easily be ascribed to the character Ubu.

Jarry's self-dubbing of Ubu along with stories of his actions seemingly done in the spirit of Ubu allows for the creation of a hybrid identity. This identity, nurtured and sustained through the reproduction of anecdotes, becomes one of the key strategies of the "U-Effect" leading to the legitimization of *Ubu Roi*. Apollinaire's publishing of the anecdotes of Jarry's daily Ubu-esque existence represents an enunciative statement—a "repeatable materiality," which "characterizes the modalities of existence proper to a group of effectively produced signs" (Foucault, *Archaeology* 109). The publication and written distribution of the Jarry anecdotes suggests that the subject position birthed in the controversy of the premiere of *Ubu Roi* was beginning to assert itself. Apollinaire's statement was the manifestation of the strategy: the public recognition (conscious or unconscious) of anecdotal biographical information about Jarry's life that must be transmitted as a valuable commodity.

During World War I, Ubu began to proliferate in other ways as well. Ambroise Vollard, an art dealer and avant-garde enthusiast wrote several Ubu plays based on stories he heard from wounded men in the hospital. *Ubu à l'Hôpital* (1918) and *Ubu à la Guerre* (1920) were written as commentary on the apparently backwards and bizarre hierarchy of military medical practice. The first play is about a soldier who begs to keep his wounded leg, which a highly ranking ("Five-stripes") doctor is about to cut off, while the doctor sends an inferior ranking ("Two-stripes") doctor, who was successfully treating the wound without amputation, "to the devil" (Vollard, *Recollections* 284-285). The censors rejected this play. The second play, *Ubu à la*

³⁵ Rachilde's side of the story is that one day at the Vallette's summer home in Corbeil, Jarry was boasting about his eating and drinking habits. Rachilde challenged him to eat a raw lamb chop, and he accepted. Two were brought out, and as Rachilde started eating hers, Jarry asked if the fat must be eaten. Rachilde responded that the fat would be the easiest part to get down, and with that, Jarry jumped up and ran off. He apparently did not return that day (Rachilde 43-45).

Guerre, is about the issues surrounding this practice, that “[o]bviously, any cure obtained by an inferior, after a man of superior rank has failed, can only be considered null and void”

(*Recollections* 285). On this script, “the Censorship bestowed its full approval” (*Recollections* 285). Vollard’s move to utilize the character for his scripts is a sign of Ubu’s staying power.³⁶

Vollard’s utilization of Ubu in the context of World War I is far removed from Ubu’s appearance in 1896 Paris. Twenty years and immeasurable cultural change separate the two, and yet, Ubu appears, apparently still aesthetically and economically valuable in French culture. Herrnstein-Smith’s argument is applicable here. She asserts that the value of any artwork is contingent and differs in any disparate context in which it may appear. Further, she suggests that any instance in which a work is seen to have the same value in two separate contexts is only the mere appearance of value stability. Vollard’s deployment of Ubu acts to gloss over any of the differences between World War I France and 1896 France. The façade of shared chaos and paradox that Vollard creates distorts the disparateness in context and value (non-contingency). The discourse and cultural practice in which Vollard’s plays were conceived allowed for the reading that Vollard’s World War I story called for the character of Ubu to appropriately describe the context and highlight the perceived flaws of the time.

The rise of Ubu, through Gémier’s revival, the spread of Jarry’s legend and his ties with Ubu, and the use of the character in others’ plays, suggests that the process of legitimization of *Ubu Roi* was well on its way by the 1910s. I read Gémier’s revival as the first step towards canonizing the play; he attempted to create a monument to Jarry by restaging the play just five months after the playwright’s death. The circulation and publication of anecdotes about Jarry, pointing up his extreme behavior and conflating him with Ubu, serves to generate steam for the

³⁶ In 1925, Vollard published *Les reincarnations du Père Ubu*, which included not only the two previously mentioned plays, but five others of varying lengths that show Ubu taking over various French and international organizations such as the French air force, the French post and telegraph office, and the League of Nations.

“U-Effect” strategy of exceptional self-performance. This strategy will not always remain just as it had begun; as scholars begin to take up the anecdotes, the notion of Jarry’s performance of self will alter significantly, and will also greatly effect the myth of the play. Vollard’s deployment of the character in his own plays demonstrates that World War I French culture was finding ways of glossing over its differences with the milieu of 1896 France and deeming Ubu a valuable character to symbolize some of the issues of the time. At the same time that Vollard uses Ubu, a group of artists from across Europe come together to create “anti-art” which will, at the time and in the future, be seen as calling forth *Ubu Roi* or continuing Jarry’s project he started with the play.

C. Dada, Surrealism, Artaud and Ubu

In this section, I will argue that, in using tactics similar to Jarry’s, dada performance, Breton and the Surrealists, and Antonin Artaud facilitated the establishment of several strategies of the “U-Effect”; by the mid-1920s, the “U-Effect” was prepared to be installed as a new way of knowing theatre through the efforts of scholars describing the productions of those artists and unknowingly turning the tactics into strategies. Contemporary scholars such as Bruce McConachie, Annabelle Melzer, and Elmer Peterson are quick to label *Ubu Roi* as pre-dada, or proto-dada. While the connections between Jarry’s work and dada are multiple, what theatre history has sometimes done is allow the connections between the two to serve as the final word on Jarry’s and dada’s status in relation to each other. Keeping in mind the three strategies of the “U-Effect” deployed by scholars in *Ubu*’s ascension to legitimacy (the conflation of Jarry with Ubu through his exceptional performance of self, the play’s capacity to scandalize, and its “revolutionary” dramaturgy), I will show how that connection has been made and maintained in

contemporary theatre history narratives. I will focus the discussion on how scholars have ignored the contingent contexts of 1896 Paris and 1910s Europe, suggesting that this ignorance reveals the result of the “U-Effect” on the contemporary scholarship.

Annabelle Melzer pulls Jarry forward into dada in her 1976 study, *Dada and Surrealist Performance*. After *Ubu*’s extraordinary premiere, Melzer reports, Jarry lived a “dada” life: “In the 12 years which remained to him, he lived his life to its dada best. Taking life as art, refusing as the dadas did, to acknowledge any separation between the two, he moved within the Paris literary world of the early 1900s, carrying his pistol, riding his bicycle, and more and more sliding into the role of the living-Ubu” (118). In an ahistorical, catachrestic move (one of the habitual techniques of those scholars wishing to see things in Jarry and *Ubu* that would not have been read onto them in the moment), Melzer attempts to make Jarry into a pre-dada anti-artist; she denies the contingency of Jarry’s moment and tries to make him fit a completely different context. She is not alone in this desire.

In his chapter “Theatres of the Avant-Garde, 1880-1940,” of *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*, Bruce McConachie also notes a strong *Ubu*-dada link. McConachie argues that part of the dadas’ inspiration came from the play and its “scandalous success” in 1896: “In a sense, *Ubu* was the first dadaist piece of theatre; it presaged many of the dadaist strategies to come” (361). McConachie’s is another example of how theatre historians have come to equate Jarry and *Ubu* with practices and movements succeeding him (the close association with dada will not be the last discussed in this study). There certainly are similarities between Jarry’s daily performance and the dramaturgy of *Ubu Roi* and the philosophy and strategies of the dadas. What is generally left veiled in categorizing them together, however, is the difference in their contexts.

The majority of the initial members and performers of the Cabaret Voltaire—Hugo Ball, Richard Huelsenbeck, Marcel Janco, Tristan Tzara, and Hans Arp—had been displaced from Paris and other places in Europe to Zurich by World War I. These young men and women came together in neutral Zurich, Switzerland out of disdain for the war and the rationality they believed led to it, and the desire to reflect on their position against it through art (Melzer 25-30; *Theatre Histories* 361). In 1920, André Gide offered words of encouragement to the artists. In his article “Dada,” for the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, he argues that dada cropped up when it did for a particular purpose: “each new need must create its new form” (15). Gide contends that, after all the changes brought about by the First World War, art should not remain the same: “What! While our fields, our villages, our cathedrals suffered so much, our style alone should remain untouched! It is essential that the spirit should not lag behind matter; it has a right to ruin. Dada will see to this” (14). Dada, and what would become early Surrealism, arose out of a different context, and a different need than that which drove Jarry to create *Ubu*.

On the other hand, one cannot deny the effect of Jarry’s dramaturgy for the production of *Ubu Roi* on the dadas’ era. World War I era discourse would allow the dadas to use and create works that seemed to traffic in the same philosophical foundations as *Ubu Roi*. In the dada movement itself, Jarry takes a prominent position, in both philosophy and material offered in their performances. There is evidence to suggest that even from their initial offerings, the tactics Jarry used informed the dadas’ approach to performance. In the earliest dada cabaret performances in February of 1916, *Ubu Roi* featured among the offerings (Menon, “The Excrement of Power” 34; Melzer 30). These performers had been aware of the legendary status of Jarry through the permeation of the anecdotes of his daily life. There is evidence that Jarry’s works were poorly circulated at the time, so the dadas would have had to know about him to find

them (Sutton 44). That the dadas would choose to present Jarry's *Ubu Roi* suggests that they knew about the supposed violent premiere and the controversy that played out afterwards. It follows that they understood the implications of Jarry's dramaturgy with the script and production, and might have been inspired to follow his lead. The tendency, then, for scholars to pull Jarry forward into dada and Surrealism stems from the notion that the work Jarry had done with the premiere of *Ubu Roi* was only fully realized by the artists at the Cabaret Voltaire and later dada/Surrealist venues.

Chaos is one aesthetic practice attributed to the dadas. The dadas created their chaos in performance through the manipulation of language, use of scatology, production design, and general construction of performances (Wellwarth and Benedikt xix-xxii; Menon 33). However, they were not the first to employ this practice. Jarry's fictional science of pataphysics asserts that everything has its equal in its opposite, and that with each act of viewing, an observer's response to an object will change, allowing for an infinite number of meanings retrievable from a single object or text. This science is based on a calculated chaos. Jarry had put pataphysics in writing with *The Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician*, which was not published until after his death, in 1911. Some scholars argue that pataphysics, as a philosophical strategy, had been present in Jarry's work from at least *Caesar Antichrist* in 1895. The same scholars also argue that pataphysics was present in the staging of *Ubu Roi* for the premiere in 1896 (Grossman, "Farcical Elements" 181; Innes 25; Menon 60). Pataphysics was not a widely circulated idea during the 1910s, so the dadas' use of chaos may seem like their invention, but Jarry had already used chaos to his aesthetic advantage. Jarry was also not the first to use chaos in his work (literary/art/daily existence).

Friedrich Nietzsche had established a sense of modernist chaos with his books *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887) in which he advocates for a moral relativism. Additionally, at the same time as Jarry and the dadas were working, Albert Einstein, Max Planck, and others were heavily engaged in old quantum theory (the work that would eventually yield to quantum mechanics in the late 1920s). The kind of chaos those scientists were observing and describing at the level of particle physics seems to hold some kind of connection between it and the chaos of Jarry's pataphysics, and the dadas who followed. When viewing these disparate artists/philosophers/scientists together, we see that they all share an interest in chaos and assume from that a connection between them. The discursive formations of European culture had experienced such great tectonic displacements as to birth chaos as an aesthetic, philosophical, and scientific foundational principle.

Reading the dada manifestoes written by Hugo Ball (1916), and Tristan Tzara (1918), one can observe the desire to arouse scandal and the overriding philosophy of a revolutionary dramaturgy, two of the strategies of the "U-Effect" contributing to *Ubu*'s legitimization. Tzara expounds on the practice of dada:

I say unto you: there is no beginning and we do not tremble, we are not sentimental. We are a furious wind, tearing the dirty linen of clouds and prayers, preparing the great spectacle of disaster, fire, decomposition. We will put an end to mourning and replace tears by sirens screeching from one continent to another. Pavilions of intense joy and widowers with the sadness of poison. Dada is the signboard of abstraction; advertising and business are also elements of poetry.

I destroy the drawers of the brain and of social organization: spread demoralization wherever I go and cast my hand from heaven to hell, my eyes

from hell to heaven, restore the fecund wheel of a universal circus to objective forces and the imagination of every individual. (qtd. in Cardullo 286, original emphasis)

With a revolutionary philosophy guiding the dada practice, and the desire to arouse scandal present in the words of Tzara, the dadas show how closely aligned they are to the tactics Jarry used at the premiere of *Ubu Roi*. Their use of Jarry's work in their performances acts to seal a firm bond between the dadas and Jarry.

It is clear that the tactics Jarry used influenced the dadas. However, theatre history has not been mindful of the contingency of the dadas. I argue that the tendency to omit contingency is a flaw in the practice of theatre historiography as it has been traditionally conducted. Gide shows that the young men and women involved in dada had their own problems they were grappling with in creating their form—they did not suffer from the same problems of Jarry. Calling Jarry “pre-dada,” or dubbing the dadas direct descendants and inheritors of Jarry's dramaturgy of revolt are moves that suggest contemporary scholars have been taken in by the “U-Effect.” I discuss how the “U-Effect” has taken hold in contemporary scholarship in more depth in Chapter 2. I have hinted at it here in order to show the difference between the actual dada practice (leaning on tactics similar to Jarry), and scholars describing their practice in relation to *Ubu Roi*. When scholars take the dadas to be Jarry's heirs, or for Jarry to have planted the seed that the dadas cultivated and harvested, they reinforce connections created by the “U-Effect” that may not exist otherwise. In 1917, while the dadas were creating performances that would be read in connection to Jarry's work in *Ubu*, Guillaume Apollinaire's *The Breasts of Tiresias* premiered in Paris, creating for critics in attendance a very clear connection to Jarry's play and allowing them to invoke the “U-Effect” to describe it.

Apollinaire's play, considered by most to be one of the first Surrealist plays, appears to take a cue from Jarry and *Ubu Roi*. Scholars point out its radical dramaturgy: "the play is as completely removed from the conventions of ordinary 'legitimate' stage reality as Jarry could have wished" (Wellwarth and Benedikt xvi-xvii). Melzer extensively details the scandalized audience's reaction at the premiere performance, reporting even, that at intermission, a man entered the auditorium and threatened to fire a revolver he brandished at the crowd (123-135). Melzer cites reviews of the production that compared the event to the premiere of *Ubu Roi*: "It's Jarry Montmartre-ized, modernized, and martyriized"; "It's an art which makes one think of Jarry, Jarry to the twentieth power"; "One thought himself at *Ubu Roi*" (qtd. in Melzer 130). These review excerpts reveal that in the moment, critics of the production began to transfer some of Apollinaire's production practices and the audience responses into strategies of the "U-Effect"; the only (or, easiest) language the critics could use to describe the production was to draw on Jarry's example. To the critics' eyes, the performance of Apollinaire's play appeared to traffic in Jarry's production techniques and created a connection between *Ubu Roi* and Apollinaire's play, a marker of the emerging Surrealism. André Breton would continue that trend, as he became a dominant presence in the formal establishment of the Surrealist movement.

In January of 1919, Breton became one of the first to write about Jarry who had not actually known him when he was alive. Breton's article, "Alfred Jarry," was mostly biographical, but he also did some critical analysis of Jarry's work; in the critical analysis, he suggested Mallarmé's influence on Jarry's early book *Les minutes de sable mémorial*. As I will discuss later, this will not be the last time Breton discusses Jarry's works outside of *Ubu*. Breton had this to add about Jarry's eccentric behavior:

He would speak in a measured voice, pronouncing each mute as well as counted letter, in a punishing language, the most fantastic stories, playing naturally the role of Ubu himself and bragging seriously about his imaginary exploits. . . . He held in his hand a strong bludgeoning stick and he was known to be ready to use his two revolvers. He had such a fearsome appearance that one morning, M. Malvy, a tenant in his block of flats, saw him in all his garishness crossing the landing of the mezzanine, took him for a criminal, and sought refuge in the recess of a door. (qtd. in Sutton 49)

As the leader of the Surrealists, Breton shows how celebrated the figure of Jarry was even in the movement's infancy. His hailing of the anecdotal biography of Jarry demonstrates the importance of Jarry's exceptional performed self to Surrealism's approach to the world. Breton's evaluation of Jarry's work shows that he has found value in it and suggests that there is a place for Jarry's work within a Surrealist perspective of the world.

Through the second decade of the twentieth century, the controversy over the *Ubu* premiere in 1896 continued to make its mark on French culture. Dadas were using tactics in the "Ubu tradition," of revolutionary dramaturgy and attempted scandal in performance. Apollinaire exhibited those same tactics with his *The Breasts of Tiresias*, and his reviewers recorded the connection they felt between it and *Ubu Roi*. Breton also made sure that Jarry's exceptional performance of self was held as important in the Surrealist approach to the world. These shared or similar tactics would become the connections most marshaled in theatre history scholarship to classify, categorize, and specify links for Jarry, dada, Surrealism, and movements that followed.

In 1926, Antonin Artaud and Roger Vitrac founded the Théâtre Alfred Jarry. As Artaud was gradually moving away from Surrealism, he latched onto certain practices and philosophies

shared with Jarry. In the final part of this section, I point out how scholars have made those connections and attempt to explain them within the dimensions of the rising “U-Effect.”

In his 1994 article “Comic Cruelty: Artaud and Jarry,” Leonard R. Koos elucidates some connections between Jarry and Artaud. Koos examines Artaud’s manifesto essays for *The Theatre and its Double*, and his practical work at the Théâtre Alfred Jarry. For Koos, dissonance of the real is at the base of all of Artaud’s work. Koos analyzes Artaud’s deployment of dissonance in humor and language, and demonstrates how Artaud’s dissonance is the product of Jarry’s work.

In summation of his work, Koos provides an apt description of how Jarry’s dramaturgy is seen to have set the table for Artaud’s work at the Théâtre:

The linguistic acrobatics of *Ubu Roi* . . . problematizes conventional signifying processes in language and characteristically expands the limits of absurdist farce as it enters the realm of Artaudian ‘HUMOR AS DESTRUCTION.’ The drama of language that Jarry’s play enacts distills the comic to an essential state that, in a truly cruel manner, initiates the dissociate movements that will illustrate the complete relativity of all value in the human plane. Embodying this fundamental, extra-human chaos in the theater was a primary goal of the ritualized Theater of Cruelty. . . . Through the “humoristic teachings” of Jarry, Artaud was able to appreciate the absurdist farce’s propensity for destroying reality and envision the possibilities for the savage god of comedy in the post-representational spectacle of theatrical cruelty. (46, original emphasis)

Koos appears to be drawing the reader’s attention to Artaud’s use of Jarry’s revolutionary dramaturgy. Jarry’s chaos employed in language appealed to Artaud, and he made use of it. In a

passage from a 1930 pamphlet for the Théâtre, Artaud mentions several influences, but none more important than Jarry: “Regarding the spirit that guides it, it participates in the humoristic teachings of *Ubu Roi*” (qtd. in Koos 43). Artaud’s admission here reaffirms just how influential he found Jarry’s dramaturgy in *Ubu Roi*.

Elsewhere, Artaud had said, “The Théâtre Alfred Jarry was created in order to use theater and not serve it” (qtd. in Koos 41). He created scandal, just like Jarry, with his second program. The Théâtre performed the third act of Paul Claudel’s *Partage de midi*, which was “somewhat traditional and decidedly non avant-garde,” as an absurdist farce. In doing so, Artaud provoked the audience, and this led to an uproar (42; 48 n. 13). Artaud used the Théâtre to cause a scandal and affect a change, much in the same regard as critics and scholars believed Jarry wanted to do with *Ubu*.

In Artaud’s founding of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry, he makes a monument out of Jarry. Foucault argues that “history must be detached from the image that satisfied it for so long, and through which it found its anthropological justification: that of an age-old collective consciousness that made use of material documents to refresh its memory” (*Archaeology* 7). In naming his theatre after Jarry, Artaud makes Jarry an image of history. The memory of Artaud’s theatre will forever be tied to its namesake. Artaud’s use of Jarry’s name assists to pull the “U-Effect” into existence as a dominant way of knowing theatre. The “U-Effect,” as it was constituted at that moment, had now fully taken over Jarry’s tactics and transformed them into strategies by publication of anecdotes of Jarry’s life, by critical attention (*The Breasts of Tiresias*), and by Artaud’s memorializing the man. The “U-Effect” would now allow Jarry to achieve monolithic status and further entrench his legend through the avenue of Artaud’s theatre. Titling the theatre after Jarry appears to be another enunciative statement, another declaration of

the discursive formations: Jarry and *Ubu* must exist in the collective consciousness of French theatre history. Making a monolith of Jarry is an example of the power accorded to Jarry in discourse at that time. I refer here again to Foucault, who articulates a strong conception of power in his *The History of Sexuality*. According to Foucault, power is “permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the overall effect that emerges from all these [point-to-point relational] mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movements” (*History* 93). The power now attained by Jarry through the contemporaneous articulation of the “U-Effect” will support a future rise to even greater historical prominence.

Artaud showed enough similarities in his work between himself and Jarry that descriptions of Artaud’s work could only be conceived in relation to Jarry. His connections with the strategies of the “U-Effect” and use of Jarry’s name were enough to allow the utterance of another enunciative statement, firmly establishing the “U-Effect” as a cultural presence and creator of theatrical discourse.

D. The Second *Ubu* Controversy and Lugné-Poe’s 1922 Revival

The material I cover in this section runs concurrently with the work of the Surrealists and Artaud that I discussed in the previous section. Charles Chassé’s 1921 *Sous le masque de Alfred Jarry: Les sources d’Ubu-Roi* (*Under the Mask of Alfred Jarry: The Sources of Ubu Roi*) is the first book-length work to focus on *Ubu Roi*. Chassé questions the legitimacy of Jarry’s authorship of *Ubu Roi*, claiming that Jarry’s classmates, Henri and Charles Morin, are the true authors. Chassé’s argument is based on testimony given by the Morin brothers, who had been involved, along with Jarry, in the initial generation of some of the tales of Professor Hèbert, the

bumbling, incompetent physics teacher who was the inspiration for the character Père Ubu.

While the play had not been overtly retrievable as a cultural object (the script was out of print and not well circulated) for a number of years, the three tactics of the emergent “U-Effect” were proving influential among select avant-garde artists. Chassé’s study is the first sustained re-emergence of the play itself outside of the context of the premiere production since Gémier’s revival in 1908. It is appropriate that, once again, a Foucauldian contradiction emerges involving *Ubu Roi*. Chassé’s attack creates the need for a strong defense of the play. Following the rupture that Chassé creates, Lugné-Poe stages a revival production, presumably in an attempt to mend the names of Jarry and *Ubu*.

Sutton has provided a full and clear summary of Chassé’s charges and the resultant fallout in the literary press in his chapter, “The Authorship Polemic,” so I will not repeat that work here. I will briefly summarize the affair and explain its immediate, and more delayed, impact on the process of discourse in theatre history. Before Chassé’s investigation appeared in print, Eugène Fasquelle published a new edition of *Ubu Roi* in October 1921. This new edition featured an introduction by Jean Saltas, a Greek physician and collaborator of Jarry’s on some of his later work, and the man whom many scholars consider Jarry’s greatest friend and advocate at the end of his life. In his introduction, Saltas puts in writing the idea that Jarry had died of excessive drinking, a narrative that retained a lot of circulatory power for many years, despite its inaccuracy.³⁷ Another aspect of this edition that is significant is that dada artist Marcel Duchamp bound it in a readymade piece. Duchamp’s readymade had the cover of the book, when viewing it fully open, spell the word “UBU.” The front and back covers were “U’s,” and the spine was a

³⁷ On February 15, 1933, Dr. Stéphane-Chauvet, the physician who performed the autopsy on Jarry’s body, published his findings in the *Mercure de France*. In the article, “*Les derniers jours d’Alfred Jarry*” (“The Last Days of Alfred Jarry”) Stéphane-Chauvet reports that in examining Jarry’s brain, he found symptoms of tubercular meningitis. This sickness confirmed the actual cause of Jarry’s death, not, as Saltas had written, excessive drinking. It will be many years before Saltas’s story is fully flushed from biographical accounts of Jarry.

“B” (Menon 48). Sutton argues that there was demand for a new edition at this time, and this is not difficult to accept, since the dadas and early Surrealists were keeping Jarry and his perceived tactics present in their work, all the while not having access to print editions of the play (Sutton 51). Chassé’s publication just a month later of *Under the Mask of Alfred Jarry: The Sources of Ubu Roi* further bolsters the idea that with contemporary theatrical practices seemingly mirroring Jarry’s, there was a need to bring *Ubu Roi* into larger cultural circulation.

In November 1921, Chassé released the book. Among the challenges he made to Jarry’s authorship were: Jarry’s only contribution to the vocabulary was changing Hèbert’s name to “Ubu”; the play had existed basically as published before Jarry even got to the lycée at Rennes; and *Ubu Roi* does not fit stylistically within the rest of Jarry’s œuvre. Chassé based these claims on the testimony of the Morin brothers. His strongest statement in the book, and what likely is the major cause of the ensuing fracas, is his assertion at his conclusion that since he has proven *Ubu Roi* is not an obscure text, and is no longer worthy of being celebrated because of its obscurity, the movement of Symbolism must feel deflated. Since Chassé attributes the major purpose of Symbolism to find literary beauty in obscurity, he felt that in providing the “ridiculously clear” explanations of the meaning of the play given to him by the Morin brothers, Symbolism would have no feet to stand on (71). Chassé had clarified what was for him the supreme mystifying example of Symbolism, pulling the rug from under an entire movement.

Reactions immediately flooded the literary press, and they lasted through 1922. Critics wrote in support of and against Chassé’s argument, with a few also landing in a position of ambivalence to whether his charges were correct or not, because they saw the play as important regardless of who wrote it. One of the most significant exchanges in this incarnation of debate over the play is that between Paul Fort and Chassé. Fort responded to Chassé in defense of Jarry

and of Symbolism, claiming that he had seen a manuscript of the play in Jarry's hand. Fort explained, however, that the manuscript no longer existed; Jarry had destroyed it in disgust. Chassé responded by spinning Fort's revelation to his side and claiming Jarry's disgust stemmed from his success with a work that was not his own, when he was utterly unsuccessful with all of his own work (*d'Ubu Roi au Douanier* 77-79). In an attempt to push back against and nullify Chassé's spin of the situation, Fort clarified in his memoirs that Jarry had destroyed the manuscript even before *Ubu Roi* had been published (Fort 51-53).³⁸ In all, over twenty articles were written on the authorship controversy over the six months between November 1921 and April 1922.

Lugné-Poe jumped at the opportunity to profit from the controversy Chassé's book had created, and staged his own revival of *Ubu Roi* in February 1922. Apparently, his hopes were not met, and the performance was not well received. Beaumont calls the reception "muted," while Sutton says outright, "the production was a failure" (*Jarry, Ubu Roi* 65; Sutton 66). The critics' reviews were mixed. Some appreciated the acting and "eccentricities" of the production, such as mimed scenes occurring simultaneously with the main action (Beaumont, *Jarry, Ubu Roi* 65-66). Others noted the indifference of the audience and themselves found the play disappointing, particularly knowing Jarry's influence on Apollinaire and other contemporary poets (Sutton 66-68; York 409-411). Many reviewers could not avoid contextualizing the production within the current authorship controversy or within a conversation of the legend of Jarry and the play that had already been established. Despite Lugné-Poe's attempts to make his production different from the 1896 premiere, he could not escape the narrative that had already been crafted by the budding "U-Effect."

³⁸ This particular thread of the authorship dilemma is likely unsolvable. However, because of the status the play had come to hold by 1966, Sutton sides with Fort. In his presentation of the dispute, Sutton shows his belief that Fort's story is more conceivable than Chassé's.

Whether it was his intention or not, I view Lugné-Poe's revival as a deployment of the strategies of the "U-Effect" to recover the play's position in discourse after the contradiction was introduced by Chassé. Scholars contend that Lugné-Poe wanted to do a revival in 1922 to capitalize on the retrievability of the play in the moment (Beaumont, *Jarry*, *Ubu Roi* 65; Sutton 66; York 408), and this is certainly a logical argument. Nevertheless, underneath even this desire on Lugné-Poe's part, I argue, is the desire to maintain the play's position in discourse, which was controlled by the process of the three strategies of the "U-Effect." By restaging *Ubu Roi* in early 1922, Lugné-Poe guarantees that Jarry will be a topic of discussion, and several reviewers talk about his legend (Sutton 67-68).³⁹ He also sees to it that the play will be discussed in terms of scandal, as the production is staged amid the authorship controversy. Finally, though the dramaturgy he uses in revival is not revolutionary, Lugné-Poe forces the reviewers to reference the 1896 production's dramaturgy in terms of its effect on that of its successors (Sutton 67-68). In this regard, Lugné-Poe's deployment of the "U-Effect" is slightly different from that articulated by Artaud, Breton, or the *dadas*; his production forces the hand of critics to evaluate revivals of the play in relation to the dramaturgy of the premiere production. Lugné-Poe's revival reveals the workings of the discursive formations, functioning through the deployment of the three strategies of the "U-Effect," to re-direct and smooth over discourse related to *Ubu Roi*, which had been carved into by Chassé's contradiction.

L'affaire d'Ubu did not even vanish following Lugné-Poe's 1922 revival of the play. Several writers took the opportunity well into the late 1920s to weigh in on Chassé's claim, demonstrating just how significant for Jarry scholarship and the legitimacy of *Ubu Roi* was the controversy Chassé created. Those providing their opinion on the matter include, among others,

³⁹ He also seemingly cements his own position in French theatre history as the director of the "original" production in 1896.

André Fontainas, author of *Mes souvenirs du Symbolisme* (1928); Madame Rachilde, in her 1928 biography of Jarry; and Paul Chauveau, in a review of Rachilde's biography for *Nouvelles Littéraires* (March 17, 1928).

E. First Biographies, Full-Length Analyses of Jarry and his Works, and the Establishment of *Ubu Roi*'s Legitimacy in France

In the thirty years after *Ubu*'s premiere, avant-garde artists began to employ tactics in their work that would come to be the strategies of the "U-Effect." Simultaneously, critics and academics (such as Chassé), consciously or not, made use of the discourse of the "U-Effect" in their considerations of avant-garde art and its foundations. The concurrent trends of using the "U-Effect" in both practice and critical analysis/scholarship led to a wider audience for *Ubu Roi*. Finally, over twenty years after Jarry's death, the first biographies were published between 1928 and 1934. In this section, I will show how the publishing of these biographies, both in content and in style, demonstrates the dominion *Ubu Roi* had achieved in France.

The first Jarry biographies reveal just how much cultural power Jarry and *Ubu Roi* had attained by the 1930s. In the sub-section, 'The Place of the Dead and the Place of the Reader,' in "Chapter 2: The Historiographical Operation," of *The Writing of History*, Michel de Certeau explains: "writing speaks of the past only in order to inter it" (101). He clarifies that this is to make a space for the living: "Writing makes the dead so that the living can exist elsewhere ... it receives the dead that a social change has produced, so that the space opened by this past can be marked and so that it will still be possible to connect what appears with what disappears" (101). In light of de Certeau's comments, it seems unsurprising that the first few biographies of Jarry appear in 1928, 1932, and 1934, a time when Surrealism was beginning to catch on in a larger

public and needed space to live and breathe on its own. Perhaps Jarry needed to be buried to make room for Surrealism and Artaud; but at the same time, Jarry and Ubu could be “marked,” as de Certeau claims, to maintain the ties between he and his perceived descendants.

The first non-hostile book-length study of Jarry appeared in 1928, when Madame Rachilde, symbolist poet and wife of the *Mercure de France* editor Alfred Vallette, published her, *Alfred Jarry, le surmâle de lettres* (*Alfred Jarry, the Superman of Letters*).⁴⁰ In this memoir-like biography, Rachilde includes chapters on her first encounter with Jarry, his family, the premiere and literary (and performance) fallout of *Ubu Roi*, Jarry vacationing, Jarry at his later home, and his death. Her chapters tend to ramble and at times become tangential to her purpose of attempting to clarify Jarry’s personal life. The material Rachilde chooses to include focuses on the most interesting and outlandish anecdotes, which play into the already established sensational narrative of Jarry’s life. On the premiere of *Ubu Roi*, she sets the example that many scholars follow, and which has made its way into anecdotal discussions of the event.

Rachilde’s account of the premiere of *Ubu Roi* compares it to the opening of Hugo’s *Hernani* in which the classicists battled the romantics. She asserts that upon Gémier’s first “*merdre*,” as Ubu, the opening-night audience erupted and the tumult lasted for fifteen minutes. Rachilde bemoans the audience’s initial reaction to Jarry’s play: “At the outset of *Ubu Roi*, a simple satire of all the good morals and especially of war, even the great war that was to come, the audience booed mercilessly” (70). Due to her authority as a close friend of Jarry and the fact that she was present, Rachilde’s account of the event is given full credence by scholars writing after her. In Chapter 2, I will show how her narrative has been questioned in more contemporary scholarship, and how she has been taken to task as the originator of one of the significant errors in the telling of the premiere of *Ubu Roi*. Because her other anecdotes of Jarry reinforce the

⁴⁰ Rachilde’s title contains an obvious reference to one of Jarry’s novels, *Le surmâle*.

perception that Jarry's everyday life was extraordinary and his behavior always ran counter to "normal" society, bolstering the "U-Effect" (which by 1928 had been ensconced in discourse through the establishment of its strategies), Rachilde's biography is an example that many authors follow.

Rachilde's work, which highlights Jarry as an iconoclast and his play as a terror to the establishment, becomes a keystone in the English-language construction of the legend of Jarry and *Ubu Roi*. She has hit upon two strategies of the discourse of the "U-Effect" in her biography. Her use of anecdotes of Jarry's extraordinary daily behavior and her description of the *Ubu* premiere as a scandalous event draws on the "U-Effect" strategies. She works from the subject-position of the "U-Effect," growing in strength at the time because of its use in theatrical discourse. Her addition to its domination of the space of theatre discourse is invaluable. Even though scholars have recognized that Rachilde's is not a biography to consult for a factual account of Jarry's life, they continue to rely on it as a means of understanding Jarry's behavior. This move, which I attribute to contemporary scholars' tacit use of the "U-Effect," acts to cover over any possible contradiction conceived by an individual scholar to clarify Jarry's life.

In 1932, Paul Chauveau publishes the second biography on Jarry, *Alfred Jarry; ou La naissance la vie et la mort du Père Ubu* (*Alfred Jarry; or the Birth, the Life, and Death of Père Ubu*). Chauveau's approach is arguably more scholarly than Rachilde's. He researched Jarry's family history and his childhood in Breton, and meticulously cites many of his sources, which include turn of the century periodicals and Rachilde and Chassé's works. His characterization of the *Ubu* premiere is similar to Rachilde's, however, and he only briefly touches on an analysis of the play itself. Even so, Chauveau's is the first full-length study to devote some discussion to the literary craft of Jarry. In particular, he discusses the symbolic significance of the *Ubus* as

individuals and as a grotesque couple.

Chauveau accomplishes two things. First, in providing a critical analysis of the play's characters, he assigns value to them as aspects of Jarry's work worthy of study. Herrnstein-Smith argues, "the academy produces generation after generation of subjects for whom the objects and texts thus labeled [as "art" and "literature"] do indeed perform the functions thus privileged, thereby ensuring the continuity of mutually defining canonical works, canonical functions, and canonical audiences" (44). Chauveau appears to make another step towards the canonization of *Ubu Roi*, while he, as a student of the play, publishes a reading that will be used and cited in future generations. Additionally, in providing an account of the premiere production as a scandal, Chauveau reveals that he has incorporated the strategies of the "U-Effect" into his assumptions of the play. Because of his book's position as the second full-length biography, and first to analyze *Ubu Roi*, Chauveau's impact on Jarry studies will be profound. As Sutton notes, Chauveau was "one of the most important students of Jarry and his work" (76). Chauveau wrote no less than nine other articles on Jarry and *Ubu Roi*, but the one study that makes it into subsequent bibliographies is his book.⁴¹

Chauveau's book would be reviewed in the Spring 1934 issue of the *Romanic Review*. In the review for this United States-based English-language journal, author G.L. van Roosbroeck commends Chauveau for his biographical detail, but laments a lack of literary study on Chauveau's part. Roosbroeck brings to an English-speaking audience—albeit a niche one—a description of Jarry that points up his social revolt: "Jarry did not only protest against the existing social order, but against any form of social order that man's mediocrity may be forced to invent for mutual self-protection. The artistic individuality was to him—law unto itself, and the

⁴¹ Sutton lists ten pieces by Chauveau, including the critical biography, in his bibliography. Obviously, issues of availability and access are factors that contribute to limiting the permeation of the articles, but this does highlight the selective nature of history making.

only law” (417). Roosbroeck’s comments reflect how Jarry’s supposed revolutionary dramaturgy had even come to be used to describe the way he lived his life, showing that the strategies of the “U-Effect” had infiltrated the discourse of English-language Jarry studies. In comingling Jarry’s daily praxis with his revolutionary dramaturgy, Roosbroeck entangles two of the strategies, potentially aiding in their mutual domination of space of the study of Jarry, and pushing *Ubu Roi* toward legitimacy.⁴²

Fernand Lot’s 1934 *Alfred Jarry, son Œuvre* (*Alfred Jarry, his Works*) is the first critical (as opposed to biographical) study of Jarry and his work. In his initial chapters, Lot rehashes the anecdotes and stories found in Rachilde and Chauveau’s biographies. Immediately after his biographical chapter, Lot argues: “In order to try to evoke the man and to explain his work, one must not be afraid of the extravagant anecdotes [about him]” (26). Lot spends the following chapter explaining numerous anecdotes about Jarry including those about he and his bike (he would race trains in Brittany); his apartment, the “Grand Chasublerie” (Jarry’s apartment ceiling height was only about five feet tall. He was himself just under five feet in height, but would often be spotted with dust in his hair from brushing up against the ceiling.); his drinking habits (avoiding water because he viewed it as poisonous), etc. In the fourth chapter, Lot reproduces Jarry’s ideas for the original production of *Ubu* that he had recommended to Lugné-Poe in a letter, and spends the rest of the chapter detailing the life of the play in the French literary world after Jarry’s death. He features Chassé’s claim that Jarry had not written the play, and, after questioning as many people who knew Jarry as he could, Lot determined that the play was a collaboration of all the students of the lycée at Rennes. Lot argues that Jarry used the already existing ideas, but nobody could label him a plagiarist, “If Jarry was fond of deceiving his

⁴² Roosbroeck’s review appears to be the second piece published in the United States with Jarry as the subject. The first publication appears in 1932 in the *Sewanee Review*. Herman Schnurer introduced Jarry to the U.S. by essentially repeating many anecdotes that had come to dominate Jarry’s biography in France.

contemporaries, he would not compromise over the point of literary honor” (45). Because Lot embraces almost without question the anecdotes about Jarry, even exaggerating them in some cases, he sets an example for those who follow to accept those anecdotes wholesale, and perhaps obscure some less interesting, but ultimately more likely details of Jarry’s life.

One notable inclusion Lot makes is to cite several examples of the proliferation of Ubu in French culture. These references include Vollard’s Ubu plays as well as the creation of the character “Ubureau” by Gustave Téry; the 1921 creation of a satiric newspaper, *Le Père Ubu*; an Ubu toy for children; and a dance hall in Ubu’s name. Lot’s marking of these cultural appearances seems to be the first example of anyone tracking Ubu’s ability to participate in the making of culture. This demonstrates how retrievable an image Ubu was by 1934, and how significantly the discursive formations of French culture had shifted since his premiere in 1896, seeing as how the character was initially understood as a monster and an affront to society. Lot’s list of cultural appearances may suggest that *Ubu Roi* had become fully legitimate in France by 1934.

Because Ubu’s legitimization was occurring through various media, I explore his cultural proliferation with the aid of media studies scholar Michael Schudson. Schudson offers us a way of thinking through Lot’s inclusion of the multiple cultural appearances of Ubu. In his “How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols,” Schudson asserts that culture, as a collection of symbols of a society, does work in the world: “culture ... comes embodied both in some kind of material form and some kind of social practice. Symbols appear to us embodied, institutionalized” (154). In other words, for Schudson, culture happens in the form *and* content of its objects. For a symbol to affect culture-making, it must have some sort of cultural power. Schudson introduces “five dimensions of the potency of a cultural object,” which

is his system of measuring how efficacious a cultural symbol is (160). If a cultural symbol has some efficacy, some power to further the process of making culture, this would suggest that it has gained a status of legitimacy in the sense of being sanctioned, or proper for use in culture (“Legitimate” *OED*). For Ubu to have gained cultural legitimacy by this time confirms the significance of the three strategies of the “U-Effect” I have posited. If French culture had not been constantly saturated by discourse generated through the deployment of the strategies, Jarry’s performance of self, the production’s “revolutionary” dramaturgy, and the scandal of the production, *Ubu Roi* and Ubu would not have been positioned to hold any power to affect French culture writ large.

Schudson’s five dimensions of cultural potency are retrievability, rhetorical force, resonance, institutional retention, and resolution. By 1934, *Ubu Roi* could be identified with each of these factors. Retrievability gauges the “availability” of a cultural object. How easily can a member of the culture identify or remember that object—what volume of examples is available for a person to call upon in reference to that object? In relation to the play, it is easy to observe how available to a French citizen’s memory the image is, and how primarily situated that image is in the memory. From the legends circulated about Jarry starting with Apollinaire, to the several controversies caused by the play (its premiere, and its authorship), to the many artistic successors who claimed Jarry and the play’s dramaturgy influential, striking references to and images of the play had spread far and wide. Rhetorical force is difficult to locate specifically, but generally describes how great an impact the cultural object exerts on the participant, viewer, or receiver. For *Ubu Roi* and Ubu, it is a slippery, intangible element to track, but, it can be demonstrated in the play’s and character’s ability to call forth images of chaos, revolution,

childlike play, primitivism, and farcical humor, after the space of dissension of the premiere performance installed those traits into discourse.

“Relevance or resonance,” states Schudson, “is not a private relation between cultural object and individual, not even a social relation between cultural object and audience, but a public and cultural relation among object, tradition, and audience” (170). The resonance of *Ubu Roi* happens in the desirability of it as an experimental product. As Bronner argues, avant-garde artists and their products were desirable to a greater audience: “they all considered their actual admirers to be their implacable enemies. Their individualism, experimentalism, and cosmopolitanism appealed to the liberal elements of the bourgeoisie” (4). The bourgeoisie was fascinated by the experimentalism that undergirds the assumption that Jarry’s dramaturgy was revolutionary. The production and distribution of toys representing Ubu speaks to this desirability.

Institutional retention involves how well the cultural symbol makes itself indispensable as institutionalized, regulated cultural knowledge. One telling symptom of a cultural symbol’s institutional retention is the presence of socially sanctioned consequences for lack of familiarity of it. In 1934, Christian S  n  chal published *Les grands courants de la litt  rature Fran  aise contemporaine* (*The Main Currents in Contemporary French Literature*), in which he writes that he sees Jarry as having an influence on twentieth-century poetry through the way he lived his life. He and poet Jean-Paul Toulet serve as points which “mark the two extremes of the line on which evolved the fantastical poets, a line which goes from the most high quality preciousness to the scandalous voluntary crudeness” (S  n  chal 326). S  n  chal’s guide is written and organized as a tool for an academic study of the subject, as he wants to track how each work has taken part in the culmination of the work of a generation: “The important thing is to mark the originality of

each one, or what makes it irreplaceable in the collective effort of a generation” (4). In taking on this task, Sénéchal attempts to institutionalize knowledge of Jarry and his work, and the institutionalized knowledge of Jarry holds at its base the discourse generated by the “U-Effect,” of Jarry’s “scandalous voluntary crudeness.”

Resolution regards the cultural symbol’s power to prompt its receivers to action. If the premiere production is any indication, *Ubu Roi* has immense power of resolution. After the premiere, critics argued ferociously over its place in theatre and literature. In the 1920s, scholars began to conceive of Ubu as a new literary type (Moriénval, Thibaudet). Ubu clearly incited cultural action in his first thirty-plus years of existence. If efficacy of a cultural symbol is a measure of its legitimacy, as I have argued here, the cultural legend and legitimacy of Ubu is solidified in France by the mid-1930s.

Without Lot’s inclusion of the references to Ubu in French culture in 1934, it may not be possible to ascertain that *Ubu Roi* had been legitimate in France by that time. By discussing those appearances, though, Lot reveals that the ever-changing strategies of the “U-Effect” had become powerful enough through multiple articulations to encourage French culture to view the play and its principal character as efficacious symbols, thereby granting *Ubu Roi* legitimacy.

F. *College of Pataphysics* and Other French Scholarship—late 1940s-1950s, and Jean Vilar’s *Ubu Roi*

In this section, I discuss French scholarship on Jarry and *Ubu Roi* in the late 1940s-1950s, and briefly outline the reception of Jean Vilar’s 1958 production of *Ubu*. The *College of Pataphysics* was founded in 1948. Prior to the *College*’s founding, no scholarship on Jarry of any significance to the process of legitimization of *Ubu Roi* had paid attention to pataphysics. While

the bulk of the work of the *College* focused (and still focuses) on bringing to light Jarry's science of imaginary solutions, part of the work they were able to and continue to accomplish is to make documents of his life available to a larger public and to submit a myriad of philosophical and artistic ventures to scrutiny under Jarry's alternative philosophy.

Dozens of Jarry scholars cite the work of the *College* as definitive on many issues related to Jarry's life and works. Writing in 1966, Sutton claims that "unquestionably, the *Cahiers du Collège de 'Pataphysique* have consistently presented more profound, meaningful contributions to the study of Jarry than any other single publication" (143). The verity of this statement may now be outdated, but Sutton speaks to the trust that Jarry scholars have put in the work of the *College* since its inception.⁴³ The *College* began disseminating its work through the *Cahiers*, *Dossiers*, and *Subsidia Pataphysica* in 1950.

In the first several issues of the *Cahiers* in 1950 and 1951, the *College* established its place at the head of Jarry studies. In the first issue, Jean-Hugues Sainmont, one of the *College* founders, wrote an article, "Jarry et la 'Pataphysique," in which he teased out the relationship between Jarry and pataphysics.

As it is unlimited, without question, 'Pataphysics could not be restrained by Jarry; but that does not permit us to think that it could do without Jarry. And it is true that an immeasurable multiplicity of avenues open themselves to a myriad of possible pataphysicians. It would be nevertheless an insupportable challenge to claim to grasp the *quid proprium* ["what is proper to"] 'Pataphysics without turning to Jarry. Reciprocally, it would be very imprudent, and one would be

⁴³ In Chapter 2, I will discuss studies such as Noël Arnaud's 1974 *Alfred Jarry: d'Ubu Roi au Docteur Faustroll*, Patrick Besnier's 1990, 2005, and 2007 works on Jarry, and Alastair Brotchie's 2011 *Alfred Jarry: A Pataphysical Life*. These studies seem to push the understanding of Jarry's life and works beyond that laid out by the *Cahiers*, *Dossiers*, and the later *Subsidia*, though all three of these authors consistently acknowledge their indebtedness to those publications.

cruelly shredded to bits by the experiment, if one attempts the exploration of Jarry without the assistance of the light of pataphysics. (27)

This moment is the first in which a Jarry scholar argues that pataphysics *must* be one of the lenses, if not the only lens through which one views Jarry's works. Sainmont's writing serves as another enunciative statement with which he proscribes the domain of the "U-Effect" in discourse. Pataphysics, the revolutionary "science" with no limits, is tethered to Jarry. Since, for many, the only (or main) identification of Jarry is with *Ubu* and *Ubu Roi*, the enunciation of pataphysics as the strategy of understanding Jarry's work means that pataphysics falls under the "U-Effect" strategy of asserting his revolutionary dramaturgy. Sainmont's demand will have great ramifications on contemporary scholarship on Jarry and *Ubu*, as scholars will debate how seriously pataphysics should be taken. While the *College* was still in its infancy, scholars outside it were conducting their own research.

André Lebois's 1950 *Alfred Jarry L'irremplaçable* (*Alfred Jarry the Irreplaceable*) is the first book-length piece of Jarry scholarship that appears after Lot's in 1934. Lebois's study is mostly critical in nature; he devotes every chapter, except for those on Jarry's childhood and death, to a critical analysis of Jarry's works from a literary perspective. His chapter on *Ubu* even forsakes a consideration of the premiere. He does make a few significant contributions to the Jarry and *Ubu* discourse. A notable biographical element on which Lebois appears to be inaccurate is the manner of his discharge from the army. Lebois writes that Jarry took picric acid and was discharged for "young idiocy" (6-7). Lebois is not the only scholar to misrepresent Jarry's departure, but this appears to be the beginning of one of the inaccurate narratives. He does not fall in line with others in believing that his life after 1896 was one big merging with *Ubu*, rather he claims that Jarry's personality consists of his other creations as well.

Lebois celebrates Jarry's use of language and style in his simply titled chapter, "Language and Style." Lebois argues, "[o]ne cannot come close to either the favorite themes or the turn of spirit of Jarry; one cannot deny his mastery of language and style" (189). He claims Jarry has several styles, and *Ubu*'s is not his, but "the clear and cruel shorthand of the elocution of his professors at the Lycée de Rennes: Hèbert, Périer, Bourdon and others" (189). Lebois says that pataphysics is the style of *Faustroll*. He also claims Jarry may surpass any other author in terms of variety of language, with a new surprise every instant. Lebois argues that *L'amour absolu* (*Absolute Love*), not *Ubu Roi*, is Jarry's masterpiece. While other scholars before him have argued for studying Jarry's other works, Lebois is one of the first, especially in a full-length study, to declare another of his works, a novel, as superior to his most famous.

Lebois's is one of the lesser-cited book-length studies in English-language scholarship. His study does not necessarily fit into the discourse as it had been configured before him. Though he does seem to share the viewpoint of the chaotic, revolutionary style present in Jarry's works (through his comments on variety and constant surprises of language), he spends a greater amount of time looking at Jarry's language and style in all of his works than digging into his life. He also does not equate Jarry with *Ubu* and prizes another work over *Ubu Roi*. The challenges Lebois puts to the commonly accepted narrative of Jarry and *Ubu Roi* make him unpopular among those who desire to perpetuate the more fantastical and fascinating story about Jarry and his work.

Perhaps, in a moment of opportunity, with the purview of the *College of Pataphysics* still not fully established, Lebois sought to disrupt discourse on Jarry. His readings of Jarry's life and works, counter to the dominant discourse determined by the "U-Effect," could be a tactic to reconfigure the reception of Jarry and *Ubu Roi* in culture. I refer back to de Certeau, who states

that a tactic “boldly juxtaposes diverse elements in order suddenly to produce a flash shedding a different light on the language of a place and to strike the hearer” (*Practice* 37-38). Lebois created a flash by seizing the opportune moment and publishing alternative ideas about *Ubu Roi*. The strategies of the “U-Effect” were able to brush aside this tactical deployment in the vulnerable moment of 1950. They would reassert their dominance over the space of Jarry studies once the *College* established their program through several issues of the *Cahiers*, through several works of Breton’s published in 1950 and 1951, and through the next biography I discuss, also published in 1951.

Following in the path of biographer Fernand Lot, who argued that scholars of Jarry and his works must accept his anecdotal biography as part of the terrain, is Jacques-Henry Levesque. In fact, in his 1951 volume, *Alfred Jarry*, for the series *Poètes d’aujourd’hui* (Poets of Today), Levesque essentially repeats a section from Lot’s study in which he addresses the many famous anecdotes handed down about Jarry. Levesque comments that those who wanted to use Jarry as their standard-bearer are the ones who created the anecdotes. He offers this explanation of Jarry’s identification with Ubu:

Jarry takes the tone of Ubu in order to express his unique ideas and his personal reactions in his existence, and he reaches it, while remaining within the general outline of his enormous fellow. Through an extremely subtle game, efficient and spontaneous—a miracle there—he properly constitutes this indefinable humor, which not only impregnates his words, but reacts with his actions as well. Thus, Jarry makes his life his most magnificent poem. (59)

Levesque argues that Jarry’s connection to Ubu was a game through which he created his “indefinable humor.” He remarks that Jarry’s assumption of Ubu’s persona, or vice versa, was a

controlled effort on Jarry's part. Chaos marked his tactics in playing his game, but Levesque believes it was a game, nonetheless. Perhaps in a child-like way Jarry toyed with his life, and out of that toying, came the magnificent poetry of his life. With his assertion of the Jarry-Ubu connection, Levesque contributes to the strategical power of the "U-Effect." He takes Jarry's daily praxis and makes it a clear entanglement with Ubu. Levesque provides the "U-Effect" strategy of Jarry's extraordinary performance of self an increase of spatial domination through widening the field of possibilities for its application. With a wider expanse of possible inclusions in the strategy, it declares more power in what is written regarding *Ubu Roi*. While Levesque increased the power of a single strategy of the "U-Effect," André Breton worked (as he had for 30-plus years) within multiple of the "U-Effect" strategies to bring *Ubu Roi* and Jarry into an even more powerful place.

In 1950, Andre Breton published his *Anthology of Black Humor*, though he had been working on it for many years prior to that date.⁴⁴ In his prefatory notes, he states his greatest fear is that he had not been "exacting enough" in his choices—he includes 45 artists, 20 of whom worked mainly in the twentieth century (xix). He also speaks of the battle black humor is winning against sentimentality: "Black humor is ... the mortal enemy of sentimentality, which seems to lie perpetually in wait ... which too often passes itself off as poetry, vainly persists in inflicting its outmoded artifices on the mind, and no doubt has little time left in which to lift toward the sun, from amid the poppy seeds, its crowned crane's head" (xix). Breton features Jarry among artists from Europe and the US ranging in period from the late seventeenth century (Jonathan Swift) to his contemporaries (Leonora Carrington and Jean-Pierre Duprey).

⁴⁴ Translator Mark Polizzotti notes in his introduction that the book "suffered years of publisher's delays [and] ran afoul of the censorship board" (*Black Humor* v). Breton's preface is dated 1939, which suggests he had completed the manuscript by that time.

In his introduction to *Jarry*, Breton explains what for him are the keys to Jarry and Ubu's existence. Jarry, Breton believes, can be characterized by his accord with his revolvers. Breton alludes to the stories that have been written which suggest he always had at least one revolver on him, and that he used it for any number of purposes, both practical and to affect shock and awe. "The pistol," Breton argues, "serves ... as the paradoxical hyphen between the outer and inner worlds" (212). Breton's statement seems very appropriate indeed for a man who has often been evaluated with an eye to his relationship with the margins. Breton activates the strategy of the "U-Effect" involving Jarry's daily praxis as important in making meaning out of his work, notably *Ubu Roi*.

As for Ubu, Breton peers into him through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis and dubs him the "Id." Ubu is the source of a humor that "allows one to brush reality aside when it gets too distressing"; Ubu is the "utterly amoral" element of psychology which gives one's destructive tendencies "free rein" (213). Here, Breton invokes a primitivism involving the reader's connection with Ubu. By calling Ubu the "Id," Breton possibilizes the reading that Ubu represents the primitive unconscious of all of humanity. Breton's description of Ubu serves as another enunciative statement, an appearance in discourse that has the properties necessary to positively affect a dominant subject position. Breton's statement is able to be carried by the strategies of the "U-Effect" to further the purview of the dominant discourse of *Ubu Roi*. Many after Breton will read the same meaning into Ubu, observe the same connection with the primitive "Id," and many scholars point to Breton's work as fundamental to understanding the play and baffling character (Menon, Stillman, Sutton, etc). Among excerpts from Jarry's other works, Breton included "The Unbraining Song" from *Ubu Cocu* and a scene from *Ubu Enchaîné*. The continued inclusion of Jarry and his *Ubu* plays is a tacit submission to the power of the "U-

Effect.” While Breton directly addresses one strategy of the “U-Effect,” his inclusion of the *Ubu* plays references the tradition of *Ubu Roi*’s significant presence and status as a legitimate object of French culture.

In 1951, André Breton wrote an article called “Alfred Jarry as Precursor and Initiator,” which would be published in his collection of essays *Free Rein*. In the article, Breton bemoans the oversimplifying of the import of Jarry to just the *Ubu* plays, namely *Ubu Roi*. He wants to bust through the wall of the “U-Effect” and open up Jarry’s greater œuvre. Breton articulates a strategy for doing so: “There can be no better contribution to this task than to divest him of that theatrical role he played in daily life” (248). In examining others of Jarry’s works, Breton points to connections between he and Oscar Pfister, Max Ernst, and Salvador Dali. It is clear that by 1951, the spectacular story of Jarry’s life, which was tied to the character of his most famous work, had come to represent, for many, the reason why Jarry was still remembered at that time. Breton’s writings are the last that I deal with in this section. I will next discuss Jean Vilar’s 1958 production of *Ubu* at the Théâtre National Populaire (People’s National Theatre) as the culmination of the French-language portion of this chapter.⁴⁵

In March 1958, Jean Vilar directed the first known adaptation of *Ubu Roi*, which consisted of the collection of multiple *Ubu* plays into a single piece. Titled *Ubu*, Vilar’s production combined into 34 scenes *Ubu Roi*, *Ubu Enchaîné*, and *Ubu Cocu*. An enormous success with audiences and critics (though not so popular with the members of the *College of Pataphysics* [Beaumont, *Jarry*, *Ubu Roi* 66]), the production was conceived, according to Vilar, to satisfy a desire of his audience for a biting satire (Sutton 156). While some critics thought Vilar’s combination of the plays was detrimental to the production, most praised the acting, especially that of Georges Wilson, who played Ubu in an “inflated life-jacket beneath a large,

⁴⁵ Appropriately enough, none other than Firmin Gémier had founded the People’s National Theatre in 1920.

ballooning, smock-like garment decorated with an enormous *gidouille* or spiral” (Beaumont, *Jarry*, *Ubu Roi* 67). The most significant aspects of the reception of this production to note are the acceptance of the playing of Ubu and the production’s appeal to a mass audience. As Beaumont states, “Vilar, for the first time since 1896, fully succeeded in conveying the presence and the power of the figure of Ubu ... this production was, for the first time ever, a huge popular success, even if to some extent authenticity was here sacrificed, rightly or wrongly, to theatrical effectiveness” (*Jarry*, *Ubu Roi* 68).

With the reception of Vilar’s production, there is no doubt that *Ubu Roi* had been accepted as a legitimate piece of theatre in France. Through the proliferation of the strategies of the “U-Effect,” theatrical and cultural discourse had shifted to allow, and even desire, the play. Philippe Soupault put it best in his review for the *Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault*. He argues that *Ubu Roi* is, “since the mystery plays of the Middle Ages, the only comedy in French literature. This is in the sense of the strength of the word having the power to provoke a scandal and to provoke the laughter of the avenger” (qtd. in Sutton 160). *Ubu Roi* had been able to incite a violent reaction and birth a controversy in 1896, and in 1958, incite an audience to laughter. Vilar’s production demonstrates here the culmination of the work of the strategies of the “U-Effect” in France over 60-plus years. *Ubu Roi* had reached the top of the heap of French theatrical literature, making it a standard for audiences to know.

In the decade of the 1950s, more and more of Jarry’s work, literary and otherwise, was being put on display, studied, and evaluated. The *College of Pataphysics* had a lot to do with the opening up of his greater œuvre. Many scholars outside the *College* continued to contribute to the expanding field of Jarry studies, which was no longer as heavily weighted toward *Ubu Roi*, but included study of Jarry’s poetry and his novels. Events like the 1953 “Expojarrysition,” in

which no less than 533 items related to Jarry's life and works were displayed at the Librarie Jean Loize from May 7 to June 20, helped to expose Jarry to a larger public (Sutton 146-147). Further new and re-editions of his works in the early and middle part of the decade continued to keep Jarry on bookshelves and in review journals. Despite all this attention and exposure to other areas of Jarry's work, other facets of Jarry's life, as I will discuss in Chapter 2, the "U-Effect" maintains its position in French and English scholarship in the decades that follow as necessary to our understanding of *Ubu Roi* and the historical avant-garde as we know it.

G. Ubu Goes English: Initial Translations of *Ubu* and English-Language

Scholarship on Jarry and *Ubu*

Of the unknown number of English-speaking audience members to attend the 1896 production of *Ubu Roi*, two, Arthur Symons and William Butler Yeats, would eventually write significant accounts of the performance. In 1907, Arthur Symons published his book, *Studies in Seven Arts*. For his study, he chose contemporary representatives of seven distinct arts through which to articulate how he views them according to his pursuit of a "universal science of beauty" (vi). The premiere of *Ubu Roi* is one of the examples he chose to represent the art of the stage. In his essay, "A Symbolist Farce," Symons describes the scenery, the behavior of the actors, and his interpretation of Jarry's use of satire.⁴⁶ Symons's essay would be ignored by French and English scholarship for fifty years, before Roger Shattuck cites it in his discussion of Jarry in *The Banquet Years*. Once Shattuck breaks the dam, using his description of the scenery as his source for the look of the production, Symons's essay will become well known. While waiting for

⁴⁶ Symons's essay originally appeared in his 1897 book, *Studies in Two Literatures*. This certainly constitutes the first treatment of Jarry's play in the English language. I use *Studies in Seven Arts* in my study proper because that is the text scholars cite when calling on Symons's essay, "A Symbolist Farce."

release from its state of purgatory, Symons's essay shared it with another, now even more famous description of the production, that of W. B. Yeats.

In *The Trembling of the Veil*, W. B. Yeats offers an account of the premiere of *Ubu Roi*, which he had attended with a friend while in Paris. In his account, which is a lone paragraph, he only briefly touches on what it looks like, but notes that his friend, Rhymer, instructs him that a performance of this kind often leads to fistfights. He claims that he cheered for the "most spirited party," which was in support of the play (222). Yet, afterwards, he reveals that he lamented what a play like that meant for art: "After Stephane Mallarmé, after Paul Verlaine, after Gustave Moreau, after Puvis de Chavannes, after our own verse, after all our subtle colour and nervous rhythm, after the faint mixed tints of Conder, what more is possible? After us the Savage God" (222). The full impact of Yeats's remarks in this account will not be felt for decades; his account goes quietly unnoticed until Shattuck includes it in his 1958 study. Shattuck sets an example that many follow, to include Yeats's entire account of the passage. After Yeats's publication of this account, it would be 18 years until the next significant English-language Jarry-related publication occurs. Through my exploration of the following pieces, I reveal how the "U-Effect" had taken hold in the United Kingdom and the United States by the end of the 1950s, rescuing Symons's and Yeats's accounts of the production as necessary for understanding the play.

In 1940, the play made its first appearance in an English anthology. With the act of anthologizing, the play had clearly attained a great amount of cultural currency outside of France. Frank Kermode discusses the troubles of periodization and canon formation in the chapter "Canon and Period" in his book *History and Value* (1988). One of the main planks of his argument is that by periodizing, and making something old, we simultaneously make that thing modern: "the idea of canon is used in the service of an order which can be discerned in history

but actually transcends it, and makes everything timeless and modern” (116). In the process of periodizing a text, the temporality and contingent conditions of the text are elided, making room for (mis)readings and (mis)interpretations such as Kermode suggests here: “Since all the books can now be thought of as one large book, new echoes and repetitions are discovered in remote parts of the book” (116). In this case, the play is not the thing at all; rather it is the canon that contains the play that is creating the difficulty of parsing out the value and reception of *Ubu Roi* from the rest of the Modernist play canon.

In 1940, *New Directions* published an anthology titled *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 1940*. Included in this anthology is a section “Values in Surrealism.” Within that section, the editors include a host of writers they consider Surrealist or Pre-Surrealist, as well as articles explaining Surrealism and arguing its value. Jarry appears as a Pre-Surrealist, with three excerpts: one from his “Pataphysics and Catachemistry,” and two from *Ubu Roi*. Jarry’s inclusion in this English-language anthology is not an anomaly; most of those artists with works appearing in the “Values in Surrealism” section are in translation from a different language. Kermode’s words are useful for considering the editors’ inclusion of *Ubu* in this anthology.

By including Jarry, and periodizing him by labeling him “Pre-Surrealist,” the editors make him an artist of the past whose work it is important to know. In asserting his import to a contemporary knowledge of art and literature, the editors simultaneously make his work modern, transcending date and placing him outside the boundaries of contingency. The play’s inclusion in a canon reinforces the growing effects of discourse that had been conceived in the initial space of dissension of the premiere production.

The “U-Effect” is in full force here. The influence of the strategy regarding Jarry’s extraordinary daily praxis—having mutated its discursive foundation and grown its sphere of

influence through the publication of an ever-increasing number of anecdotes of Jarry's life and his influence on those that followed him—has granted that Jarry be included, due to contemporary conceptions of the Surrealist approach to life. Section editor Nicolas Calas, in an interview called "The Meaning of Surrealism," which precedes the anthologized works, quotes Breton when asked about how Surrealists wish to live. "I can hope for nothing better than that Surrealism will pass for having tried to throw a conducting thread between the too dissociated worlds of waking and sleeping, objective and subjective reality, reason and madness, the calm of knowledge and love, life for life's sake and the Revolution, etc'" (388). Breton's words reflect on the way Jarry had been considered in his outrageous existence. In his chaotic, paradoxical way, Jarry was said to have blurred the lines in his daily life between many of the binaries Breton listed, and as such, the construction of Jarry's life fits the bill precisely for considering him as a "pre-Surrealist." Additionally, Calas quotes Breton's reference to living life for the sake of revolution. The weight of the notion of Jarry as revolutionary, not only through his life, but also through the by-then dominant discourse of the dramaturgy of *Ubu Roi*, contributes more validity to his inclusion. In Calas's choice of Breton's words, he also reveals an orientation to the world which could easily lead to controversy and scandal in application. Since Breton was clearly interested in Jarry and the *Ubu* plays (as I demonstrated with my discussion of his works in Section F), I see Calas as carrying on Breton's project in using his words. Therefore, I argue that Calas also reads onto *Ubu Roi* the ability to cause scandal. Thus, it appears as though Calas and the other editors were influenced by the "U-Effect" in their decision to include *Ubu Roi*.

After the *New Directions* anthology of 1940, the next significant appearance of Jarry's play is in the first English-language translation.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ In 1947, Gertrude R. Jasper published *Adventure in the Theatre: Lugné-Poe and the Théâtre de l'Œuvre to 1899*, in which she provides an account of the 1896 production of *Ubu Roi*. Her account is developed mainly from Lugné-

In 1951, Barbara Wright published the first complete English-language translation of *Ubu Roi*. In an apparent homage to Jarry's youthful drawings and woodcuts of Ubu, her translation includes over 200 illustrations by artist Franciszka Themerson. In her introduction to the play, Wright gives a brief biography of Jarry, including some of the sensational anecdotes of his life. Wright explains Jarry's relationship to the world: "[h]e neither wished nor was able to adapt himself to the world as it was. He ignored the conventions of life, and even the conditions of life. He refused to compromise with something for which he felt nothing but scorn, and he accepted with indifference the logical consequence of his attitude—that life should destroy him, and much sooner than most" (vi). While her perspective appears to be nuanced beyond accepting at face value those exceptional stories, the anecdotal legend of Jarry does not seem wasted on Wright. Also included in her introduction is a brief description of the *Ubu* premiere, highlighting the uproar it caused, and Jarry's letter to Lugné-Poe in which he laid out his suggestions for the "revolutionary" production design. The inclusion of these elements places Wright squarely in line with the strategies I am tracking, showing how the "U-Effect" had influenced a translator of Jarry's work.

Wright concludes her introduction with the claim that *Ubu Roi* had not dated in its 55 years in the world: "Perhaps *Ubu* is eternal; it has not dated in the half-century it has been in existence. One imagines it is even more topical today than in 1896. It is timeless, placeless, it shamelessly displays what civilisation tries hard to hide, and that is more than lavatory brushes and schoolboy swearwords, it is an aspect of truth" (xi). This move serves to gloss over the contingency of her context and the context in which the play was created and initially performed. To assign the play apparently infinite value as a "timeless, placeless" piece, distorts its actual aesthetic and economic value to a 1951 viewer/reader. The discursive formations in the post-war

Poe's and Madame Rachilde's telling. Jasper's book is rarely cited in any scholarship on Jarry or the play.

world may have covered over significant differences between the two separate contexts, with the appropriation of the character of Ubu as a stand-in for any of the tyrants of the early to mid-twentieth century.

The translation itself is printed in a font made to look hand-written. Themerson's illustrations fill the page in the background of the text. Wright appears to attempt to bolster and strengthen the perception that the play went far beyond the expectations of the audience by placing that same element of surprise and difference in the translation. The childlike quality of the drawings seems an attempt to mimic Jarry's style. It seems to me, however, that if the publisher wanted truly to copy Jarry's style, s/he would have left out illustrations altogether and left the creation of images up to the imagination of the reader, just as his dramaturgy asked of the spectator. Regardless of how true to Jarry's script the translation is, Wright's is one of the most referenced in Jarry scholarship, and one of the most used in anthologized editions of the play, placing it in a prime position in the transmission of value and legitimacy of *Ubu Roi* from French to English.

In 1953, the second English-language translation of *Ubu Roi* appears, this time as *King Turd*, by Beverley Keith and G. Legman. Keith and Legman translated all three plays to appear together in a single bound volume.⁴⁸ Legman repeats some of the previously troubling anecdotal biographical details of Jarry. In his translators' notes, he claims that Jarry must have been mentally disturbed to engage in such outrageous behavior. He also dubs Rachilde Jarry's "sometime mistress," a distinction that appears to be made solely by him (185). Legman appears to be a very confident translator, as he downplays Jarry's language, specifically his scatology, as

⁴⁸ Before Keith and Legman's translation is released, in 1952, Judith Malina and Julian Beck stage their own translation of *Ubu Roi* with the Living Theatre in the Cherry Lane Theatre, in the Village, Manhattan, NY. This is the first verifiable professional production of the play in the United States. I will discuss this production in more depth in Chapter 3.

mere child-speak. He also calls Ms. Wright's translation "incredibly bad," and the illustrations, "impertinent and unnecessary doodles" (189). These assessments, along with others of the Jarry scholarship that had been done to date may contribute to the lack of citation this translation receives in the discourse that postdates it. Several of these accusations run counter to what the discursive formations had established through the strategies of the "U-Effect," and hence, pose only enough of a threat to them to force them to acknowledge that the translation exists. As scholars look to Keith and Legman's translation, they subsequently give it less credence than Barbara Wright's. With her support and use of the strategies of the "U-Effect," Wright's translation and introduction fits the narrative the scholars want to tell better than Keith and Legman's.

The first book-length study to appear in English in which Jarry is one of the primary subjects is Roger Shattuck's 1958 oft-cited study, *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France 1885 to World War I*. Shattuck's construction of this history is similar to Lot's; his biographical chapter on Jarry is largely anecdotal and he rarely cites his sources. Shattuck was a member of the *College of Pataphysics*, and had previously written for the *Cahiers* an article surveying the appearances of Jarry's works in English. It is his report of the *Ubu* premiere that is most critical to understanding his place in the construction of the myth of *Ubu Roi*.

Shattuck devotes an expansive section to the premiere of *Ubu*. He marshals every relevant anecdote or story he can find that has emerged as an important account of the event. He generally follows the narrative that Rachilde established, that Gémier's first "*merdre*" at the premiere performance started the rioting, replete with verbal abuses and fistfights (205-208). He situates as fact Arthur Symons's description of the setting from his *Studies in Seven Arts*, and supports his version of events with W. B. Yeats's now canonized account from his

autobiography of his experience at the premiere, which Yeats concludes with the famous line, “After us the savage god.” Shattuck also publishes an incorrect date (December 11) as the evening of the premiere performance.

One of the most fascinating and compelling (in terms of the power of the “U-Effect”) additions to the rendering of Jarry’s biography made by Shattuck is on the artist’s drinking habit. He suggests that due to Jarry’s alcoholism, he was able to keep himself in a perpetual “semi-exalted state” wherein his imagination, which was key to his work, was always being tapped (201). This additional glorifier of Jarry’s spectacular stature only adds to the space of power of the “U-Effect” and immediately brings the English-speaking audience under the influence of the “U-Effect.”

In addition to Shattuck’s account of Jarry’s biography, he conducts a literary analysis of Jarry’s works. Contrary to the readings most critics make of Jarry’s work due to the presence of innumerable contradictions, Shattuck sees a circular pattern, arguing that, “Carefully read with an open mind, [Jarry’s] writings do not break in half. On the contrary, they turn and turn constantly away from a straight line, modulating from grossness to subtle irony to sentiment to metaphysical speculation to blasphemy to anarchism-and come full circle back to grossness” (225). In his analysis, Shattuck invokes primitivism, in a very similar manner to Breton. Where Breton calls Ubu the representation of the primitive unconscious of humanity (the “Id”), Shattuck speaks of Ubu’s soul as primitive and calls his existence elemental, and therefore asserts that Jarry presented a kind of primitivism by “letting him loose on the stage.”⁴⁹ Jarry supports this reading, as, in his article “Theater Questions,” he describes the appearance of Ubu

⁴⁹ I paraphrase here a statement of Jarry’s own that he makes in his article, “Theater Questions.” In it, he ponders the conditions that are “indispensable” to the theatre. One of his assertions is that there is no reason to give a work dramatic form unless “one has invented a character whom one finds it more convenient to let loose on a stage than to analyze in a book” (*Selected Works* 82).

to the public thusly: “It is not surprising that the public should have been aghast at the sight of its ignoble other self. . . . This other self, as Monsieur Catulle Mendès has excellently said, is composed ‘of eternal human imbecility, eternal lust, eternal gluttony, the vileness of instinct magnified into tyranny’” (*Selected Works* 83). Jarry’s description reveals the primitive nature that he views in Ubu, and supports Shattuck’s reading. Through his analysis of Jarry’s work, Shattuck plays up Jarry’s revolutionary dramaturgy, completing his use of the three strategies of the “U-Effect.” Because Shattuck’s is the first significant work on Jarry in English, it has become the text that all English-speaking Jarry scholars point to as that which paved the way for the study and understanding of him and his creations.

Shattuck has also contributed to the English-speaking community’s understanding of Jarry’s imaginary science of pataphysics. In his 1960 article, “What is ‘Pataphysics’ in the *Evergreen Review*, Shattuck takes seven “truths” about pataphysics and explains each. In “3. ‘Pataphysics is the science of imaginary solutions,’” Shattuck writes, “‘Pataphysics welcomes all scientific theories (they are getting better and better) and treats each one not as a generality but as an attempt, sometimes heroic and sometimes pathetic, to pin down one point of view as ‘real’” (290). He concludes this section by arguing: “The idea of ‘truth’ is the most imaginary of all solutions” (290). This argument most clearly underlines what the majority of scholars view was Jarry’s major point of rebellion in his work and life, that he viewed any truth as equally imaginary, and therefore, equally real in the mind of the respective believer of that truth.

Another illuminating “truth” in Shattuck’s article is “4. ‘Pataphysics, all things are equal.’” In this section, Shattuck explains that in pataphysics, everything is equal and opposites converge. Within this conception, the pataphysician rejects all values: “‘Pataphysics preaches no rebellion and no acquiescence, no new morality nor immorality, no political reform, no reaction

and certainly no promise of happiness nor unhappiness. What would be the use, all things being equal” (290). Along with demonstrating the ultimate contrariness of pataphysics, this passage also speaks to the reason why some scholars see Jarry as an optimist and some see him as a devout pessimist: he is both and neither. Shattuck’s explanation of aspects of pataphysics has defined how other scholars have observed them. His explanations appear in various scholars’ treatments of pataphysics to follow. As such, Shattuck’s article represents yet another enunciative statement, capable of inserting a repeatable piece of knowledge about Jarry into the field or space of Jarry studies and theatrical discourse. Shattuck’s influence on the English-language understanding of Jarry’s life and work is monumental. In Chapters 2 and 3, I will make it clear that his point of view is observable in a significant number of studies on Jarry and *Ubu Roi*, and in the background information supplied by critics reviewing productions of the play.

In the first six-plus decades of *Ubu*’s existence in the world, the play went from a point of controversial origins in the space of dissension of the premiere in December 1896, to an anthologized, legitimate, even sometime-canonized position in Western theatre history. Due to its ambiguous origins in the space of dissension of the premiere, the value of the play was immediately tethered to Jarry’s exceptional performance of self, the supposed scandal caused by the production, and the “revolutionary” dramaturgy employed in the production. Through the permeation of strategies of the “U-Effect” conceived in the controversy after the premiere, *Ubu Roi* became a landmark in tracking the emergence and development of the avant-garde, an example that many avant-garde practitioners claimed as an inspiration, and that scholars observed as a predecessor to those artists. By the 1930s, Jarry’s biography had been constructed and put into a book, and references to Ubu were pervasive throughout French culture—the play

had gained legitimate status, having the power to participate in the making of culture. Excerpts of the play began to appear in anthologies in the 1940s, which strengthened its institutional power. The establishment in 1948 of the *College of Pataphysics* ensured further study and dispersal of *Ubu Roi* to a wider audience through the *College's Cahiers*. The act of establishing the *College* could itself be argued an aid in granting the play legitimacy and institutional power. In the 1950s, the play made strides into English-language theatre, with several translations and Shattuck's heavily cited study of Jarry. This greater access to the play in English would allow a wide audience to accept Martin Esslin's use of the play in his groundbreaking work, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, in 1961. It is with that publication that my next chapter begins.

CHAPTER 2

Ubu Ascends to his Throne

“With this system, I will make a quick fortune, then I’ll kill everyone and disappear.”

Père Ubu, *Ubu Roi*, Act 3, Scene 4⁵⁰

Many times over the next two chapters, I reference the tendency of scholars and critics to note the prophetic quality of Jarry’s monstrous character. Only half of Ubu’s line I quote above, however, will prove to be prophetic: the play will certainly generate plenty of currency as a cultural object, but Ubu and his world will refuse to go away. As evidenced by the popular success of Jean Vilar’s production of *Ubu* in 1958, *Ubu Roi* became a vital, legitimate object of French culture in the period covered in my first chapter. There is no doubt that the play gained a reputation and importance within certain circles of English-speaking culture prior to 1961, but there was still work to be done for Jarry’s play to attain the position it now holds in broader Western culture and the Western canon.⁵¹ The highly adaptable strategies of the “U-Effect,” which emerged out of the space of dissension of the premiere production, begin to transfer to the English language with the translations and scholarship I discussed at the end of Chapter 1. Two works especially, Barbara Wright’s 1951 translation, and Roger Shattuck’s *The Banquet Years*, give the strategies of the “U-Effect” a foothold in the English language. That foothold will give the first three studies I discuss in this chapter plenty of leverage to lift *Ubu Roi* to previously unreachable cultural heights, and to allow other works to follow.

I have broken this chapter down into sections in which I see the power of *Ubu Roi* serving different purposes. My chronology ultimately leads to a discussion of the play’s fit within contemporary considerations of the historical avant-garde and Modernist

⁵⁰ Alfred Jarry, *Œuvres Complètes, Volume 1* (1972): p. 374.

⁵¹ In his 1965 *100 Key Books of the Modern Movement from England, France & America 1880-1950*, Cyril Connolly laments that “even now Jarry is hardly known outside France” (35).

performance/literature. I begin by describing as a group three English-language studies that, drawing on the attention Shattuck's *The Banquet Years* earned the play, position *Ubu Roi* for the first time in relation to the development of the avant-garde of the 1950s. Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961), Leonard Cabell Pronko's *Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theater in France* (1962), and George Wellwarth's *The Theater of Protest and Paradox* (1964) determined the trajectory that the play would take, especially in the English language, for the next fifty years, and had much to do with *Ubu*'s canonization for English-language audiences. In the middle sections of the chapter, I show the play's ascent to canonical status. I argue that the scholarship and English versions of the play from the 1960s-mid-1970s represent the play's summit of the Western canon, and announce its now long-held position at the forefront of the historical European avant-garde.

My analysis on translations and anthologized versions of *Ubu Roi* and critical and biographical treatments of Jarry continues through latter sections of the chapter, covering the period through 2011.⁵² I use the final section in this chapter to lay out various contemporary (1987-present) scholarly studies of the avant-garde to observe how they converse with the "U-Effect." I argue here that since 1987, there have been several contradictions to the "U-Effect," but those have been slow to affect any change to the dominant position, from which *Ubu Roi* is the paramount play in the historical avant-garde canon. By the final section, it should be clear that my dissertation represents the minority of studies that even acknowledge *Ubu Roi* could be anything but the first avant-garde play. The "U-Effect" has assured that the myth of the premiere

⁵² Due to the overwhelming influence of the narrative passed down to us through scholarship, the traces of which I collect as the strategies of the "U-Effect," there have been a number of books and articles published on Jarry and his play that do not in any significant way affect the English-language reception of *Ubu Roi* and its place in the avant-garde. Therefore, I have intentionally omitted several of those French- and English-language books, articles, and collections of articles published during the time covered by this chapter. I attempt to mark their presence in the space of Jarry studies (usually through a note), but I do not discuss them in any kind of depth.

has become ubiquitous and deeply embedded in the story of theatre history as we have received it.

Throughout the chapter, I argue that the premiere of *Ubu Roi* has become a myth of theatre history, and one that theatre historians and Jarry scholars feel the desire to tell frequently and fervently. Sometimes historians tell this myth while even acknowledging its complicated and dubious history. I cannot blame them. Myths of history are useful and comforting. Myths provide intriguing stories to keep students and readers engaged; they reinforce our beliefs of how we got where we are from whence we came. The myth of *Ubu Roi* seems to have become for theatre historians, under Gilles Deleuze's use of the term, a ritornello. In the space of the story of theatre history, and, more specifically, the historical avant-garde, the myth of *Ubu Roi* stands as a refrain (ritornello) that marks the territory of *Ubu Roi* within the avant-garde. The strategies of the "U-Effect" have come to dominate the space of theatre history in such a way that telling the tale of *Ubu Roi*'s legendary premiere has come to represent a "home" for historians seeking to center their discussion of avant-garde theatre. Though the premiere of *Ubu Roi* may be the most comforting and stabilizing home for thinking about the creation of the historical avant-garde, there is a danger in placing the locus of an entire theatrical movement on a performance whose construction is hardly conclusive.⁵³

In her article, "Against Plausibility," Ellen Mackay argues that when attempting to conduct scholarship on a slippery performance such as the *Ubu* premiere, it is important to keep in mind that an account of any particular historical performance cannot necessarily do the performance justice. She believes that any methodology employed will fail to capture what we seek from that performance.

⁵³ Deleuze's use of ritornello is found in his essay, "Music and Ritornello," from *The Deleuze Reader*, pgs. 201-203.

The story that [a performance's] "history" tells is thus an injunction to remember that performance refuses the straightening-out that would deliver us from centuries of methodological flailing. It is, rather, an agent of looseness, always toggling between the "flat unraised spirits" of scholastic inquiry and the "imaginary forces" of spectatorial enchantment. Any attempt to lay down some discipline must therefore take into account the fact that "the sharp distinction of the real and the unreal," or of the "pseudo" and the bona fide, will necessarily fail to take into account the theater's history, which is to say, the "transient emotional experiences of former generations of spectators." To ... do justice to performance is thus to get past the illusion of empirical factuality and make peace with the dream of being there. (29)

Mackay reminds us to remain cognizant of performance's fleeting existence in the material world when attempting to reconstruct a performance event or verify the plausibility of existing accounts. If we as theatre historians can "make peace with the dream of being there," or take the myth for what it represents, our discussions of performances with histories difficult to pin down will be less strained in focusing on what we can or cannot put back together, but rather, on how that "dream" informs our understanding of the event decades, centuries, or millennia after the fact (29).⁵⁴

The beginning of the period covered in this chapter is two generations removed from the premiere of *Ubu Roi*. By that point, few, if any, remained living who experienced the event live. Their ability and/or willingness to attempt to accurately account for the unfolding of the performance(s) would be questionable at best. Due to its spectacularized existence made popular

⁵⁴ "Against Plausibility" is contained in *Theater Historiography: Critical Interventions*, Henry Bial and Scott Magelssen, eds (22-31).

by the strategies of the “U-Effect,” the premiere of *Ubu Roi* had come to take a paramount and seminal place in theatre history, and the myth of the event had become compelling and comforting. From a post-structuralist point of view, however, it is difficult to fall in love with the myth. I attempt here to make peace with the myth, acknowledge its existence, and move beyond it. I examine its existence at the level of discursive formations and expose how the deployment of the “U-Effect” creates errors and falsehoods in the tale for the sake of maintaining a sense of absoluteness in discourse. As I demonstrate, those mistakes reveal themselves in the scholarship of the period covered here. If the telling of the myth is taken for absolute fact, those mistakes go unproblematized. It is only toward the latter end of this period in which the myth of *Ubu Roi* is recognized as such and actually troubled in scholars’ consideration of it.⁵⁵

A. Using *Ubu Roi* to Frame the Contemporary Avant-Garde in the 1960s

With Shattuck’s *The Banquet Years* in 1958, a wider English-language audience was primed to receive *Ubu Roi* and its premiere as an important element in the development of the avant-garde. The stage had been set to place *Ubu* in a narrative that led directly to the contemporary work of playwrights such as Ionesco, Beckett, and Genet. In this section, I will show that three of the first studies to explain the plays of the aforementioned playwrights worked from the position under the “U-Effect” to make a linear path from the premiere of *Ubu Roi* to those in the 1950s avant-garde. I argue that in doing so, Martin Esslin, Leonard Cabell Pronko, and George Wellwarth (the authors I discuss here) determine a dominant trajectory for the historical avant-garde that will last for decades. Jarry scholars and theatre historians cite Esslin more than they cite the others. Yet, the proximity in date of publication between the three (a

⁵⁵ While scholars such as Lebois had previously offered alternatives to the “U-Effect” in studying Jarry and *Ubu Roi*, it is only more recently that scholars admit the constructed nature of the received narrative and self-consciously attempt to offer alternatives.

mere three years) suggests that taking the three works as a group can demonstrate the power of the strategies of the “U-Effect” in early 1960s English-language scholarship. All three authors engage in the three “U-Effect” strategies to craft their respective conceptions of the avant-garde.

I open this section with a consideration of Martin Esslin’s 1961 paradigm-shifting work, *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Esslin calls the Absurd the “attitude most genuinely representative” of his time, and says that the distinguishing characteristic of that attitude is “its sense that the certitudes and unshakable basic assumptions of former ages have been swept away, that they have been tested and found wanting, that they have been discredited as cheap and somewhat childish illusions” (4-5). In his chapter “The Tradition of the Absurd,” however, Esslin argues that the attitude of the absurd can be traced back to antiquity. He states, “both the fantastic and the nonsensical have quite a respectable and generally accepted tradition” (286). Tracing these impulses from the Latin *mimus* through early Christian drama and Shakespeare, into Büchner, Strindberg, and other 19th century dramatists, when he arrives at Jarry and *Ubu Roi*, Esslin delves more deeply into them than any of the preceding carriers of the Absurdist tradition.

Esslin dubs Jarry a precursor to the Absurdist. He argues that Jarry was ahead of his time, and only in the late 1950s had audiences been prepared for theatre of Jarry’s ilk: “now the time has caught up with the avant-garde ... and the theatre Jarry ... created has found its public” (349). In his discussion of Jarry, Esslin covers the premiere of *Ubu*. He rehearses the same story that Rachilde had told in her biography; the play “provoked a scandal as violent as the famous battle at the first night of Victor Hugo’s *Hernani*” (309). Esslin claims that the public was “stupefied,” delivering the account that it took 15 minutes after Gémier had uttered “*merdre*” for the audience to finally settle. Here, Esslin reveals his interest in one of the strategies of the “U-Effect”: that the premiere performance was a scandal. Esslin completes his treatment of the play

with the assertion that “a play that had only two performances in its first run and evoked a torrent of abuse appears, in the light of subsequent developments, as a landmark and a forerunner” (312). He takes the series of events of the premiere to represent a key moment in the development of the avant-garde and Absurdism.

Esslin also affirms the power of the “U-Effect” in his discussion of Jarry’s performance of self. He calls Jarry one of the most “extraordinary and eccentric figures” of his time (309). He goes on to say that Jarry was largely regarded at his death as a bizarre specimen of the “Paris *Bohème* who merge their lives and their poetry by turning their own personalities into grotesque characters of their own creation that disappear when they perish” (309). In Jarry’s case, that creation did not disappear. In the continual recounting of the legendary anecdotes in scholarship, the connection grew to where the figures merged into one. Esslin’s mere mention of Jarry’s connection to his character supports the “U-Effect” strategy and perpetuates the control of the “U-Effect” over discussions surrounding Jarry’s life.

Esslin provides an explication of the character Ubu that is likewise important to consider. Like Breton and Shattuck, Esslin views Ubu as the representation of the primitive aspects of humanity. He calls Ubu a “savage caricature,” and a “terrifying image of the animal nature of man,” (310). He also includes in his narrative Jarry’s response to the harsh critical reaction to the premiere. He notes that Jarry wanted the public to view that primitive side of itself. As did Breton and Shattuck, Esslin sees Ubu as a primitive figure, in some way related to the human psyche. By including this analysis in his study, Esslin underlines a connection between Jarry’s dramaturgy and primitivism. In the act of placing primitivism within Jarry’s dramaturgy, scholars like Esslin, Shattuck, and Breton make primitivism fit under the power of the “U-Effect.” This will have implications in Chapter 3, where I will show that critics often view

production practices aiming toward primitivism as the most authentic, or at least authorized, way to produce *Ubu Roi*.

Esslin's discussion of pataphysics is one of the most important in his study. By calling pataphysics the basis of Jarry's own aesthetics, he makes a claim of the imaginary science that would have significance in future perceptions of Jarry's influence on the avant-garde. He judges pataphysics to be "the definition of a subjectivist and expressionist approach that exactly anticipates the tendency of the Theatre of the Absurd to express psychological states by objectifying them on the stage. And so Jarry ... must be regarded as one of the originators of the concepts on which a good deal of contemporary art, and not only in literature and theatre, is based" (313). Here, Esslin invokes the third strategy of the "U-Effect," that of Jarry's "revolutionary" dramaturgy. Esslin's statement may be true, but I wonder whether, had he not made the statement, if Jarry's status would be any less significant than it is today.

Esslin's influence on *Ubu Roi*'s status cannot be understated. His installment of the play as a "landmark and forerunner" of the Theatre of the Absurd may be the most significant statement of the play's history in the English language. A statement, as described by Foucault, is "divided up into an enunciative field in which it has a place and a status, which arranges for its possible relations with the past, and which opens up for it a possible future" (*Archaeology* 99). Esslin's statement—his placement of *Ubu Roi* at the opening of the contemporary avant-garde—holds a centralized position within the enunciative field (the range of possible readings or meanings of an object or event). His relates to statements of the past that took Jarry as a forerunner to previous avant-garde movements, and opens a wide space, or field of possibilities, to relate to statements about the play made in the future. Because Esslin finds *Ubu Roi* to exert what he assumes are prototypical, emergent energies of the Theatre of the Absurd, the play

obviously occupies an important position in his narrative. Due to the pervasiveness and acceptance of Esslin's conception of the avant-garde theatre of the postwar world, *Ubu Roi* has therefore been established as a major work to include in anthologies and syllabi.⁵⁶

Following closely behind Esslin in considering the 1950s avant-garde in Paris is Leonard Cabell Pronko. While his 1962 book, *Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theater in France*, was not as discourse shifting as Esslin's (maybe only because Esslin had preceded him in publication by a year), Pronko's study is also heavily cited and represents another enunciative statement in which the power of the premiere of *Ubu Roi* is reinforced. Pronko, like Esslin, does not necessarily believe the "avant-garde" to be exclusive to one particular strain of theatre. At the beginning of his study he explains, "there is no single avant-garde. There are only certain characteristics that we may associate with any achievement so classified" (3). Following Ionesco's conception of it, Pronko sees the avant-garde as a "restoration, a return," as opposed to a transitional movement concerned with carrying theatre to a new paradigm (3). Avant-garde theatre "constitutes a rediscovery of the fundamental models of theater, a return in some respects to primitive theater, and a return to man, rather than society, as the center of the dramatic universe" (3).⁵⁷ Later, however, Pronko makes a move similar to Esslin's assertion that Jarry's theatre had finally found an audience in the 1950s. Pronko dubs Jarry the creator of the theatrical avant-garde: "With *Ubu Roi*, Alfred Jarry may be said to have founded the avant-garde drama,

⁵⁶ Though my study focuses only on the play's transfer from French to English, I believe that scholars of other languages will have given the play a place of prominence as well. From a simple search of "Esslin theatre absurd" on WorldCat (1/12/13), I found that the book has been translated into no less than a dozen languages, including such non-Western languages as Turkish, Hebrew, and Japanese.

⁵⁷ Pronko addresses Jarry's engagement with an idea of primitivism here. He asserts that Jarry, as a member of the avant-garde, works toward rediscovering the "fundamental models of theater," and a "return to man" as the focus of the theatrical work. While he is unclear in how he views the "primitive theater," Pronko's use of primitivism could be similar to Breton's, Shattuck's, and Esslin's in that he speaks about a return to man as its focus (showing man his animal side, exposing his unconscious unleashed). Pronko may also mean that primitivism involves getting rid of scenery that indicates society or civilization and focusing on the engagement with the human onstage, and discovering meanings from watching the actions of that person or cast.

for it is the first modern play reflecting the anarchy of the author's double revolt against the society in which he lived and the more or less set forms of the realistic and naturalistic drama favored by the Théâtre Libre" (4). Pronko believes Jarry to be the initiator of the avant-garde as we have come to know it through the work of the 1950s experimental playwrights, or Esslin's "Absurdists."

Pronko introduces Jarry's play as the conception of the experimental French theatre of the 1950s.

After a silent pregnancy of almost twenty years, the French theater at mid-twentieth century gave healthy birth to a type of drama that had been conceived, and briefly drew breath, as early as 1896 when Alfred Jarry shocked the placid audience at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre with Père Ubu's resounding "Merdre!" Jarry's revolt against bourgeois morality and prevalent theater values, drawing inspiration from the romanticism and bohemianism of the nineteenth century, led in the theater to the more organized revolt of Apollinaire's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, and the few dramatic efforts of dada and surrealism. By 1930, however, despite the efforts of Antonin Artaud, the lineage of Jarry seemed extinct, and it was only in 1950, with the performance of Ionesco's *Bald Soprano*, and three years later with Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, that it became clear that the spirit of the avant-garde was still alive in the theater. (1)

Pronko makes two things plain in this passage. First, he argues that Jarry *is* the father of the avant-garde (at least the incarnation of it as it was appearing in the 1950s) in France—anything that comes after him stems from his work. It is important to note that in Pronko's model, Jarry represents the spirit of the avant-garde only as it relates to *Ubu Roi* and the play's scandal-

rousing premiere. Pronko sees *Ubu Roi* as prophetic beyond Breton's vision of its prophecy of the carnage of the 20th century. "The immense verve of Jarry's work, the grotesqueness of his exaggeration, the simplicity of characterization, his deep-cutting social satire, and his free linguistic invention all herald plays like *The Bald Soprano*, *Jack*, and *The Chairs*" (6). And though Pronko shares with Esslin the notion that the premiere of Jarry's play is a landmark moment in the development of the avant-garde, what Pronko does not do that Esslin does is make explicit that he believes Jarry's pataphysics is the basis of the avant-garde of the 1950s. That said, as I noted in Chapter 1, scholars have taken pataphysics as the platform of Jarry's dramaturgy for the premiere. As such, Pronko may also take this position, and simply not make explicit the impact he believes pataphysics has had. Regardless of his position on pataphysics, Pronko makes clear that for him, *Ubu Roi* is the spark of the avant-garde work of the 1950s.

The second idea that Pronko reveals in the above passage is that he takes the crowd at the premiere as "placid," and not expecting the play that it would witness on the evening of December 10, 1896.⁵⁸ To call the audience "placid" mischaracterizes its preparedness for and the part it was to play in what was to come. In *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Esslin skirts this characterization by claiming the audience was "stupefied" (309). He does not disallow the possibility that the audience may have been familiar with the play. Esslin's comments suggest that when they were confronted with the play live, the spectators' horizon of expectations may have been shattered, and that may have caused a shock, surprise, or "stupefaction"; a fair assertion to make. Pronko's claim, on the other hand, demonstrates the attractiveness of stretching the truth of historical narrative. Pronko chose to disseminate the narrative with the most monumental weight, the one that had proven to be most effective through previous

⁵⁸ I problematized this narrative in Chapter 1. Much of the audience knew the play, and certainly was primed to react, some favorably and others negatively.

enunciative statements (Breton and Shattuck). In all likelihood, as Sutton, Carlson, Besnier, Blackadder, and Brotchie have argued, the audience was prepared to engage the performance. The narrative Pronko tells makes the most of the strategies of the “U-Effect,” the revolutionary dramaturgy and shock value of the production, and Jarry’s performance before it.

Pronko’s move to establish Jarry as the initiator of the avant-garde that eventually yielded the work of Ionesco, Beckett, Genet, and others, matches Esslin. Both authors carry on the tradition of claiming Jarry as an example to and inspiration of the avant-garde artists who followed. Where previous critics and scholars saw the connections between Jarry and the das, Surrealists, and Artaud, Esslin and Pronko draw the positivistic line down to the experimental artists of the mid-twentieth century, and allow the “U-Effect” to encompass the genealogy of the historical European avant-garde.⁵⁹

In 1964, George Wellwarth published a collection of critical essays on avant-garde theatre, *The Theater of Protest and Paradox*. His first essay in the collection is on Jarry, titled “Alfred Jarry: The Sower of the Avant-Garde Drama.”⁶⁰ Wellwarth begins the essay with a bang: “On the evening of December 10, 1896, the Paris theater world was shocked by an extraordinary and unprecedented event” (1). He adds that all the leading critics and members of the “literary demimonde” had come to the Théâtre de l’Œuvre to see Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*. Wellwarth recounts that the play opened with “a word that had never before been pronounced on stage. The theater was never the same again ... *Thus began the avant-garde drama*” (1, my emphasis). Here is another example of a scholar taking the premiere of *Ubu Roi* as the beginning of the avant-

⁵⁹ I say that the line Esslin and Pronko draw is necessarily positivistic because they both reveal themselves to think in positivistic terms. Esslin exposes his viewpoint in claiming that Jarry and the das and Surrealists were ahead of their time, and only in the 1950s had the audience caught up to their dramaturgy (*Theatre* 389). Pronko claims that from the point of Jarry, moving towards Ionesco, the dramaturgy of those das and Surrealists and others following them gets progressively more illogical (7-8).

⁶⁰ Wellwarth had published this same essay in the journal *Criticism* under the title, “Alfred Jarry: The Seed of the Avant-Garde Drama,” in 1962. I point this out to show just how contemporaneous Esslin, Pronko, and Wellwarth’s studies were.

garde. Like Pronko and Esslin, Wellwarth has set up a sensational event from which he sees the entire avant-garde tradition being born. Throughout the essay, he defines the avant-garde in relation to this event and to how the avant-garde has adapted Jarry's personal rebellion against everything. Wellwarth delivers some anecdotes about Jarry's life and attempts to connect Jarry's rebellion with the rebellion of the later avant-gardes. He also attempts to show how elements of *Ubu Roi* reveal themselves in the avant-garde plays of the mid-twentieth century. In all of the work Wellwarth does, he reaffirms the "U-Effect"; his argument is built on the power of the "U-Effect" strategies.

Wellwarth lays out some brave assertions that need to be problematized. Essential to buying into Wellwarth's argument is that the reader agree with him that the premiere of *Ubu Roi* was a theatrical anomaly. He asserts:

In the theater, as in life, events are irreversible. Once something has happened, it has happened; and once it has happened, it can happen again. In art, setting the precedent is the important thing. After the production of *Ubu roi* the theater could not be the same again: *Ubu roi* had happened, and the totality of theatrical experience had instantly and irretrievably been translated into a new perspective.

(4)

Wellwarth does not report that exactly what happened in the 1896 production is contested. He also implies that the premiere is an event that had no precedent itself, which is not the case (Deak; Innes; Weber).⁶¹ Wellwarth draws on the notion that what Jarry had persuaded Lugné-Poe to stage represented a complete break from what had come before; it is without question a revolutionary, scandal-rousing performance that would define a new approach to theatre.

⁶¹ For example, to speak of well-known French premieres alone, *Ubu Roi* is frequently placed alongside such productions as *Hernani* and *Le Cid*.

Though Wellwarth seems to repeat many of Shattuck's ideas on Jarry's everyday behavior, especially concerning his alcoholism, one idea that does appear original is the notion that Jarry controlled his own death through alcoholism: "Jarry chose to rebel against the ultimate by systematically destroying himself. In this way he conquered [everything]—paradoxically" (11).⁶² This analysis makes sense, because Wellwarth asserts that Jarry rebelled against everything in every act he made. This is one of many daring claims Wellwarth makes, and with few citations to other scholars or references to non-anecdotal evidence, it seems difficult to accept any of what Wellwarth would like the reader to believe. Nevertheless, the power of the strategies of the "U-Effect," especially that of Jarry's constructed biography, is such that they are able, through discourse, to mold and shape the reader's perception that what is written is true. Because the "U-Effect" has dominion over the knowledge Wellwarth draws on, he does not need to provide evidence.

In an attempt to seal the *Ubu Roi* premiere as the leaping point for the contemporary avant-garde, Wellwarth concludes his essay by arguing that Ubu has reappeared in contemporary avant-garde drama.

Fully rehabilitated, even respectable now, [Père Ubu] has waddled back on to the stage and now pervades the avant-garde drama like some enormous intangible and interpenetrating influence. Ubu is back with us—to stay. The seed that Gémier sowed on that momentous evening in 1896 has finally taken root and sprouted. With that incredibly simple yet explosively destructive word, Jarry changed the whole course of the future dramatic continuum. Indeed, the theater would never be the same again. (14)

⁶² While original to Wellwarth, this narrative, in the tradition of Dr. Jean Saltas, is an inaccurate characterization of Jarry's death, proven by Dr. Stéphane-Chauvet to be of meningeal tuberculosis.

Again, Wellwarth hits home his argument that the premiere sparked the contemporary avant-garde. Unlike Pronko, however, Wellwarth apparently does not see the avant-garde as a restoration or renewal of a certain type of theatre; he takes the first word as a destructive force, somewhat aligned to Artaud's reasoning of Jarry's language (Koos). Wellwarth is unclear whether he believes that, like Artaud, the explosive destruction of the "*mot d'Ubu*" (*merdre*) leads to a renewal of the theatre, but it is similar to Artaud's assessment, nonetheless. Regardless of how Wellwarth characterizes the destructive force of the play, he one last time cites *Ubu Roi*'s supposed revolutionary power. Of the three authors, Wellwarth appears to be the most vehement in his allegiance to the "U-Effect." He has paid particular attention to all three strategies of the "U-Effect" in order to demonstrate what is for him the clear revolutionary step Jarry took with the play.

By considering all three of these pieces together, I do not mean to conflate them; rather, I desire to show the ease with which they can be conflated into one document of history, one story of the avant-garde. Wrapped up in the field of the development of the avant-garde, these studies may exist as a single statement, which makes itself seductively whole and neatly cohesive, which may also lead to the false notion that the "U-Effect" is a constant, unchanging combination of three particular strategies that have a singular effect in the writing of theatre history. Esslin's initial statement, in Foucault's words, "appears with a status, enters various networks and various fields of use, is subjected to transferences or modifications, is integrated into operations and strategies in which its identity is maintained..." (*Archaeology* 105). Immediately, Esslin's statement is integrated into a field defined by a positivist approach to the development of the avant-garde. His statement is transferred to Pronko and Wellwarth, who modify it very slightly, but maintain its general identity, defining the limits at which it allows or prevents the existence

of a narrative of the avant-garde. When viewing the surface discourse (the words of Esslin, Pronko, and Wellwarth), which appears smooth, the “development” of the avant-garde becomes a clean, easily traced line from Jarry through the Absurdists. The “U-Effect” has made it possible for the three of them to blur into one. Under the influence of the strategies of the “U-Effect,” the authors are cajoled into telling and selling the same story.

While I do not want to suggest Esslin, Pronko, and Wellwarth’s studies are one, I have placed these three together for a reason. I have drawn many similarities between them in order to strengthen my argument that they are all representative of the influence of the “U-Effect,” which works through its strategies to dominate the landscape of the theatrical avant-garde and create a narrative free of rough edges, cracks, or ruptures. Nevertheless, they do have many similarities, which is another important reason why I have considered them together. Esslin, Pronko, and Wellwarth all chart a line from *Ubu Roi* in 1896 through the 1950s on which their contemporary avant-garde is situated. Their mutual deployment of the “U-Effect” strategies that emerged out of the premiere of *Ubu* is significant; they all treat the premiere as riot-inducing, they all take Jarry’s dramaturgy to be revolutionary, and two of the three make claims of Jarry’s life that position his personality as potentially merging with *Ubu*’s.⁶³ Viewed together, Esslin’s, Pronko’s, and Wellwarth’s studies, published within three years of each other, demonstrate that the work of the experimental playwrights of the 1950s was lending itself to viewing it as a vessel for Jarry’s avant-garde conceived in the premiere of *Ubu Roi*. Esslin, Pronko, and Wellwarth established for future scholars that *Ubu Roi* was the consensus locus for the ignition of the European avant-garde as it was received through works of the Absurdists.

⁶³ Pronko’s comments on Jarry’s life are nearly nil, but he does clarify that “eccentric behavior” is representative of the avant-garde artists of Jarry’s time (2). In making this reference, Pronko gives a glancing nod to the kind of story that is told of Jarry’s behavior. Pronko’s slightly different way of marking Jarry’s outrageous performance of self is also suggestive of how the “U-Effect” takes up differing statements and allows them to expand its power, rather than to exist outside its panoptic gaze.

B. French Scholarship and Collections in the 1960s to mid-1970s

In this section, I will mark significant contributions to the continued study of *Ubu Roi* in French-language scholarship in the decade and a half from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s. Significant changes to the study of *Ubu Roi* in this period include the first two reliable editions of the Ubu plays in collection, several bold challenges to the received narrative of Jarry's life and the *Ubu* premiere, and even the way of conducting scholarship on the play. This period in France is a fertile ground for scholarship on Jarry and the play, and will have considerable implications on French- and English-language scholarship in the coming decades.

Prior to 1962, there were few available editions—regardless of reliability—of *Ubu Roi*. That year, however, Maurice Saillet, a member of the *College of Pataphysics*, edited *Tout Ubu*, a French volume that included all three major *Ubu* plays, the *Almanachs du Père Ubu*, and Jarry's "Reduction to two acts of *Ubu Roi*," *Ubu sur la Butte* (447). Saillet also included Jarry's writings pertinent to the plays, such as his letters to Lugné-Poe in preparation for the premiere production, his essays "On the Uselessness of the Theatrical in Theatre," "Twelve Arguments on the Theatre," and "Questions on Theatre," and an early version of *Ubu Cocu*, "Ubu Cocu ou l'Archéoptéryx." Saillet's agenda is reflected in his inclusion of Jarry's essays. He wants to represent *Ubu* as a landmark in the development of the avant-garde. By bringing in Jarry's articles related to the 1896 premiere of *Ubu Roi*, Saillet underscores how important they are to a contemporary understanding of the works; it is not enough to read the plays, one has to view Jarry's philosophy of theatre in order to fully grasp what the plays should do. Saillet's work of putting these texts together has proven influential; this collection is one of two primary editions on which scholars rely in contemporary discussions of the play(s).

Numerous additions to Jarry studies and the further legitimization of *Ubu Roi* appear in 1965. In that year, French author Louis Perche released *Alfred Jarry*. Perche's study was the first biography of Jarry published since Shattuck's 1958 *The Banquet Years*, and the first in French since Levesque's 1951 *Alfred Jarry*. Perche's work reads much like Lot's 1934 biography in that he orients the book around Jarry's unique relationship with Ubu through the anecdotes told by Jarry's contemporaries. The anecdotes Perche shares indicate that supposedly Jarry had been influenced by characteristics of Ubu. For the first time in French, an author makes the move to place Jarry's life in the control of the character. With his first words in Chapter IV, "The Domain of Ubu," Perche asserts, "Jarry therefore saw his existence dominated by Ubu" (48).

Perche shows early on how he orients his study of Jarry. His first four chapters are titled: I. From Jarry to Ubu; II. *Ubu Roi*; III. The Return of Ubu, and; IV. The Domain of Ubu. Perche includes three more chapters in which he analyzes Jarry's language and characters in his theatre and his poetry. However, it is clear that Perche privileges the place of Ubu in studying Jarry. The brief first chapter provides standard biographical information that tracks until 1895. The second chapter deals with the play, all Jarry had to go through to get it produced, and the literary reaction after the premiere. He also briefly discusses two productions of the play in the twentieth century. Here, Perche, like Lot, reproduces Jarry's ideas for theatrical production and other thoughts on the play. In Chapter IV, Perche discusses and analyzes the two later *Ubu* plays, *Ubu Cocu* and *Ubu Enchaîné*, and attempts to demonstrate just how controlling the presence of Ubu was over Jarry. The last sentence of the chapter is: "And we recall here that Jarry was manhandled by life, Jarry was on the margin" (72). Ubu had taken over Jarry's life, according to Perche.

It seems that Perche wants to make Jarry out to be a martyr to his creation. While other scholars, such as Schumacher, have noted that Ubu became a presence that Jarry battled, none have taken the argument this far; none argue that Ubu pushed Jarry to the margin of his own life. What Shattuck called a slow, deliberate suicide on Jarry's part, Perche finds an unwinnable battle to maintain the status of a player in his own life.

Perche seems to be one of the first in French who breaks from the need to provide a number of anecdotal biographical stories in order to paint a particular picture of Jarry. Instead, he uses the character of Ubu as the main brush in fleshing out Jarry's existence. This may be the first work in which Ubu takes such a distinctly central place in the analysis. In previous works, the studies centered around Jarry as author of Ubu. Perche instead centers the study on Ubu, and how Jarry related to him and designed his world through the Ubu plays. Perche's Foucauldian statement of his argument demonstrates perhaps the densest embedding of the sensationalized biography of Jarry into the enunciative field of Jarry scholarship and the avant-garde yet. Along with the other strategies of the "U-Effect," Jarry's sensationalized biography had worked to allow the acceptance of an argument even as extreme as asserting Ubu's control over Jarry's life. At this point in history, it seems, anything spoken in celebration of the play or relating Jarry to Ubu could be taken as true; the "U-Effect" had perhaps reached the apex of power.

The next French collection of Jarry's works appears in 1972, with the first volume of his *Œuvres Complètes*. Edited by Michel Arrivé, the volume includes all of Jarry's works involving Ubu, several of his novels, the issues of both journals he had run (*L'Ymagier*, *Perhindérion*), some of Jarry's literary and art criticism he had written, and some of his personal letters. Arrivé also includes his own introduction and notes on the texts. In his introduction, he laments the received biography of Jarry, and the fact that there have been few articles written on him—and

even of those, “most are missing a sufficient material knowledge [*connaissance*] of the works” (x). Arrivé also delivers a brief semiotic analysis of aspects of the works included; for example, he discusses Ubu’s sexuality through an analysis of the signs of his body and accoutrement (xxi-xxii). Arrivé expands on this work in his *Lire Jarry*, which I will discuss below. Since its publication, this volume, and the series in whole (volumes II and III are published in 1987 and 1988 respectively), has become the most trusted and frequently cited collection of Jarry’s works among Jarry scholars. Its appearance in 1972 brings a reliable, annotated edition of *Ubu Roi* to library shelves, with which theatre historians and Jarry scholars have easier access to the text that had few previous editions.

Noël Arnaud’s 1974 *Alfred Jarry: d’Ubu Roi au Docteur Faustroll* (*Alfred Jarry: From Ubu Roi to Doctor Faustroll*) was, at the time of its publication, the most densely filled study of Jarry. His biography, however, only covers the years between 1891 and 1898, from Jarry’s arrival in Paris to the year he collaborated with the Nabis on the Théâtre des Pantins. What he lacks in years covered, Arnaud makes up in content. He publishes dozens of correspondences between Jarry and associates, filling out his narrative like no scholar had before. His narrative rambles, is not subject to any kind of theme or time-oriented structure, except for eight extended chapters, each covering a year, and is not subdivided in any way. Structure aside, Arnaud’s biography is leaned heavily upon by later scholars such as Linda Klieger Stillman, who points to it as essential reading, Keith Beaumont, who declares it “contains a mine of valuable information,” and Jill Fell and Alastair Brotchie (Stillman 160; Beaumont, *Alfred Jarry*, 347). Of most interest to me is his narrative of the premiere production of *Ubu Roi*.

Arnaud’s account of the 1896 production provides the first widely available challenge to the dominant narrative that the tumultuous reception of the play had occurred from “*merdre*” at

the opening performance. Arnaud relies heavily on Firmin Gémier's account of the production, which he gave in an interview recorded in the *Excelsior*, on November 4, 1921.⁶⁴ Arnaud takes Gémier's word that nothing happened at the *générale* until Act 3, Scene 5, when he pantomimed inserting a key into the hand of another actor serving as a lock on a jail cell door at the Casemate of Thorn. This is the occasion where, Arnaud argues, after 15 minutes of disorder, Gémier danced his jig to refocus the house's attention onstage. In preparation, then, for an uproarious opening, Arnaud shares Gémier's declaration that he had purchased an omnibus conductor's horn to blow whenever the public interrupted him, which he claims he did. Other than this detail, provided by Gémier, Arnaud is ambiguous about how the performance on December 10 proceeded.⁶⁵ Arnaud notes that many theatre historians mistake the account of the premiere with the preview performance (312-315). He does not explain the reasons why the mistake is so commonly made, but in arguing that scholars are mistaken in their accounts of the performances and highlighting Gémier's account, Arnaud creates the possibility to challenge the received narrative of when the violent reaction occurred in the 1896 production.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Significantly, Arnaud's is only the first biography of Jarry, French or English, to use Gémier's account (Henri Behar's 1973 critical study, *Jarry: le monstre et la marionnette*, is the first outright to mention it). I cannot be sure of the reasons why previous historians had not used it. For a special edition of the literary review *Europe* devoted to Jarry in March-April 1981, however, the interview is reprinted with two other texts in a section called "Trois textes peu connus relatifs à Ubu." ("Three Little-Known Texts Pertaining to *Ubu*"), collected by Thieri Foulc. Foulc's publishing Gémier's account in this venue suggests to me that the text was rare in the sixty years after its publication, and Arnaud (and Behar) was fortunate to have found it. The only other bibliography in which I found Gémier's account prior to the *Europe* issue was in Sutton's dissertation. He does not actually reference the text in his study; it appears to be a source that he knew existed, but could not locate.

⁶⁵ Gémier states that outside of two instances of having to use his conductor's horn, the performance proceeded without event, for, he claims, "the public at the premiere, as always, was less passionate than that at the preview" (Gémier "La Création" 143).

⁶⁶ In his 1973 book, *Jarry: le monstre et la marionnette*, a critical analysis of Jarry's works, Henri Behar beats Arnaud to the punch in providing a revised account of the premiere production. Behar uses Gémier's account to assert that the dress rehearsal did not provoke a reaction until Act 3, Scene 5, but reports that from the first word, the performance on the tenth was incendiary, and did arouse an instantaneous and explosive response (97). I have featured Arnaud in the main body of my study and relegated Behar to a note, because Arnaud's 1974 study casts a shadow over Behar's book; Arnaud is viewed as essential reading on Jarry (Stillman), where Behar is often ignored, outside of scholars conducting biographies or critical studies of Jarry.

Aside from sharing Gémier's version of events, Arnaud's account of the production focuses on the individual reactions of celebrities in the audience. By placing the focus on the individual reactions, which cannot necessarily be verified, Arnaud makes the myth of *Ubu Roi* more about various negotiations of personal relationships, rather than a collective engaged in an epic war over the play's suitability. Some might assert this lessens the rhetorical power of the myth. I argue that Arnaud's enunciative statement envisions other possibilities for the myth, possibilities that include re-creating the audience side of the performance or discussing the value of particular utterances in relation to others in light of who spoke which remarks.⁶⁷ It is safe to say that Arnaud's report of the 1896 production has been influential to the way the event has been historicized. As I stated above, no less than four of the major English-language Jarry scholars have displayed their reverence for his work, in their discussions of the premiere production of *Ubu Roi* in particular. What Arnaud did with his account of the *Ubu* premiere was to introduce a discontinuity, or rupture, into the discourse that had been constituted by the "U-Effect." The incongruous account allowed for a reconsideration of the production. In the years after Arnaud's rupture, scholars would rush in to fall in line with his account, modify it in some way, or argue against it. If Arnaud had not exposed Gémier's account of the premiere production, historians' current understanding of the event may be much less nuanced than it is.

Two years later, another French work would enter the field of scholarship, facilitating another significant change in studies of Jarry and *Ubu Roi*. With *Lire Jarry (Reading Jarry)* in 1976, Michel Arrivé sets the example for critical analysis of Jarry's works for the next thirty-plus

⁶⁷ It is important to remember, after Mackay's urging, that to accurately reconstruct the event is perhaps not the goal. If one can accept the account for what it is, using it to create one's own reconstruction can serve a greater purpose, pedagogical or otherwise.

years.⁶⁸ His use of semiotics is the first in a line of scholarship that draws on that mode of analysis to examine Jarry's œuvre. He breaks his study into five separate essays, each addressing a particular semiotic concern in one or more of Jarry's works. Arrivé takes a structuralist, Saussurian linguistic viewpoint in his semiotic analysis, as he attempts to find deep structures and hidden meanings of signifiers buried underneath Jarry's surface-level signs. He takes this approach, because, he claims, in Jarry's writing, objects

act in a corrosive manner on the method which one applies. Here there is a necessity to progressively redefine this method, to eventually abandon the concepts on which they are based in order to substitute for others. What if they require, for example, contesting even the concept of the sign, or at least carefully circumscribing the field in which it is the operator? (11)

Arrivé attacks the texts from various angles, establishing diverse functions and formations of the sign in Jarry's works. Because Arrivé's is the first prominent work of scholarship to use semiotics to analyze Jarry's œuvre, his book constitutes, like Arnaud's, a discontinuity in the discourse over *Ubu Roi*. He necessitates a shift in discursive relations to re-negotiate the limits containing what represents a scholarly expression about *Ubu Roi*. From Arrivé's initial challenge to the constitution of *Ubu Roi* in discourse, the subject position of those under the influence of the "U-Effect" will slowly alter, as more scholars employ Arrivé's methodology. This shift ultimately allows the numerous reinterpretations of the script and of the premiere production in present times.

⁶⁸ In 1974, François Caradec published *A la recherche de Alfred Jarry (In Search of Alfred Jarry)*, a critical study of Jarry's literary works. Caradec laments that the bulk of attention on Jarry had to that point been paid to his connection with *Ubu Roi* and its premiere production. Caradec's work does not figure significantly in the studies that follow him, so I intentionally omit his book from formal consideration.

C. English-language Translations, Collections, and Scholarship on Jarry and Ubu-1960s-1970s

In this section, I turn back the clock to the early 1960s to track the translations, collections, and scholarship on *Ubu Roi* in the English language during the same period as covered in Section B. At the beginning of this section, most of the works I discuss will be translations and collections of *Ubu*. Those texts set the stage for scholarly work written in the later 1960s and into the 1970s. I argue that by the end of the period, *Ubu Roi* has assumed its position in the English-language narratives of the historical avant-garde and Modernist performance/literature, and becomes fully canonized in Western literature. The play's canonization is what will allow for the variety of explorations of Jarry's material that begin to occur in the latter portion of this period, which include such diverse examinations as a comparison between Jarry's acting theory and Artaud's "Theatre of the Double," and an explication of the sign-value of Jarry's use of the spiral on Ubu's paunch.

All of the play's appearances in translations, collections, and anthologies throughout this period have an impact on maintaining and/or strengthening the play's position in the Western canon. In his now canonical (appropriately enough), *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (1994), Harold Bloom states that to be canonical means simply to be "authoritative in our culture" (1). Offering up a similar, but more explanatory definition of canons in his *Canons and Consequences: Reflections on the Ethical Force of Imaginative Ideals* (1990), Charles Altieri argues that "[c]anons are efforts to define a culture by proposing a normative archive sustaining those powers and states of being that offer the fullest possible education in a version of what the culture's history makes possible" (16, original emphasis). Altieri believes the work

of canons is both normative, as mentioned in the quote, and curatorial, as he explains: “When we argue that a text ought to be canonical we in effect claim that by reading *through* it we can gain a rich grammar for interpreting particular experiences or projecting self-images that have significant resonance in how we make decisions in the present” (16-17, original emphasis). For Altieri, canons are a means of regulating and influencing cultural practice, in effect, operating as a cultural currency of sorts.

Few institutions supply and regulate cultural currencies like the academy. In *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (1993), John Guillory asserts that canon formation—a means of legitimizing a literary text—has to do with the “constitution and distribution of cultural capital,” (ix) or the issue of literary production and consumption. For Guillory, cultural literacy is capital gained through the unity created by the form of a canon. Guillory argues that the problematic strategy of canon formation is not the actual products contained within the canon, but the unity created in the *form* of the canon.⁶⁹

When *Ubu Roi* is deposited or situated in the catchall Modernist canon, it becomes subject to the economy of cultural capital as determined by the distribution and regulation of the canon in the academy. The process of editing, collecting, and translating the play into English and including it in anthologies acts to make *Ubu Roi* part of the required cultural literacy and makes the play an asset in the economy of cultural capital—a valued commodity in the system of possible cultural symbols and practice. While this process had been accomplished in France prior to the 1960s, the frequency of *Ubu*’s appearances in English-language translations and

⁶⁹ Tangential to this, Sally Banes has argued that institutions such as colleges and universities have been the home of avant-garde development in the United States since World War II. In her article, “Institutionalizing Avant-Garde Performance: A Hidden History of University Patronage in the United States,” Banes asserts that colleges and universities have served as “research and development centers, venues, catalysts, and patrons” of the avant-garde in the post-World War II era (217). This would suggest that while *Ubu Roi* was gaining currency in culture as an object of study in the university, avant-garde performance was simultaneously developing alongside it, creating the opportunity to observe the play’s influence on contemporary avant-garde work.

anthologies in the 1960s and 1970s installs the play firmly into the broader Western canon (in its English-language configuration). In the format of translations and anthologies, the script is valued by the English-language academy, the institution with the greatest means of regulation of cultural capital.

The first English-language anthology in which *Ubu Roi* appeared in its entirety was *Four Modern French Comedies*, published in 1960. Wallace Fowlie wrote the introduction to the collection, which included Barbara Wright's translation of Jarry's script, Courteline's *The Commissioner*, Adamov's *Professor Taranne*, and Ayme's *Clerambard*. In his introduction, Fowlie writes, "[t]he four plays of this collection, while representing very specifically French styles of playwriting, appear more universal in their wit and observations than others which might have been chosen from the repertory of the past half century. *Ubu Roi*, of 1896, has reached the status of a myth in the history of the western theatre" (7). Fowlie acknowledges the main reason of *Ubu*'s inclusion: its mythical status. Additionally, Fowlie points out Jarry's oppositional working style and his reputation's foundation in legend: "As vigorously as Cézanne and Rimbaud, Alfred Jarry opposed the taste and the artistic successes of his period. Between the end of the 19th and the middle of the 20th century, Jarry's legend continued to grow. The writer Jarry is now confused with his character Ubu Roi" (7). From his introduction, it is clear that Fowlie works under the power of the "U-Effect."

Fowlie seems to cover all of the "U-Effect" strategies in reinforcing the legitimacy of the play. He displays Jarry's equation with Ubu, he hints at Jarry's revolutionary dramaturgy in mentioning his opposition to the prevailing arts of the time, and later discusses the premiere of the play. He incorrectly labels the date of the premiere as December 11, 1896, and inaccurately dates the founding of the Collège de 'Pataphysique as 1949 instead of 1948 (8). Thomas

Postlewait will pursue the question of why such errors are made in sharing the narrative of *Ubu* in his *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*, which I will discuss later.

Fowlie's collection is the first of a number of anthologies published in the next fifteen years that include *Ubu Roi* and position the play within one or multiple narratives of "modern" drama (as a comedy, or broadly speaking, outside genre boundaries), French drama, avant-garde theatre, or Western drama.

The next English-language presentation of *Ubu Roi* in anthologized form is Michael Benedikt and George E. Wellwarth's *Modern French Theatre, the Avant-Garde, Dada, and Surrealism, an Anthology of Plays*. Benedikt and Wellwarth did their own translation, *King Ubu*, for the collection. Benedikt's introduction to the anthology is worth discussing at length. He makes it very clear in just what position he sees *Ubu Roi*.

When Alfred Jarry wrote *King Ubu* he affected what in literature amounts to a miraculous event. With no immediate literary antecedents, he created a genre of drama in which many of the most advanced poets and dramatists of his country—and many of the most talented—have worked; a genre which, indeed, has achieved a prominence today that Jarry himself could hardly have imagined. (ix)

Benedikt believes that with *Ubu Roi*, Jarry established an avant-garde that has had many followers. In fact, regarding the selections in this anthology, Benedikt dubs all works after him the "post-Jarry theatre" (xxv).

He correlates aspects of every work included in their collection to some element of Jarry's dramaturgy. To note a few: Apollinaire's "people of Zanzibar" is represented by one actor after Jarry's idea to have the entire Polish/Russian armies played by one person (xvi); Cocteau's orchestra harkens to Jarry's wishes for the music of his play (xix); and the dada

movement carried Jarry's "immediate implications to a point of absolute no return" (xx). On Breton's prizing of the subconscious, Benedikt argues, "Jarry, whose hero crashes through all kingly conventions for the sake of the unashamed satisfaction of his whims, would have especially understood Breton's emphasis on the abolition of moral preoccupations in literature" (xxiii). Benedikt's motives are not difficult to understand. After all, he collaborated with Wellwarth, who in 1962 and 1964 had argued that Jarry was indeed the "Sower of the Avant-Garde." The domination of *Ubu Roi*'s "revolutionary" dramaturgy over the narrative played out through Benedikt's introduction is clear; he takes it as the base on which the avant-garde drama that followed was founded.

Benedikt also discusses the *Ubu* premiere. As does Fowlie, he makes the mistake of dating the premier on December 11. Their mutual error suggests to me that they both looked to Shattuck's *The Banquet Years* for their information on the premiere.⁷⁰ Moreover, Benedikt asserts that the premiere caused one of the most violent theatrical riots in history. He claims, "Alfred Jarry's approach to theatre must have appeared to many in the opening-night audience as virtually unprecedented in theatrical history; and it was, indeed, an approach without parallel in the theatre of the time" (ix). Benedikt toes the party line put in place by the "U-Effect" and anchored by the discursive formations that the premiere of *Ubu* represented a clean and distinct break with theatrical tradition and an entirely new approach to theatre. He argues that the most "forward-looking" dramatists of Jarry's time were those concerned with Realism. "In *Ubu*," Benedikt writes, "with an intransigence one would say is typical of the most inspired literary innovators—were there not so very few of them—Jarry embodied a theatrical aesthetics exactly the opposite of those preoccupying the most 'progressive' dramatists of his day" (x). He goes on:

⁷⁰ I noted in Chapter 1 that Shattuck reported the opening performance occurred on December 11 (*The Banquet Years* 205)

“*King Ubu* draws its strength from Jarry’s revolutionary rediscovery that theatre, in order to be viable, need not precisely reproduce conditions of everyday life” (x). Benedikt makes it clear that Jarry’s work in *Ubu Roi* is, for him, a lone gunman against the entire force of Realism. He neglects Symbolism outright. Those who would argue for Jarry’s place in Symbolism have been, to this point, few and far between (Tailhade, Chassé), and they are far outweighed by the rhetorical power of the received narrative of *Ubu Roi*’s value as an original, unparalleled work. One cannot argue, however, that Symbolism did not have a place in Jarry’s day, and that it represented a less “progressive” dramaturgy than Realism. Benedikt’s total oversight of Symbolism suggests how significantly the discursive formations had shifted under the power of the “U-Effect,” how its strategies had shifted discourse so drastically after the *Ubu* premiere that Symbolism would be forgotten in casting an image of the theatre of Jarry’s time.⁷¹ This trend does not end with Benedikt and Wellwarth.

Joining Louis Perche as contributors to Jarry studies in 1965 are two English-language books. Roger Shattuck and Simon Watson Taylor edit their *Selected Works of Alfred Jarry*, and Cyril Connolly publishes *100 Key Books of the Modern Movement from England, France & America 1880-1950*. Connolly selected *Ubu Roi* for inclusion in his book, a collection of descriptions of what represent canonical contributions in the “Modern Movement.” He defines the Modern Movement as a “revolt against the bourgeois in France, the Victorians in England, the Puritanism and materialism of America. The modern spirit was a combination of certain intellectual qualities inherited from the Enlightenment: lucidity, irony, skepticism, intellectual curiosity, combined with the passionate intensity and enhanced sensibility of the Romantics” (11). To carve out a discussion of possible definitions of Modernism would be inappropriate

⁷¹ It is possible also, that Benedikt had not forgotten Symbolism at all, but rather ignored its presence intentionally. If Benedikt had given Symbolism a place in Jarry’s milieu, *Ubu Roi* might not have seemed as revolutionary as he made it out to be.

here.⁷² I point out Connolly's in order to demonstrate how he fits *Ubu Roi* within it. He prizes rebellion, innovation, and originality in his conception of the movement. He defends his choices: "In preparing this list I have tried to choose books with outstanding originality and richness of texture and with the spark of rebellion alight, books which aspire to be works of art. Realism is not enough. There is nothing specifically modern about realism and too often it goes with undigested documentary and unimaginative technique" (15). It seems clear that Connolly's descriptors point toward the definite inclusion of *Ubu Roi* in his collection.

Connolly's entries on all of the selections themselves are brief, one or two paragraph explanations of the works and their import. For *Ubu Roi*, Connolly mentions Jarry's influence on Surrealism. He writes of the *Ubu* plays, "[u]nder [Jarry's] precocious genius his schoolboy farces, *King Ubu* and *Ubu Cocu*, flowered from Shakespearean burlesque into a prophecy of dictatorship by a bourgeois-hating anarchist who died of drink at the age of thirty" (35). Connolly takes care to note that the plays were generated by teenagers having a laugh at their professor, but also calls the plays prophetic by their characterization of Ubu as a dictator. Connolly is only one of many scholars and critics who have noted their observation of Ubu as prophetic of the tyrants of the twentieth century. Comments like these, issued frequently in scholarship and reviews of the play, have suggested that the character is ubiquitous in world history, and, for that reason, important in the Western theatrical tradition. Connolly explains that, "Ubu's appeal like Mr. Punch's, is universal, he is the Id in action and his anal materialism administered the *coup de grâce* to Des Esseintes" (35). Connolly, who had labeled Ubu the "Santa Claus of the Atomic Age" in 1953, takes on Breton's engagement with primitivism, and

⁷² For an example of the complex nature of this discussion, I point to Michael Levenson's "Introduction" in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. In it, Levenson astutely acknowledges that "[i]t is so tempting to make the many Modernisms into one thing, and then to place that one thing into a single chapter within a tidy narrative" (7). There is clearly a variety of understandings of what Modernism and the Modernist movement were/are. I will consider various definitions of Modernism and the historical avant-garde in a later section of this chapter.

makes Ubu a necessary consideration within a Freudian view of the world.⁷³ His use of Ubu, at the tail end of his first period of the Modern Movement, called “The Heroic Era,” is as an object of uninhibited revolution and change. Connolly’s use of *Ubu Roi* maintains the established narrative of the play’s paramount place in both *fin de siècle* Paris and in modern theatre history.

Connolly’s book was joined in 1965 by a significant collection of Jarry’s works in English. Roger Shattuck and Simon Watson Taylor published *Selected Works of Alfred Jarry*, apparently drawing on the power of the “spirited revival in France” Jarry enjoyed after World War II, as Shattuck reports in his introduction (9). In their collection, Shattuck and Taylor include *Ubu Cocu* and fragments from “Ubu’s Almanac,” all of Jarry’s writings on theatre (as Shattuck claims, it is the first collection to include them all [11]), several of Jarry’s poems, a few philosophical essays, and excerpts from Jarry’s three novels. Of *Ubu Cocu*, Shattuck writes, “the episodic construction, vulgar tone, and authentic ring of *Ubu Roi* recur in the later play” (10). Like Barbara Wright before them, the editors include original illustrations with the text of the play. These again attempt to create a playful spirit with the text. It seems as though, for Shattuck and Taylor, including *Ubu Cocu* instead of *Ubu Roi* is a way of growing the influence of the Ubu plays; they assume their audience is familiar with *Ubu Roi* and want to bring more of Jarry’s plays to light. Shattuck calls upon Connolly’s title of Ubu the “Santa Claus of the Atomic Age,” a title that would be reiterated in the decades that followed. The collection exposes how prominently Ubu stands in any discussion of Jarry’s work.

While Shattuck and Taylor take strides to expose a wider selection of Jarry’s œuvre to an English-language audience, they cannot escape featuring Ubu at the head of his works. In terms of collection order, the Ubu materials are presented first, followed by Jarry’s writings on the theatre, four of which are related to the 1896 premiere of *Ubu Roi*; all of the other works follow

⁷³ Connolly gives Ubu the label in his book of essays and excerpts of literature, *Ideas and Places*, 1953.

after. Even in the introduction, Shattuck's way in to the collection is by first mentioning the impact *Ubu Roi*'s "explosive *générale*" had on avant-garde theater of the twentieth century (9).⁷⁴ The "U-Effect" shows its assertiveness in Shattuck and Taylor's *Selected Works*. Ubu is positioned as the primary entry-point into Jarry's work and as a primary point of discussion in avant-garde theatre.

Following the crystallizing of the narrative of Jarry's founding of the contemporary avant-garde with *Ubu Roi*, and the play's consistent institutionalization and canonization through translation and anthologizing, English-language scholarship on Jarry, the play, and its legacy began to diversify. While some continued to focus on bringing nuance to the narrative that Esslin, Pronko, and Wellwarth had founded, others struck out in new ways of analyzing the text of *Ubu*. A rush of articles and shorter length studies appeared during this time.

In 1966, Lewis Franklyn Sutton completed his dissertation, "An Evaluation of the Studies of Alfred Jarry from 1894-1963." Sutton attempts to track the accumulation of studies that guaranteed Jarry's influence on the theatrical avant-garde of the time, especially in light of Martin Esslin's 1961 *The Theatre of the Absurd*. While Sutton's dissertation is not found in many bibliographies of future Jarry studies, it has been of great assistance to my study. His bibliography has led me to many French sources that I had not previously known. What he offers in terms of literature review for the period of his study is unparalleled in any other source. Unfortunately, his study only operates at the level of literature review; he culls together hundreds of sources, but does not make an argument. Perhaps for this reason, and its relative

⁷⁴ Interestingly, Shattuck's remark here represents a revision of the story he presented in his book, *The Banquet Years*, where he claimed that the opening performance, on December 11, was the violent event.

inaccessibility, Sutton study goes for the most part unnoticed, or at least unmentioned, among contemporary Jarry scholars.⁷⁵

Already in 1967, scholars had found the enunciative statements of Esslin, Pronko, and Wellwarth highly influential. At the outset of his article, “Alfred Jarry and the Theatre of the Absurd,” Manuel L. Grossman cites all three. Using their work to tie Jarry to the absurdists as a point of departure, Grossman rehearses the process of how pataphysics came to play such an instrumental role in assessments of the Theatre of the Absurd. He runs down Jarry’s articulation of the pseudo-science and its explanation through scholars such as Shattuck. He discusses how Esslin has applied it in his analysis of the Absurd, and how several scholars have used it to analyze Ionesco’s work. Grossman also examines Jarry’s, Ionesco’s, and Beckett’s breaking down of the distinction between comedy and tragedy.⁷⁶ He argues that all three playwrights use comedy as an absurd element to open the audience’s view to the tragedy of their respective subjects. At the end of his brief essay (five pages), Grossman explains that he has shown a “direct line of development between the two basic approaches [Jarry’s and the absurdists’]. At the same time it has also provided a more precise idea of the implications of the quotations by Esslin, Pronko, and Wellwarth cited at the opening of this article” (477). Grossman’s project of summing up the work of his three predecessors provides scholars after him a convenient place to position the locus of their search for a neat narrative unifying the trajectory of the historical avant-garde. At this point, it is clear that the “U-Effect,” firmly entrenched in English-language theatre history scholarship by the “Big Three” of Esslin, Pronko, and Wellwarth, has taken control over considerations of the avant-garde. As Breton had done with Surrealism and Artaud

⁷⁵In 1966, a key production of *Ubu Roi* occurs in the United Kingdom. William Gaskill and Iain Cuthbertson direct music hall actor Max Wall in *Ubu Roi* at the Royal Court Theatre. I will case study this production in Chapter 3.

⁷⁶Grossman’s exploration of the comedy/tragedy divide in Jarry is out of his 1966 unpublished dissertation, “A Study of the Farcical Elements in the Theatre of Alfred Jarry.”

with his Théâtre Alfred Jarry for Theatre of Cruelty, Esslin, Pronko, and Wellwarth had convinced theatre historians that the premiere of *Ubu Roi* had come to represent the birth of the contemporary avant-garde, or Absurdism.

The next translation of the Ubu plays appears the following year, 1968, with Simon Watson Taylor's edited collection of *The Ubu Plays*. For this collection, Taylor and Cyril Connolly collaborated to co-translate *Ubu Roi* into *Ubu Rex*. They selected Connolly's translation of *Ubu Cocu*, *Ubu Cuckolded*, and Taylor did his own translation of *Ubu Enchaîné*, *Ubu Enchained*. In his introduction to the plays, Taylor notes the "violence and pandemonium that accompanied [*Ubu Roi*'s] notorious *première*" (12). Without commenting on Jarry's part in the construction of the event, Taylor establishes the premiere as a scandalous, violent affair. He states that one of the effects of the premiere is that French theatre was forever changed by the event, suggesting that somehow, whether through revolutionary dramaturgy or otherwise, the premiere production had single-handedly altered the foundations of French theatre. Later in the introduction, Taylor points out the "strenuous and deadly serious" role Jarry played as "court jester" to his friends and associates in the *fin de siècle* avant-garde (13). While he nods at the performative element of Jarry's antics, Taylor still calls his performance "deadly serious," suggesting that the man did not put on a show merely to have a laugh. By including this comment in his introduction, Taylor affirms the opinion that Jarry's outrageous performance of self is an important consideration to make when evaluating his play and situating its place within the Modernist canon.

In his introduction, Taylor has explicitly addressed two strategies of the "U-Effect" (the production's scandal and Jarry's performance of self) and hinted at the third (the revolutionary dramaturgy), validating his collection's place within the English-language Ubu appearances. The

vagueness of his references to aspects of the “U-Effect” speaks to the growing power of its strategies. De Certeau argues that strategies master space through sight. He contends: “The division of space makes possible a *panoptic practice* proceeding from a place whence the eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and ‘include’ them within its scope of vision. To be able to see (far into the distance) is also to be able to predict, to run ahead of time by reading a space” (36, original emphasis). At the juncture of Taylor’s introduction, the “U-Effect” strategies command the ability to control discourse to the point where even suggesting the ramifications of the performance (the history of French theatre was changed forever) asserts the effect of the strategy to create its desired narrative. As I continue my investigation in this chapter, frequently, the authors’ references to the components I have gathered under the term “U-Effect” will be glancing and off-hand. This phenomenon is due to the foresight of the “U-Effect” strategies over possible ways of discussing the *Ubu* premiere, as de Certeau has argued strategies maintain foresight of the possibilities of challenges to its power in an attempt to consistently broaden its reach.

On translating the play, Taylor states its challenges of schoolboy language, shifts in pace and style, puns, obscure jokes, and neologisms.⁷⁷ Sadly, he never addresses how he and Connolly met them other than to point out that he believes their “pschitt” is an inadequate substitute for “*merdre*.” He also feels that Connolly’s invention of “hornstrumpot” in translation of Jarry’s “*cornegidouille*,” has given the English language a new expletive.⁷⁸ Taylor and Connolly’s translation was deemed worthy enough to be used for a BBC-2 TV production of *Ubu Roi* starring Donald Pleasance in 1976. If nothing else, their publication of the translation of

⁷⁷ I have directed a production of *Ubu Roi* using Taylor and Connolly’s translation. Their script seemed to be meant for reading, rather than performing; I found it favoring a literary deployment of Jarry’s techniques rather than allowing the text to open up in performance.

⁷⁸ Literally, “*cornegidouille*” means: “horn” or “antler,” (*corne*) and “*gidouille*” is variously taken to be either Jarry’s made-up term for Ubu’s enormous stomach, or the spiral positioned on Ubu’s paunch in Jarry’s drawings.

all three works in 1968 suggests that there was enough desire felt and support for a new translation, even just four years after the publication of Wellwarth and Benedikt's translation in their anthology.

Breaking ground on explorations of Jarry's conceptions of acting theory is Michael K. Spingler, in his 1972 article in *Modern Drama*, "From the Actor to Ubu: Jarry's Theatre of the Double."⁷⁹ In the article, Spingler deepens the perceived connection between Jarry and Artaud by equating Jarry's prescribed performance of the character of Ubu with Artaud's idea of a theatre of the double. Spingler argues that Jarry wants the character of Ubu to assist in creating a theatre of images, not a narrative. In this regard, it is of great import for the performance of Ubu to lead the audience to accessing its subconscious. Spingler notes that "[b]y distorting the human image of the actor," through the application of the mask of Ubu, "Jarry invented a character who would suggest to the audience aspects of themselves deeply hidden beneath the appearance of civilization and culture. The play reshapes the actor's living presence into a concrete metaphor which reveals to the spectator his dark and primordial nature" (1-2). The image Jarry intended the audience to observe was to spark each spectator's individual subconscious and expose his/her baser existence.

Spingler notes that Jarry also gave precise directions for the actor's voice; the "French could be accentless and pure, but the actor's voice had to be completely transformed. Its tone, texture and resonance had to be altered so that its sound would appeal directly to the spectator's subconscious" (2). One can easily observe Spingler's activation of a primitivism based on Jarry's

⁷⁹ In 1970, Manuel Grossman published an article for *Modern Drama*, "Alfred Jarry and the Theater of His Time." The last half of his article, to a certain extent, is a re-presentation of what he had established in his 1967 article. He highlights again the work of Esslin, Pronko, and Wellwarth to draw *Ubu Roi* into position as forerunner and initiator of what would become the contemporary avant-garde. In the first part of his essay, Grossman summarizes the theatre of the half dozen years before *Ubu*'s premiere. He briefly discusses Andre Antoine's Théâtre Libre as a reaction to the "well-made" plays of the Boulevard, and the Symbolist response to Antoine's Naturalism: Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art and later, Lugné-Poe's Théâtre de l'Œuvre.

desire to access his audience's subconscious, or imagination. He argues that this is a necessary element in Jarry's dramaturgy in the play. By arguing that through Jarry's theatre of images he was deeply connected to Artaud, Spingler only strengthens Jarry's stranglehold over the avant-garde of the twentieth century. If Jarry had used elements found in all of these individual avant-gardes (dada, Surrealism, Artaud, Absurdist) in so many different respects, how can a positivistic history not read back on him that he was pre-Absurdist? Spingler's essay, like Arrivé's semiotic study, is a prime example of the way in which theoretical explorations of Jarry's work diversified and allowed for the development of new readings once the play had reached canonical status.

As *Ubu Roi* had reached the pinnacle of literary success, the play appeared in two English-language editions in 1973. In his *Themes of Drama: An Anthology*, editor George Wellwarth makes explicit his intent to affect students of theatre. Wellwarth directly addresses his desire for the anthology in drama classes, as he writes, "the student should be able to see that the form and content of a play is directly attributable to, and is an index of, the social conditions under which the play was written. This should greatly enhance the book's pedagogic value" (v). Wellwarth indirectly points to the process of gaining cultural capital for a work of literature, through being taught in schools (Guillory). As for the construction of the anthology itself, "[t]he purpose of this book," Wellwarth explains, "is to demonstrate how some of the principal themes of drama have changed as the social surroundings in which they were written have changed" (v). Wellwarth breaks the anthology down into six different themes, which he believes to be the six "chief categories" of drama. He places his and Michael Benedikt's translation, *King Ubu*, along with Büchner's *Woyzeck*, Adamov's *All Against All*, and Roger Cornish's *Open Twenty-Four Hours*, under the theme of "Alienation."

In his introduction to the section “Alienation,” Wellwarth explains that man’s “unwilling realization that he *is* alone in the cosmos is called alienation” (551, original emphasis). For Wellwarth, the plays he includes under this theme all deal with humanity’s alienation in some way. He argues that the consciousness of alienation was formed in *Ubu Roi*. He repeats some points that he had made in his article, “Alfred Jarry: The Sower of the Avant-Garde Drama,” such as the notion that the play had given birth to the Theatre of the Absurd. He also writes, regarding Jarry’s use of scatology, “[t]he scatological references sprinkled throughout the play represent rebellion on its most instinctive and elementary level—that of a child’s refusal to bow to toilet training” (552). Wellwarth regards Jarry’s use of scatology as an overthrowing of conventional language and signs, signifying a complete rebellion on Jarry’s part. He ends his introduction to the play by claiming that Ubu—fifty years prior to what would be considered contemporary, or “present-day” avant-garde drama—personifies and makes tangible all the relentlessly malevolent forces of the avant-garde: “the grotesquely bloated but still human figure of Father Ubu has all the attributes of the cosmic malignant force that pervades the avant-garde drama” (552). For Wellwarth, Ubu embodies the baseness implicit in characters of Beckett’s, Adamov’s, Genet’s, and others’ plays.

Wellwarth does not discuss Jarry’s personal life or biography, except in reference to his overall rebellion against society (Wellwarth only devotes half a page to introducing the play). In his three-line note on Jarry, he calls him an “eccentric personality” (646). With his nod to Jarry’s exceptional daily praxis, Wellwarth supports the myth of *Ubu Roi* as constructed through the strategies of the “U-Effect.” With their growing power over the possible ways of discussing the play—due to their ability to mutate and accept new statements into their range of dominance—

simply stating the connection between *Ubu Roi* and the contemporary avant-garde confirms the proper functioning of the “U-Effect” strategies.

Appearing in the same year as Wellwarth’s anthology is David Copelin’s translation, *Ubu Rex*. Just five years removed from Simon Watson Taylor and Cyril Connolly’s 1968 translation of the play, Copelin boasts that he has done the first English Canadian version of it. After Wright’s, and Shattuck and Taylor’s previous examples, he includes illustrations done by Chuck Carlson between each Act. Unlike Themerson’s illustrations for Wright’s translation, and Siné’s for Shattuck and Taylor’s, however, these drawings appear to try to capture the grotesque, base physical elements of Ubu, rather than cast him and his fellow characters in a playful light. Carlson’s drawings represent only Père Ubu, and they make him look like a pile of dung, quite distinct from Themerson’s juvenile-looking, action oriented sketches.

In a note at the end of the play, Copelin explains that *Ubu Roi* had premiered in 1896, provoking a riot and a controversy in the critical press. His translator’s notes take the title “The First Polish Joke.” He says that he felt the need to do his own translation because the previous ones seem written only to be read, not performed. Copelin says that works such as Esslin’s have guaranteed *Ubu* will remain an important work, especially in the tradition leading to the Absurd. He argues, however, that there is another force at work in keeping the work relevant: “*Ubu* lives, somehow, and will continue to live as long as our theatre and our politics are dominated by the venal, brutal *bourgeoisie* of which King Ubu and his gross Queen are mirror images, not merely cartoon-figure burlesques” (82). Copelin believes that the spirit of the play lives on, almost eighty years later.⁸⁰ Later in his notes, Copelin completes his references to the “U-Effect,”

⁸⁰ His idea that the reason *Ubu* remains relevant due to the bourgeoisie control of theatre is an interesting concept. Copelin’s reasoning indicates to me that he speaks of the mainstream theatre (I would assume that Copelin would not take the avant-garde theatre as under control of the bourgeoisie). If so, he seems to argue that *Ubu* has work to do in the mainstream theatre, an issue I will deal with at length in Chapter 3. What is *Ubu Roi*’s place in mainstream

arguing that Jarry “found Ubu within himself, and then he slowly *became* Ubu as he drank himself to death. But Ubu did not become Jarry; Ubu survived, only to reappear elsewhere” (82). With this reference, Copelin reifies the myth of *Ubu*, and, through this enunciative statement, allows the “U-Effect” to strengthen its rhetorical power and the play to maintain its place in the Western theatrical canon.

The journal *Dada/Surrealism* features Jarry in a 1974 special issue called “Jarry Tzara Art.” In this issue, several articles expand the English-language study of the play. In his “The Gyres of *Ubu Roi*,” John Erickson examines Ubu’s *gidouille* (what he defines as the spiral symbol situated on Ubu’s belly that represents his undying appetite) to tell the story of Père Ubu’s journey as the symbol connects to his forays into the world and back to himself. Erickson shows, through illustration, that the spiral begins at the center of his belly, indicating modest beginnings (in his past, unknown; in the action of the play, a captain of the Polish Dragoons; in the future, on the deck of a ship). The spiral moves outward, indicating that his belly “superimposes itself on the world,” as he moves through the plot of the play (6). The spiral leads Ubu to a different position in the world in relation to material wealth and status (in the past, the king of Aragon; in the action of the play, the king of Poland, then flight from Poland; in the future, he projects himself to claim the title of Master of Finances of France). Erickson clarifies this illustration, in explaining, “Ubu’s belly is the cornucopia inverted: instead of spilling its abundance, it sucks it up from the world. The finite and the infinite find a meeting-ground in Père Ubu’s belly—the finite being the immediacy of his satisfaction, the infinite being the expansion of Self, which moves outward to swallow the world” (7). Erickson’s article appears to be the first in English that examines an aspect of the play from a semiotic view.

theatre? Would the play have any efficacy if performed in mainstream spaces in 1973 and beyond? If the avant-garde goes mainstream, who holds the power in determining its influence and contribution to theatre history narratives? I will pursue these questions in Chapter 3 in relation to professional productions of *Ubu Roi*.

Following Erickson in the issue is Bettina Knapp, with her “A Spiritual Heir: Antonin Artaud and the Théâtre Alfred Jarry.” In her article, Knapp separates the issue of Jarry’s influence on Artaud’s practice at the Théâtre Alfred Jarry from considering them together in a continuous line between Jarry and the Absurdist. The main connection Knapp lands on is through their mutual insistence on making a performance “anti-rational.” “Artaud, like Jarry, opted for a militantly anti-rational theatre that would divest the stage happenings of all logic and verisimilitude and would touch, bruise, and shock the spectator. He believed that only through the irrational can the proper theatrical atmosphere be created, life be pared down to its essentials and so be illuminated—and reality emerge” (12). As “spiritual” kin, it can be seen that they shared a similar philosophy, though not necessarily the same aesthetic. Knapp provides a simple foundation for scholars to follow, and her article is frequently cited in future scholarship.

The final article about *Ubu* in the “Jarry” issue of *Dada/Surrealism* is Rosette C. Lamont’s “*Ubu Roi*: A Collage.” Establishing Jarry as a devotee of world literature in school, Lamont runs through the collage of references she finds in *Ubu Roi* to works of the Western canon, such as several Shakespeare plays, elements of Rabelais, *The Odyssey*, elements of German Romanticism, and French Symbolism. She finds references to French history, with Ubu’s flight from Russia mirroring Napoleon’s (23). She also reads the prophetic quality into the play, with Ubu’s use of his “final solution,” the disembraining machine: “[t]he creator of Ubu seems to have foreseen our infinitely ruthless society ruled by mass production and mass extermination, a civilization in which people and things are equated as products” (23). Lamont dubs his essays, “Twelve Arguments on the Theatre,” and “On the Uselessness of the Theatrical in Theatre,” an “*Ubu* manifesto” (26). Her comparison of the play to literature in the Western tradition is the first in the English-language, beyond glancing nods toward similarities between

Ubu Roi and Shakespeare and Rabelais. Her labeling of Jarry's essays as a manifesto of sorts also represents what appears to be a first, making it much easier to tie him into the avant-gardes of the early twentieth century, which used numerous manifestoes to clarify their philosophies.

This collection of essays, and indeed the ones that precede those in *Dada/Surrealism*, demonstrates how studies of *Ubu Roi* and Jarry had been valued by the English-speaking academy by the 1970s. The play's canonization, having been, for the most part guaranteed, provided the onus for scholars to take on the study of the play, again. As Frank Kermode argues in his essay, "Institutional Control of Interpretation," "once a work becomes canonical the work of the interpreter begins again" (77). Scholars return to *Ubu Roi* to re-determine whether the play has the "requisite qualities" to maintain its canonicity.

With her monograph, *Ubu Roi: An Analytical Study*, Judith Cooper provides the first full-length work in English devoted solely to *Ubu Roi*. Cooper participates in the narrative created by Esslin and followed closely by Pronko and Wellwarth, that Jarry was the leader that many avant-garde/Modernist artists later followed. "Many of the themes and techniques that were present in *Ubu* or that Jarry discussed in his writings on the theater have become important motifs in modern art and literature and especially in the contemporary avant-garde drama ... we must ... give the credit to Jarry for having been the first to burst the dam of literary and theatrical propriety" (110-111). In her study, Cooper takes advantage of the play's canonized status and performs her own interpretation of the script, analyzing *Ubu Roi* for its plot structure, construction of characters, and Jarry's use of language.

Cooper has made a sound analysis of Jarry's script, but what gives her study its greatest value is her literature review. Her review of literature is well organized and helpful for tracking the major players in the creation of value in relation to Jarry's work to that time. While Sutton

had essentially created an expansive literature review with his 1966 dissertation (he includes every mention of the play he can possibly find), Cooper only includes works that she deems significant to the study of *Ubu Roi* up to 1974.⁸¹ Cooper's work demonstrates that by the early 1970s, the notion of Jarry and *Ubu*'s influence on theatre of the mid-twentieth century was deeply embedded in legitimate scholarship, and her work serves to further entrench the play's influence. Her rehearsing of the narrative (similar to the project I undertake in this chapter) of scholars' solidifying the call to Jarry and the play to serve as the initiator of the historical avant-garde and predecessor to the then contemporary avant-garde acts as an anchor in scholarship.⁸² Works like Cooper's and mine fall into an assumption of New Historicism, as articulated by H. Aram Veeser in his "Introduction" to the anthology, *The New Historicism*, that "a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe. (xi) I have referred to this assumption of other scholars throughout the study, but must note that especially with a work like mine, and to a lesser extent Cooper's, the purpose of which is to expose the passing of the metaphorical torch from one scholar to the next in the making of the myth of *Ubu Roi*, that we cannot hope to escape the economy (legitimate scholarship with heavy cultural currency) in which we do our work. Cooper's words became available for other scholars to use to describe the legitimization of the play in scholarship, and scholars have put them to work to continue the functioning of this economy of cultural capital.

⁸¹ Sutton tends also to work in generalities and avoids conclusions on material, often ending paragraphs with quotations and not explaining their purpose. An additional detractor to Sutton's value as a literature review is that he looks at each appearance of every one of Jarry's works—one has to browse the entire study to find the literature on *Ubu Roi*. Another unfortunate reality for Sutton is that while he is able to include Esslin's initial essay on the "Theatre of the Absurd," he does not (nor, perhaps, could he, due to timing of the study) cover Esslin's book, or those of Pronko and Wellwarth. All of those studies are key, especially when considered together, in creating the main thread of scholarship on *Ubu Roi* in the latter half of the century.

⁸² My project has a different goal than hers, however. Where she works through the literature on *Ubu Roi* to aid scholars in finding helpful foundations in the study of the play, I look at the literature in order to view the power it draws on and adds to in making the play legitimate. Cooper's study assumes the play's legitimacy; mine asks why and how Cooper makes that assumption.

The studies included in this section reveal that already in mid-1970s English-language scholarship, *Ubu Roi* was tied up in the theatrical avant-garde tradition, a narrative that took the play as a fundamental piece in the development of much of contemporary theatre. As a key member of this “development” generated by the academy, the play earned elevation to premier status in legitimate culture. This is especially true, because, according to Guillory, the academy is the regulator of cultural capital. As such, *Ubu Roi* was called on for further examination and interpretation of the play (as Kermode has suggested in “Institutional Control of Interpretation”). The play’s power as a firmly established member of the Western canon had attained the ability to self-reproduce, hailing itself in discourse to maintain its permanence (Foucault, *History*). However, if the value of *Ubu* seems to have reached its peak by the mid-1970s, that is an illusion, for the decade of the 80s would bring, especially in the English language, more scholarship on the play and Jarry than had ever been seen before.

D. Academe Overrun by Jarry: French and English Scholarship in the 1980s

Beginning in 1980, there was an explosion of English-language Jarry scholarship, a large part of which were expansive studies of Jarry, *Ubu*, and his other works, mostly in critical biographical form.⁸³ With a nascent postmodernism bubbling, Jarry’s world without a center spoke to scholars, and drove a desire to explore Jarry’s life and works more fully. Long before then, *Ubu Roi* had assumed its canonical position, making it a powerful curator of culture. As Kermode has argued, scholars were freed, and even compelled, by the canonical status of the play, to take on more diverse aspects of Jarry and his work. Moreover, scholars could also engage in varied methodologies in their studies. After the example of Michel Arrivé in his *Lire*

⁸³ Peter Brook’s 1977 production, a compilation of all four *Ubu* plays, but mostly consisting of *Ubu Roi* and *Ubu Enchaîné*, became a significant addition to the production history of the play, and would attract some critical attention in the 1980s scholarship. I will address this production at length in Chapter 3.

Jarry, semiotics became a popular lens through which to examine Jarry's work, and *Ubu Roi* in particular. In this section, I will show how pataphysics had itself become a set of practices and ideas through which to evaluate all of Jarry's work.

Building on Shattuck's and others' explanations of pataphysics, scholars began to engage with the imaginary science in their studies. The first of these is Henri Behar, with his *Jarry dramaturge* (1980).⁸⁴ In his study, Behar devotes a chapter to a discussion of Jarry's dramaturgy as it relates to pataphysics. He labels one section "Une dramaturgie pataphysique" ("A Dramaturgy of Pataphysics"). Within that section, Behar argues that Jarry's dramaturgy "tends toward synthesis" (187). In doing so, his plays affirm the tenet of pataphysics that declares opposites equal. He gives as examples the plots of *Ubu Roi* and *Ubu Enchaîné*, and the themes Jarry plays with in those works and *Cesar Antichrist*, including liberty and slavery, despotism and anarchy, Christ and Antichrist, and Ubu is God and his adversary (187). For Behar, these all demonstrate the pataphysical dramaturgy Jarry employs, and make pataphysics an important component to understanding Jarry's work.

Behar also offers a useful accounting of the play's production history. In an appendix, he provides a listing of 50 international productions of the Ubu plays and adaptations.⁸⁵ He gives the location, production staff, and principal actors of each production, and sources for acquiring more information on the productions. While he does not provide any explanation or description of the productions, it is nonetheless one of the most helpful accounts of productions of the Ubu plays available. The others, Cooper's and Beaumont's, both detail professional productions, but Cooper's list is limited and her descriptions are brief, and Beaumont fails to reveal his sources.

⁸⁴ Behar's study is considered a re-issue of his 1973 *Jarry: Le monstre et la marionnette* with the addition of an extra chapter (Beaumont, *Alfred Jarry* 347).

⁸⁵ Behar's listing also includes 10 productions of other plays of Jarry's, such as *L'amour en visites* and *L'objet aimé*.

For a play with such a rich production history, Behar's list of productions is crucial for helping to bring some of those productions to light.

In the same year, Maurice Marc LaBelle publishes his *Alfred Jarry: Nihilism and the Theater of the Absurd*. LaBelle examines many of Jarry's literary works chronologically, from his earliest short plays and poems in his childhood through his last novels and incomplete works. In his analysis/critique, LaBelle argues that Jarry was a "consummate iconoclast" (1). He uses his entire book to drive this point home. While he seeks to explain Jarry's revolt and demonstrate the effect of his alternative dramaturgy on the "Theatre of the Absurd," LaBelle does fall in line with the bulk of scholarship on Jarry and rehearses the narrative of *Ubu*'s iconoclastic force: "This play became the most seminal, revolutionary and iconoclastic play of the modern theatre" (43). One of the most interesting moves LaBelle makes is to challenge the tendency of scholars like Shattuck, Esslin, and, most recently, Behar, to take pataphysics too seriously. As I have previously mentioned, Jarry put down the anti-science of pataphysics in his novel, *Exploits and Opinions of Dr. Faustroll, Pataphysician*. In the novel, Jarry devoted one chapter in 47 to the "science of imaginary solutions." Because of that, LaBelle believes that scholars err in using pataphysics as a lens through which to view Jarry's works; he thinks it is not as significant as most critics make it out to be. LaBelle may be correct in his belief, but that does not stop the fact that many scholars had not only used pataphysics to analyze Jarry's work, but also to speak about how he lived his life. Despite LaBelle's argument, pataphysics had become an important part of scholarship on Jarry, and, as it will become clear, its use continues into this century.

One of the first issues Linda Klieger Stillman points out in the preface to her 1983 book, *Alfred Jarry*, is that although Jarry's *Ubu* plays and other peripheral works involving the character total about a third of Jarry's oeuvre, they have received a disproportionate amount of

scholarly treatment (though Stillman laments even scholarship on the Ubu plays is not as bountiful as it should be [i]).⁸⁶ Therefore, in her study, she takes as her goal the greater exposure of Jarry's lesser-known writings: "This book will be a first step toward bringing Jarry's other texts out of the dark and into the public domain: they are daring and enigmatic works of art" (ii). Indeed, her language here reflects her approach to the project. In her six chapters that examine Jarry's methodology and philosophy and writings (her first chapter of the seven is a brief biography), she uses the lens of Freudian (and others) psychoanalysis to read his works, arguing that through all of his works, Jarry exposed his Id ("the dark" in her statement) to the "public domain."

Apparently unfazed by LaBelle's point, in her second chapter, "Pataphysically Speaking....," Stillman develops a complex reading of pataphysics that will serve to foreground her examination of all of her subsequent subjects. Taking pataphysics as the guiding philosophy under which Jarry lived his life, Stillman brings pataphysics to bear on her reading of every individual work: "[Jarry's] text focalizes and concretely organizes Jarry's indestructible

⁸⁶ Preceding Stillman's study is a special edition of the literary review, *Europe*, dedicated to Jarry, for its March-April 1981 issue. This special issue brought together the work of many prominent Jarry scholars, including Noël Arnaud, Michel Arrivé, and Henri Behar, whom I have already mentioned. Others who I will later discuss include Patrick Besnier and Sylvain-Christian David. In this issue, scholars wrote about the philosophy of Jarry's works. In the collection, scholars unveiled several sets of unpublished correspondence between Jarry and Rachilde, and Jarry and Claude Terrasse. The issue had individual sections laid out for "Jarry and Europe," and "On Ubu." The section on Ubu contained a variety of articles on the character of Père Ubu and other material related to the play. Henri Behar wrote an article about the Ubu plays in production; several texts related to the publication and initial performance of *Ubu Roi* were included as well.

Also preceding Stillman is the convening of a seminar, the "Colloque de Cerisy" in the commune of Cerisy in northwestern France in the summer of 1981. The proceedings of this seminar, organized by the Centre Culturel International de Cerisy – la – Salle, were published in 1985. The published papers represent contributions of many of the major Jarry scholars at the time, and focus on a wide variety of aspects of Jarry's life and work. The most relevant paper to my study is Anne C. Murch's "Ubu en Australie" ("Ubu in Australia"). Murch describes five different productions in Australia staged between 1962 and 1979. Apparently, due to the page constraints, she felt she could not go into detail about the production companies and the production team members—she does not mention a single name involved in any production. She also provides limited details on several of the productions (due to, she laments, lack of available information). Generally, from the details she does deliver, it is clear that in those five Australian productions there is as much diversity in production values and techniques as there are in productions in the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada in the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first (I will make this clear in Chapter 3).

yearnings to escape the routine and the commonplace. Pataphysics serves as the locus of both oneiric and rhetorical displacement. It provides access to another dimension of thought and language” (16). The work that Stillman does in this chapter is significant to further studying Jarrry’s works through this lens, and is one of the richest, most nuanced engagements with pataphysics into the twenty-first century. Despite her stated goal to bring forward Jarrry’s lesser-known works, Stillman’s third chapter (and first actual analysis of Jarrry’s texts), “Long Live the King: Ubu,” contains a close reading of Jarrry’s most well known works. This is not necessarily a bad thing, nor is the chapter a trivial or already-done treatment of Ubu and the plays, but it is important to note the position of privilege to which Stillman assigns these texts.⁸⁷ Imbued with its power in discourse to place *Ubu* at the false center of a center-less world, even a study that seeks to unveil Jarrry’s other works must defer to the play.

Two more elements of Stillman’s work stand out as significant. While the first element I point out is not at all distinct from the tradition in Jarrry scholarship, it is significant for my study. In her analysis of the language in the Ubu plays, Stillman asserts: “‘*Merdre*,’ the first word uttered in *King Ubu* (and the cause of scandal at its premiere), is a defiant child-like projectile hurled at the disdained order of the adult world” (47). Stillman commits the already common assertion of the facticity of this narrative without showing verification. The strategies of the “U-Effect” have gained such dominion over discourse to make proof of this statement irrelevant. Because scandal is now implicit in knowledge of *Ubu Roi*, there is no need for confirmation; in making the statement, Stillman affirms the existence of the scandal upon “*merdre*.” The second element worth commenting on is her use of psychoanalysis to examine Jarrry’s texts.

Psychoanalysis plays into a semiotic approach to texts. Stillman has taken Arrivé’s lead and used

⁸⁷ This is similar to the position of privilege that Shattuck and Taylor give the Ubu plays in their *Selected Works of Alfred Jarrry*.

semiotic analysis from a structuralist viewpoint to guide her readings. The trend of using semiotics will continue beyond her.

In *Alfred Jarry: A Critical and Biographical Study* (1984), Keith Beaumont pursues an analysis of the gamut of Jarry's works as he contextualizes them within a biography of the man. While providing fascinating and insightful readings into Jarry's texts, Beaumont never comes out and explains the purpose of his book; in fact, he admits that Jarry's biography has been well established over the thirty years prior to his writing. Beaumont does put forward his own reading of Jarry's texts, and setting them within Jarry's biography is apparently his major purpose. One interesting detail that Beaumont asserts is that Jarry's familial relationships as a young child—contrary to what many scholars would like to believe—were relatively bourgeois: “There is evidence also that ... Jarry was to remain a loyal and devoted son, brother and nephew, by no means as ready to throw over all the conventions of respectable ‘bourgeois’ society as ... accounts suggest” (28). Beaumont argues that in constructing their narratives, scholars have trusted potentially flawed retrospective accounts of Jarry's youth given by former classmates and acquaintances: “It seems highly probable that the authors of these accounts unwittingly exaggerated certain features of his character and behavior in light of what he was later to become and of the ‘legend’ thus created” (28). Here, Beaumont poses a challenge to the construction of Jarry's biography. At this point, however, due to the stifling stranglehold of the “U-Effect” over discourse, Beaumont's contradiction would not be recognized in the immediate future.

In discussing the meanings of Jarry's texts, Beaumont uses poststructuralist semiotics to argue that in Jarry's work the signifier breaks away from the signified, creating ambiguous, indeterminate, polysemic texts (68-69). Related to this indeterminacy of meaning that Beaumont views within each of Jarry's works is an intertextuality among his texts. Beaumont spends time

establishing intertextuality as one of four key ideas or tendencies he views in Jarry's writing. The other three include: 1.) anti-realistic, naturalistic attitude, 2.) fascination with form, 3.) an absolute literature (301). Scholars following Beaumont praise his rigor of scholarship in the biographical work. His opening up of Jarry's œuvre to a network of intertextuality is an example that will be mimicked by several scholars after him. Due to Beaumont's importance in later scholarship, his book stands as a key marker of the value of *Ubu* in a post-structuralist academic world which highlights intertextuality in and among texts.

The most outstanding remarks Beaumont makes about *Ubu* include: questioning how much Jarry actually lived the presence of Ubu; his claims that with *Ubu* Jarry made a "total rejection of *all* existing theatrical forms" (108); his suggestion that all would-be producers of the play heed Jarry's published desires for the initial production at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre; and his claims that the "preview" of the play on December ninth did not have the same violent reaction as the official premiere the following evening. Several of these assertions represent contradictions to the discourse that the discursive formations have imposed. Beaumont attempts to reverse the statement of one of the "U-Effect" strategies by claiming that Jarry as Père Ubu was a marvelously and delicately crafted fabrication. He looks to Jarry's novel *Days and Nights* for evidence of this: "The Jarry who wrote *Les Jours et les Nuits* had little in common with the colourful eccentric whom his contemporaries identified with Ubu. Yet he was working on this novel at the same time as he was preparing for the staging of *Ubu Roi*, in 1896, and it was completed in April 1897" (126). Beaumont's argument supports an overall drive to paint Jarry as a much lighter, much more relatable human.

Where Arnaud asserted that a violent reaction occurred at the preview performance and hinted that the opening night audience was more docile, Beaumont argues that the preview on

December 9 did not elicit the intensity of response as the premiere performance the following evening. He repeats the now generally accepted model in which the preview performance went smoothly until Gémier used another actor's hand for a door lock mechanism, stuck his hand in, made a clicking noise, and turned the actor's arm as if opening a door in Act 3, Scene 5 (100). Contrary to Arnaud, Beaumont appears to believe Rachilde and others that at the opening night performance havoc started from Ubu's first "*merdre*." It is at the opening performance, instead of the preview, where Beaumont claims all of the back-and-forth audience bickering occurred. Beaumont does not cite the sources of his information to argue that there was a raucous opening night performance, but in his 2011 Jarry biography, Alastair Brotchie will tediously point to all accounts that would seem to confirm Beaumont's narrative. At this point in scholarship on the play, Beaumont has proposed that the narrative of the 1896 production of *Ubu Roi* read that the preview performance had a fifteen minute delay once Ubu opened the door to the jail at Thorn and that the opening night performance had the "real explosion" as soon as "*merdre*" was uttered. His proposal will gain support and be clarified almost thirty years later.

Having presented significant challenges to the standard Jarry scholarship, such as recalibrating the proceedings of both 1896 performances, Jarry's childhood behavior, and his connection with his foil, Ubu, Beaumont's study provides the potential to alter the subject position of scholars after him, and under which future study is partially determined. Kendall R. Phillips argues that "[t]he articulation of these contradictions creates a *disorientation* as the enunciation of the contradiction *disrupts* the regularized strategies for maintaining discursive and material coherence, ultimately *displacing* these relations and, indeed, the subject positions of enunciation themselves" ("Rhetoric" 495, original emphasis). For the first time in decades in English-language Jarry scholarship, Beaumont introduces a disruption to the firmly established

discursive relations in which the play is suspended. While its effects are not immediately visible, the disruption will ultimately allow for substantial reconsideration of the myth of *Ubu Roi*.

Also appearing in 1984 is Nigey Lennon's *Alfred Jarry: The Man with the Axe*. Lennon is a self-described cheerleader for Jarry. In a move similar to past translators of *Ubu Roi*, Lennon uses many hand-drawn illustrations done by Bill Griffith to animate the story she seeks to tell. She uses hyperbolic language to create a legendary persona for Jarry and for Ubu. She calls Ubu an "evil character" without hesitation or nuancing that reading (45). In reference to *Ubu Roi*, Lennon makes the bold claim that "never before had any play taken such a dim view of humanity" (50). She does this, again, without a second thought or explanation of why she believes thusly. In discussing the premiere of the play, Lennon uses the incorrect date, December 11, 1896, likely handed down from Shattuck. If the error is editorial, it may be symptomatic of a greater issue with the text's general lack of care in historical detail and lack of rigor in analysis of text and event. With few references to her source material, it is difficult to track where Lennon obtains some of her information. In terms of import to the scholarly transmission of the myth of *Ubu Roi*, Lennon's book is insignificant; her work does not appear frequently in the bibliographies of studies after her. I include it here in order to demonstrate how easily it has become to accept baseless stories and spectacular tales when creating theatre history, especially the history of such a controversial play, whose controversy propels it all the further into sensationalism.

Claude Schumacher explores Jarry's biography and Ubu plays in *Alfred Jarry and Guillaume Apollinaire* (1985). His is standard fare; he follows Shattuck's example and supplements his narrative with many anecdotes about Jarry's life. As opposed to Beaumont, he claims that Jarry did take on the character of Ubu in life. In his chapter analyzing *Ubu Roi*,

Schumacher focuses on the plot, time, language, and character (as Cooper does), and also emphasizes what he sees as the play's roots in the tragedies and histories of Shakespeare. He claims: "Jarvis has borrowed a Shakespearean plot, the broad outlines of which he follows quite faithfully while at the same time treating with utter derision a theme which the earlier author approaches with reverence" (56). Schumacher makes this move to strengthen his argument that the play flies in the face of theatrical tradition. Schumacher asserts, "With *Ubu Roi*, Jarvis undermines the foundations of our western theatrical tradition more radically than any playwright has yet dared; even the most daring of our contemporary experiments are tame compared to his achievements" (54). In this facet, relating to scholars recently preceding him, he is in agreement with Beaumont, but disagrees with both LaBelle and Cooper. I am not certain that Schumacher's assertion is universally acknowledged and/or justified. It seems to me that each epoch will have particular vulnerabilities to its own traditions/standards, and the challenges to those traditions are not necessarily any less "radical," or "daring" than Jarvis's work. Regardless, certainly some of the experiments in postmodernism that had been occurring by Schumacher's time could have posed a counter to his argument. Schumacher also includes a brief chapter in which he details a few other productions of the plays, notably: BBC-2's 1976 television production starring Donald Pleasance; Peter Brook's 1977 production at his Bouffes du nord theatre; Sylvain Itkine's 1937 premiere of *Ubu Enchaîné*.

Schumacher's analysis, after his contemporaries', is fairly simple. He tracks some of the same elements of the script while making less of an argument—his work is, for the most part, descriptive. Schumacher also returns to an aspect of *Ubu Roi* that Esslin had read onto the play in pulling out what for him seems to be Jarvis's moralistic purpose of the play: "Why does MacNure [Bordure] live so long and why does he die so definitively? He lives on because Jarvis wants to

emphasize the blackness of the traitor and show how one act of treason leads to another” (44).

Despite this, Schumacher includes a discussion of pataphysics in which he concludes:

So it is that ‘pataphysicians refuse to distinguish between moral, immoral and amoral acts, between left- and right-wing political parties, or between rich and trivial works of art. The sign of equality (=) is raised to a universal principle expressed by the equivalence of opposites. $0 = \infty$. Jarry’s two major plays are based on that principle.

Schumacher could easily explain away his inconsistency here with the mere mention of the word, “pataphysics,” but it likely speaks to the general lack of rigor that I find in this text as opposed to studies such as LaBelle’s, Stillman’s, and especially Beaumont’s.

In 1987, Keith Beaumont publishes his second study focusing on Jarry and *Ubu Roi*. His monograph, for the series, Critical Guides to French Texts, is titled *Jarry, Ubu Roi*. Beaumont’s brief study (97 pages) is only the second book in the English language, after Cooper’s, devoted solely to the play. The goal of Beaumont’s study is to explain “how and why” the premiere of *Ubu Roi* inaugurated an aesthetic revolution (9). He argues that Jarry was indeed attempting to overhaul theatre with the 1896 premiere, and he takes a third of the book to describe six elements of the play through which Jarry incited his revolution. Beaumont looks at the play’s structure and plot, characters and characterization, language and verbal humor, action and gestural humor, the figure of Ubu, and the play in relation to myth and childhood vision. His work on these elements is a continuation of the analysis he undertook in his 1984 *Alfred Jarry*, and he often references his previous book for further reading on the subject. As Pronko had argued the avant-garde meant a renewal of theatre, Beaumont asserts that Jarry’s project of simplification had the goal of revitalizing theatre by returning to the “simpler,” more “naïve” art of mime and puppet theatre

(90). Again, primitivism is invoked to describe Jarry's dramaturgy. Beaumont states that others, such as Edward Gordon Craig, Gaston Baty, Ghelderode, Ionesco, Arrabal, and Beckett, continued that trajectory of primitivism through various methods (90). In another section, Beaumont continues his pecking at the smooth discourse of the "U-Effect," as he again denies the connection between Jarry and *Ubu*, but considers the premiere as a revolutionary event, nonetheless. The most distinctive chapter in this study is Beaumont's fifth chapter, on the play's production history.

Beaumont delivers just the third treatment of *Ubu Roi* in production outside of the 1896 premiere. Before Beaumont, Judith Cooper and Henri Behar had been the only other scholars to detail the play's production history.⁸⁸ Alongside the French productions that I described in the first chapter, Brotchie illustrates later performances spanning the globe. Through his chapter, Beaumont highlights the variety of approaches that have been taken to produce the play. He argues that it may be due to a search for novelty "at all costs," and laments, as he had in his 1984 study, that most directors do not heed Jarry's intentions for the play (84). Another tendency that he finds among the productions is that the play seems to appeal to the youthful, and young at heart. The final trend Beaumont takes away from the productions is that beyond enthusiasm for the play, the productions that have been—and can be—most successful tend to demonstrate "discipline, careful organization and extreme precision of timing and tone" (85). Beaumont's descriptions are valuable for ascertaining the feel of the major productions through the play's history. For the most part, however, he does not provide sources to look further into records of the productions he discusses.

⁸⁸ Sutton spoke at some length on the reception of Lugne-Poe's 1922, and Vilar's 1958 productions in his dissertation. Behar's production history was merely a rundown of production dates, locations, production staff and key actors, and sources for more information.

Beaumont's scholarship is thorough and convincing, but his disregard for showing his work seems more along the lines of scholars who take entrenched narratives about the play for granted. His bibliography lists only 22 major works that he has cited, but from my own search, I know that he had to obtain at least some of his information from sources outside those he disclosed on his short list. Beaumont has presented useful depictions of major productions; still, he does himself a disservice by glossing over his sources for information. In doing so, he allows his scholarship to be read as unqualified as Wellwarth or Shattuck. Here, it appears, even though Beaumont has offered evidence against it, the "U-Effect" has influenced Beaumont's decisions in presenting his scholarship.

In sum, the scholarship in the 1980s represents the power of *Ubu Roi* in full bloom, seemingly invincible in terms of its cultural currency. The several new enunciative statements and challenges offered in this period by Beaumont and Stillman expand the space within which considerations of the play, its author, and its history can take place. At the close of this period, English-language scholarship on Jarry and *Ubu* had peaked, and had made its mark on the literary analysis of the play.⁸⁹

E. Contemporary French and English Jarry Scholarship-1990-Present

Through most of the decade of the 1990s, there is a lull, relatively speaking, in studies on Jarry and *Ubu Roi*. Then, at the turn of the millennium, the scholarly output on Jarry increases again. The work done during the first decade of the twenty-first century demonstrates how deeply embedded in the economy of cultural capital the play has become. One scholar, Patrick Besnier, who published three books on Jarry since 1990, dominates the French scholarship of

⁸⁹ In 1989, the Lincoln Center Theater produces *Ubu*, a combination of *Ubu Roi* and *Ubu Cocu*. Most critics disparage the production, and its run is financially unsuccessful; it had only 25 performances. I will discuss this production in depth in Chapter 3.

this period. Several new translations appear during this time, as well as a new critical edition in French of Jarry's collected works. English-language scholarship features several full-length books on Jarry and his work, numerous high quality articles, and an introduction to the play in a textbook meant for secondary school students.

Besnier's 1990 book on Jarry, *Alfred Jarry*, is a fairly simply conceived study. In the first part, Besnier briefly traces the life of Jarry and connects moments of his biography to his various works. The second part, titled, "Conversations with an Icosahedron [20-sided polyhedron]," contains 27 mini-essays. In these, Besnier compares elements of Jarry's works to the works of those authors Besnier argues influenced Jarry. Besnier intends to put an understanding of Jarry together by examining "these 27 pieces of the puzzle" (169). Besnier would seem to complete his work of putting Jarry's life together with his 700-page biography published in 2005, also titled *Alfred Jarry*. Besnier believes, as he had even in his 1990 book, that Jarry has become invisible underneath the mask of Ubu. It is his purpose in his biography to remove that mask and make Jarry visible again. At its publication, Besnier's biography was easily the most complete biography to date. In his treatment of the premiere of the play, however, Besnier does not separate the premiere performance from the preview on the ninth. He concedes,

For *Ubu Roi*, many accounts and anecdotes, all published more or less long after the fact, and all more or less concocted, give a feeling of chaos and confusion. It is perhaps for this reason that it is most just to say of these evenings, where the departure is difficult to establish between the spontaneous hostile or enthusiastic reactions for control, that the accounts are very contradictory. Besides that, one cannot always distinguish between the two evenings. (271)

Content to leave it at that, the result is that Besnier only presents the narrative that Gémier had told, that the rioting did not begin until Act 3, Scene V, when he mimed the key going into an actor's hand, which was serving as the lock mechanism on the jail door. His work here seems like a fair compromise; when thinking through his logic with Mackay's argument in mind, Besnier's equivocation allows him to avoid getting entangled in the myth and move beyond it. His text is the most respected French biography among contemporary Jarry scholars. Jill Fell and Alastair Brotchie, both of whom have published English-language biographies on Jarry within the past three years, cite most heavily from Besnier and Noël Arnaud.

Having essentially told everything he needed to tell with his 2005 tome, Besnier's 2007 *Alfred Jarry* is much more modest. This text is a beautifully illustrated, brief biography of Jarry, which makes the reader feel the book is more about experiencing the photos of Jarry and color reproductions of some of his works (woodcuts, drawings of *Ubu*, decorations he included in his published works) than it is about facts of Jarry's life. The font style of the text reproduces fonts seen in some of Jarry's original publications. In some ways, Besnier's 2007 book shows how decadently we have come to lavish in our enjoyment of Jarry. Jarry and *Ubu Roi* have become the locus of pleasure of some scholars and enthusiasts who study the *fin de siècle* epoch and the theatrical avant-garde.

The playfulness evident in Jarry's works and life opens the possibilities of finding pleasure in his indeterminacy. It seems as though scholars like Besnier, and, as I will discuss later, Fell, are able to move beyond attempting to piece together a meaning from Jarry's fragmented world. They revel in the lack of fixity of his biography and works, and enjoy the sheer speculation of the verifiability of any reading of his life or artistic/literary contributions. Besnier's acceptance of the contested nature of the 1896 production signals the possibility of a

shift in the way studies on Jarry and *Ubu Roi* are conducted. He, Fell, as well as others that I will discuss in the last section of this chapter, may represent the coming ascent of a new set of strategies regarding knowledge of the play and its place in theatre history; strategies based on the instability of the received narrative.

In 1997, two English translations of *Ubu Roi* appear.⁹⁰ Maya Slater translates *Ubu Roi* for a compilation titled *Three Pre-Surrealist Plays*, which also includes Maeterlinck's *The Blind*, and Apollinaire's *The Breasts of Tiresias*. Kenneth MacLeish translates all three Ubu plays for a single collection, *The Ubu Plays*. These are the first two English-language translations published since Copelin's 1973 *Ubu Rex*. Both translators recapitulate the myth of *Ubu Roi* through exhibiting the strategies of the "U-Effect" in their introductions to the play(s). They discuss the scandalous premiere of the play in 1896, they assert its revolutionary dramaturgy, and they tell of Jarry's bizarre behavior. The continued reproduction of the "U-Effect" in translations reveals the high import on tying the script to its constructed legacy as the original avant-garde "masterpiece."

The first English-language guide to reading the play created for secondary-aged school students appears in 2000, in, *Drama for Students: Presenting Analysis, Context and Criticism on Commonly Studied Dramas, Volume 8*. The guide to *Ubu Roi* in the textbook contains sections on Jarry's biography, the history of the play, its plot, its characters, its themes, its style, etc. The article reinforces the myth of *Ubu Roi* and perpetuates the play's status as a canonical work.

Interestingly, despite, or because they consulted the work of notable scholars (Beaumont,

⁹⁰ In this same year, Albert Bermel publishes a new translation of *Ubu Cocu* in his edited volume of *A Dozen French Farces*. In his afterword, Bermel speaks of the works he has chosen: "If they don't amount to anything like an exhaustive exploration of French farcical theatre, they do present a range of dramatic structures, writing styles, background settings, and roles..." (396). He lists fantasy as a thematic unifier of *Ubu Cocu* with other farces in his collection. Bermel says that one characteristic all of the farces have in common is "satire in the form of ridicule" (398). He says, "[b]iting skits alternate in *Ubu Cocu* with forbidden scatological word games" (398). It is not hard to envision Bermel's characterization of *Ubu Cocu* after seeing how scholars talk about *Ubu Roi*'s energies.

Wellwarth, Shattuck), the uncredited author(s) of the article make(s) several mistakes. S/he dates the premiere of the play as December 11, 1896, and misspells Wellwarth's name (Wellworth). Mistakes like these, editorial or not, reflect the kind of careless history that is often practiced regarding this play. Perhaps it is due to the mythic status of the play that historians feel they can play fast and loose with the details of its history. Whatever the reason, this lack of care perpetuates inaccuracies that may have been the cause of how the play arose to this status in the first place—out of the space of dissension of the premiere, perhaps the confusion was such that, all anyone could do was to put down their best guess or the narrative they felt most strongly about. It is possible to trace the scholarly confusion over the event to Rachilde, who alleged that with the initial “*merdre*” on opening night, the audience was shocked and appalled. But only recent scholars such as Arnaud and Besnier in French, and Beaumont, Fell, and Brotchie have recognized this incongruity and pointed it out in their studies, and Fell and Brotchie both wrote their books after this article was published. Therefore, as is the case for many scholars writing on *Ubu Roi*, Jarry, and the avant-garde, if the author(s) of this article was not reading French and not paying close attention to Beaumont, s/he could have taken for fact what had been promulgated as the correct information for several generations of scholarship on the play. The work of further clarifying *Ubu Roi* and details of Jarry's life would get a great boost in the scholarship composed in the new millennium.

In her 2001 essay, “Puppetry and Pataphysics: Populism and the Ubu Cycle,” Kimberly Jannarone expands the field of research into Jarry's life and influences. More specifically Jannarone argues for the rural guignol puppet theater as tremendously influential in Jarry's creation of his Ubu cycle. She reads this influence in conjunction with pataphysics with the goal of demonstrating “Jarry's appropriation of puppet-theatre conventions as an attempt to make his

own theater a catalyst for imaginative action, not a product for consumption by the audience” (239). This reading seems to fall in line with Beaumont’s polysemic, intertextual reading of Jarry’s works that tends to assert the audience’s engagement happens at an imaginative, rather than material level. Jannarone tracks through a brief history of rural puppet theatre, pointing out in particular the close relationship—spatially in performance and socio-economically in everyday life—between the puppeteers and their audience (239-241). She moves on to discuss the influence of puppet theatre in *fin de siècle* Paris, as viewed in Kleist’s canonical “Über das Marionettentheater,” and the thoughts of André Antoine and Maurice Maeterlinck. She ties her history of puppet theatre together with the Ubu plays by exploring *Ubu Roi* while holding Jarry’s “anti-science” pataphysics as the lens through which the play should be viewed. She analyzes Jarry’s prescriptions for the scenery, his use of language, and his absurd action: “Many of the *Ubu* cycle’s apparently unstageable stage directions make more sense when viewed through the lens of puppet theatre: characters can be impaled, split in half, shoved into suitcases, all while continuing to speak. Boats can sail on land and crocodiles can come and go as they please” (249). Jannarone ultimately lands on the idea that Jarry’s “radical fusion of popular forms with elite philosophy attempts to catalyze the individual imagination of the audience members in order to force a rejection of bourgeois values – values that include laziness, inertia, and unquestioned acceptance” (250). Jarry’s uniting of highbrow and lowbrow culture, for Jannarone, is key to his overall project, which plays itself out even through his life. Jannarone has provided a new reading wherein she further re-interprets *Ubu Roi* and strengthens its grip on its position in the Western canon.⁹¹

⁹¹ Though it is tangential to my argument, it is important to note a second contribution Jannarone has made to the study of Jarry’s works. In “Jarry’s Caesar Antichrist and the Theatre of the Book,” (2009) Jannarone continues her reading of Jarry’s works at the level of the imagination. *Caesar Antichrist* contains a compressed version of *Ubu Roi* in its “Terrestrial Act,” which displays Père Ubu assisting the Antichrist wreaking havoc on the Earth. Jannarone

Building off of numerous historical references to *Ubu Roi*'s connections with Shakespeare, and in particular, *Macbeth*, in "Monsieur Macbeth: From Jarry to Ionesco" Ruth Morse seeks to revise the received narrative that Jarry's *Ubu Roi* and Ionesco's *Macbett* are adaptations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Instead, Morse asserts that *Ubu Roi* came to be taken for granted as an adaptation as critics equated Jarry's plot with what they assumed to be the plot of *Macbeth*. She argues that due to French translations that privileged particular plot elements, but did not include the whole story, French enthusiasts of *Macbeth* used and celebrated a text they thought was *Macbeth*, but to Morse's mind, was not. Morse clarifies: "in the nineteenth century, in France, there were ideas available of *Macbeth* and of the Macbeths which included, by plot, the political wheel; and, by character, the mix of supernatural and psychological (not yet so denominated) which excerpted the dagger and the sleepwalking" (116). For Morse, all of those elements make up the plot of *Macbeth*, and French translations in the nineteenth century included the former and left out the latter. Therefore, French critics took *Ubu Roi* to be an adaptation of what they thought was *Macbeth*. What deepened this presumed connection between the plays, Morse asserts, is that "*Ubu* required a defence, and it particularly required a defence which made it seriously unserious: assimilating Jarry to Shakespeare was one way of doing that, because, after all, Shakespeare famously (against French neoclassical norms) broke decorum" (117). Because Shakespeare gave Jarry a legitimate rule-breaking precedent and iconic bolster, many French critics and defenders of the play were quick to use the *Macbeth-Ubu* connection when proposing just how anti-French theatrical tradition was Jarry's play.

posits that the text of *Caesar Antichrist* is an autonomous theatre in the form of a book, made for only one individual to read/de-code at a time. She asserts that the text is a self-contained universe: "[signs] actually replace real-world substances with themselves. Jarry subverts the 'real' world by creating and circulating signs that mean through different systems" (132). She uses pataphysics largely to show that Jarry is after the individual as co-creator and co-meaning maker.

Morse is one of several scholars in the past twenty years who have felt the demand to correct what they feel are inaccurate representations and/or deployments of Jarry's text based in hyperbolic assumptions of the play perpetuated by the strategies of the "U-Effect." The connection between *Ubu Roi* and *Macbeth* and others of Shakespeare's plays that had been formed over the years is based on notions of Jarry's "revolutionary" dramaturgy. Since Shakespeare is taken to be a genius and the figurehead of the Western canon, then Jarry, whose dramaturgy was skewed to be equally original and perceptive, must occupy a place in the canon. Morse's challenge to this perceived connection, not only between the content of the plays, but between the dramatists themselves, asserts a contradiction into the discursive formations, and creates a disruption in the smooth operation of "U-Effect" regulated discourse.

Jill Fell has provided the first book-length study of Alfred Jarry in English since the mid-1980s. In her 2005 *Alfred Jarry: An Imagination in Revolt*, Fell's task is to "investigate the less known and unknown aspects of Jarry's private campaign against the norms and pretensions of French bourgeois society, whether in art, literature, dance, or sexual mores" (16). As such, she has organized her book into six chapters in which she examines distinct aspects of Jarry's work, such as his use of ornamental lines in creating his pictures of Ubu or in manipulating heraldic symbols; his style of woodcutting for purposes of illustrating his novels; his innovative, fiction-based form of art criticism; his engagement with the art of puppeteering; his contribution to French dance theory through his novel, *Messalina*. Following Beaumont's lead, throughout her study, Fell stresses the idea that all of his works are intertextual. She asserts that they all act as clues for how to access his other works and an understanding of his life. She argues, for example: "It does seem very probable that Jarry intended some of his illustrations [woodcuttings in his novels] to act as visual keys to parts of his fictitious texts that deal with dream sequences,

and that they contain objects connected with important moments in his past, which he invested with talismanic power” (95). Fell makes this argument of intertextuality by performing close readings of dozens of his poems, excerpts of novels, literary journal articles, etc. Fell continues the tradition of semiotic analysis of Jarry’s works started by Arrivé and followed by Beaumont. Within this analysis, she also latches onto a primitivism she reads in Jarry’s creative process. Fell dubs Jarry’s process of reaching the unconscious his “bucket theory of the mind” wherein acquired thoughts and knowledge, and impressions, are able to “dive to the abyssal unconscious recesses of the mind” as part of the memory and creative process (73). Here, Fell supports those who came before her in identifying Jarry’s dramaturgical pursuit of accessing some primitive element of his audience’s being. In this study, she provides the reading of the most of Jarry’s total artistic and literary output in the English language.

Fell has also provided one of the two most recent biographies of Jarry. Her 2010 study, *Alfred Jarry*, is founded on the very questionable narrative that has traditionally been spun about the playwright’s life. In her book, part of a series called Critical Lives, Fell explores Jarry’s biography mainly through the telling of anecdotes and other historically significant moments in Jarry’s life and problematizing them. What Fell does differently from those who came before, however, is to put many individual accounts and reports about a particular event into conversation. Significantly, in most instances, she remains neutral about what position might be the correct one, because to do so would make her guilty of totalizing the narrative. For example, as to the reason for Jarry’s early discharge from his military service, she explains that there are several theories of the actual circumstances; Jarry may have actually been sick, he may have had intervention from a friend with influence, or he may have simulated an illness to gain discharge. She is careful in articulating several possible scenarios, and leaves what she believes the possible

reason to be ambiguous; she does not weigh in on the issue (67-68). Her tendency to work this way makes her study stand as a challenge to the way most historians have conducted themselves in relation to Jarry's biography. Fell is equally careful and reserved in her discussion of the 1896 *Ubu Roi* premiere.

Fell relies largely on the narrative Arnaud provided in his biography for her story of the premiere production. Indeed, her account matches Arnaud's almost entirely, and she cites his narrative several times in the midst of hers. She shares the same trust as Arnaud of Gémier's account that the rioting at the preview performance on the ninth did not commence until the jail scene in Act 3. Fell claims that it was Rachilde who began the fiction that from the first "*merdre*" the audience was up in arms (91). Fell is then almost as ambiguous as Arnaud and Besnier about the opening night performance. After pointing out that Gémier had bought a megaphone for the opening, she claims that at the premiere "the play thus came even closer to its puppet origins, the prancing character of Ubu interacting with the vociferous audience in the manner of a Punch and Judy show" (93). She does not go as far as Beaumont to assert that there was a significant reaction to the performance, but does claim that Gémier "interacted" with his audience, maintaining her ambiguity over what the actual event looked like. In addition to that, she reports that Arthur Symons and W. B. Yeats had attended the production but does not make a decision as to which performance they saw. How does such vagueness interact with the "U-Effect?"

Fell's careful treading over the construction of Jarry's life suggests to me that she understands the challenges that have been put to the received narrative, and makes it a point to respect the dubious nature of the history that we have received of Jarry and his play. Since her expertise seems to lie in reading literature, art, and performance, this book itself contains her

readings of several of Jarry's works and moments in his life. Fell does follow the "U-Effect" strategies that the premiere performance was a scandalous, revolutionary event, as is clear from her account of the production (90-95). In this regard, she has Besnier and Arnaud as examples to draw on. It is her intelligent willingness not to make any unfounded or questionable decisions on Jarry's life that makes this biography distinct from most others, in both English and French.

The latest biography on Jarry, Alastair Brotchie's 2011 *Alfred Jarry: A Pataphysical Life*, dresses itself as the most comprehensive yet in English. At the forefront of current Jarry scholarship as a Regent of the *College of Pataphysics*, Brotchie delivers to English-language Jarry scholars and enthusiasts a convincing narrative of Jarry's life in which he attempts to nail down certain dubious moments in the received biography of the misunderstood avant-gardist. In his certainty, he is quite unlike Fell.

Brotchie does not necessarily offer a critical biography in the strictest sense, such as Beaumont's or Stillman's critical biographies; rather, his evaluations of Jarry's œuvre are secondary to the conditions surrounding those works. Brotchie delivers an in-depth analysis of Jarry's actions and behaviors in relation to his contingent world.

Brotchie's narrative fills many gaps left open in previous English-language biographies, including the details of Jarry's military service and other life events between 1894 and 1896, and from 1901 to his death in 1907. Brotchie reveals that during his time in the military, Jarry was given frequent leave to Paris thanks to his father's connections at the Rennes base, and argues that the supposedly self-manufactured reason for Jarry's discharge—that he poisoned himself—may not have been fabricated at all. Brotchie tells the unfortunate tale of how toward the end of his life, Jarry was persistently pursued by his creditors between Paris, Laval, and his "Tripod"

home in Le Coudray, as he moved in and out of the care of his sister while his undiagnosed meningeal tuberculosis progressed.

Another tale significant to my study that Brotchie attempts to verify is the proceedings of the 1896 production of *Ubu*. In line with Arnaud, Beaumont, and Fell, Brotchie concludes that Gémier danced his jig to regain the audience's attention at the invited dress rehearsal on December 9, not the premiere on the tenth, and not until after an actor's hand was used for the lockbox on the cell door holding Bordure prisoner. Brotchie matches Beaumont in his description of the opening night. The audience at the premiere performance—including all of the Parisian literary critics—started the violence with Gémier's initial "*merdre*," and continued throughout the performance. Brotchie cites numerous accounts of the critics in attendance and the memoirs of others who claimed to be there; with all of his citations, he makes a compelling case, and shores up the account that Beaumont had given nearly thirty years ago without the transparency of sources that Brotchie provides.

I do not believe that Brotchie's account is conclusive. His status as member of the *College of Pataphysics* suggests he has an agenda to maintain the privilege and reputation *Ubu Roi* has gained through the "U-Effect." In order to do this, Brotchie necessarily makes the 1896 production into a high scandal, which includes for him, constant shouting matches across the auditorium, seats flying through the air, Lugné-Poe crashing cymbals at random moments not being able to hear over the din, and actual fist-fighting (163-164).⁹² Brotchie's biography is the

⁹² One of the accounts Brotchie cites heavily that I had not seen in any previous biography or account of the premiere production, is that of Marguerite Moreno, in her *La statue de sel et le bonhomme de neige, souvenirs de ma vie et de quelques autres*. After examining her account myself, I have determined that her story does nothing to provide conclusive evidence to the unfolding of the two evenings' performances. Her account only references the preview performance on the ninth, of which she remarks: "I am unaware of how many punches were exchanged between the spectators during the three hours the show lasted, but it is certain that no boxing match can compete with the dress rehearsal of *Ubu Roi*" (114-115). She suggests that the reaction at the preview was very violent, and what preceded the fistfights was the necessity to shine spotlights on the audience to calm them down. She is unclear about the point at which this action had to be taken, but her language hints that immediately after Jarry spoke the

most thoroughly constructed, well-cited account that has yet been presented. It is plain to see, however, that in the tradition of Jarry scholarship determined by the deployment of the “U-Effect” strategies, the premiere production is once again positioned as an event as earth-shattering as any other in theatre history. It is perhaps never verifiable whether the actual proceedings really were as cataclysmic as Brotchie, or anyone else, may claim it to be.

The scholarship in this period exhibits diversity, clarity, and ambiguity with respect to the various topics of exploration. *Ubu Roi*’s reified status as a member of the Western canon continues to support—and indeed, as Kermode would argue, demand—many avenues of interpretation and articulation. With new translations still flooding academe, there is no shortage of English-language introductions to the play. Works such as Jannarone’s act to continue to enhance and deepen scholarly engagement with the play and its surrounding ideas. Biographies such as Brotchie’s, with new contributions to the understanding of Jarry’s life, also perpetuate the pursuit of understanding him and his most well known work. As I will point out in my conclusions, I anticipate that this process will only continue, as the enunciative field in which statements about *Ubu Roi* are contained grows larger and more accommodating.

F. Contemporary Treatments of the Avant-Garde

Over the past 20 or so years, there has been a revival in interest in the study of Modernism, and concomitantly, the historical avant-garde. Numerous definitions of what it is to be Modernist have been put forward, some of which take Modernist theatre and art to be separate from the avant-garde, and some count them as roughly the same. For example, in his 2005 study,

introduction, the crowd got hostile, a reading of the dress rehearsal that has been argued inaccurate by most of the contemporary biographers of Jarry (114).

Theatre, Performance, and the Historical Avant-Garde, Günter Berghaus is very clear in differentiating avant-gardists from Modernists.

The avant-garde in the arts propagates a radical break with preceding formulae of artistic production and promotes creativity as part of a wider cultural-political revolution. This transgressive, subversive stance separates avant-garde artists from other Modernists, with whom they share an interest in experimentation with new artistic forms and techniques. Avant-garde artists oppose conventional concepts, values, and standards, and instead aim at absolute originality in their creations. They operate in uncharted terrain with genuinely novel means of expression, creating works of art that are substantially and significantly different from the average production of their time, and are initially appreciated by only a small number of connoisseurs. (35)

Modernists, for Berghaus, are interested in experimentation in new forms and techniques, but avant-gardists take that experimentation to its extreme in a “transgressive, subversive stance.” Stephen Eric Bronner, however, is not so clear in his use of avant-garde and Modernist practice/philosophy. He suggests that, rather than a distinct separation between Modernist work and that of the avant-garde, “Modernism was composed of diverse avant-garde groups” (11). While these various avant-garde groups often had disparate styles and ideologies, they were all united as Modernists under the fight against a common enemy, the “cultural philistine,” who could be anyone from the “anxiety-ridden petty bourgeois” to “the provincial fearful of the new,” from the “liberal banker puffing his cigar” to “the old geezer admonishing the young,” or the “schoolteacher eulogizing the classics, the uneducated proletarian, the sexually repressed

rationalist, the aristocratic traditionalist” (7). For Bronner, there seems to be no distinction separating an avant-gardist from a Modernist.

Still others locate the avant-garde elsewhere in relation to Modernist practice. In his essay “France” in *The Cambridge Companion to European Modernism*, Maurice Samuels never actually qualifies an avant-garde, referring to the Symbolists, Surrealists, dadas, Cubists, and others only as Modernists. In “Theatre,” of *The Cambridge Companion to Modern French Culture*, Christophe Campos argues that the French avant-garde of the Modern period—first used to describe Antoine’s experiments at the Théâtre Libre—is united by several ambitions: one, to de-center the emphasis on language in French plays and to highlight other aspects of production, such as scenography, costume, movement; two, to involve other “plastic and performing arts” in the production; three, to look to other European cities for inspiration (256). Therefore, for Campos, like Bronner, the avant-garde is a group of experiments conducted under the blanket paradigm of Modernism, “a reaction against academicism” (256). In their Introduction to *Contemporary French Theatre and Performance*, Clare Finburgh and Carl Lavery take purity of medium to be a high concern of Modernism, and French avant-garde theatre to be focused on hybridizing the form. Avant-garde theatre, for them, at least at its beginnings, battled against Modernism. Finburgh and Lavery assert Jarry to be an initiator of this practice, however, their argument precludes him from having any sort of content-based, political, or, in Michael Kirby’s terms, “antagonistic” force.

Clearly, the historical avant-garde and its relationship to Modernist practice and philosophy is complicated, and not fully agreed upon. By looking at all of these examples, I assert that Jarry qualifies as a Modernist in that he worked under the paradigm of Modernism (using whatever definition one wants), and was one of the first of the artistic avant-garde, as an

artist who experimented with form, language, and other content of his works, specifically for my purposes, in *Ubu Roi*. These various definitions of the avant-garde in relation to Modernist performance practice inform the following discussion about contemporary scholars' placement of Jarry on a trajectory of the avant-garde, because of course, all that has come before on the subject (Esslin's, Pronko's, Wellwarth's work) leads to a conversation on how that has determined Jarry's current status.

To compound the currency of the play's premiere as the theatrical avant-garde originator, numerous books have entered the academy with scholars orienting their studies around that very idea. Among these are the aforementioned works by Günter Berghaus, and Finburgh and Lavery, as well as Olga Taxidou's 2007 *Modernism and Performance: Jarry to Brecht*. These works all contribute to the received narrative, and, in turn, add to the cultural capital of the premiere performance of *Ubu Roi* as the spark of the theatrical avant-garde. Before those studies would appear, however, the first three major challenges to *Ubu Roi*'s status as initiator of the avant-garde are published.

Michael Kirby is the first scholar of note to offer an alternative narrative to Jarry's origination of the theatrical avant-garde, once his play had been firmly installed in that place. In his 1987 *A Formalist Theatre*, Kirby puts forth a concept of multiple avant-gardes. One, an "antagonistic" avant-garde, begins with *Ubu Roi*. The second, a "hermetic" avant-garde, begins prior to December 1896, with Symbolism. Kirby sees the Symbolists as turning in on themselves, dismissing the bourgeoisie and outside world. Yet in their hermeticism, they can still be avant-garde, because, as he claims, "[n]ot all avant-garde work intends to deny, subvert, or confront traditional mainstream values. Many avant-garde artists direct their work toward a specialized audience whose values, standards, and concerns are quite different from those of the

general public. It is not the bourgeoisie with which this hermetic avant-garde is concerned” (100). He argues that the tradition of the hermetic avant-garde leads to contemporary work that is oriented more toward formalism; the work tends to be “formal and conceptual rather than content-oriented” (106). Kirby’s goal is to make the avant-garde fit neatly into his idea of formalism, which is a theatre concerned with its external form, rather than its content or meaning. The avant-garde of *Ubu Roi* is necessarily outside this approach, as the *message* of the play is, for Kirby, much of its focus. A Symbolist theatre, focused on the experience of the play, articulates a formalist or hermetic avant-garde before Jarry’s antagonistic avant-garde. What is frustrating about Kirby’s assertion is that he never clearly defines what being avant-garde actually is. He makes several claims to things an avant-garde is not or does not have to do, but he never provides a specific definition of what it is to be even his multifaceted avant-garde.

Perhaps this is the reason why, despite Kirby’s stature in the field of theatre, that within contemporary studies of the avant-garde, this is an aspect of Kirby’s work that has been glossed. Foucault’s notion of “discursive relations” is a useful tool to describe Kirby’s work here. Foucault describes discursive relations as “the limit of discourse: they offer it objects of which it can speak, or rather ... they determine the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of this or that object, in order to deal with them, name them, analyse them, classify them, explain them, etc” (*Archaeology* 46). Failing to define the limits of what the practice of the avant-garde will or will not allow barely scratches the smooth surface of the discourse determined by the “U-Effect” that has been articulated and re-articulated through numerous enunciative statements. Had Kirby set the limits at which one could speak about an avant-garde, hence, determining the relations of objects set within that avant-garde, he might have created a clear rupture in discourse established by the “U-Effect.” On the other hand, one

could argue that he disrupts the construction of knowledge on the avant-garde by refusing to set limits within which the avant-garde operates. Regardless of the position one takes, Kirby's assertion that *Ubu Roi* was not the first avant-garde play does not gain much traction with other scholars.

As Kirby's challenge to the "U-Effect" is not given its full due, the same fate will befall Christopher Innes, who, in 1993 authored *Avant-Garde Theatre, 1892-1992*. Perhaps taking a cue from Pronko, who saw the avant-garde as a return to primitive theatre, in his study, Innes posits that the theatrical avant-garde has always been guided by the pursuit of primitivism. Innes asserts Maeterlinck's Symbolist drama, *Pelias and Melisande*, as the first work in this trajectory, and the Symbolists as the first movement to engage in avant-garde practice. Innes nonetheless recognizes that it is Jarry who serves as the example (along with August Strindberg), that the avant-garde would follow (2). Along with naming Jarry the example for the avant-garde, Innes includes a lengthy passage about the premiere of *Ubu Roi*, where he repeats the story of the scandalized audience and the argument that Jarry's work in the play was revolutionary. "*Ubu roi* undermines the very concept of man's nobility by treating as ludicrous the images that were held up to every schoolboy as models of human, as well as dramatic excellence ... reducing heroic actions to burlesque and fine sentiments to pastiche" (24). He also casts Jarry as identifying with Ubu. While Innes posits an earlier beginning, he shows the influence of the strategies of the "U-Effect" on his conceptualization of the avant-garde. For that reason, I believe this study could not make a dent in the discourse of theatre history and force a shift in the writing of the history of the avant-garde.

Also in 1993, Frantisek Deak publishes *Symbolist Theater: The Formation of an Avant-Garde*. Deak steps beyond Kirby's and Innes's goals and organizes the entire theatrical avant-

garde movement as beginning with the Symbolists. For Deak, “Symbolism appears as the formative literary and artistic movement of the twentieth century avant-garde, and also, specifically for Italian futurists, as the image of the dead-end of the nineteenth century; as the past that should be gotten rid of in order to invent the art of the present” (3). He conceives of Symbolism as the initiator, the creator, of the *fin de siècle* and twentieth century avant-garde writ large. Deak spends chapters on individual artists such as Villiers de l’Isle-Adam and Mallarmé. He takes a chapter to tease out the influence symbolists found in Richard Wagner’s relationship to literature, literary theory, music, and theatre. Deak then devotes a chapter each to Paul Fort’s Théâtre d’Art, and its incarnation as Lugné-Poe’s Théâtre de l’Œuvre, respectively. The way Deak situates the premiere of *Ubu Roi* in 1896 indicates that Jarry’s staging is not the beginning of the avant-garde, but rather, a high point that has been picked out in the development of the theatrical avant-garde, informed by all the work of the Symbolists before it.

Deak’s work on establishing an alternative to the model of the development of the avant-garde usually promoted by scholars of the theatrical avant-garde is sound. Because he has come up against so much scholarship perpetuating the notion that the historical theatrical avant-garde sprang from the premiere of *Ubu*, Deak attempts to revise the received narrative of the opening, in order to re-situate it into what is, for him, a more appropriate position in the development of the avant-garde. He is the first scholar of note to point out the flaws in historiography which have led to the sensationalism and one-track narrative surrounding the premiere production of *Ubu*: “The present view of this production, which overly emphasizes the scandal it caused, is limiting because it reduces the complexity of *Ubu Roi* (and for that matter the avant-garde) to a single cause, and is also flawed and untenable, since it is based on an erroneous reconstruction of events” (228). Deak compels belief in his argument that those who take the *Ubu* premiere as the

birth of the avant-garde privilege a sensationalized account at the expense of considering the production's position within the Symbolist aesthetic and performance traditions of the time:

Ubu Roi is a part of, and a further development of, symbolist theater.

Furthermore, as far as the scandal was concerned, the audience's behavior was within the customary behavior of the opening night audience. For the audience of *Ubu Roi* the production was a dramatization and theatricalization of discourse on contemporary art as was the case with previous productions of Théâtre d'Art and Théâtre de l'Œuvre. (228)

Deak's historiography of the moment does much to make it possible for future scholarship to reframe the *Ubu* premiere in a different context. His study clearly defines an avant-garde borne out of Symbolism, with the premiere of *Ubu Roi* serving as merely another production in the Symbolist avant-garde tradition. Deak's construction of the avant-garde serves as the first major contradiction that will require fitting Jarry differently into the accepted narrative of the development of the historical avant-garde. Due to the power and cultural currency the play has received from its canonization—its dense network of relations at the level of discourse asserting its position in the avant-garde—it will take some time before this crack, this rupture in the smooth surface of discourse constituted by the “U-Effect” can work its way to the subterranean level of discursive formations and affect any change.

Twelve years later, Günter Berghaus traces the development of the historical avant-garde in his 2005 book, *Theatre, Performance, and the Historical Avant-garde*. Jarry is the first artist Berghaus discusses as avant-garde, and he asserts that Jarry and his artistic work was “a model of avant-garde creativity” (46-47). Berghaus also makes two claims of the *Ubu* premiere that situate the event as key in the development of the historical avant-garde. The first claim is that

the premiere became “a benchmark against which future avant-garde events were to be measured” (47). Berghaus gives the premiere paramount status among avant-garde events. Secondly, he claims that the literary and performance controversies surrounding *Ubu Roi* “established a clear demarcation line between the avant-garde and the mainstream” (47). Berghaus makes *Ubu* the clear break of the historical avant-garde from the mainstream. With these claims, Berghaus reinforces the dominant (one might say hegemonic) position that *Ubu Roi* is the originator of the avant-garde.

Olga Taxidou generalizes even further in her 2007 book, *Modernism and Performance: Jarry to Brecht*, when she places Jarry at the starting point of a trajectory of performance in the context of modernity that attempts to “create a distinct language of performance—one that differentiates itself from the dramatic text” (2-3). Along with Jarry and *Ubu*, she examines such topics as marionette theatre, Yeats, Eliot, Stein, Orientalism, Primitivism, Futurism, dada, the Federal Theatre Project, and Brecht as a way of bridging textuality and materiality through their Modernist performances. Taxidou, Berghaus, and others have helped to maintain *Ubu Roi*’s legitimacy and prime position in the historical avant-garde in contemporary times. These scholars work from the dominant subject position as it has been minted by the “U-Effect” through the decades of *Ubu Roi*’s existence in French and English-language culture. This subject position will not disappear any time soon, as the strength of Jarry’s play is mighty within the theatre history practices that guide what is possible to speak about in the world of Western literature and theatre. I now turn, finally, to the most recent challenge to the power of the “U-Effect,” whose prominent position in contemporary theatre history scholarship may ultimately lead to the long-anticipated widespread relegation of *Ubu Roi* from its high throne of original avant-garde status.

Appropriately enough, as I mentioned in my introduction, in 2009, just as I was beginning preliminary explorations in preparation for my dissertation work, Thomas Postlewait published *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*. In his chapter on cultural history, Postlewait uses the narrative of the premiere production of *Ubu Roi* at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre for his case study. Postlewait argues: "In the process of describing and celebrating the premiere, we have been influenced apparently by our guiding ideas on the nature of avant-garde art. We bring to the production a set of modernist narratives, assumptions, beliefs, and ideologies" (62). He goes on: "despite the availability of the extensive documentary records, our descriptions and explanations have misrepresented both the event and its context" (62). Due to the temptation of a spectacularized riot story, Postlewait suggests, after Deak, that scholars have stuck to an artistic heritage that sees the theatrical avant-garde as an antagonistic enterprise, and we try to protect that when we retell the story. The errors in dating the performances in scholars' considerations of the play are bound up in privileging the spectacular story. Postlewait argues that one could fit the event into any number of different contexts with the privileging of different historiographical questions to answer and aims to fulfill, which would change how the event is (mis)construed and received. Despite our disparate methodologies (Postlewait's structuralist approach seeking out the "artistic heritage" of the play, and my post-structuralist approach examining how the discursive formations have worked through the employment of the strategies of the "U-Effect" to determine the play's place in history out of the space of dissension of the premiere), I agree with Postlewait's purpose, to find a better historiographical method to more fully understand how certain scripts and productions have come to positions of such prominence, and to possibly revise or correct that history into a more responsible one.

I have arrived in my study at a space in theatre history scholarship where and when such entrenched narratives as the “explosive” premiere of *Ubu Roi* can be put into question for what it may actually have been, rather than what it has been made to be by the tactics-turned-strategies of the “U-Effect.” This process started first in the initial published and popular anecdotes of Jarry’s friends and acquaintances, then moved to the tales of Jarry enthusiasts, and finally to the work of Jarry scholars, taking those anecdotes at face value, and now also challenging those legends and the myth of *Ubu Roi*. At this moment of opportunity, I end my study of the process of *Ubu*’s legitimization in French and English scholarship. I here return to Mackay once more, as a sort of ritornello of my own. It seems as though, through all of the intense scrutiny that the December 1896 production has been put under, the only definitive conclusion that has been made is that the premiere of *Ubu Roi* is an important event in theatre history. If we never get the “true” account of how the two performances proceeded, I will not be disappointed. I will, in Mackay’s words, “get past the illusion of empirical factuality and make peace with the dream of being there (29).” I merely hope to underscore how past attempts at empirical factuality in biography and scholarship may have actually oversold or given more credit to the premiere of *Ubu Roi* than it was due. However, especially we who work in theatre and performance studies should know that performance has its own ways of validating, legitimizing, critiquing, or subverting some idea, concept, or value. Therefore, in Chapter 3, I will examine the production history of *Ubu Roi* to gauge how productions of the play assist in perpetuating the power and legitimacy, and help to construct culture in discourse dominated by the “U-Effect.”

CHAPTER 3

Ubu Takes the Stage

“The play was a fart in the face of naturalism”

Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright, *Changing Stages*, 352.

In the summer of 1989, the Lincoln Center Theater (LCT) staged *Ubu*, an adaptation of *Ubu Roi* that added the character Ubu’s Conscience from *Ubu Cocu*. Critics and audiences alike overwhelmingly jeered the production.⁹³ Most critics hated the acting, particularly that of Oliver Platt as Ubu. Many critics thought the scenic and lighting design were all wrong, and found problems with the pace, the costumes, and the adaptation of director Larry Sloan and playwright Doug Wright. In short, the production was a flop. However, what most critics did in their evaluation of the performance was laud Jarry’s text as a critical piece of Modernist, avant-garde art while bashing LCT’s production. Employing practices that were oriented against the intentions Jarry had for the 1896 production, I see the producers of the LCT production engaging tactics against the “U-Effect” in an attempt to make the play available to a postmodern public. Sloan’s production at LCT is a prime example of a performance violating the “horizon of expectations” of an audience, and allowing for resentment and distaste among those who were expecting something different from what they received. The negative critical and popular response makes this production serve as a high-water mark for gauging the play’s ascension to canonical status and the expectations that come with that status. When the “U-Effect” imposes particular standards and assumptions of the text in performance, and a production openly violates and attacks them, the reaction of those holding the dominant opinion will intervene to attempt to right the wrongs of the production (almost as the 1896 production had provoked).

⁹³ Critics called attention to the fact that audience members frequently walked out during the performance.

The LCT production represents the peak of the journey of the “U-Effect” in governing the reception of productions of *Ubu Roi* in the English-language. All of the productions I discuss in this chapter will indicate various uses and abuses of the “U-Effect.” When critics and audiences attended the 1989 LCT production, the performance was not an isolated incident; they had a rich production history to draw on in their reception. In this chapter, I trace the steps of how the play could come to be read as it was in 1989 through examining English-language professional productions in the United Kingdom and North America from 1952-2005.

Outside of Lugné-Poe’s 1896 Théâtre de l’Œuvre production, the production history of the Ubu plays is generally ignored in Jarry and *Ubu* scholarship. In my view, scholars too often err in omitting the performance history in considering the play’s value and use. I seek to rectify that oversight in this chapter. In my review of literature, I have identified only three studies that offer anything in the way of discussing the plays in performance. Those studies include Judith Cooper’s *Ubu Roi: An Analytical Study* (1974), Claude Schumacher’s *Alfred Jarry and Guillaume Apollinaire* (1985), and Keith Beaumont’s *Jarry, Ubu Roi* (1987).⁹⁴ Lewis Franklyn Sutton also discusses the reception of 1908, 1922, and 1958 French revivals in his dissertation, “An Evaluation of the Studies on Alfred Jarry, 1894-1963.” These scholars’ treatments range from a very basic description of several performances (Cooper, Schumacher) to an in-depth comparison to Jarry’s intentions of eight or ten productions (Beaumont). My work is two-fold. I describe the staging techniques used by the producing companies in order to shine a light on the multitude of ways *Ubu Roi* has been staged. Related to my description of the productions is a conversation about how the productions engage with Jarry’s own desires for the play to be performed, and his hopes for theatre in general. Historically, productions that have been well

⁹⁴ In his *Jarry dramaturge*, Henri Behar does not discuss productions of the play, but provides a list of 50 productions of the Ubu plays and adaptations from around the world. The list includes production venues, artistic team, principal actors, and sources for more information on those productions.

received by critics and audiences seem to participate in production practices that many critics would consider part of Jarry's own project. I also describe how critics (and, where available, theatre scholars) have received the various productions in relation to the play's and the author's histories. The critics who celebrate productions for the most part also say something about how those productions fit within the received narrative of Jarry's play and the infamous 1896 premiere production. On the other hand, those productions that are negatively received are often positioned against the power of the Théâtre de l'Œuvre production as the critics deploy the "U-Effect" to protect the status of the play in the Western canon.

As I move through the chapter, I alternate between sections surveying several revival productions, and case studies. My survey sections include, in total, fourteen productions and adaptations of *Ubu Roi*. In these sections, I keep each production discrete. For each production, I describe what can be known about production choices, evaluate the critical response to the production, and draw conclusions on how influential the "U-Effect" is in the remarks of the critics to maintain the play's legitimacy in Western literature. In my case study sections, I look specifically at the 1966 Royal Court Theatre, the 1977 (1978, 1980) International Center for Theatre Creation (CITC), and the 1989 Lincoln Center Theater productions, respectively, and perform the same analysis as in the survey sections, though at a deeper level. I choose to highlight these three productions because they are well documented, and there is an incredible diversity in approach and reception. A number of critics for many of the productions betray just how significant one's horizon of expectations is when coming to a performance of one of the most infamous plays in Western literature.

A. Professional Productions in the US and the UK, 1952-1960

***Ubu the King*, The Living Theatre, Cherry Lane Theatre, New York, August 1952**

The first documented professional production in the United States is Judith Malina and Julian Beck's August 1952 production of *Ubu the King*. The recorded details of this production are limited. In one of the first divisions of responsibilities within the now-iconic Living Theatre, which eventually became a pattern, Malina directed the production while Beck designed. The company built 152 costumes for the show, which Beck "splattered . . . with gaudy paint patterns born out of techniques discovered by Jackson Pollock" (Malina 240). Beck made the set out of wrapping paper the night before the show opened, because it was the "least expensive material he could imagine" (Tytell 84). Several authors say that the whole production cost less than \$35 (Beaumont, *Jarry*, *Ubu Roi* 68; Biner 32). Malina, who gives the only mention of the acting in her diary, reports that Moe Moskowitz played Ubu "on a single violent note" (Malina 235). The production opened on August 5 to much enthusiasm. Supposedly, the final ovation was so great that the curtain collapsed (Tytell 85).

Available information, though limited, suggests that the company was guided by the "U-Effect" in creating its production. After the first rehearsal, Malina notes that with Moskowitz's reading of *Ubu*, the production promised to be "wholeheartedly pataphysical" (232). Malina's knowledge of pataphysics in connection with the play suggests that her reading of the play is based on a perception that pataphysics is an integral part of the dramaturgy of the play. This is a perception forwarded by carriers of the "U-Effect." The company may have gotten the inspiration for the 152 costumes from knowledge of Jarry's acquisition of 40 wicker mannequins used in the 1896 production, and perhaps attempt to in some way replicate that choice. This may also have been an independent decision on Malina and Beck's part as a production technique to

point up the absurdity of the play's dramaturgy, in which case they would be reinforcing that perception as espoused by the "U-Effect" through such publications as Breton's *Anthology of Black Humor*. The company likely had a primitivist impulse, as the abstract paint of Beck's costumes and the wrapping paper set suggests that he attempted to create some universal unconscious connection to the material of the production.⁹⁵ From scholars' characterization of the production (I have found no reviews or production reports or accounts), it appears as though there is some very subtle attempt to draw on the power of the "U-Effect" to evaluate the Living Theatre production against Lugué-Poe's. Beaumont only guesses at the interpretation given by the company, which he imagines was one of political satire (*Jarry*, *Ubu Roi* 68). Theatre history scholars Stuart W. Little, Julia S. Price, and John Tytell, however, concern themselves with the circumstances surrounding the production's abrupt closing in their books on off-Broadway theatre (Little, Price) and the Living Theatre (Tytell).

The production ran for three performances at the Cherry Lane Theatre in the Village before it was shut down for reasons that remain unclear. In her 1962 book, *The Off-Broadway Theater*, Price argues that once the property owner saw the performance, he "had them turned out because they repeatedly used the word 'shit'" (189).⁹⁶ Little argues otherwise in his 1972 *Off-Broadway: The Prophetic Theatre*. He reports that the company suspected the fire department closed the production, "because the clinical references in the script of homosexual practices disturbed some high city official" (60). There are no overt references in *Ubu Roi* to

⁹⁵ Primitivism is a concept applied to many forms and movements of theatre, but it is frequently used to describe the work of the avant-garde (Christopher Innes has written an entire book on the topic, *Avant-Garde Theatre, 1892-1992*). For different scholars, primitivism appears in different incarnations, and the scholars make it serve differing purposes. As I have made clear throughout my first two chapters, primitivism is often invoked in discussing Jarry's dramaturgy, and as such, it is implied in the strategy of the "U-Effect" involving his "revolutionary" dramaturgy. Therefore, as critics and scholars examine revivals of *Ubu Roi*, primitivism, if not expressly addressed, is implicitly included under the set of expectations they have for a revival as it compares to their understanding of the 1896 production.

⁹⁶ Price incorrectly dates the Théâtre de l'Œuvre premiere production to 1898.

homosexuality; however, Little does not clarify that the group was doing *Ubu Roi* alongside another play, John Ashbery's *The Heroes*, which did offer numerous homosexual allusions (Tytell 84). In *The Living Theatre* (1995), Tytell writes that the fire department did shut the production down, for whatever reason, claiming that the sets were an extreme fire hazard, but not before the fire inspector "was chased down ... Commerce Street by Judith brandishing a bamboo spear" (85). Tytell synthesizes what Price and Little had previously written. He argues that the property owner, Kenneth Carroad, called the fire inspector in an effort to evict the group because he desired to gentrify the area (85).⁹⁷ Regardless of the reasons, the Living Theatre's production occurred amid a minor scandal in which the company was evicted from its (artistic) home. This kind of link to the 1896 production only serves to further strengthen the grip of the "U-Effect" in scholarship on the play's production history.⁹⁸ The Living Theatre production, however, will be the last for 40 years that has an associated scandal.

***Ubu Roi*, Irving Theatre, London, December 1952**

A professional production was next staged at the Irving Theatre in London in December 1952. This is the first professional production in the UK.⁹⁹ For the production, producers used Barbara Wright's translation (at the time, the only published in English). The reviewer for *The Times* said producer/director William Jay, *a la* Jarry, introduced the play prior to the curtain rising and "briefly prepare[d] us for the long series of incidents that follow" ("*Ubu Roi*" n. pag.). According to the review, the production was done with the actors in masks, behaving as marionettes. The reviewer calls the series of events "faintly humorous," and says that the play is

⁹⁷ Carroad, Tytell reveals, owned a large amount of Village property, so the Cherry Lane eviction was not an isolated incident in an area in which most of the properties were inhabited by working class tenants (85). Tytell reports further that the actual reason Carroad had to get rid of them was most likely because the company was using the theatre as a living space, "a place for eating, sleeping, and loving" (86).

⁹⁸ In writing about the link between the controversies of the two productions, I am also perpetuating the connection.

⁹⁹ I have located only one performance review and no records of the theatre. Perhaps this sparseness of documentation is the reason why many scholars give the title of first English language production to Gaskill's at the Royal Court.

almost too much, but not quite, for “it is all too detached to be unbearably disturbing, and there is always the fascination of the puppet show to hold us firmly in our seats—in this case puppets without strings” (“*Ubu Roi*”). From the information available, it appears as though the Irving Theatre production attempted to recreate the Œuvre production of 1896 as a museum piece. The production was tame, with its collection of expletives and grotesqueries merely annoying, rather than truly affecting an imaginative or emotional response in the reviewer.

The museum-piece quality of this production recalls Gémier’s 1908 revival, which I argued was the first attempt to canonize the play. With the play’s place in the Western canon not yet fully realized, this 1952 production may represent another effort to bring the play to the summit of Western literature. The production arose out of a dramatic reading of Wright’s translation at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in February of that year (Beaumont *Jarry*, *Ubu Roi* 68). The move on Jay’s part (who had also directed the reading) to create a full production suggests that he wanted to bring the play to greater prominence. As it was the first production of the first published English translation of the play, Jay may have had it in mind to celebrate the 1896 production and stage a re-creation of it. After all, the Irving Theatre production privileged the “U-Effect” in numerous ways. Jay used the pre-show speech, in the manner of Jarry, to prepare the audience for the play. The production also seemingly used the same acting style as the 1896 production, with actors acting like puppets onstage. The repetition of the tactics of the premiere production represents another attempt at freezing the value of the play as memorable and worthy of the public’s understanding. The complete ignorance of this production on the part of Jarry scholars and historians is somewhat surprising, since it stands out, in large part because it was staged before the play was well known in the English language.¹⁰⁰ Yet, perhaps that is the

¹⁰⁰ Beaumont gives the production two sentences in the production history section of his *Jarry*, *Ubu Roi*. His chapter on the play’s productions is by far the most detailed production history of the play.

reason why it is so easily ignored. With no major exposure at the time, the production may have been entirely disregarded, and subsequently, the Irving Theatre production has attained no importance in the transfer of the play to the English language.

King Ubu, Take 3 and Harlequin Café, New York, September 1960

Ubu resurfaces in a September 1960 production of *King Ubu* staged at the Take 3 Coffeehouse on Bleecker Street in Greenwich Village. The *New York Times* announcement calls the Take 3 a “new theatre-café,” and credits Katherine Litz, a dancer, as Père Ubu, directed by William Regelson, with music by Teiji Ito (“*King Ubu*” 37).¹⁰¹ Regelson, according to Arthur Gelb of the *New York Times*, was a dada artist and teacher, making his theatrical debut (“‘King Ubu’ Reigns” 47). The production used Keith and Legman’s 1953 translation. After three weeks at Take 3, the production was moved to a larger coffeehouse venue, the Harlequin Café, where it ran for another three months, becoming the longest running performance, to that date, on the Greenwich Village “coffeehouse entertainment circuit” (Gelb, “‘King Ubu’ Reigns” 47). In his review of the production once installed at the Harlequin, Gelb writes that

The most professional things about the production are a “debraining machine” designed by Mr. Regelson and a background score composed by Teiji Ito and played on a tape recorder. The “debraining machine,” an example of 1960 Dadaism, is made of bits and pieces of junk lit up by Christmas-tree lights; the score combines voodoo instruments and ancient Chinese and Japanese drums with saxophone, flute and zither to provide an eerie river of sound. (“‘King Ubu’ Reigns” 47)

¹⁰¹ There was either a misprint in the *New York Times* announcement or a change in cast, because by the time the production reached the Harlequin Café, Henry Howard and Valerie Spear were playing the Ubus (Gelb “‘King Ubu’ Reigns”).

Gelb recommends the performance with caution to those interested in the avant-garde. He gives remarks about the overall direction and acting as well. He says that the direction, “which is intended to create an effect of calculated chaos, is merely haphazard. Nor does the earnestly rambunctious acting do much to advance the spirit of the play” (“‘King Ubu’ Reigns” 47). Gelb finishes his review with a small compliment: “aspects of the play, while crudely stated, do have the salutary effect of a strong wind on a humid day” (“‘King Ubu’ Reigns” 47). If there was not much in the production to be praised, the fact that the production happened when and where it did is significant.

Gelb argues that the production of *King Ubu* was an indication that the off-off-Broadway movement was already happening in October 1960. In his article, “Voice of the Beatnik is Being Stilled in the ‘Village,’” Gelb concludes that “[t]here is no question that the ‘Village’ is once again throbbing with talent; the beatnik is on his way out and a cultural renaissance, comparable to the post-World War I era of the Provincetown Players, seems to be on its way in” (44). Gelb dubs Jarry’s text an “anti-play,” and mistakenly dates the premiere to 1895.¹⁰² He is not the last critic to position this production of *King Ubu* as an indicator of the genesis of the off-off-Broadway movement.

In the introduction to *Eight Plays from Off-Off Broadway*, Michael Smith, a critic for the *Village Voice*, also dubs the Take 3 production the initiator of the off-off Broadway movement. Smith quotes the “inspirational note” in the production program: “This production...represents a return to the original idea of Off-Broadway theatre, in which imagination is substituted for money, and plays can be presented in a way that would be impossible in the commercial theatre” (6). In this regard, the producers’ use of imagination in place of cash is reminiscent of the Living Theatre production, which was done on a shoestring budget, but was well received by its

¹⁰² Gelb provides the correct date of 1896 in his November 24 review, “‘King Ubu’ Reigns at Coffeehouse.”

audience. Stuart Little calls Take 3's savvy use of imagination over money "theatrical self-awareness" on the part of the producers (187). The producers' theatrical self-awareness could also be read as an attempt to work toward primitivism, in which case the goal of the production might have been to access, through soundscape and the calculated chaos of the action, the spectators' unconscious.

Little follows Gelb's and Smith's lead, and accepts the Take 3 production as the first production of the off-off-Broadway movement. He claims that being off-off-Broadway "allowed a writer to go to the outer limits of his material. No theme or situation was beyond permissibility" (187). As a play with a reputation for its crossing the line of permissibility in *fin de siècle* France, *Ubu Roi* stands as a perfect exemplar of the spirit of the off-off-Broadway movement, and its production in Take 3 Café a very convenient point of origin for the movement. Stephen Bottoms also marks the Take 3 *Ubu Roi* as the first play in his "Alternatives to the Alternative?" section of the chapter "Setting the Scene" in his book, *Playing Underground: A Critical History of the 1960s Off-Off-Broadway Movement*. It makes sense for critics Gelb and Smith, and scholars Little and Bottoms to mark the beginning of this movement with the production of a play whose revolutionary and revolution-instigating power, constructed by strategies of the "U-Effect," is crushing and broad-ranging by 1966 (at the time of Smith's statement). They aim to show that Jarry's play, widely credited and accepted as the origination of the avant-garde, fittingly serves as the initiation of the off-off-Broadway movement, the production of which sets the standard of ultimate permissibility for other playwrights to follow.

These three productions indicate how, early in the play's English-language production history, it served various purposes and was understood by critics to serve some subversive or anti-establishment purpose. Producers of the play had varying desires, from staging an homage

to the 1896 production with masks and puppet costumes, to making due with limited resources and spatial constraints, and placing the emphasis on allowing the artistry of the actors to enliven the performance. The influence of the “U-Effect” is apparent on the part of both the producing companies, and critics and scholars writing about the productions. The Living Theatre production has been given scholarly attention for its appeal based on the controversy of the company’s eviction from the theatre associated with the production, a scandal that recalls the 1896 production’s power to provoke scandal. Likewise, the production at Take 3, which transferred to the Harlequin Café, is closely attended to. Seen as relying on production techniques that fit under the “U-Effect,” and its staging at a threshold moment in the New York experimental theatre scene, critics and scholars alike appreciate the Café production, and declare it the start of a new movement.

B. Ubu and his Royal Court: Ubu Makes his Presence Known in the UK

***Ubu Roi*, Royal Court Theatre, July 1966**

The first major professional production of *Ubu Roi* in the English-speaking world was produced at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 1966. William Gaskill, the newly installed artistic director of the resident English Stage Company at the Royal Court hired young director Iain Cuthbertson to co-direct with him, a rising star in artist David Hockney to design the sets and costumes, and music hall actor Max Wall, to play Ubu.¹⁰³ Because of the position of prominence Gaskill’s production receives in the reviews and later scholarly treatments of the play, it is clear that the production is noteworthy. I argue that due to the congruence of several key factors: Hockney’s sets and costumes; Wall in the role of Ubu; the staging of the production

¹⁰³ David Hockney biographer Peter Webb notes in *Portrait of David Hockney* that Gaskill had a policy which was to “extend the boundaries of theatre” by hiring painters as designers (75).

in the Royal Court; and the immediate and long-term reception of the play, Gaskill's 1966 *Ubu Roi* is the production that made the play legitimate in the English language.

If there is one quality that each production of *Ubu Roi* seems to share, it is that they all differ in production style. In this sense, the Royal Court Theatre production was just like any other. Designer Hockney was a pop-artist whose fame was rapidly growing. In order to forge a better understanding of where much of the style of this production came from, I provide *New York Times* writer David Thompson's description of Hockney's art style. Thompson writes that he did his pieces in a "theatrical" manner: he has painted false frames around them, set them behind and in front of curtains, 'staged' them in various shorthand devices for special recession, made 'scenes' of them. And he plays them for paradox, sometimes incorporating written words which underline that it is all a game of illusion or symbolism" (111). Thompson argues that Hockney reversed this process in the design for *Ubu Roi*: "he has real space to deal with, and he sets about making it represent a drawing" (111). The drawing quality comes through in the simplicity of each scenic element. The design consisted of a number of single-color (often pink) flying backdrops which had some details to represent various generic and specific locales, such as Père and Mère Ubu's home, a peasants' home, the King's palace, the Ukraine, etc.¹⁰⁴ In *David Hockney: The Biography 1937-1975*, biographer Christopher Simon Sykes describes the set thusly: "The sets themselves were like large paintings, a garish series of poster-paint backdrops, suspended from the flies by ropes, which dropped down when required, 'like a joke toy theatre'" (177).

The other major features of the set were: fake, green, plastic grass (like the kind used for decorating gift baskets) creating the floor surface; a giant birdcage for the prison at Thorn; a miniature windmill at the battlefield; and removable letters were used often to spell out the scene

¹⁰⁴ The backdrops all appeared two dimensional instead of being done with a forced three-dimensional perspective.

in which the action took place, for example, “PARADE GROUND,” or “POLISH ARMY IN THE UKRAINE.” In his autobiography, *The Fool on the Hill*, Max Wall writes of his entrance into the first scene: “My own first entrance in the play was made from beneath the stage as I was hauled up to stage level on a lift while sitting on a toilet that matched up with the backdrop on which was painted a cistern and lavatory chain” (226). Hockney designed a space in which simplicity, sparseness of detail, and an element of play in the scenic elements bred the ability to unlock the imagination in the audience. Beaumont argues that this element of the production, “a purely schematic representation, derisory in its extremes of non-realism, with a deliberate incoherence,” accords precisely with Jarry’s desires for the play (*Jarry*, *Ubu Roi* 70). In this way, primitivism was spoon-fed to the audience, demanding each individual spectator to reach into his/her primitive subconscious to make meaning out of all the incongruities.

The acting of the play received mixed reviews. Wall’s *Ubu* was a major issue for critics, and presents an interesting facet of the reception of the play. His performance was not what critics expected. In his autobiography, Wall elaborates on how his performance came to be such an issue with critics: “Bill Gaskill said, ‘Forget *Ubu* and be Max Wall, for this is what we want. Ad lib as and when you like.’ And that was how it was. Some pressmen ‘sent me up,’ but many important people in the theatre liked it, and it was successful in what it tried to do” (226).

Herbert Kretzmer of the *Daily Express* writes of Wall’s performance that he “raises his eyebrows endlessly, invents all manner of gags along the way, changes the play from a fierce onslaught upon society into a harmless, good-natured goon show. . . . Customers with a taste for nonsense will appreciate Mr. Wall’s heresy” (4). Michael Billington, for *The Times* of London, rips on Wall, saying he “transformed the character from a magnified embodiment of the darker aspects of human nature into a harmless little clown in a bowler hat” (9). Similarly, in a review for the

Sunday Telegraph, Rosemary Say speaks of the production as a “riot of smutty, spiteful jokes delivered by Max Wall, whose gusty music-hall character seemed to bear little relation to the grotesque, glutinous hero that Jarry himself described affectionately as ‘un être ignoble’ [an ignoble being]” (n. pag.). Marvin Esslin is another of those critics who criticized Wall; in *Plays and Players*, he calls it a “blatant miscasting” (“Ooboo” 16). Still, Esslin compliments Wall on his performance, claiming that he did a great job as Ubu in his convention. “The trouble is,” he continues, “is that Ubu requires a totally different convention” (“Ooboo” 16). It appears as though Wall’s performance, while mildly entertaining, was not what many of the critics wanted.

The acting of the rest of the cast is not such an element of contention. The casting of John Shepherd in the role of Mère Ubu apparently followed a tradition of playing the role in drag that had begun in student productions of *Ubu Roi* and *Ubu Cocu* in Paris in the 1940s (Cooper 45). Shepherd, whose costume breasts were equipped with batteries that allowed the nipples to light up at moments of crisis (D. Thompson 111), is credited for his acting as being much closer to Jarry’s ideal (Esslin “Ooboo” 17). As for the rest of the cast, it apparently delivered a serviceable performance (Esslin “Ooboo” 17). Cuthbertson also added musical numbers to his adaptation, to make it closer to a music hall performance. This was much to the chagrin of critics, as even good acting, in their minds, could not make up for poor treatment of the text. These multiple elements (design, acting) of the physical production, demonstrate moves to legitimize the text.

The reputation of the Royal Court Theatre activates issues of reception of this production, both in terms of audience appeal and of critical opinion. The Royal Court was a legitimate, institutional new playwright’s theatre.¹⁰⁵ This production was of a 70-year-old play that had not had but one, maybe two professional productions in all of the UK; so for most in the Royal Court

¹⁰⁵ In *Playwrights’ Theatre: The English Stage Company at the Royal Court*, Terry W. Browne reports that the company received significant funding through grants from the Arts Council, a government funded body dedicated to supporting a wide range of artistic projects and companies (76).

audience, it was a new play. English-language scholars had made moves toward legitimizing and canonizing the script, but it had not to that point fully taken hold in the English-speaking world as it had in France.¹⁰⁶ Yet critics would judge the production in relation to Jarry's intentions (or what critics thought his intentions were); due to the increasing influence of the "U-Effect," the text was not allowed to exist outside of its 1896 premiere, whose myth was still growing.

Additionally, despite its legitimate status, the Royal Court did claim to be at the time one of the only professional theatres that attacked the "Establishment" in any "serious way" (Roberts 114). The theatre had been the home of the premieres of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and Edward Bond's *Saved*. The production of the latter in November of 1965 led to the censorship case that eventually brought the end of theatre censorship in the UK in 1968 (Gaskill 69-70). The reputation of the legitimate company for actively taking jabs at the establishment is a perfect match for the production of a play renowned for its attack on establishment. Beyond establishing the legitimacy of the play in the English-language, the Royal Court production also launched a new production model for the company.

The company's financial situation had been deteriorating for years and came to a head in spring, 1966. Accustomed to always doing plays in rep, Gaskill was forced to make a decision to move away from that model and begin a straight run policy, which would begin that July with *Ubu Roi*. In *Playwrights' Theatre: The English Stage Company at the Royal Court*, Terry W. Browne claims that "box office takings ... proved disappointing" (77). Browne may have assumed this because it was the company's first attempt at a new production model, and the administrators may have had high or unrealistic hopes for its financial success. The disappointment may also stem from the fact that the English Stage Company, the resident

¹⁰⁶ Recall the note I made in Chapter 2 regarding Cyril Connolly's 1965 lament that the play had not been well-known outside of France (*100 Key Books*).

company of the Royal Court, had desires to transfer their productions to the West End, and *Ubu Roi* did not (Roberts 107). Beaumont notes this fact, yet reports that it enjoyed “considerable popular success” (*Jarry*, *Ubu Roi* 70).¹⁰⁷ Though *Ubu Roi* would not be the company’s most financially successful straight-run production, it would do well enough to show the company that it could survive in the new production model. Philip Roberts, author of *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage*, confirms that while doing true repertory, the company reported losses of £45,000 over the six months prior to *Ubu Roi*; after following the straight run policy for three years, the theatre remained deficit free over the whole period (113). The critical reception is more mixed than was the relatively positive popular opinion.

With their production’s simultaneous support and dismissal of the “U-Effect” strategies, Gaskill and Cuthbertson claimed a space for the play in legitimate culture, keeping the critics busy with their complicated rulings while mildly pleasing the public. The critics’ readings take into account the tradition of the play that had already been established in Jarry scholarship. In *The Fool on the Hill*, Wall writes, “the translation had been carried out with comedy in mind, in direct contrast to Jarry’s original idea, which had been to shock the whole of France with vulgarities and cold-blooded horror” (225). In response to the production’s supposed erring in striving for comedy and entertainment with musical numbers, Esslin writes, “the old masterpiece shines through all the imperfections and misconceptions” (“Ooboo” 17). Esslin adds that Jarry was a forerunner of pop art. He describes the “violent colours” and the “sophisticated primitivism” of the set (“Ooboo” 16). Beaumont judges it in relation to Jarry’s intentions, claiming that elements of the production (Hockney’s sets and costumes) aligned with Jarry’s

¹⁰⁷ In his article “Theatre Abroad” for *Educational Theatre Journal*, Glenn Loney reports that the Royal Court’s theatre club consisted of 10,000 members, but they only attended the theatre when they were impressed by the critics’ reviews (91). Loney’s comment suggests that had the critical reception been more fully positive, the audience would have shown in stronger numbers, perhaps facilitating a transfer to the West End.

primitive dramaturgy that privileged non-realism and incoherence (*Jarry, Ubu Roi* 70). Esslin and Beaumont show that critics and historians see portions of the production engaging with primitivism. Browne reports that critics had high praise for the production, and qualifies his remark with the statement that the play had influenced most of the playwrights since its 1896 premiere, particularly those working in the Theatre of the Absurd.¹⁰⁸ He also notes that most critics pointed out its loss of shock effect and sting (Browne 77). The most pertinent statement made in critical and scholarly discussions of the production is when Beaumont argues it was this production that did the most to establish the play in Britain (*Jarry, Ubu Roi* 70). All of these comments reflect the complicated reactions critics were forced into by the incongruous dramaturgy of the production.

On the other hand, the public response, as I have cited above, reflects that some of the production choices made the play accessible to a popular audience. Gaskill planted a known star in the role of Ubu, and Cuthbertson's adaptation included musical numbers reminiscent of a British pantomime play, a popular performance form. Gaskill buys the production some legitimacy with a popular audience, and therefore demonstrates the attempt to make the play legitimate. Staging the play within the Royal Court itself also granted the play legitimacy, as it was an institutional space. Additionally, the English Stage Company was seen as one of few companies taking on the establishment at the time, and therefore held up the banner of the "U-Effect" strategy of scandal provocation. The balance that Gaskill and the production team struck between production values that appealed to a popular audience, and those that bolstered and drew on the "U-Effect," gave the play legitimacy to a broad audience. The Royal Court's *Ubu*

¹⁰⁸ I do not share Browne's findings on the critical reception of the production, as I have mentioned that the reviews I have gathered suggest a response that is positive toward some aspects of the production and negative toward others, Wall's acting being significant among those.

Roi opened the play to a popular audience and cemented its place as relevant to the English-speaking academy.

C. Professional Productions in the United States, 1970-1976

Scholars often point out one of Jarry's dramaturgical purposes as investigating the actor-audience relationship. Jarry provides evidence for this in an article he wrote after the 1896 Théâtre de l'Œuvre production of *Ubu Roi*, titled "Theater Questions." In his article he exclaimed, "I intended that when the curtain went up the scene should *confront* the public like the exaggerating mirror in the stories of Madame Leprince de Beaumont, in which the depraved saw themselves with dragons' bodies, or bulls' horns, or whatever corresponded to their particular vice" (*Selected Works* 83, my emphasis). Jarry speaks of a particular relationship he wanted to have with the audience. He wanted to force the audience to participate in the coproduction of meaning, not merely present a show for its consumption; he wanted to engage the spectators' imaginations to present the image of their "ignoble double" for observation and their own confrontation. That goal apparently had at least mild success, according to the tale of the reaction, from W. B. Yeats's account of which we have obtained the now notorious phrase, "After us the savage God."

With his stated desire for spectators to complete the meaning of his plays in their imaginations, Jarry stresses the kind of role he sees the audience playing in relation to the actors; it is as if the audience members themselves are part of the production team. In *Theatre, Performance, and the Historical Avant-Garde*, Günter Berghaus situates the actor-audience relationship as a key feature of avant-garde art. Berghaus points out the process of "placing the spectators at the center of the work and forcing them to take an active role in the creative act.

The audience as coproducer ... the spectator has to resynthesize the fragmented reality exhibited in the artwork through an active engagement with its form and content” (45). Several productions in this section demonstrate the urge to use this production practice of the historical avant-garde in order to re-establish the spectators as co-creators of the meaning of the performance.

***Ubu Roi*, LaMama E.T.C., New York, February 1970**

In February of 1970, LaMama Experimental Theatre Company staged *Ubu Roi*. Regarding the initial driving project of LaMama, founder Ellen Stewart has said, “I wanted to create a premise out of which creative theatre experimentation could best be served, and I think there is a subliminal rapport that somehow has come into being here, with the playwright or the production and the audience. It *eliminates the separation of artist and audience* that one is so aware of in ‘contemporary’ theatre” (Orzel 163, my emphasis). The actor-audience relationship is one that Stewart nurtures in her theatre; as visiting director, Andrei Serban does that and more.

Serban was concerned with developing “a sensory and essentially antiliterary theater” (Bottoms 338). He threw fragments of the Ubu plays together in a “collage of theatrical excess, full of slapstick and offal” (338). Clive Barnes called the piece a series of “simple comic impulses and patterns” (“Double-Bill at LaMama” 33). In assembling fragments of the text as the working script, Serban made a turn to probing the nature of theatre; he stripped the text of its social meaning, investigating how the text can be accessed when thrown together in fragments: “Serban’s [sic] strengths, as [*Ubu*] indicated, lay in using classic texts as malleable raw material for creating his own theatrical visions...” (Bottoms 338).¹⁰⁹ Serban was able to successfully move beyond the verbal language tied to the text, into raw material, to use primitivism to his

¹⁰⁹ Bottoms, among others, misspells Serban’s name as Sherban.

advantage in creating the *Ubu* performance; Barnes described Jarry's text, as reworked by Serban, as a reduction to simple comic impulses and patterns ("Double-Bill at LaMama" 33).

The press roundly praised the actors' performances. Writing for *Show Business*, Joyce Tretick exclaimed "[t]he actors are marvelous and exhibit a wide range of ensemble playing" (14). Clive Barnes gave the entire company kudos, but singled out especially the actors who played Père and Mère Ubu (William Duffy and Michèle Collison, respectively), and Lou Zeldis, who played a multitude of characters. For the *Village Voice*, Dick Brokenfeld also gave high praise to Duffy, Collison, and Zeldis: "There is one particularly inspired moment when the exultant Ubuses fill the stage with their newly gained treasure, which is junk. William Duffy makes a gruff Falstaffian Ubu, and Lou Zeldis adds a nice, subdued comedy, impersonating a slew of nobles" (62). The review in the *Wall Street Journal* describes Duffy's Ubu as "witty" (20).

Critics seem to highlight the production's strategies as effectively reflecting a turn toward primitivism. Tretick suggests, "I think that M. Sherban [sic] illustrates ... the importance of ritual in theatre. He intensifies the absurdity of his situations by showing man's banalities in the simplest terms" (14). The ritualizing of the performance and the simplifying of its actions demonstrates Serban's commitment to primitivism and the attempt to follow Jarry's example in production practice. By ritualizing the performance, Serban asked the audience to complete the meaning in ways in which conventional theatre would refuse its spectators. Brokenfeld notes that Serban "succeeds in making immediate the adventures of Jarry's turn of the century, shit-obsessed creations" (62). The immediacy Brokenfeld senses could be due to Serban's handling of the actor-audience relationship. In a well-crafted actor-audience relationship, the performance should appear immediate and affect the audience in some tangible way.

As Brokenfeld's comment on the immediacy tapped by the production reveals, critics of this production are not ignorant of the 1896 production and the "myth of *Ubu Roi*." Barnes, Tretick, and the reviewer for the *Wall Street Journal* all mention the momentous 1896 production. They do this, it appears, merely to give some background on the play; none of the critics sets his/her review of the production off from the 1896 production or compares the two. By merely announcing the existence of the groundbreaking premiere production and not in any way challenging Serban's production against the formidable history of the play, critics are out to spread the gospel of the "U-Effect." This is a dynamic that will change significantly in future productions.

***Ubu Roi*, St. Clement's, New York, December 1971**

The next professional production of *Ubu Roi* was performed in December 1971 at St. Clement's on West 46th Street. Lynne Meadow directed the production. The actors were costumed in union suits and diapers, and the set resembled a football field, with goalposts at either end. In his review for *Backstage*, George L. George noted the cast's "expert" marionette-like performance, and called the whole thing a "hilarious, lusty and ... satirical comment on human foibles and follies" (21). Both George and Michael Feingold, for the *Village Voice*, applaud Henry Winkler and Duncan Hazzard's performances as Ubu and Prince Bougrelas, respectively. Feingold says of Winkler's performance that he "roared manfully, and was often funny and ferocious at it," but laments that "he is no monster, and that was that" (46). Feingold suggests that a man the size of Zero Mostel needs to play Ubu in order to capture the image Jarry wanted. While he does point out several moments he found impressive, overall, Feingold thought that the production was too muddled: "lots of business and noise, not much blood and guts" (46).

Here, as he will in reviews of several other performances of this play, Feingold shows a bias created by the “U-Effect.”

In his review, Feingold, like Barnes and Gelb before him, gives a requisite history lesson on the play before delivering his review. He argues that the play could never have gone mainstream because the bourgeoisie would not tolerate *Ubu*, for “‘Ubu’ tells the world that all its dreams—wealth, power, security, bravery, justice—are the goals of anal, infantile impulses—the banker across the desk from you is ‘a great big elderly baby’” (“Tidings” 46). Feingold’s is a story generated by the controversy of the 1896 production and perpetuated by the establishment of the strategies of the “U-Effect” years after the fact, as scholars attempted to pin down and understand the energies supposedly inherent in Jarry’s text. Both Feingold and George comment on the play’s avant-garde status, Feingold calling it “the play most permanently fixed to the idea ‘avant-garde,’” (“Tidings” 46) and George noting it as a precursor of Surrealism. These moves situate Meadow’s production against the monolithic Théâtre de l’Œuvre production, which by 1971 had been saddled with the reputation of a performance striving for primitivism, thanks to the work of the “U-Effect” strategy of revolutionary dramaturgy. These comments, from the arbiters of taste, act to preserve a particular status for the play: legitimate, and appropriate to study in the academy, yet undesirable for the masses to consume.¹¹⁰ These statements give audiences the authority to pre-judge the production as not worthy of its history, or as simply undesirable to take in, perhaps leading to financial failure. Feingold and George both authorize this audience response with their remarks. Feingold’s words of the play’s inability to attain mainstream status will take a challenge less than twenty years later, when *Ubu Roi* is performed at a mainstream venue in New York, the Lincoln Center.

¹¹⁰ Despite the fact that the Royal Court production had proven at least mildly successful with a popular audience, critics such as Feingold maintain the authority to judge that the play should not be “popular.” Additionally, the New York market is obviously different from London, so the critics’ desires could well be very different.

***Ubu Roi* and *Ubu Enchaîné*, Nighthouse Company, New York, November 1973**

The Nighthouse Company produced both *Ubu Roi* and *Ubu Enchaîné* (*Ubu Bound*) in repertory in November 1973.¹¹¹ The plays were directed by Gerald Mast, and adapted by Mast and B. Y. Sitterly. David Gaard designed the “cunningly snug sets—a convertible latrine for each play,” and Gordon Needham created the “surreal” costumes (H. Thompson 30).

Critics for the Nighthouse production hold Mast’s direction as the key to creating the ease with which the audience and the actors were able to strengthen their relationship in the performance. Wasserman gloats, “most outstanding, is the way in which director Gerald Mast has found a comfortable balance in form between realism and stylized absurdity. . . . Mr. Mast has used this composite style . . . to draw out . . . their parallels to reality” (7). Through juxtaposing the acting styles from one play to the next, Wasserman finds Mast’s technique as an invitation to relate more closely to the actors in order to make apparent the play’s parallels to our own world. Similarly, Howard Thompson finds that “the clever and effective combination of these two ingredients [*Ubu Roi* and *Ubu Enchaîné*] is the real achievement at Night House [sic], sharpening the point of Mr. Jarry’s wild, withering appraisal of mankind and his Ubu, a rapacious con man to end them all” (30). Peter Burnell and Linda Kampley’s Ubuses receive high praise from all critics. Thompson sees “mercurial grotesquerie” in their work (30). For the *Village Voice*, Michael Smith says Burnell “creates a new clown archetype,” while Kampley is “sweet and real with her neat little pencil mustache” (Smith 71). Wasserman calls Burnell’s Ubu “superbly portrayed as a loveable-but-repulsive fool,” and Kampley’s Mère Ubu “charismatically and smoothly played” (Wasserman 7). The company’s production values

¹¹¹ The company had initially produced *Ubu Roi* and *Macbeth* to run in repertory in February of that year (Washburn).

seemed to fit their space and their audience perfectly, for it is one of the most highly regarded in terms of critics' response to it.

The critics' engagement with the "U-Effect" for this production is mixed. Supporting the "U-Effect," Martin Washburn calls the play one of the "glories of Western literature" (55). Also drawing on the strength of the "U-Effect," Howard Thompson notes that *Ubu Roi* "pioneered the Theater of the Absurd" (30). Debbi Wasserman, on the other hand, calls the play's shock qualities "unnecessary," and "out-dated," denying that a production of the play should strive to achieve the same shock and scandal as the 1896 production (7). She also insinuates that the Nighthouse production far exceeds the qualities that the script has traditionally been known for by subduing those elements and drawing out the plays' parallels to reality. All of the critics, however, respond very positively to the production, so their hailing the "U-Effect" serves only either to publicly support the production with the rhetorical power of the "U-Effect," or to suggest that the production supersedes the "U-Effect" and adds to the play's legitimacy more than the "U-Effect" is capable of doing.

***Ubu/Jarry*, Gate Theatre, New York, September 1976**

In September 1976, the Gate Theatre in the East Village produced *Ubu/Jarry*, an original biographical play about Jarry, which incorporated scenes from *Ubu Roi*. The play presented some of the famous anecdotes about Jarry in the first half. In an attempt to stage the story of Jarry's taking on the character of Ubu, scenes from *Ubu Roi* appeared early in the second, and then Ubu became Jarry's double, following him throughout the rest of the action. The production was staged in a thrust space, but was apparently directed as full proscenium (Banes). In honor of Jarry, the design was simple, using a black backdrop, sparse props, and detailed, brightly painted and sculpted costumes (Lamb).

The critical response to the production was less than generous. Sally Banes of the *Soho Weekly News* calls director Gary Trout's staging, like author Michael Chepiga's structure "unimaginative and sometimes downright awkward," and says the work was trivializing to Jarry (30). In her review for "Off Off Broadway Reviews" on WNYC/830 Radio, Leah D. Frank claims that the program notes were the most exciting aspect of the play. Arthur Sainer of the *Village Voice* begs for the production to be "more exciting, more inventive, more enchanting" than it was (115). The sole redeeming element for him, and indeed the high point for most reviewers, was Maurice Blanc's portrayal of Ubu. Sainer's description of Blanc's performance speaks for most in calling him "a mound of plump coyness, a quivering lump of greediness, an undulating stretch of lust, stupidity, and cowardice" (115). The reviewers also point to Madeline Cohen's costumes as spectacularly done. These two elements, along with a few complimentary reactions to Andy Wood's performance as Jarry, are the sole positive comments from the critics. Critics do not agree on whether they see Jarry portrayed as insane or a life-long practical joker, but most seem to contend that whatever light was cast on Jarry was not correct or encompassing enough to fully reveal a man whose work has had such an impact on experimental theatre in the Western world. The critics' comments on this subject reveal their debt to the "U-Effect."

Trout's production exposes the critics working within the "U-Effect" in different ways than for most other productions. Since *Ubu/Jarry* is, in large part, a biography of Jarry, critics have the strategy of the "U-Effect" regarding Jarry's exceptional behavior and merging with the character Ubu to lean on. Ultimately, the same criticisms are found when critics make the obvious comparison between what they think Jarry's life was, and how the production presented it. Banes claims that the adaptation "reduces Jarry to an over-grown adolescent, a sulking pariah

who's secretly lonely and wants to be normal. . . . See, he's not really superhuman, but needy and vulnerable just like the rest of us" (30). Banes seems to want to deny any sense of ordinariness to Jarry; she wants to uphold the extraordinary figure that has been created through the anecdotes handed down and supported by the "U-Effect." Borger writes that Chepiga "distorts and simplifies" his subject, an interesting remark to make, since the biography Borger is protecting is assuredly just as distorted and simplified through the anecdotes that have come to construct Jarry's life. Surprisingly, however, some critics for this production go against the grain and take issue with the simplification of Jarry's life that has happened through the various articulations of the "U-Effect."

It appears as though the playing of Jarry's well-known life, shown even through all the anecdotes with which biographers and scholars had fallen in love, runs the risk of exposing a crack in the discursive formations. Sainer, like Borger, Frank, and Syna, believes that if there is anything worthwhile in staging the life of Jarry, it is not the barrage of pranks that constitute his biography, but his interior life. Maybe actually witnessing the pranks and mystifying behavior played out causes the critics to examine how little they understand Jarry as an individual. These critics find a snag in the web of knowledge that constitutes the received biography of Jarry, and can finally speak up to the fact that what has been written is unjust, inaccurate, or insufficient to represent Jarry 70 years after his death. It is obviously impossible to know exactly how Jarry experienced the world in his mind and heart, so any attempt to represent his interior life is speculative, but it seems as though these critics would be satisfied with even a wildly imagined look at Jarry's inner self—there is no doubt that would please Jarry, in any case. If these critics have found a chip in the porcelain façade of the knowledge of Jarry maintained by the "U-

Effect,” it may be an indication of the larger impulse to reconsider and reconstruct Jarry’s biography, as simultaneously, scholarly constructions of Jarry’s life were shifting as well.¹¹²

The productions I have considered in this section reveal several elements of the play’s production history. As I mentioned in the introductory paragraph, it is clear that companies, such as LaMama ETC and the Nighthouse theatre, took Jarry’s lead and attempted to manipulate the actor-audience relationship to make the audience a more vital component in creating the meaning of the performance. Additionally, critics have made several moves with the “U-Effect.” In cases such as the LaMama and Nighthouse productions, critics called upon it either to support the work achieved in the production or to suggest that the production did better than what the “U-Effect” suggests it could. In the case of the St. Clement’s production and *Ubu/Jarry* at the Gate, critics called on the “U-Effect” to criticize the productions for failing to meet the standards (as constructed as they are) of the precedent of the 1896 production and the narrative of Jarry’s life set in place by the strategies of the “U-Effect.” Productions will continue to receive both support and backlash from critics deploying the “U-Effect” as the production history continues.

D. Peter Brook’s *Ubu*

***Ubu*, Bouffes du Nord, Paris, Young Vic, London, LaMama ETC, New York, 1977, 1978, 1980**

One of the most famous, and most critically acclaimed, productions of *Ubu Roi* is Peter Brook’s 1977 production produced by his International Center for Theatre Creation (CICT). Brook’s production combined *Ubu Roi* and *Ubu Enchaîné*, titled *Ubu*, and played at the Bouffes du Nord in Paris, before touring to the Young Vic theatre in London in 1978, and LaMama ETC,

¹¹² In 1974, Arnaud published his *Alfred Jarry: d’Ubu Roi au Docteur Faustroll*, and in 1984, Keith Beaumont would publish his *Alfred Jarry: A Critical and Biographical Study*, both of which were significant in clarifying previously dubious details of Jarry’s life. I discuss both of these books in Chapter 2 of this study.

New York, in 1980. In this section, I will evaluate the production in relation to its production values as described by critics, by scholars of Brook's work, and by Brook himself. Then I will evaluate how the critics position the production in relation to the received narrative of Jarry's play. I will argue that because Brook's production values and views on the theatre may be viewed as similar to Jarry's, the reception of his production demonstrates that a production with seemingly similar goals as Jarry will assist with the process of maintaining the play as a worthwhile text to study and stage.

In Paris, the production was staged in the Bouffes du Nord, a stripped theatre on the market street of Rue du Faubourg. Critics note the appropriateness of the space for the experiments Brook had been conducting at the time with his CICT (Coveney 28; Trilling 128). In her article "Brook's *Ubu*" for *Canadian Theatre Review*, Ossia Trilling describes the auditorium with the audience seated on a semi-circular stand situated around the bare floor playing area. She notes the lack of any conventional set, but an iron walkway across the rear stage wall was used on occasion. Actors made their entrances through the auditorium or an opening in the proscenium arch. The properties and costumes were sparse, suggestive, and multi-purposed. Outside of generic, dirty, street-looking clothes, costumes included a knitted cap for a crown, a gown for the Empress of Russia, and a sheepskin coat worn early by Ubu that doubled later as the bear. For props, bricks served as food among other items, and an empty, wire rope reel as a throne and a table, as well as for numerous other purposes. Bouncing balls dropped from the ceiling assaulted Ubu and his soldiers in the battle (Trilling "Brook's *Ubu*" 128; Coveney 28). When the production toured to London and New York, the company maintained the sparse set with the minimal props and costumes.

The cast was composed of actors and musicians from four continents: Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. In Paris, the company acted the play exclusively in French. When it toured to London and New York, some of the French dialogue was translated to English. A Japanese musician set the atmosphere on drums and various other instruments. The acting of Andreas Katsulas and Michèle Collison, as Père and Mère Ubu, is frequently praised in the reviews from all locations.¹¹³ A representative example of the raves they receive comes from Irving Wardle of *The Times* of London. Wardle exclaims, “among a brilliantly doubling and tumbling company, the central pair are monumentally played by Andreas Katsulas and Michèle Collison, who project Ubu and his monster spouse as comic giants, indestructibly alive no matter what regrettable aspects of the French temperament they may embody” (14).¹¹⁴ Critics frequently note the excellent quality of the acting by the whole company. In fact, the acting, and its impact on the audience, is one of the most widely discussed elements of the production.

Throughout his career, in both his production work and his writing, Peter Brook has placed considerable importance on the actor-audience relationship. In his chapter on the “Immediate Theatre” in *The Empty Space*, Brook discusses the idea that the audience is required to give *assistance* to the actors in order to complete the theatrical representation:

Occasionally, on what he calls a “good night,” [the actor] encounters an audience that by chance brings an active interest and life to its watching role – this audience assists. With this assistance, the assistance of eyes and focus and desires and enjoyment and concentration, repetition turns into representation. Then the word representation no longer separates actor and audience, show and public: it envelops them: what is present for one is present for the other. The audience too

¹¹³ Michèle Collison had also played Mère Ubu in Serban’s production at LaMama ETC in 1970.

¹¹⁴ Malick Bowens and Miriam Goldschmidt doubled in the roles of the Ubus in the second act, and did not receive as much mention as Katsulas and Collison.

has undergone a change. It has come from a life outside the theatre that is essentially repetitive to a special arena in which each moment is lived more clearly and more tensely. The audience assists the actor, and at the same time for the audience itself assistance comes back from the stage. (140)

Actor and audience assist each other to realize the theatrical event. The mutual assistance of actor and audience seems to be a strong relationship, one forged from almost ideal circumstances.

Brook's production of *Ubu* invited the audience's assistance in many ways. In the production's bare minimum and manipulation of props, the audience was asked for assistance, and it apparently granted it: "Brook's ability to make us see what is not there is all over 'Ubu': that brick, for instance, not only plays a chicken, but plays being eaten, and the actor's mime of nibbling it down to the bone is astonishingly plausible, though there is no attempt at optical illusion" (Levin n. pag.). Victoria Radin, for *The Observer*, feels compelled by the sense of play: "Brook instils [sic] a wonderful kind of life into the text by infusing it with absolute conviction, the tone of children at play. It's a tone to which his improvisational method is admirably suited: for all the production's technical perfection, you feel that the games are still being played and discovered" ("Knockabout" n. pag.). The invitation for assistance worked on the audience because in producing both plays together, Brook allowed the audience to observe even more games and more instances of transformational properties, as well as the doubling of the actors playing the Ubus. Additionally, in the performances in English-speaking London and New York, the play was performed in a mix of French and English (still mostly French), so the audiences assisted the actors with closing the signification process by reading the actors' bodies, and understanding the language of the play through the text of their bodies. Jack Kroll, for

Newsweek, confirms this element of audience assistance: “Brook is telling you that language really doesn’t matter: real understanding comes from the total expressiveness of people vibrating in the throes of passion or obsession” (101). The audience assisted in completing the meaning of what the actors were physically doing.

Brook also showed a concern for primitivism through his investigation of his essential questions, “What is an actor,” and “What is the actor’s relationship to the spectator.”¹¹⁵ In their study, *Peter Brook*, Albert Hunt and Geoffrey Reeves describe how theatrical lighting affects the relationship: “The performance was played with the house lights on. When Mère Ubu went looking for treasure in the crypt, she blundered about with her candle and asked someone in the front row to help her shift a paving stone. There was audience contact of the most natural and unaffected kind” (213). With the lights on, the actors and audience could easily commune and negotiate the actor-audience relationship in search of that fundamental aspect of theatre. Wardle also commends Katsulas and Collison for “always maintaining their playful direct contact with the house,” affirming the actors’ work to commune with the audience (14).

Brook’s actors also showed themselves to the audience as examples of primitivism in performance through sheer physical exertion of the body: “The staging consisted of physical clowning, impressive acrobatics and the most resourceful invention. It was raucous and noisy, coarse and fast. The actors sweated and spat and roared. . . . The overall effect was of a highly disciplined circus troupe improvising a farce. The tone was that of a silent film, or music hall” (212). Radin, of *The Observer*, calls the company “athletic,” and notes the visual sensation of experiencing the actors’ bodies do precise, challenging work such as the Ubus rowing off for their final exit in perfect unison as a key part of the production’s ability to take the text “daringly

¹¹⁵ Brook posed his essential questions of theatre performance in the program for his 1968 production of *The Tempest*. Brook’s questions are: “What is a theatre? What is a play? What is an actor? What is a spectator? What is the relation between them all? What conditions serve this best?” (qtd. in Innes 3).

and ruthlessly ... further than you thought they could go” (“Knockabout” n. pag.). Through the actors’ physical work and exhaustion, they showed an undying, foundational, primitive aspect of theatre: the actor’s vitality. Concerns over merely watching the actors engaging in apparent theatrical exercises inform numerous critics’ responses to the production.

Critical response for Brook’s production was not uniformly positive. For *The Sunday Times*, John Peter questions Brook’s purpose in presenting the production in Paris; he believes that Brook is “meditating in public with his actors, waiting for [the] play to yield up its secret” (38). Peter ends his review stating “the theatre is not ... a public laboratory of basic stagecraft” (38). It appears as though Peter, one of the few critics with a negative review of the production, simply does not appreciate Brook’s pursuit of the vitalist spirit in his productions. He sees Brook as giving no reason for having done the play, and cannot accept the production as a mere laboratory experiment. In a similar critique, John Simon, for *New York*, believes that Brook made a mistake in staging the play in the style of Grotowskian “poor theatre.” Drawing on the “crazy panoply” of the 1896 production, Simon believes that Brook’s production was too harmless because the “childish nastiness” of Jarry’s play did not have “something grandiose to deflate” (79). As an example, Simon says that the wire rope reel as a rolling tank of destruction, killing peasants at will, worked well. The rest of the minimal stage material was not as effective in his mind. While many scholars, including Breton, Shattuck, Esslin, and Innes have argued that Jarry pursued a primitivism of his own kind, Simon and Peter believe that Brook’s primitivism does not work for the production.

Both Simon and Peter comment on Jarry’s original effect with the play’s premiere in 1896. They do not offer any possible solutions for how to recapture the shock quality and surreal imagination of the piece, but they know that Brook does not have the answer with his production.

Demanding that contemporary productions of the piece create the response that the play had 80 years prior is silly and futile; there is no way to re-create the precise material conditions and dominant ideas of theatrical production that would alchemically achieve a scandal. Simon's and Peter's closed-mindedness is perhaps the difference between their views of the production and those of the critics with positive reviews, who share the same references to the 1896 production, but perceive Brook's production in very different ways.

For *The Sunday Times*, Bernard Levin laments the fact that audiences no longer riot for plays that displease them. Following that lament with the note that the 1896 production resulted in a "battle royal," Levin ultimately judges the production far from riot-worthy, but good, nonetheless ("Little Touch" n. pag.). The tendency of scores of critics to maintain sensationalized narratives of the premiere production by which to measure the relevance or quality of revivals continues to guide the expectations and perceptions of (potential) audiences, and to shape the theatre-going public into followers of the myth of *Ubu*. A public exposed to the power of the "U-Effect" through constant reminders by the critics in the space of theatrical reviews is a public that will likely expect revivals to behave in very particular ways—ways that uphold the notion of the play being the originator of historical European avant-garde—if they are to be deemed acceptable and successful.

Brook himself gives some insight into how critics, and scholars like myself, might judge his production in relation to Jarry's text. In his *The Empty Space*, Brook classifies *Ubu Roi* as "Rough Theatre." One facet of Rough Theatre that Brook describes is its absence of style: "putting over something in rough conditions is like a revolution, for anything that comes to hand can be turned into a weapon" (66). For Brook, a piece of Rough Theatre can use whatever it needs to reach the audience; it is not leashed by a set of rules of style. Therefore, in the case of

Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, Brook sees the text easily lending itself to the absence of style of Rough Theatre. Perhaps it is due to the "Roughness" of the 1896 production that he places the play in that category, but he also says that the intent of a piece of Rough Theatre is to create joy and laughter (69). Most accounts of the 1896 production of *Ubu Roi* do not indicate joy and laughter were part of the audience experience, yet certainly plenty argued Jarry was out to change society, which is another purpose Brook sees in Rough Theatre. For the *Wall Street Journal*, Edwin Wilson recognizes the 1896 production as "the first shot fired in the modern avant-garde movement" (n. pag.). Similar to what the production at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre strove for, Wilson describes Brook's project: "Like most people in the avant-garde, Mr. Brook had become dissatisfied with traditional theater ... As with other avant-garde directors, he eschewed ordinary language and concentrated, among other things, on movement and ritual" (n. pag.). Wilson evidences the easy correlation that can be made between Jarry's assault on the conventional theatre of *fin de siècle* France and Brook's use of the Rough and Holy Theatre to escape the conventions of his own time.

As a revival of a canonical avant-garde text, Brook's *Ubu* was able to achieve wide-scale celebration of the play in performance, a feat that almost no other *Ubu Roi* revival could claim, but certainly not any other in the English language. For a play whose reputation rests on its premiere, most discussion of the play occurs within the field of literary criticism or French/Romantic studies. Brook's production reopened the doors for theatre critics and scholars to discuss the play (unfortunately, *Ubu Roi* would still suffer from a dearth of scholarship on it in performance). Brook's production at the end of the 1970s seems to usher in a period in which the English-speaking academy puts out an unprecedented volume of scholarship on Jarry and *Ubu Roi*. The celebration of the play comes from the success of Brook's staging. For many, the

staging was successful due to Brook's pursuit of primitivism. Through both production design and action, *Ubu* drew on primitivism for its vitality and ability to place the actors and their communion with the audience at the center of the performance. The connection Brook's primitivism forged with the cultural understanding of the 1896 production ratifies the quality of the CICT production. In the reception of this production, the "U-Effect," while ever-present, does not have to work to enforce its dominance or expand its sphere of influence; Brook's company achieves that work for it. With critics comparing *Ubu* to the 1896 premiere for the benefit of the revival, the "U-Effect," as our dominant mode of understanding the avant-garde, was activated and distributed to a broad public, and the play's legitimacy was affirmed.

E. Productions in the UK and US, 1977-1989

***Ubu Rex*, Bristol Old Vic at the New Vic, November 1977**

The production of *Ubu Rex* at the New Vic in Bristol opened the Old Vic's Fall 1977 season, using Cyril Connolly and Simon Watson Taylor's 1968 translation. If there was an attempt at primitivism in the production, it is difficult to parse out from the one available review. Critic Jeremy Brien of *The Stage and Television Today* writes that the impact of Jarry's text rests in part on crude pantomime comedy. Further, Brien argues that director Adrian Noble attempted to capture the impact of which the text is capable. In this regard, the production could be argued to engage in the primitivism implicit in the style of pantomime. That said, with just one review to work from, that argument is tenuous, at best. The company performed the play in a studio setting, with a design consisting of graffiti on the walls and trap doors spread around the space to convey a sort of "animated cartoon" (Brien 13). In his review, Brien speaks highly of the use of the space, but again fails to mention any comment that would indicate the pursuit of primitivism

through working on the actor-audience relationship. He compliments the acting, with the highest praise going to Alan Rickman for his “superbly played” Ma Ubu, “a drag queen in every sense” (13). Brien writes that Harold Innocent was “equally at home with the monstrous wit and wiles of the bullying Ubu” (13). Brien also singles out two company members playing punk rock guards, and the fight choreography as noteworthy. While there is no clarity on whether or not primitivism was sought, Brien very clearly exposes the influence of the “U-Effect” on his viewing.

Brien claims that the play—or at least its impact in 1896—is easy to understand. He argues that anarchy in theatre has extended far beyond the riot-causing impact of “*merdre*,” so Jarry’s text is well within the grasp of contemporary audiences. His statement here is a minority statement, since many other critics have called on the play’s supposed obscurity and unstageability. What Brien seems to do for the production, and for readings of the text, is to open it up as a much more accessible play. Brien does not hide behind the tradition scholars have said *Ubu Roi* started; instead, he argues it is more easily understood because of what comes after it. In this way, he assists with the growing legitimate reputation of the play by encouraging would-be readers/viewers to experience the text. This development would in turn buoy the power of the “U-Effect,” enabling its spread over a wider cultural influence.

***Ubu Rex*, Yale Repertory Theatre, New Haven, February 1980**

In February 1980, the Yale Repertory Theatre staged David Copelin’s 1973 translation *Ubu Rex*, directed by Andrei Belgrader.¹¹⁶ The cast included Ron Faber and Ruth Jaroslow as the Ubuses, and among the Yale students in the cast, Tony Shalhoub appeared in a number of ensemble roles. The performance provided ample visual stimulation through scenic design. The scenery, designed by Loren Sherman, consisted of a white and red mat covering the stage floor,

¹¹⁶ Copelin was a 1972 graduate of the Yale School of Drama’s Dramatic Literature and Criticism Program.

with several traps, which lowered beneath the stage floor to raise pieces of scenery (bathtub, banquet table, etc.) and to accept actors, such as those whose characters were sentenced to disembraining. Two long trenches bordering the playing area, covered with steel mesh bridges, also facilitated scenery and actor movement from under the stage. The peasants' house in Act 3 was moved about the space by the actors inside it. When the peasants escaped through one of the traps, the house deflated, leaving a pile of fabric. Sherman played with scale in the scenery and properties. In Act 1, at the review of the parade, toy soldiers represented the marching King's men. In contrast, Tsar Alexander's robe was two stories high with openings through which a miniature village, forest, and the Kremlin could be seen. Sherman also gave Ubu a plaster fist the size of an ox to assert his iron will. Belgrader chose to stage Ubu fleeing Poland to the US, so at the end of the play, the Statue of Liberty was brought on stage (Gussow "Yale Rep"; Shyer).

Mel Gussow of the *New York Times* found the production to demonstrate some of the outrage he sees in the script. He admits that in performance, "the outrage wears a bit thin" by the end, though he does assert that in whole, Jarry's view remained "blunt, mordant and horrifying" (n. pag.). Gussow appreciates Faber's "bold emphatic" Ubu, and Jaroslow's "brazen, almost burlesque" Ma Ubu (n. pag.). He also notes the obscene view propounded by the play and the feeling that Belgrader and translator Copelin played up the scatology. Gussow's opinion here may be seen as in line with the history lesson he seeks to tell with his review.

Gussow tells the story of how *Ubu Roi* created a tradition in European avant-garde theatre. He calls the play pivotal in the history of the avant-garde and claims that in Belgrader's production, one can detect the "germination of Ionesco, Genet, Arrabal and others" (n. pag.). Attaching the mid-twentieth century experimental dramatists to the work Jarry did with *Ubu Roi*, Gussow latches onto the repeatable materiality of Esslin's, Pronko's, and Wellwarth's

statements; he desires for Ionesco, et. al, to represent the full development of Jarry's ideas.

Despite the production's use of elaborate scenery and apparent intent on divorcing itself from strict adherence to Jarry's written directions for the piece, with Gussow's remarks on the play's place in theatrical history, the "U-Effect" stamps its presence on his review and marks Gussow as a carrier of the "U-Effect." Perhaps this is because Gussow concerned himself more with the language of the play than he did the visual representation. His observation of the production's foregrounded scatology would then suggest that Belgrader operated within the standard, "U-Effect" sanctioned practices for a production of *Ubu Roi*.

***Ubu*, The Open Space at the Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre, London, April 1980**

Charles Marowitz directed an adaptation, *Ubu*, by Spike Milligan, in April 1980 for the Open Space at the Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre, London. Milligan's adaptation places the Ubus at a plant in Dagenham, England, where Fred Ubu serves as a shop steward. The adaptation apparently consisted of a series of crude and simple jokes based on various generalizations of women, race, and class. The set and costumes, according to critic Clare R. Venables, reflected the "general muddle, being simple and stylish much of the time, but interrupted and misused" (n. pag.). That is all the description of the set that can be found in two available reviews, so it is unclear whether the artistic team consciously strove for primitivism in this production. Venables and *Observer* critic Malcolm Hay both dislike the British panto-esque musical comedy performance under Marowitz's direction, and believe the talent of British comedy favorite Charlie Drake was wasted as Fred Ubu.

Both Venables and Hay set their negative opinion of the Marowitz's production in relation to their vision of what they see Jarry's play doing. Hay calls Jarry's script a "splendidly abusive and scatological ... shocker" and laments not seeing in production how Milligan was

turned on to the script in the first place (n. pag.). Venables questions why many seem to do “versions” of Jarry’s play, but none do a straight translation of the script. With that as her foundation, she ultimately judges that “this version goes for the surface barminess without hooking into the central drive of the play, and so becomes meaningless and silly” (n. pag.). Both Venables and Hay position Jarry’s *Ubu Roi* as a text that has significance to theatre, and both put forth the opinion that it had been wronged in Milligan’s adaptation and under Marowitz’s direction. The critics’ desire to protect the image of Jarry’s script at the expense of the Open Space production demonstrates the power of the “U-Effect” on the arbiters of taste deciding the fate of productions of the play. The reviewers’ message: if one messes with the text, one will miss the point of the play, which is to evoke the evilness of the bourgeoisie through its representation in *Ubu*, and thus raise the ire of the bourgeois press.

In this section, the “U-Effect” can be seen to spread its influence even further in the field of knowledge of *Ubu Roi* in production. Critics consistently call on the 1896 production at most every opportunity, whether to condone and support the production practices of the producing companies (Bristol Old Vic and Yale Rep), or to deny their viability (Open Space). Critics stretch the dominion of the “U-Effect” by allowing particular production practices that do fit into the space of its control to open the entire production to being acceptable within the parameters of the “U-Effect,” even if other production practices seem to work against it, as in the Yale Repertory production. At this threshold in the play’s production history, the influence of the “U-Effect” may have expanded so broadly that it was bound to be vulnerable to new tactics taking a perfect opportunity to strike at its dominance and attempt to weaken its stranglehold on production practices of performances of *Ubu Roi*. The production at Lincoln Center Theater in 1989 appears to enter at that opportune moment.

F. Lincoln Center Theater's *Ubu*

***Ubu*, Lincoln Center Theater, New York, June 1989**

The Lincoln Center Theater production of *Ubu*, staged at the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater on Broadway in the summer 1989, seems to have exhibited the traits of performances and productions occupying both mainstream and avant-garde spaces.¹¹⁷ While the eighty-five minute play had a budget of over half a million dollars, it remained at least a mildly faithful adaptation of Jarry's play. In many ways, attempting to nail down a clear-cut set of ideas about this production is just as difficult as parsing the slew of accounts on the 1896 premiere. The production values and material practices suggest that the artistic team attempted to honor Jarry and yet to subversively combat the dominant knowledge of his play that had by that point proliferated legitimate culture. The critics were simultaneously searching for a production that could have only happened 100 years prior in Paris, and attempting to keep their finger on the pulse of their audiences within a postmodern milieu.

I offer here a few necessary details about the production and adaptation of *Ubu*. The show ran June 25 through July 23, 1989. The Lincoln Center Theater production of *Ubu* was a "literal" translation by Jacqueline de la Chaume and adapted by the director Larry Sloan and Doug Wright, who inserted the character of Ubu's Conscience into the plot from Jarry's second Ubu play, *Ubu Cocu* (Ubu Cuckolded). In the adaptation, Ubu ultimately kills his Conscience while on his devouring rampage. What is the result of the performance of this play when the dominant "U-Effect," governing the perception of the play in legitimate culture, is challenged by the desires of postmodern consumer society to see the play differently?

¹¹⁷ Indeed, as Michael Kirby argues in his *A Formalist Theatre*, there is no absolute separation between avant-garde and the mainstream, no eternal and universal roadblock stopping an avant-garde work from becoming a mainstream favorite (99).

The Lincoln Center Theater (LCT) production of *Ubu* was staged in a complicated and conflicted situation due to the saturation of the postmodern consumer culture and the simultaneous and competing domination of the “U-Effect” guiding the thoughts of the critics. LCT’s *Ubu* was dead in the water: the production values straddled prevailing mainstream and avant-garde production practices, and through those practices, tactics different than the “U-Effect” emerged and attempted to weaken the grip of the dominant knowledge of the play. At the same time, the critics came to the production with expectations the production would never deliver on. The influence of the “U-Effect” is enough to guarantee that in the moment *Ubu* would be poorly received. However, I argue here that due to its assertion of tactics that strike against the dominant way of knowing the play and productions of it, the LCT production occurs at a moment of opportunity, and is significant to a study like mine on the critical reception of a play.

In order to foreground the performance practices of mainstream and avant-garde theatre in 1980s New York City, I turn first to Fredric Jameson, whose article “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” details the reigning cultural paradigm. Jameson takes postmodernism as the product of late capitalism, “a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order—what is often euphemistically called modernization, postindustrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism” (1131). Jameson claims postmodernist aesthetic values can be classified as an aesthetic of consumerism. Included in this aesthetic are the values of pastiche, nostalgia, temporality, and the death of the subject. Most important to my work here are nostalgia and pastiche. Nostalgia and pastiche are aesthetic values which I would argue are in some way “in the water” by June of 1989. It is these values of

the aesthetic of consumerism that would assert themselves as tactics against the “U-Effect” in the LCT’s production of *Ubu*.

Theatre critic Elinor Fuchs has argued that a major, if not *the* major, concern for spectators and producers of this context involved shopping. In the chapter “Theatre as Shopping” of her book, *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism*, Fuchs reminds readers of the socio-economic/cultural reality of the consumerist milieu: “no institution was too ‘cultured’ to resist shopping. The ballet, the opera, even Carnegie Hall, have succumbed to the shop” (128). For Fuchs, the idea of shopping is the manifestation of the consumerism that permeates postmodernism. Further, she points out that in “‘shopping theater,’ the real, material object becomes important, not so much to cling to realism as a form, as to guarantee the tangible value, the ‘real goods’ of the spectacle” (135). When consumers (audience members) attend the theatre, they go seeking an experience with material goods in the staging, so they can know that they have tried on or consumed a product.

Broadly speaking, mainstream commercial theatre in the 1980s tended towards the spectacular, simple, and schmaltz. In his article, “Consuming the Past: Commercial American Theatre in the Reagan Era” Alan Woods considers these traits as suiting what the culture of the decade demanded: “just as the conspicuous consumption and ostentatiously public display of wealth [of the time] found theatrical expression in elaborate musicals, their simplified story lines also reflect an aspect of the . . . era” and “an emphasis on nostalgia permeated the theatre of the 1980s” (254-256). The audience attended these performances in order to shop: to “try on” the glorified past to see how well it fit their own existence, to indulge in the luxury of the exquisitely grand sets, and to scarf down the simple plots and ideas being promulgated. Broadway theatres and companies that failed to return to these standby aesthetic values did so at the cost of

shortened runs.¹¹⁸ Significantly, a high percentage of the productions that attained box office success on Broadway turned to nostalgia, glorifying and calling back the past, and treating the public to over-simplified plots supporting outrageous spectacle, ultimately reifying the political reality of the 1980s.¹¹⁹ Jameson also asserts that the nostalgia mode contains the aesthetic value of pastiche; that the objects and shapes of the reinvented past are a collection of signs which mimic the feel of the past, but do not comment on the past in any particular way—the signs remain neutral. In the discussion of the LCT production of *Ubu* that follows, the ideas articulated above of shopping theatre and Jameson's postmodernist aesthetics, as tactics, come to blows with the formidable strategies of the "U-Effect."

Critics are complicit in maintaining the production practices of the time, as they are part of the commerce of the theatre business. It is possible the critics were looking for a nostalgic production of *Ubu*, one with star power and spectacle, and one that would boil down the play's incoherence and incongruity to the simplest possible image, capable of being consumed without over-stuffing oneself. If this were the case, critics would desire to see a museum piece, a representation of the 1896 production, featuring big stars in the roles of Père and Mère Ubu, or a production that casts Jarry's era in a quaint, fake, and consumable mode. At the same time, however, critics reviewing a production of *Ubu Roi* have even stronger loyalties to uphold.

¹¹⁸ Woods argues that several revivals of Eugene O'Neill plays staged towards the end of the decade were unsuccessful due to complexities beyond the grasp of a public desiring simple truths (258). Other revivals, however, were able to find their way into the cultural reality; Lincoln Center's own *Our Town*, starring Spalding Gray as the Narrator "celebrated individuality...but without the need to defy either a restrictive society or governmental authority" (256). LCT's *Our Town* toed the party line and sustained a five-month run perhaps as a direct result of its skill in doing so. *Our Town* ran at the Lyceum Theatre from November 9, 1988 to April 2, 1989.

<http://www.lct.org/showMain.htm?id=47>

¹¹⁹ Woods elaborates: "much of the rhetoric emerging from the Reagan White House had a similar effect [of pandering simple ideas]: issues were simplified to slogans, essentially devoid of content" (254). Woods also argues that many of the Broadway successes during the Reagan era were nostalgic, if not spectacular and simple. He takes this to be filtered down from the White House as well: "The casual appropriation and falsification of the past for contemporary consumption was another hallmark of the Reagan period seen in the comparison between Reagan's first term and that of Franklin Roosevelt's in the 1930s" (257).

At the height of its power in 1989, the “U-Effect,” guiding the dispersal of knowledge of the avant-garde, has a stranglehold on theatre critics.¹²⁰ The critics who saw LCT’s *Ubu* were primed and ready to leap to the defense of the dominant perception of the play at the expense of a new revival. The *New York Post*’s Clive Barnes is particularly vehement in his defense of the canonical text: “The importance of this play written by a 23-year-old genius is that it not merely preceded the avant-gardists of the 20th century, it presaged them ... When Père Ubu first walked on stage and shocked the bourgeois audience with his scatological cry of ‘Merdre!’ ... the theater’s body politic recoiled in horror and never bounced back” (27). Barnes glorifies the creation of the play and its premiere almost beyond belief. His review of the production, then, shows over and again how short Sloan came on his staging. Barnes ends his review by stating, “‘King Ubu’ should shock—but not this much and not this way. Count your blessings—it is short!” (27). Barnes believes that a production of *Ubu Roi* should have a shock effect on its audience, and this perception can only be registered by a pure loyalty to the sensationalizing properties of the “U-Effect,” which extol the virtues of the “revolutionary” dramaturgy employed in the 1896 premiere and the supposedly unprecedented rioting it caused.

For the *Village Voice*, Michael Feingold shares Barnes’s views almost entirely, except that instead of implying that the production is shocking for how bad it is, Feingold insists there is not an iota of “shockability” in the production. He says the play has as much ability to shock as “a late-night rerun of *Babes in Toyland*” (99). John Simon adds insult to injury as he rattles off a list of all the “isms” and movements Jarry influenced, and then remarks: “I tell you all this so you can appreciate the full injustice of what Lincoln Center Theater has perpetrated at the Newhouse under the title *Ubu*” (47). The brutality issued to Sloan and the LCT does not end

¹²⁰ In Chapter 2, I argued that the first clear challenge to the foundational strategies of the “U-Effect” came only in 1987, and was not very forceful.

there, as several other critics issue similar defenses of the “U-Effect” and nearly as damning critiques of LCT’s *Ubu*. Perhaps these critics did not watch the house closely enough, for director Larry Sloan made an argument that his production shocked some people.

Sloan gave evidence that the production provoked a strong reaction in some of its patrons. In an interview with Joseph C. Koenenn for *Newsday*, Sloan cites one performance in which 40 people walked out of the theatre. Koenenn also writes that a theatre spokesperson indicated the LCT had received almost two dozen letters and several phone calls complaining about the play (18). By 1989, theatre controversies were, for the most part, a thing of the past. I think it is safe to say that most spectators were conditioned to passively take in what they were viewing, no matter whether they agreed with it, or were enraged by it. Perhaps those dozens of audience members felt no other way to show their disgust or anger or disapproval of the material presented, than to walk out of the theatre or write a letter after the fact. Then again, maybe the patrons were simply put off by the poor quality of the production, and felt compelled to leave to avoid further discomfort. In truth, however, when looking at the production’s pandering to the postmodern consumer, and thereby tactically challenging the received knowledge of how the play should be produced, it is not difficult to understand how the critics, based on the influence of the “U-Effect” on them, could so easily jump to shred *Ubu* and its “U-Effect” incompatible, even offensive, production values.

Several elements of the production work heavily against viewing it as taking up Jarry’s purpose or aesthetic. Spectacle flies in the face of the primitivism that Jarry pushed on Lugné-Poe for the 1896 production. As noted above, the Lincoln Center Theater had a budget of over half a million dollars and clearly spent a good deal of it on the spectacular set. In his review for *Show Business*, Claude Solnik reveals that the play

offers wonderful spectacle...the set by Douglas Stein is stark white, a cross between a regal Greek amphitheatre and a shabby public bathroom plastered with linoleum tile . . . the drain at the center is a wonderful vortex . . . things are tossed in and water bubbles out. Contraptions here are ingenious. The tax collector pushes around a portable toilet to collect taxes. . . . The ‘disembrainer’ is a gold dumpster that circles the stage gloriously. A sailboat mast parades in the back. (6)

In his review for *Newsday* on June 21, 1989, Drew Fetherston clarifies that the disembrainer was even motorized. Far from primitivism, in staging the spectacular set and furniture pieces, *Ubu* engaged with the same consumer-based desire to shop sumptuous, decadent visual candy as many of the Broadway theatres during the decade of the 1980s.

LCT’s *Ubu* also made use of the postmodern aesthetic value of pastiche. This is perhaps not surprising, since, from the original production, Jarry’s language was excoriated by critic Henry Fouquier of *Le Figaro* for his apparent “superficial pastiche of the language of Rabelais, of which particularly the muck is retained and repeated with love” (qtd. in Sutton 34). Feingold rattles off a list empty signs in condemnation:

Doug Stein’s setting, a large tiled bathroom with a drain at its center and an upstage wall that appears to conceal a reviewing stand, allows Sloan to reduce the event to a baby’s caca joke, carefully sheltered from the outside world. The nobility and military wear ornate 18th century uniforms, Mère Ubu wears the dress of Delacroix’s Liberty, the *Palotins* World War I aviator uniforms, Ubu himself a nondescript maroon overcoat. The staging and performance are as haphazard as the costumes. (109)

Feingold has even missed the red cloth glove worn on Mère Ubu's hand, not to mention all of the other textual references to Shakespeare plays, including the bear that appears in the cave scene. *Ubu* appears to have been firmly rooted in a postmodern paradigm in which the production used pastiche to appeal to a consumer society with a nostalgic streak. The final element of the reception of *Ubu* I will examine is the space within the production was contained.

The issue of the rhetorical power of the space of production is a complication to its reception as well. The Lincoln Center Theater is a legitimate, mainstream venue; it is an institution. The playbill for *Ubu*, recognizing the donors for the Lincoln Center Theater, in its top tier of giving, the section "Chairman's Council," alone, lists: Merrill Lynch and Company, Inc. in the Benefactors category; Barclays Bank and The Mutual Benefit Companies in the Sponsors category; and Citicorp/Citibank, J.P. Morgan and Co. Incorporated, and The New York Times Co. Foundation in the Supporters category; there are dozens more in the lower tier of giving (*Ubu* 41-45). The playbill also acknowledges government sponsorship from the New York State Council on the Arts, The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, The National Endowment for the Arts, and the Natural Heritage Trust (45). Though all of this institutional giving suggests that the production is far from claiming avant-garde status, I am hesitant to accept the notion that the legitimate establishment staging of the play does anything to reduce the potential for exhibiting avant-garde qualities.

Arnold Aronson has argued, "There is an inevitable question about the possibility of an avant-garde with corporate and government support ... Theatre that is part of the establishment culture cannot, by definition, be avant-garde no matter how subversive it may try to be" (*American Avant-Garde* 200). In response to Aronson's remark, I must point out that his conception of the avant-garde in this situation insinuates only one possible type of avant-garde:

an antagonistic, subversive one. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Michael Kirby has asserted that there are no less than two different Euro-American avant-gardes. He argues: “[n]ot all avant-garde work intends to deny, subvert, or confront traditional mainstream values” (100). Yes, *Ubu Roi* is considered an antagonistic avant-garde play, but staging it in an institutionalized venue does not preclude it from operating, at least in part, according to avant-garde tactics. Certainly, there is quite a volume of corporate and government sponsorship for the Lincoln Center, but that does not in any way automatically sap the “avant-garde” out of a production of an avant-garde play staged within its walls. As an example, the new avant-garde, represented in part by a contemporary of *Ubu*, a New York franchise of *Tamara*, was being staged in a legitimate, establishment venue. *Tamara* was staged in the Park Avenue (Seventh Regiment) Armory, which was named a National Historic Landmark the year before the production’s 1987 premiere there.¹²¹ This fact alone suggests that institutionalized spaces do not have the power to destroy a piece of avant-garde art when it is housed within them. I think it could be argued that the space of the LCT may serve as a tactic against the “U-Effect,” which has traditionally been more generous in its support of productions in less legitimate, mainstream venues (though it has certainly spread its influence into those spaces as well).

The 1989 Lincoln Center Theater production of *Ubu* was a clear challenge to the control of the “U-Effect” over production practices and readings of productions of *Ubu Roi*. Staged in a context of consumer culture, the production appeared to make the theatre shopping experience as pleasant as it could be for the patrons, equipping it with spectacle and plenty of pastiche for the patrons’ tasting pleasure, which in turn prodded at the boundaries of the “U-Effect’s” sphere of influence. The “U-Effect,” that regulator of knowledge surrounding *Ubu Roi* and the

¹²¹ Information on the Seventh Regiment Armory’s historic landmark status was obtained at: <http://tps.cr.nps.gov/nhl/detail.cfm?ResourceId=1551&ResourceType=>

development of Euro-American avant-garde theatre, had convinced the critics that the dramaturgy should do certain things that LCT's did not. The critics brought a horizon of expectations to the performance that the production did not meet, and, since it is not socially acceptable to riot or respond violently, they had nothing to do but to strike *Ubu* down in their reviews. With such a challenge posed to the "U-Effect" in production, would productions staged after the Lincoln Center Theater *Ubu* pose similar ones? Moreover, if so, would they be received any differently, or would the strategies of the "U-Effect" push the discursive formations to action and cover up any possible contradictions the challenge may have created?

G. Productions in Canada, the US, and the UK, 1990-2005

***Ubu Rex*, Shaw Festival, Niagara-on-the-Lake, August 1990**

Following the LCT production, the next major professional English-language production of Jarry's play is in August 1990 at the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada. The play appeared as the Shaw Festival's "risk" production, the company's designation for "problem plays outside the mainstream" (Portman F8). The play, Copelin's 1973 translation *Ubu Rex*, was directed by Allen MacInnis and was staged at the Courthouse Theatre.

The Shaw Festival production was apparently styled toward silliness. Costumes by Yvonne Sauriol placed Pa Ubu in pillows and red rouge, Ma Ubu in dirty bloomers, and gave Sexcrement (Copelin's Bordure) a six-foot long stuffed, pink penis, which he wrapped around his body to keep under control. The rest of the costumes looked like a "cascade of decorator latrinewear, all of it similarly bright and innocuous" (Conlogue). The sounds of the performance significantly affected the audience's experience as well, consisting of bountiful farts and toilets flushing. Sauriol's scenic design does not figure in the reviews of the production, and from

production photos, the set appears to be a bare stage with a wood plank floor. In the array of sounds, colors of the costumes, and sparseness of scenery, a primitivism in search of the audience's unconscious to fill in the gaps in imagery and meaning seems prevalent.

Critics point out several acting performances for specific notice. Barry MacGregor's Pa Ubu stands out for the critics as a strong performance, but Ray Conlogue of *The Globe and Mail*, who has an issue with the production's style, calls MacGregor's Ubu "bright and innocuous" despite its precision. Both Robert Crew, of the *Toronto Star*, and Jamie Portman, of *The Ottawa Citizen*, appreciate Julie Stewart strutting about as Buggerlas and Diana Leblanc's bizarre and exaggerated counterpoint to MacGregor as Ma Ubu. Conlogue describes Robert Benson's playing of King Wenceslas as a "bouncy, squeaky, white-wigged spoof of royalty that would not be out of place at a children's costume party" (n. pag.). Conlogue's description of Benson's performance is representative of how he views the entire production.

Conlogue calls the production a "clown show," and says it had "all the shock impact of a Whoopee Cushion at a suburban barbecue . . . everything that is loathsome in the play has been made silly" (n. pag.). Crew and Portman are much more generous with their evaluations of the production. Crew says the company "attacks the play with energy and gusto" (n. pag.) He believes that more work needs to be done to explore the "core" of the play, but still finds it "broad, wild and colorful" (n. pag.). Portman says the performance has an "unkempt spirit" about it, and despite, or even because of that, it is "outrageously entertaining" (F8). The split in critics' opinion appears to be based on Conlogue's disapproval that the production makes a limp attempt at shock and does not succeed, where Crew and Portman are more forgiving. All three critics agree on the play's historical importance and position in the history of European avant-garde theatre.

Conlogue, Crew, and Portman each acknowledge the play's pinnacle avant-garde status. Crew notes its importance in terms of Jarry's influence on playwrights and theorists such as Beckett, Brecht, Artaud, and Ionesco, and that the play was a "sensation" from the first word. He is more forgiving of the production's missed attempt at shock than Conlogue, perhaps because he realizes playing *Ubu Rex* gives the company the opportunity to, literally, "let it all hang out" and have fun with it (Crew n. pag.). Similarly, Portman uses the tale of the mess of the play presented in 1896 to show support for the production's "unkempt spirit." Conlogue believes it is not possible to re-create the effect of the 1896 production, so to attempt it is, in his mind, futile. He also claims that the Shaw Festival production is no acceptable alternative, but does not give any suggestions for what might be. His response seems to be based on a judgment of audience members who had found the production shocking. In response to those apparently ignorant souls, he shoots down the production, and tames it, calling it silly and bright in order to demonstrate how far from shocking it was. Conlogue leans on the "U-Effect" to achieve his work of disparaging both the production and its spectators who were obviously impacted by it. Conlogue attempts to defend the mystique of the 1896 premiere, while Crew and Portman try to allow that mystique to encourage exploration and experimentation with the text 100 years later.

***Ubu is King*, Grand Central Station, New York, January 1992**

One of the more provocative *Ubu* revivals, in that it actually caused a minor controversy, is Christopher Sanderson's adaptation, *Ubu is King*, which he staged at Grand Central Station in early 1992. Compared to the Lincoln Center Theater production, Sanderson's adaptation seemed to traffic in production practices more closely aligned with the philosophy driving Jarry's ideas for the 1896 production. Sanderson's choice of space, acting style, and costuming activate similar impulses to those of Jarry's dramaturgy asserted by the "U-Effect." Where the Lincoln

Center Theater offended the critics with its outright attack on the “U-Effect,” Sanderson’s production fit neatly within its bounds.

Sanderson’s company Street Theatre and Guerrilla Productions was given a permit to perform the play on weekends from January 18 to February 9. It is unclear on which weekend, the first or the second, but by January 26, Metro-North security officers interrupted the 45-minute adaptation.¹²² Citing caricatured genitalia on the costumes and the content of the play, David A. Treasure, the assistant superintendent of Grand Central Terminal, and the man who had originally granted the playing of the performances, revoked Sanderson’s permit.

In the process of acquiring his permit, Sanderson asked Treasure if the content would be an issue in performing the play. Treasure assured him content would not be a problem, stating that censorship was not his business. Sanderson responded to the revocation of the permit by obtaining the services of the Art Censorship Project. A representative from that office, Marjorie Heinz, contacted the Metro-North police, who could not produce the alleged complaints they had cited in stopping the performance. On Heinz’s pressure and threat of a lawsuit, Treasure renewed Sanderson’s permit for weekends from late March through mid-April. The second run at Grand Central was apparently uneventful, but was “quietly supervised” by two Metro-North officers (Cropper 21). Cropper is sure to note that almost a hundred years after *Ubu*’s premiere, *Ubu is King* sparked another controversy, but this time continued playing despite what Sanderson called ““suppression by authorities who have been convinced by national precedent that they can force their morality on others, sacrificing civil liberties and oppressing freedom of speech”” (qtd. in Cropper 21). Calling on the play’s history as told by the “U-Effect,” Cropper attempts to make

¹²² One article, Cuman D. Cropper’s “Police Halt *Ubu* in Grand Central” in *TDR*, Spring, 1993, claims that the first weekend of performances was stopped mid-performance and that the second weekend of performances, January 26, was prevented from beginning at all, by the Metro-North police revoking the permit (19). In another article, “Grand Censorious Station?,” Porter Anderson of the *Village Voice* writes that the first weekend proceeded without incident, but that the January 25 performance was halted by the police (96).

Sanderson's production a carrier of the "Ubu spirit." While the controversy roiled, the play did run elsewhere.

The Living Theatre opened its doors to house *Ubu is King*, where it ran during the month of February. There, however, critic Brian Parks of the *Village Voice* found the production "frustratingly contained" (97). The performance was designed for a public space, playing to spectators both knowing and unknowing. Cropper describes the Grand Central version as beginning in the center court with raucous, attention-grabbing physical and vocal warm-ups, then moving to the north concourse where the cast "ranted, raved, marched, and jumped, changing roles as fast as they could the costumes" (19). Multiple combinations of actors played the Ubus throughout the 10 scenes. Parks argues that the dynamic the company created in that environment, one of surprise, is impossible in a theatre, where a "consensual audience may find it frenetic and amusing but not disruptive in the vital way both Sanderson and Jarry intend" (97). After playing the Living Theatre in the interim of its Grand Central run and moving back to Grand Central Station, the production was extended and moved to Washington Square Park through the beginning of May, 1992. This production, which seemed to open the possibility to reading the characters as sources of meaning beyond mere representations (such as, perhaps representing the fragmented reality of a postmodern world through the fragmenting of character by having multiple actors play them), seems to carry on a tradition of twentieth-century productions of *Ubu* in which the company positions itself as a seeker of primitivism. Through provoking an unwitting audience, Sanderson and company sought to reinvigorate the relationship between actor and audience, and make the audience a more empowered and important player in the unfolding of the performance.

***Jabu*, Flea Theater, New York, February 2005**

Tony Award nominated writer/composer/director Elizabeth Swados created an adaptation of *Ubu Roi*, which, like Chepiga's *Ubu/Jarry*, combined plot elements from the play with stories of Jarry's life. Swados's structure, which intertwines the plot of *Ubu Roi* and a telling of Jarry's biography narrated by Madame Rachilde, like Chepiga's in *Ubu/Jarry*, is emblematic of the history that has been written about Jarry, the play, and Ubu. Swados's musical adaptation took the name of *Jabu*, and premiered at the Flea Theater in New York on February 16, 2005. The play's original run was extended a week through April 9, and the critical response was mixed. The critics particularly appreciate Melissa Schlachtmeyer's "inventive" costumes: cut-away jackets, tweed hotpants, and the "occasional faux hawk" (Levett 35; Shaw 17). The work of the ensemble is also given high notice. The most germinal element of the reviewers' responses for my study is their treatment of the production in relation to Jarry's life, and of course, the 1896 premiere, in their reviews.

What is common among the reviews is the critics' use of the received narrative of Jarry's life and the premiere production's impact as a way of positioning Swados's adaptation against Lugné-Poe's production. In reference to Jarry's avant-garde clout, critics share the observation that while the play was produced by an avant-garde group (the Flea Theater's resident company, "The Bats"), the performance was "adorable" or "charming," a long way off from what Jarry accomplished with the premiere at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre. The "cute" performance quality becomes the crack through which the reviewers ultimately see the production and make their judgments. Writing for the *New York Sun*, Helen Shaw is the least generous to the production. She states that Swados had hit all the right notes, yet, drawing on Jarry's iconoclasm, Shaw chides Swados: "you can't ape rebellion, you can only rebel. With a sweet tempered ensemble

and disappointingly polite staging, this Ubu falls asleep on its feet” (17). In a similar way, Karl Levett of *Backstage* laments the lack of earth-shattering elements in the production. He writes, “the musical, replete with avant-garde trappings—puppets, video, vaudeville, modern instances—is, however, remarkably conventional at heart. Despite the best of bad intentions by playwright and players, there are no surprises or jarring Jarry moments here” (35). Levett and Shaw both desire to see Jarry’s 110-year-old text put to rebellious, iconoclastic work. Like the critics for Lincoln Center Theater’s *Ubu*, Levett and Shaw demand to see the play function in a singular way, as scandalizing and iconoclastic, and if they cannot have it that way, then it is better to leave it alone. This desire shows how powerful the “U-Effect” is to dominate the critics’ ideas of acceptable productions of Jarry’s text. History governed by the “U-Effect” spreads its influence even wider in these reviews.

The permeation of the “U-Effect” has allowed the dispensing of poor history regarding Jarry and the play in various arenas, critics’ reviews being one of the most prominent; the reviews and announcements for *Jabu* are no exception. Writing for *Variety*, Marilyn Stasio calls Jarry the “enfant terrible of French absurdist theater circles,” a type of theatre that would not be coined until fifty years after his death (54). Stasio makes the connection due to the success of Esslin’s, Pronko’s, and Wellwarth’s studies to link Jarry so closely to the experimental theatre practitioners in France in the mid-twentieth century, thus cementing the grasp of the “U-Effect” on conversations about Jarry’s dramaturgy. Stasio’s error is so egregious that it is hard to imagine anything affecting her history in such a substantial way but the whitewashing of history of which the “U-Effect” is capable. At the outset of his review, Levett lists off the titles now assigned to Jarry, including “Father of the Avant-Garde,” and “Forerunner of the Theatre of the Absurd.” These names clearly draw upon the power of the “U-Effect” to take the controversy

Jarry instigated and make antagonizing dramaturgy a major, if not the major, impulse of the historical European avant-garde.

Furthermore, by invoking Jarry's titles in his review, Levett creates an expectation for his audience that the play he is reviewing, if it is good, should, in some way, draw upon and showcase those latent avant-garde and "Absurd" energies. As I mentioned above, Levett did not see that rebellious, radical dramaturgy in the production. In her review for *CurtainUp.com*, Jenny Sandman also references Jarry as a forerunner of the Absurdist, and also claims that *Jabu* presents Jarry's life just as it happened: "maniacally, jerkily, with nonsensical tangents" ("*Jabu*"). I wonder where Sandman received her narrative of Jarry's life, because recent biographers such as Beaumont and Brotchie have suggested there was much more order than what the initially published anecdotes indicated and which were retold and distributed among early biographers. Sandman's careless history is yet another example of how the critics continue to circulate ideas about Jarry legitimized by the strategies of the "U-Effect." Those ideas have been contested for some time, yet are constantly recycled and permeate the public's knowledge of Jarry and *Ubu Roi*. From the critical response to Swados's *Jabu*, it is clear that theatre critics, even in 2005, still believe that *Ubu Roi* should have some special impact on its audience, and if a production or adaptation of the play does not harness some element capable of shocking or awing an audience, the production is not worth seeing. The reviews of the final production I consider will show a similar anxiety among its critics.

***Ubu the King*, Barbican Pit, London, November 2005**

David Greig's adaptation, *Ubu the King*, directed by Dominic Hill for a four-company co-production at the Barbican Pit, is set in a nursing home at Christmas. Dad Ubu rebels against a caretaker and takes over the home, though the whole journey appears to be a fantasy lived in

the mind of Dad, who thinks he is living in the Kingdom of Kazakhstan. The caretaker obliges him by dying many deaths and treating him like royalty by bathing and feeding him, and giving him drink. As king, Dad Ubu crowns himself with a chamber pot, robes himself with a toilet seat, and uses the traditional toilet brush for scepter. Dad kills other residents as well, and meanwhile, Mum Ubu gets it on with the caretaker, singing a Paddy Cunneen song: “I have needs, I have urges, I have regular weekly purges” (Sam 26). In his review for *Variety*, Mark Fisher describes the scenery as “splendidly depressing,” with the day room of the home “half-heartedly decorated with paper-chains and Christmas tree” (53). Additionally, a row of toilet stalls lined the upstage wall, and Dad Ubu often returned there to fill the air with flatulence and cries of “shat” (Greig’s translation of Jarry’s “*merdre*”). The critical reception of this production is positive, with one loud exception.

The division of critical opinion is worth considering. Writing for the *Evening Standard*, Nicholas de Jongh presents the lone negative review of the production. He finds Greig’s updating and setting “witless” and “patronizing” of “self-respecting old age pensioners” (n. pag.). De Jongh judges the whole production in bad taste, and compares it to what he sees in Jarry’s text. He writes, “instead of being invigorated by Jarry’s scathing satire and caricature, by his schoolboy mockery of a gluttonous cowardly clown who seizes a crown and becomes a timeless, barbaric tyrant, we are offered a slapstick, apolitical romp in an old people’s home” (“*Ubu*” n. pag.). I disagree with de Jongh’s judgment of the play being apolitical; every act is a political act, one way or another. Further, to respond directly to de Jongh’s issue with Hill’s “apolitical” production, another critic stands in direct contrast to de Jongh’s point of view, and explicitly addresses its politics. Marlowe Sam, for *The Times*, argues that the production “restores a real sense of the subversive to what could, in our unshockable times, seem tame or

tedious. Watching people abuse one another, have energetic, soulless sex, defecate, break wind and throw their food around is one thing; watching infirm elderly people do it is quite another” (26). Sam continues, “in [the production’s] implication that our treatment of the elderly is often as grotesque as these onstage antics, it is ... disturbing” (26). Where de Jongh glosses over a politics entirely, Sam observes a critique of contemporary treatment of the elderly in society. Fisher, likewise, is able to see the politics of this production, but parallel to his conception of Jerry’s “excesses and political anger” (53). He describes his observations: “Where Jerry has surrealism, Hill offers senility; where Jerry has authoritarianism, Hill provides the orthodoxy of the nursing home, and where Jerry has a rude explosion of bodily functions, Hill gives us, well, exactly the same” (53). While John Peter for *The Sunday Times* does not peer with such penetration into the production as Sam and Fisher, he shares their appreciation for the play.¹²³ Despite their different readings of the production, all the critics call upon the history of the premiere production of the play in order to set up their viewing of the production.

In 2005, it remained a necessity of critics to underline to their readers how explosive was the 1896 production of *Ubu Roi*. All four critics I have cited inform their readership of the 1896 scandal in order to set up their reading of Hill’s production. Like so many other critics that have come before them, Fisher, de Jongh, Peter, and Sam present the history of the play as a pivotal, threshold moment in theatre. Perhaps, in 2005 the critics feel even more compelled to present the story of the play’s premiere. Four generations removed from the 1896 opening, critics may believe the public has forgotten the now infamous affair. In reality, the case is quite the opposite.

¹²³ After writing about his negative review of Peter Brook’s production, I have a mixed reaction to the fact that John Peter calls this production “an inspired, irresistibly obscene and appallingly funny revival” (20). In one sense, I understand that Peter did not appreciate Brook’s style in that production, which turned him off from it, and Hill’s production is quite different in style and tone. However, in another sense, I find it interesting that he found a Brook production less appealing than a more conventional production played for, in Peter’s eyes, pure amusement. Perhaps it is just me being a fanboy of “Rough Theatre” and Brook’s approach to the work that creates this confusion, but I am nonetheless fascinated by Peter’s opposite reaction.

With the play's canonical status, it is more easily accessible than it was 40 or 50 years ago. The "U-Effect" continues to monitor discourse about the play in order to maintain its cultural position. The critics, as the custodians of culture, work under the employment of the "U-Effect" to spread its gospel and push its boundaries of power ever further into the cultural landscape.

In this chapter, I have shown that there are two notable forces driving the production practices and the point of view of the reception of English accessible revivals of *Ubu Roi*: the copying of Jarry's dramaturgy as a means of recapturing some of the energies of Jarry's play, and the deployment of the "U-Effect." Most professional productions I have surveyed here strive to access the primitive in their stagings, and at the same time, the "U-Effect" monitors and usually endorses the pursuit of primitivism. A notable exception to that trend is when John Simon and John Peter deploy it against Peter Brook's production in order to argue that his "meditative" production does not enliven the text as it should. The "U-Effect" also polices every other production value in an attempt to create and maintain the play's legitimate status. In his reviews of the Royal Court Theatre production, Martin Esslin employed the "U-Effect" in both praise and admonition of various production practices. Indeed, the Royal Court production stands out as the production that legitimizes the play. Hockney's design was an ideal carrier of the "U-Effect," and seemed to do the work Jarry intended. Yet other production elements enlivened the text in various new ways foreign to the "U-Effect." These elements, such as Wall's *Ubu* and the music hall style of the translation made critics uncomfortable, but entertained the popular audience. Other productions also experienced a harsh reaction from critics working under the "U-Effect."

The Lincoln Center Theater production in 1989 was a clear tactical challenge to the strategies of the “U-Effect.” Conceived in a postmodern milieu, director Larry Sloan and his production team sought to open the text to an audience with consumerist desires, thus attacking the foundations of the “U-Effect.” The critics responded to the offensive staging by calling forth the power of the “U-Effect” strategies and blasting the production in their reviews. Productions after the LCT performance do not exhibit the same “blasphemous” approaches, but even in mainstream stagings, such as the 2005 Barbican Pit production, critics are more generous to them. Perhaps the LCT opened a new crack in the discursive formations and allowed the reshuffling of knowledge to reorient the “U-Effect” as accepting mainstream, institutional stagings of the play. What is clear is that, despite, or because of the challenges that have been posed to the “U-Effect” in the scholarship over the last 25 years, critics of productions over that time feel more beholden to uphold the paramount, groundbreaking status, and earth-shattering ramifications of the 1896 production. This dynamic may continue for the next 25, 50, or 100 years, or may, due to the introduction of new and previously unanticipated challenges to the “U-Effect,” shift significantly to allow and/or disallow various newly imagined approaches to the canonical script.

CONCLUSIONS

I believe the historical avant-garde is at, in Foucault's terms, a "threshold moment" (albeit, perhaps, an extended one): a moment in which the current organization of power relations, which helps determine the function of discursive formations, is flexing and shifting. Recent studies such as Berghaus's, Taxidou's, collections such as James M. Harding's, and even those before them such as Deak's and Kirby's, indicate that there are currently many different directions in which a dominant discourse of the historical avant-garde can break.¹²⁴ With this study, I hope I have exposed the impulse and process to place *Ubu Roi* as the primogenitor of the avant-garde in theatre. Providing an understanding of the process of Ubu's ascent to the throne of Western literature should, I hope, spread a greater awareness of the traditional placement of the play as the prime example for the inspiration of so many avant-gardes that followed his appearance in 1896 Paris. Recent reconsiderations of the premiere are an encouraging sign that, though the premiere of *Ubu Roi* is still taken as a seminal moment in theatre history, there are readings of the premiere that use it for different purposes than any previously conceivable under the influence of the "U-Effect."¹²⁵

¹²⁴ In Harding's *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde: Performance and Textuality*, the contributing authors offer a multitude of opinions on the historical avant-garde and our contemporary relationship to it.

¹²⁵ Three studies published within the last ten years stand out as significantly altering the focus of the work on the premiere. With *Performing Opposition: Modern Theater and the Scandalized Audience* (2003), Neil Blackadder argues that the audience reaction was as extreme as it was because of contemporaneous notions of hygiene which made the mention or thought of excrement taboo. In a newly hygienic cosmopolitan city, with quality urban sewage disposal, Blackadder argues, Jarry's play was repulsive for the uncontaminated audience. Blackadder also questions the use of the word "riot" to describe what actually happened in the theatre, suggesting that the reaction was not worthy of that term. Ryan Hartigan examines Jarry's own performance in the event in his 2007 article, "'They Watch Me As They Watch this' – Alfred Jarry, Symbolism and Self-as-Performance in Fin-de-Siècle Paris." Hartigan describes the "productive contradictions" in Jarry's delivery of the ten-minute introductory speech to the performance, and asserts that because of his forcing the audience into a paradox, the audience members had to choose in their imagination how to read the performance. In *Scandal on Stage: European Theater as Moral Trial* (2009), Theodore Ziolkowski poses the play as a vehicle for Jarry's moral vision made of universal images and myths. According to the author, the public responded poorly to the production because it challenged the audience in its set beliefs, who did not want to accept Jarry's vision of returning to a "simpler, more childlike, more innocent vision of wonder and universal types" (58).

What I have offered within this study is not necessarily a new interpretation or re-reading of the premiere, but a new description of it in terms not previously used. I have referred to the premiere as a Foucauldian “space of dissension” wherein the unstable symbolic and material conditions of the event allows variant readings, spurring the creation of new discourses. In this case, the subversive tactics Jarry employed in the performance led to immediate confusion among the attendees, who—despite what the language of most scholars would suggest—were not some placid, unprepared group; they merely had alternate expectations for the performance. In the years following the premiere, as discourse began to shift through artists’ deployment of tactics similar to Jarry’s, more contradictions in the discursive formations (manifested by a gap in language able to describe the material practices of the artists) led to the necessity for scholars to describe those tactics in performance. In writing those tactics down, the scholars and critics emptied their subversive value and turned them into strategies, the tool of those with power. I have collected those strategies under the title “U-Effect.” Using these terms, I have been able to trace the proliferation of *Ubu* and the play in legitimate, institutional culture. By observing how broadly *Ubu Roi*’s influence has spread in theatre history, I have also been able to point back at the event to show its place in the perceived development of the historical European avant-garde.

In my study, I have asserted that the concept of the historical European avant-garde handed to my generation of scholars was created out of a constructed significance of the December 1896 premiere production of *Ubu Roi*. Because accounts of the performances obscured the actual proceedings of the evenings of December 9 and 10, scholars have been left to make intelligent guesses in crafting their narrative of the event. What I have argued in this study moves beyond the necessity to tell the unfolding of the premiere accurately. In my research, I started from the multiple and varied readings of the event and read back to the event in order to

declare it a controversy, out of which occurred a re-negotiation of what constituted an acceptable piece of theatre. In doing this, I have steered the conversation away from a concern over what the performance really looked like to how looking back on the performance has created a particular story of the historical avant-garde. If the three tactics Jarry employed at the performance were not so easily viewed as significant to later artists and fans of Jarry, the “U-Effect” would not have risen as a set of strategies, which together shifted discourse in such a way as to ultimately legitimize the play and make it a useful cultural symbol in both the French and English languages.

As I have shown throughout the study, *Ubu Roi*’s continued presence in our narratives of the historical avant-garde and Western theatre history only strengthens the “U-Effect” in discourse. I have also argued that productions of *Ubu Roi* and its adaptations accessible to English-language audiences have further contributed to the play’s legitimacy. The most dangerous aspect of staging revivals that appear to support the “U-Effect” and of continuing to present *Ubu Roi* and its history in studies of Western theatre is the influence it has on students of theatre and performance. In the following paragraphs, I briefly show, on the strength of the “U-Effect,” how deeply embedded *Ubu Roi* has become in key references for students of theatre history.

Once the play was brought to the spotlight in the English language, with the works of the “Big Three” of the early 1960s (Esslin, Pronko, Wellwarth), *Ubu Roi* suddenly became more important to mention in theatre history textbooks and collections of dramatic theory.¹²⁶ In probably the most well known English-language theatre history textbook series of the last 50 years, Oscar Brockett’s *History of the Theatre*, *Ubu Roi* appears from the first edition. In that

¹²⁶ The isolated incident of *Ubu Roi*’s canonical presence may be symptomatic of a larger issue of a constricted canon taught in universities today, as Bonnie Marranca lamented in her 1995 article, “Theatre and the University at the End of the Twentieth Century.”

1968 edition, Brockett notes that the play had been attaining more importance in the years before, and was by that time “often cited” as the first absurdist drama (565). He also points out that Jarry inspired the Surrealists (611). By the ninth edition of the book (the one I used in my undergraduate theatre history classes), Franklin J. Hildy had joined Brockett. In that edition, published in 2003, the description of the play and its import is much more nuanced.¹²⁷ There, the authors report that the play is “sometimes called” the first absurdist drama. They note that the play’s dramaturgy hovers somewhere close to symbolism (antirealism) and naturalism (“moral topsyturvydom”), but is not really either of the two (412). Brockett and Hildy provide a description of the play’s plot and connect that with the fact that the play was elevated to a place of prominence only after World War II, when scholars saw Jarry’s work as prophetic and inspirational to the absurdists. Brockett is not the only textbook author to feature Jarry and *Ubu Roi* in his/her narrative of Modernism in theatre.

Jarry and his play are given note in many other widely used theatre history textbooks. In another theatre history series that has held up for thirty years (not quite Brockett’s 45 year reign), Edwin Wilson and Alvin Goldfarb’s *Living Theater: A History*, the authors devote a paragraph to the play. Wilson and Goldfarb point up the scandal caused by Gémier’s speaking the word “*merdre*,” and the other scatological references in the script. They also deem Jarry’s creation prophetic of twentieth-century atrocities (379). Marvin Esslin wrote the chapter “Modern Theatre: 1890-1920” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Theatre*. It should be no surprise, then, that *Ubu Roi* features prominently in the chapter. Esslin reports on the scandal caused by Gémier’s first word, the presence of Arthur Symons and W. B. Yeats in the audience and their

¹²⁷ I do not mean to argue here that the addition of Hildy to the authorship of the book made the text any better or more nuanced than it would have been under Brockett’s sole authorship. I mention Hildy’s involvement only to accurately report the authorship of that edition of the book. I point out the 2003 edition’s level of nuance to connect it to my argument from Chapter 2: by 2003, possible statements about the play had diversified, and by then, challenges had been posed to *Ubu Roi*’s position at the head of the avant-garde.

contributions to the performance's history, and the "isms" which take Jarry and the play as their inspiration. In Chapter 1, I discussed Bruce McConachie's description of Jarry and his play as pre-dadaist in the trendy text, *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*. Elsewhere in the book, Gary Jay Williams details his influence on Artaud, and uses the rhetorically powerful language "blows up" to describe Jarry's efforts to subvert traditional French institutions through the text and action in the script (533). All of these authors in some way support the proper function of the "U-Effect" in the space of theatre history.

It seems that theatre history textbooks have made the further propagation and maintenance of the "U-Effect" an easy task. It is through these introductions to the play in which students learn of its "revolutionary" dramaturgy—which, they are told, inspired many avant-garde artists to take its example—and the scandal of its premiere, which causes students to take the event as an earth-shattering moment in theatre history. The task of dislodging *Ubu Roi* from its position as the originator of the historical avant-garde is even more complicated by the (now) regular inclusion of Jarry's theatrical writings in collections of dramatic theory.

In his 1984 survey of world dramatic theory, *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, From the Greeks to the Present*, Marvin Carlson discusses Jarry's September 1896 essay for the *Mercure de France*, "On the Uselessness of the Theatrical in Theatre," and his address at the premiere performance.¹²⁸ Carlson characterizes Jarry's essay as a move to the abstract and universal in performance under the influence of contemporaneous English experiments with productions of Shakespeare using an "unadorned stage." Carlson refers to Jarry's address at the premiere performance to indicate his move to occupy a dramaturgical space between Symbolist practice and the later Surrealists (292). Carlson's remarks position Jarry's

¹²⁸ I mentioned in Chapter 2 that Rosette C. Lamont had dubbed Jarry's collection of essays on theatre his "*Ubu* manifesto" ("*Ubu Roi*: A Collage" 26). Taking his writings as his manifesto makes them convenient to include in collections of dramatic theory.

dramaturgy in a metaphorical “nowhere” (appropriately enough), which allows the reading of the dramaturgy that it is revolutionary. Richard Drain features an excerpt from the same September 1896 essay in his 1995 anthology, *Twentieth Century Theatre: A Sourcebook*. In his editorial comments on the excerpt, Drain writes that Jarry’s essay outlines the thoughts that undergird the *Ubu* premiere, and that the performance broke with all accepted theatrical conventions of the time (13). Drain’s comments support the notion that Jarry’s essay was a manifesto of sorts, which strengthens the connection between he and the “isms” of the 1900s-1920s. Surprisingly, Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman, and Olga Taxidou situate *Ubu Roi* outside of their conception of the historical avant-garde, but nonetheless include Jarry’s “Preliminary Address at the First Performance of *Ubu Roi*, 10 December 1896” in their collection, *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*. They do write, in their introduction to the piece, that the play is regarded as the “founding work in the tradition of the Theatre of the Absurd” (129). The editors deny the play its position as the first historical avant-garde play, but in confirming *Ubu Roi*’s connection to the “Absurd,” they maintain its connection to a later development in the avant-garde, one that the “U-Effect” has ratified repeatedly. These collections of dramatic theory, important texts for courses in critical traditions of theatre and performance, give the “U-Effect” another outlet for exposing students to its workings.

Since the play’s canonization in the English language, several authors have appropriated the play or the character of Ubu to stand as a representation of a new type, spreading the power of the “U-Effect” over an even more diverse field of discourse.¹²⁹ In 1971, Kenneth Steele White published his monograph, *Savage Comedy Since King Ubu: A Tangent to “The Absurd.”* In his study, White locates *Ubu Roi* as the start of a trajectory of comedy that negotiates

¹²⁹ This is by no means a recent development; Jean Morienva had done the same thing in 1929 with his *De Pathelin à Ubu: Bilan des types littéraires (From Pathelin to Ubu: An Assessment of Literary Types)*

metamorphosing species: humans and humanity shift(s) towards the savage and animalistic.

White views the image of the savage type in Dionysian rituals and early Greek comedies, but for him, Jarry's play represents the origination, or "fountainhead" of a larger impulse in Western theatre (86).¹³⁰ Appearing after Jarry in this "savage comedy" tradition are the same playwrights Esslin posited coming after him in his "Absurdist" tradition: Ionesco, Beckett, Genet, Arrabal, Dürrenmatt, etc. White would be joined a generation later by another scholar interested in the iconicity of Ubu and his world.

Ralf E. Remshardt has latched onto one of the most oft-repeated statements made about the play in the English language to set up his 2004 book, *Staging the Savage God: The Grotesque in Performance*. Remshardt takes Yeats's famous utterance, "After us the Savage God," and makes the "Savage God" serve as the representation of "Dionysus, the original Savage God of the theatre," which appears in theatre and performance as the use and re-use of a set of images and tropes called "the grotesque" (2). Remshardt's book is similar to White's, in that he articulates the "savage" qualities in modern dramatists, but he goes beyond White's in historical scope. In the book, Remshardt traces the genealogy of the grotesque in performance, within and without theatre. For him, Jarry's dramaturgy of pataphysics is merely a representation of an aesthetic of the grotesque that has an unbroken line from the early Greeks through contemporary drama. Remshardt's use of Yeats's phrase, "Savage God," to encapsulate the representation of the grotesque in a character, and his display of Jarry's iconic woodcutting of Ubu on the cover of the book speaks to the retrievability of the image of Ubu and his connection to the idea of grotesqueness. Studies like White's and Remshardt's have granted the "U-Effect" a broader dominion in studies of theatre and performance, and given theatre students even more

¹³⁰ Indeed, White's "savage comedy" is somewhat of an answer to Esslin's "Absurd theatre" and other types characterizing drama of the early- to mid-twentieth century.

opportunities to experience the “U-Effect’s” power in discourse. Performances of the play have been able to achieve the same thing, and though I discussed only professional productions in Chapter 3, I will finish my study with a single example of an amateur performance of *Ubu Roi*.

In Spring 2011, I had the opportunity to stage a production of Taylor and Connolly’s translation, *Ubu Rex*, at Bowling Green State University. My concept was largely inspired by Grotowski’s ideas of the “Poor Theatre” and various thoughts of Peter Brook. The production took place in an eight-sided, former church fellowship hall. I staged the play in the round, leaving four wide alleys separating seating areas so there was space for the action to spill out of the central area. I chose to use only four black rehearsal cubes to assist in creating levels in the flat space. The ensemble used no properties, and they dressed all in black.

In my proposal to the Department of Theatre and Film’s Elsewhere Committee (the body that produced the performance), I articulated the desire to activate Jarry’s pataphysics and his demands that the imagination of the audience be the place where meaning making happens in the performance. I thought that staging the play in the round, and focusing on continuously shifting images would lead to the indeterminacy, which would in turn spark the audience’s imagination or unconscious reaction to the signs of the performance. Throughout the performance, I attempted to create images with the actors’ bodies that would yield a different interpretation from each individual seat, and would demand the audience’s participation in the meaning-making process of the performance.

These production values and practices I employed demonstrate my fealty to the “U-Effect.” I was interested in using performance practices that would create, in my mind, the kind of response Jarry desired. I even asked the actor playing Pa Ubu to use a slightly altered voice.¹³¹

¹³¹ I cannot even be sure why I made this choice. I had been asked to do the same thing when playing a scene from this script in my undergraduate acting styles class. I was also familiar with the fact that Lugné-Poe had asked

The “U-Effect” has clearly had a profound effect on my approach—and, I would argue, the approaches of other students/scholars of my generation—to the play and the avant-garde.

Because I feel that the “U-Effect” has had such a constraining effect on the potential scholarship and performance practices of my generation of scholars, I desire to change that trend. What I have tried to accomplish in this study is to expose the process by which *Ubu Roi* attained such an important place in theatre history; to show how panoptic strategies with the power to dominate the space of theatre history have governed not only the output of scholarship on Jarry and his play, and how it relates to the avant-garde, but also the production and reception of revivals of *Ubu Roi*. I hope that by executing this task, I have prepared the way for other scholars to peer through the pristine veneer of discourse and see, in those cracks or discontinuities, the opportunity for new conceptions of the historical avant-garde. As I have shown, however, with the “U-Effect” controlling so many threads of the development of the avant-garde, it is a difficult task to escape or subversively invade its bounds. I argue the near inescapability of the “U-Effect” is reflected in the diversity of appearances of Ubu, the play, and Jarry in the theatre history of today’s academy.

What is the way to combat the depth and breadth of Ubu’s penetration into contemporary theatre history? Maybe there is no way to combat it, other than to take up a project quite opposite of what I have done and stop writing about him, his world, and his creator. If we theatre historians decide to wall Ubu out, to bar him from finding refuge on our shores any longer, we can possibly take away his cultural currency and leave him begging to port on our docks, land in our narratives of theatre history. Resistance to let him into our histories would certainly lead to changes in the way the historical avant-garde is configured. Nevertheless, in the words of

Gémier to use Jarry’s voice for the Œuvre production. What happened, most likely, is that I decided that one of the practices the text demands is that Ubu use a harsh, gruff voice, because that is what I had known from the 1896 production and my own experience playing Ubu.

Barbara Herrnstein-Smith, “nothing endures like endurance” (*Contingencies* 50). The canon is the canon because it has endured. Works positioned in the canon are not quickly removed.

Perhaps a more modest goal, when performing our interpretations/re-interpretations of it and its history, is simply to continue to remain mindful of our contingency in relation to the text when it was written, and performed at the Théâtre de l’Œuvre in 1896.

As a final thought, I offer a minor list of work I would love to see accomplished after my study. I hope that the work seen in recent reconsiderations of the premiere of *Ubu Roi*, such as that of Blackadder, Hartigan, and Ziolkowski, continues after my study. I hope that others will see the opportunity for using the “U-Effect,” or something like it, for new investigations of the historical avant-garde. I recognize that I have used a methodology that is well established in our field, but I do hope that my study can serve as a methodological example to others. I hope the theories of Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, and those of the New Historians will be put to further use in studies similar to mine, perhaps in an attempt to unearth the genealogy of another canonical work with controversial origins, such as Hugo’s *Hernani*, or Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*. Post-structuralist historiographical projects on works like these can bolster a deeper understanding of how a series of power negotiations determines an artistic or literary object’s value in culture. Understanding those power negotiations is crucial in opening up our history to allow those previously silenced by the canon and its constituents to have a voice. Ubu may never stop hurling profanities at the world, but hopefully, we can dig underneath his girth to find one, two, or a panoply of suppressed voices to provide some relief through, if not sweeter, at least different tones of the historical avant-garde.

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