UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Notes from a Fugitive City: Situated Theater in Neoliberal Los Angeles

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Theater and Drama

by

Guy Zimmerman

Dissertation Committee:
Chair Professor Bryan Reynolds, Professor Stephen Barker
Professor Jim Carmody, Professor Martin Harries
Professor Anthony Kubiak

2015

DEDICATION

To

Jenny Bright

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
CURRICULUM VITAE	v
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	xiv
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: The Paradigm Without a Set: Beckett's *Endgame* and Its Influence	31
CHAPTER 2: Speculative Ruin: Sam Shepard and Plenitude of Celebrity	60
CHAPTER 3: Site-Specific Placement and the Techno-pharmacology of Fornes's *Mud*	93
CHAPTER 4: Pinocchio LA: *Storyland* by John Steppling	125
CHAPTER 5: The Captain in LA: Reza Abdoh's *Hip-Hop Waltz of Eurydice*	157
CHAPTER 6: The Situated Subject: Toward a Politics of the Anthropocene	189
REFERENCES	209

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my committee chair, Professor Bryan Reynolds, who first proposed contemporary Los Angeles as the topic of my dissertation, and who brought his finely-tuned critical radar to bear on the project throughout its development. Without his guidance and persistent help this dissertation would not have been possible. I also want to thank Professors Anthony Kubiak and Stephen Barker, who met with me frequently to share their profound understanding of forces at play in contemporary American culture. Professors Jim Carmody and Martin Harries both also provided new and enriching perspectives on the work that will continue to resonate moving forward. In general, the joint UC Irvine and UC San Diego Doctoral Studies Department in Theater and Drama has been a haven for me, and I am profoundly grateful to the faculty and the doctoral cohort for supporting my research on this dissertation. Thank you, finally, to Rachel Belash, Gray Palmer, Valerie Olson and Claire Zimmerman for weighing in at crucial junctures with wisdom, new perspective and encouragement.

CURRICULUM VITAE

GUY ZIMMERMAN
Department of Drama
4000 Mesa Rd, Irvine, CA 92697-2775
University of California
Irvine, CA 92697-2775
gzimmerm@uci.edu
323.839.8576

EDUCATION

PhD. University of California at Irvine/University of California San Diego, Theater and Drama, Critical Theory Concentration.
Dissertation Committee: Bryan Reynolds (Chair), Anthony Kubiak, Stephen Barker, Jim Carmody, Martin Harries, October, 2015.

MA. Urban Sustainability, Antioch University LA, Graduate Certificate, June 2011 (MA in progress—expected 2016)

BA. Major: History; Minor: Art History, University of Pennsylvania, *cum laude* (1982)

Fellowships and Awards

2015 Annual PhD Program Essay Contest, Joint PhD program, UCSD/UCI for "Harold Pinter Goes Fishing: Autopoiesis and the Post-War Stage."

2014 *Graduate Dean's Dissertation Fellowship* recipient, Graduate Division, University of California at Irvine
Medici Scholar Award recipient, Claire Trevor School of the Arts, University of California at Irvine.

PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Book Chapters

With Bryan Reynolds: "Transversal Affectivity and the Lobster: Intimate Advances of Deleuze and Guattari, Rodrigo Garcia and La Carnicería Teatro, and Jan Lauwers and Needcompany" *Sentient Performativities of Embodiment: Thinking alongside the Human (Lexington Books, 2015).*

"In the Furnace of Disorientation: Tragic Drama and the Liturgical Force of Metal," ed. Etienne Turpin, *Architecture in the Age of the Anthropocene* (Open Humanities Press, 2013).

Journal Articles

"The Captain in LA: Heterotemporality and Reza Abdoh's *The Hip-Hop Waltz of Eurydice," Theatre Journal* (forthcoming*)*.

"Becoming Brecht: Gestus and Delirium in the Early Plays and the Lehrstück," *Theatre Survey*, (forthcoming).

"Playing with Fluid-Space: Site-Specific Placement and the Techno-pharmacology of Maria Irene Fornes's *Mud,*" *SubStance* (Spring 2016).

"Performing Counter-Sorcery: Lemi Ponifasio's Tempest: Without a Body," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 33.2, July, 2015.

"The Shaming Gaze, Feminism, Destratification, Heat Death, and the Transversal Gurlesque," *The Atlantic Review of Feminist Studies*, co-authored with Bryan Reynolds – (July, 2015).

"Bryan Reynolds Gets Close in Transversal Theatre Company's *Fractalicious!*," *Theatre Forum* 42, February 2013.

Edited Books

I Might Be the Person You Are Talking To: Short Plays from Padua and Sharon's Farm, (Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2015).

Fever Dreams, New Plays from Padua, (Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2010).

Beneath the Dusty Trees, *The Gary Plays*, (Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2010).

Hipsters in Distress, *Are You Lookin'? and Other Plays,* (Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2005).

Plays for a New Millennium, (Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2005).

Three Plays by Murray Mednick, (Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2003).

New Work from Padua Playwrights, (Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2003).

Plays

Hello, Say (*I Might Be The Person You Are Talking To*, Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2015).

Forget Me That Way (*I Might Be The Person You Are Talking To* Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, *2015)*

Pink (I Might Be The Person You Are Talking To, Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, *2015)*

HeadTrader (Fever Dreams, New Plays from Padua, Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2010).

The Inside Job (*Fever Dreams, New Plays from Padua*, Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2010).

Vagrant (*Plays for a New Millennium*, Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2005)

The Wasps (*Plays for a New Millennium*, Padua Playwrights Press, New York, N.Y.: Sideshow Media and Theatre Communications Guild, 2005)

The Sheila Hour, Meditations on Macbeth. (*Los Angeles Under the Influence Doublewide Press, Los Angeles, 2002).*

Editing and Arts Journalism:

Times Quotidian: Associate Editor and lead feature writer of this influential arts and culture blog in Los Angeles: www.timesquotidian.com. 2009-present.

The Los Angeles Citizen: Arts Editor and feature writer of blog with arts and cinema commentary for a progressive downtown monthly, 2007-2008.

Cyrano's Journal: Arts Editor and feature writer of blog with arts commentary from the left: http://www.bestcyrano.org/voxpop/, 2006-2008.

Padua Press: Supervising Editor of this imprint revived in collaboration with Sideshow Media in New York City, with Theatre Communications Guild (TCG) acting as national distributor. 2001-present.

Conference Papers

"The Heart of the Matter: Tim Crouch's *England* and the Assault Sorcery of Neoliberal Capitalism," *Circuits of Abuse* Working Session, American Society of Theatre Research Annual Conference, Portland, OR. Nov 2015.

"Transversal Affectivity and the Lobster: Rodrigo Garcia, Jan Lauwers and Needcompany, Deleuze and Guattari," American Society of Theatre Research Annual Conference, Baltimore, MD., 2014 (with Bryan Reynolds).

"The Captain's Fat Suit: The Corporate Archon and Time's Arrow in Abdoh and Dick," Society of Science Literature and the Arts Annual Conference, Dallas, TX., 2014.

"The Hive Project: A Triptych of New Plays," Society of Science Literature and the Arts Annual Conference, Notre Dame, IN., 2013.

"Tragic Drama and the Liturgical Force of Metal," Society of Science Literature and the Arts Annual Conference, Milwaukee, WI., 2012.

THEATRE WORK & PRODUCTION

2001-present
Artistic Director of Padua Playwrights (a new play, nonprofit theatre company with roots in the Padua Hills Playwrights Workshop/Festival). Produced over 40 full productions of new work in Los Angeles, moving several to stages in New York City, Atlanta, Edinburgh (Scotland), Berlin (Germany) and Prague. Playwrights include Maria Irene Fornes, Murray Mednick, John O'Keefe, John Steppling, Guy Zimmerman, Wesley Walker, Sharon Yablon, Rita Valencia, Gray Palmer and many others.

2007-present
Founder and Co-Director, the Arts District Center for the Arts (ADCA), an interdisciplinary arts center in the mixed-use development at 1 Santa Fe, Los Angeles, CA. With support from the NEA and the city and county of Los Angeles, the theater and gallery space is completing fund-raising for a 2015 buildout and opening.

2015—Co-Executive Producer, Vision L.A. Climate Action Arts Festival
A city-wide, interdisciplinary new works festival timed to coincide with the UN's COP-21 meeting of global ministers in Paris to arrive at new emissions standards. Featuring prominent venues such as the Hammer Museum, Pasadena Armory for the Arts, and MorYork Gallery and artists such Robbie Conal, Heather Woodbury and Clare Graham, Vision LA Festival allows the L.A. arts community to register its support for a more sustainable future.

Director, *The Gary Plays*, by Murray Mednick, The Open Fist Theater Company, Los Angeles, CA – forthcoming.

Director, *Fractalicious!* by Bryan Reynolds, Transversal Theater Company, Interferences Festival in Cluj, Romania. December 2014

Director and Playwright *The Hillary Game*, PushPush at Seven Stages, Atlanta, GA. September 2014

Director and Playwright *Hello, Say*, "The Hive Project," ArtShare, Los Angeles (July 2013); Science and Literature Society of America (SLSA), Notre Dame PostNatural Conference, Indiana. October 2013

Director and Playwright *The Black Glass*, Balhaus OST, Berlin, Germany. February 4-20, 2013

Director of performance, *Fractalicious!*, by Bryan Reynolds and Transversal Theater Company, UCLA, UC Irvine, UC San Diego, UC Davis, Utrecht University, University of Amsterdam. 2012-2014

Director and Playwright *The Black Glass*, The Open Fist Theatre Company, Los Angeles, CA. July 2012

Director, *The Fool and the Red Queen*, The Lounge Theatre, Los Angeles. May-June 2012

Director, *Hotel Bardot*, LADAD Space, Los Angeles. July 2010

Director, *Clown Show for Bruno*, ArtShare, downtown Los Angeles. February-March 2009

Director, "The Neo-Sacred Revival," ArtShare, downtown Los Angeles. December 2008-January 2009

Director and playwright *Hammers*, "The Neo-Sacred Revival," ArtShare in downtown Los Angeles, CA. December 2008-January 2009

Playwright, *The Death Pit of Ur,* "A Thousand Words," ArtShare in downtown Los Angeles. Directed by Mark Adair Rios. May-June 2008

Director, *The Fever* by Wallace Shawn, Bootleg, Los Angeles, and Divadlo na Pradle, Prague, Prague Fringe Festival. July 2007

Playwright, *Red State,* The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Edinburgh, Scotland. Directed by Jack Kehler. August 2007

Director, *A New World War,* Stephanie Feury Studios, Los Angeles, CA. April-May, 2007

Director, *Out of the Blue*, The Lost Studio, Los Angeles, CA. October-November 2006

Director and playwright, *Pink*, Bedlam Warehouse, downtown Los Angeles. July 2006

Director and playwright, *Vagrant*, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Scotland. August 2006; The Electric Lodge, Venice, CA. February 2006

Director, *Girl on a Bed/The Gary Plays*, The Electric Lodge, Venice, CA, October-November 2005

Director and playwright, *The Wasps*, "In the Cool Dark," The Lillian Theater, Los Angeles, CA. March 2005

Director and playwright, *Great Things*, Apartment A, The Electric Lodge, Venice, CA. January 2005

Director and playwright *Shiny and New*, Sharon's Farm at Wattles Park, Los Angeles, CA. September 2004

Director and playwright *The Inside Job*, 2100 Square Foot Theatre, Los Angeles, CA. March-April 2004

Director, *G-Nome*, The Powerhouse Theatre, Santa Monica, CA. October-November 2004

Director, *Joe and Betty*, The Quintero Theatre, New York, NY. July 2003; The Kirk Theatre, New York, NY. October 2003

Director and playwright *Hide*, Glaxa Studios, Los Angeles, CA. January 1998

Director and playwright, *La Clarita,* Theater of NOTE, Los Angeles, CA. June 1996

Director and playwright, *Quell,* "Murdered Sleep – Meditations on Macbeth," Empire Red Lip, Los Angeles, CA. October 1996

Director, *Freeze,* Padua Hills Festival, Los Angeles, CA. July 1995

Director, *Baby, Jesus!,* Circus Minimus, Los Angeles, CA. October 1994

Director and playwright *Splinter!* Circus Minimus, Los Angeles, CA. March 1994

Director and playwright, *HeadTrader*, Circus Minimus, CA. September 1993

Playwright, *Blossom*, Ensemble Studio Theater, New York, NY (directed by Kirsten Sanderson). October 1992

Playwright, *Big Dizzy*, Playwrights Horizons, New York, NY (directed by Kirsten Sanderson). May1991

Honors/ Awards

2012 The Center for Cultural Innovation Awards ARC Grant recipient, for the Berlin tour of *The Black Glass*.

2009 Named a core participant in the U.S. Artists Initiative, June 14-30 at *The World as a Place of Truth* international theatre festival, peak event of *The Grotowski Year 2009*, Wroclaw, Poland.

2005 *Girl on a Bed* (Director) 2 Ovation Award Nominations, 2 L.A. Weekly Award Nomination. 2 L.A. Weekly Award Nominations.

2003 *G-Nome* (Director) Winner, Garland Award for Best Direction. Critics Pick, Backstage West.
Go! L.A. Weekly.

Times Like These (Artistic Director) 2 Ovation Awards.

2002 *Joe and Betty* (Director) Winner*: NY Times* Top Ten Performances of 2003 (for Annabelle Gurwitch).
Times Like These (Artistic Director) Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle Award, 3 LA Weekly Awards Nominations.
Dog Mouth (Artistic Director) 2 L.A. Weekly Award Nominations.

2001 *Joe and Betty* (Artistic Director) Los Angeles Times "Top 10 for 2001"
Mrs. Feuerstein (Artistic Director) LA Weekly "Top 10 for 2001" 3 L.A. Weekly Award nominations.

1998 Oxblood Theatre Collective (Co-Artistic Director), L.A. Weekly's Top Ten Theatre Companies 1998.

1996 *La Clarita,* (Writer/Director) Dramalogue Award, Best New Play.
Murdered Sleep (Writer/Director) "Year's 10 Best," L.A. Times.

Press/ Reviews

"*The Padua playwrights embody as much a true voice of L.A. as Steppenwolf embodies a voice of Chicago.*" Steven L. Morris, Theater Editor, L.A. Weekly.

2009 *Clown Show for Bruno* (Director), "…perfectly syncopated staging, the gifted performers make us experience the horror afresh. It works." L.A. Times
"Pick!" The Jewish Journal.

Neo Sacred Revival (Writer/Director) "…three smartly staged one-acts [that] illustrate the rewards of the long-running writing workshop's dedication to a 'poet's theater.'" L.A. Weekly.

2008 *A Thousand Words* (Writer/Director) "…beautifully produced by Padua Playwrights, the evening achieves a striking elegance." L.A. Times,
"An impressive undertaking. Go!" L.A. Weekly.

2007 *The Fever* (Director), Top Ten Fringe Shows, Prague Post
A New World War (Director), April-May, The Stephani Feury Studios, Los Angeles. *Go!* L.A. Weekly: "*nicely droll direction*." "*Energetic staging*," L.A. Times.

2006 *Pink*: (Writer/Director) *Pick*, Flavorpill.
Vagrant (Writer/Director) 3-Stars, Scotsman, Broadway "*A taut, dark story, a piece of L.A. Noir that could have come from James Elroy." Go!*, L.A. Weekly.
Recommended, L.A. Times.

2005 *The Wasps* (Writer/Director) "*Splendidly evocative*" – BackStage West. Critics Pick in October at the L.A. Fringe Festival.

2004 *The Inside Job* (Writer/Director) "…Smart and piercing writing that fully hits home." Backstage West.
"Zimmerman's direction is sure and supple, his text tight, teasing and self- contained, and his cast strikingly in tune with his unblinkingly bleak vision." Recommended, Los Angeles Times.
Go! LA Weekly.

1995 *The Conquest of the New World*" (Writer/Director) "Year's Best," L.A. Reader.

More reviews available upon request.

SELECTED FILM AND TELEVISION WORK

Great Things (short film), premiere screening at Hollywood Fringe Festival, 2012.

Pronghorn, (short film), adaptation of the radio play by Guy Zimmerman, with Rick Dean, John Horn and Hugh Dane. Premiere screening, Hollywood Fringe Festival, 2011.

The Furies, an experimental triptych shot on 35mm film based on the play by Aeschylus and the photographs of Jeffrey Atherton, LADAD Space, 2010.

Gary's Walk (independent feature film) with John Diehl, Brooke Adams, and Amy Madigan, release pending.

The Wasps, a digital (short film) adaptation of the play by Guy Zimmerman. Released on CutLab and other internet portals, 2008.

Triptych, including *Lost*, *Djinn* and *Snout* (short dramatic monologues), with Peggy Blow, Elizabeth Greer, and Barry Del Sherman. Videography: Jeffrey Atherton. Release pending.

Girl on a Bed, feature length adaptation of the play by Murray Mednick with Chris Allport, Hugh Dane, Shannon Holt and Jack Kehler. Director of Photography: Jeffrey Atherton. Released on CutLab and other internet portals, 2008.

Liddy, a short made from still photographs based on the play by Sissy Boyd. Released on CutLab and other internet portals, 2008.

Wonderland (freelance script), ABC- DISNEY, 1999.

The Pretender, NBC "Home Country" staff writer, 1998.

Cracker (freelance script), NBC "The Sins of the Father," 1997.

Los Alamos (optioned feature film screenplay), Grokenburger Productions, 1987.

TEACHING AREAS: BA and MFA Courses.

2001-present Padua Workshops: Lead instructor in ongoing professional playwrights workshop with writings by such seminal thinkers and cultural historians as Freud, Marx, Lacan, Norman O. Brown, Eric Hobsbawm, Marcuse, Rene Girard, Walter Benjamin, Foucault, Isabelle Stengers and Deleuze and Guattari.

2014 U.C. Irvine: Guest Lecturer, "Performing Culture" – the "transversal" intersections of culture, ethnicity, aesthetics and ideology in American identity formation" XX (February 2014).

2012-2013 U.C. Irvine:
Instructor, Drama 40: *The History of World Theatre from Aeschylus through Sarah Kane* (seminar).
Guest Lecturer, "European Intermedial Drama: Roderigo Garcia, Hotel Modern, Castalucci," *Drama in the Twentieth Century*

2004-2005 Art Center School of Design, Pasadena, CA: *The Theatricality of Design* with Michael Dobry as part of the MFA course in Industrial Design with guest lecturers such as Drs. Christof Koch and Shin Shimojo from the California Institute of Technology.

2004-2005 *Introduction to Dramatic Writing:* My Friends Place, Los Angeles, CA (facility for homeless teens), Hollywood, CA.

Teaching Interests:
Performance Theory
Contemporary European Theatre (avant-garde, intermedial theater, postdramatic theater)
Critical Theory & Philosophy
Postmodernism and Post-naturalism
Brecht and Beckett Studies
Cultural Studies (performance, film, music)
Cinema and media
Postwar British and American Drama
Playwriting and Directing
Dramatic Literature from the Greeks to the Present
Environmental Theatre and Sustainability

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Notes from a Fugitive City: Situated Theater in Neoliberal Los Angeles

By

Guy Zimmerman

Doctor of Philosophy in Drama

University of California, Irvine, 2015

Professor Bryan Reynolds, Chair

In the context of L.A.'s countercultural theatre scene in the neoliberal 1980s, this dissertation explores resonances between tragic drama, democracy and finance. Using Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* as paradigmatic of a postmodern "neo-tragic" drama, I focus on a sequence of Beckett-influenced plays linked to L.A.—*The Curse of the Starving Class* by Sam Shepard, *Mud* by Maria Irene Fornés, *Storyland* by John Steppling and *The Hip-Hop Waltz of Eurydice* by Reza Abdoh—to show how the city's roots in the financial speculation of the late 19th Century continue to mark it as a cultural milieu. Situated between what Donna Haraway calls "the God trick" of abstract thinking, and the "coin trick" of reductive binarisms based in money, I further show how these plays trouble the standard division of contemporary theater into dramatic and postdramatic aesthetic regimes. The central argument of this dissertation, which is also its critical intervention, is that theater cannot be fully understood without examining its persistent conversation with the social object of money—with, in other words, the broad domain of the financial. By financial, I point far beyond the banal topic of funding, and gesture toward the modes of financialized thought, sociality, experience, materiality, and life characterizing the

social worlds of the Anthropocene. I locate these relationships in the situated, post-Beckettian plays I analyze, which are linked to L.A. as a center of finance and entertainment, and therefore to the production of neoliberalism as a sociocultural experience. I trace the link between theater and ethics, meanwhile, to a contradictory both/and embrace of the ceremonial and the mimetic aspects of the art form. These lines of inquiry converge to situate countercultural theater of 1980s L.A. within a larger shift in the West from *episteme* to *techne* as the dominant mode of knowing, a shift with broad implications for thought and politics. I conclude by pointing toward how the situated L.A. aesthetic pertains to the new modes of political protest and activism (e.g., the Zapatistas, Anonymous, and the Arab Spring) by which oppressed populations are seeking to mitigate the social and environmental injustices of our new Gilded Age.

INTRODUCTION

1. Situating the God trick

John Steppling's site-specific play *Storyland* was performed in a grove of fruit trees on the campus of Cal State Northridge, as part of the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival, in July 1990. Seated on a set of bleachers nearby, or standing in small groups around the edge of the expanse of grass forming the stage, the audience listened to a scratchy recording of a man's voice reading from Collodi's haunting story "The Adventures of Pinocchio." The voice emerged from a playground figurine of Walt Disney's iconic puppet-boy riding on the back of a smiling whale, and the tape began to skip. The tall, stooped figure of the actor Rick Dean appeared and shuffled across the playground to repair the device. Dean's character, "Bat," is the maintenance man of this children's theme park. Pulling a wrench from his pocket, Bat cursed and bent down to tinker with the guts of the damaged figurine, which was already missing one of its arms. The stars were coming out, the wind was blowing. The scene came wordlessly to a close, the lights fading to black.

Straddling the boundaries of L.A.'s semi-urban milieu, Steppling's play, like the three other L.A.-based plays examined here—*The Curse of the Starving Class* (1977) by Sam Shepard, *Mud* by Maria Irene Fornés (1983) and *The Hip-Hop Waltz of Eurydice* by Reza Abdoh (1990)—embodies a Beckettian aesthetic that subverts the distinction between dramatic and postdramatic modes of theater-making. Steppling's play can also be viewed as the product of two boundary constraints—the 99-Seat Contract governing small theater in L.A. on the one hand, and the political theology of neoliberalism that was completing its rise to dominance within the U.S. on the other. These two boundaries clashed in unique ways in Los Angeles during the 1980s, when the city developed a surprisingly robust theater scene typified by what I am calling *situated*

theater. The situated aesthetic flourished in Los Angeles in the 1980s in playwright-centered productions, that were often—but not always—staged site-specifically[i], often—but not always—directed by the playwright, and often—but not always—in close collaboration with specific performers. Incommensurable tensions between language and the body on stage are amplified in these works, the resulting disjunctions drawing the audience into the situated event of performance.

If the term *situated* points toward Debord's situationist project to unify art and life at the level of an urban-centered politics, it draws even more on Donna Haraway's work on boundaries. "Boundaries are drawn by mapping practices" she writes in her influential essay "Situated Knowledges," first published in 1988 at the very heart of the era studied here:

> …'objects' do not preexist as such. Objects are boundary projects. But boundaries shift from within: boundaries are very tricky. What boundaries provisionally contain remains generative, productive of meanings and bodies. Siting boundaries is a risky practice. (594)

Haraway goes on to denounce "the God trick" of "seeing everything from nowhere" with a "conquering gaze" giving rise to "techno-monsters" (582)[ii]. Evoking both *site* (spatiality) and *situation* (temporality) the defining characteristic of situated theater is the way playwright-directors configure *mimesis* and ceremony as boundary constraints, giving rise to negentropic and transformative cultural effects. Beckett's *Endgame* provides a crucial precedent for this nuanced, postmodern, "neo-tragic" form of theater, laying out the basic aesthetic practice of situating theatrical objects (i.e., plays) between theater's dramatic and ceremonial aspects, which

Hans-Thies Lehmann identified in his 1997 *Postdramatic Theater* as distinct aesthetic regimes. Through close readings of specific plays, I substantiate Haraway's critique and shed light on the dynamics of Los Angeles, both as a cultural milieu and as an urban landscape being remade in the 1980s by the forces of neoliberalism. I look at these plays, all of which were written in a Beckettian tradition of *lessness*[iii], and all of which grapple with the tensions between dramatic narrative and immanent performance, for insights into much older connections between tragic drama, urbanicity and financialization. The ways these playwrights embraced this aesthetic practice evokes the city's origin a century earlier as a vast real estate speculation, and also, intriguingly, again via Beckett, the origins of tragic drama in 5th century Athens.

2. Situating L.A.

This analysis is based on the familiar, two-sided idea that theater is an urban art form and, conversely, that cities are theatrical entities—assemblages of complex, nested performances. Studying the modes of theater indigenous to a specific urban region provides a glimpse of the distinctive subjectivity also native to that city. It is easy to find continuities, for example, between the self-inventive expressivity of Elizabethan London and the propulsive muscularity of plays by Marlowe and Shakespeare; similarly, the expansive power of tragedies by Aeschylus and Sophocles reflect some of the defining contradictions of 5th century Athens. Writing from the process-based perspective of a theater practitioner, I examine this reciprocity in the context of Los Angeles in the 1980s, a time and place conspicuously associated with the rise of free-market neoliberalism. Born in late 19th-century land speculations during a similar era of unfettered financialization, Los Angeles complicates Giorgio Agamben's account of archeology (European Graduate School, "Giorgio Agamben"), in which origins continue to shape how

complexities (like cities) evolve over time. Inviting what Mike Davis calls "the view from futures past" (2), Los Angeles embodies a futurity full of relevance for a world in which the financial increasingly infuses the interstices of daily life (Randy Martin). In L.A., it is a *speculative future* that continues to command, and this oddly involuted temporality characterizes the situated theater examined in this study.

Neoliberalism was first valorized broadly by Reagan and Thatcher, but had roots in Austrian economics of the mid-1930s.[iv] In Jean-Joseph Goux's analysis, neoliberalism can be understood as an entirely new mode of postmodern capitalism, one in which Weberian rationalism is deployed in a contradictory assemblage along with a Dionysian "supply side" ideology of irrational excess and expenditure.[v] An echo of the dissonant dynamics of neoliberalism, I maintain, can be discerned in the work of a lineage of Beckettian playwright-directors associated with L.A. at this time—Shepard, Fornés, Steppling and Abdoh. Their *situated* investigation of how the mimetic and the ceremonial aspects of the art form relate to each other thus sheds light on neoliberalism's rise to dominance. Since neoliberalism can now be located as the driving force behind a broad range of social and environmental pathologies—the destruction of the American middle class, the persistence of racism and sexism as sources of social injustice, the globalization of the economy, climate change and the degradation of living systems everywhere[vi]—the stakes of this analysis could not be higher.

I'm highlighting a lineage rooted in a specific mode of theater-making that has been overlooked in American theater studies. Little has been written about Steppling despite his many awards and broad influence.[vii] Not much more has been written about Fornés or Abdoh. While the literature on Shepard is growing, his literary output in the archive[viii] outweighs the critical work devoted to it,[ix] an imbalance suggesting unease within the culture about the nature of his

work. While the most anomalous in some respects compared to the other playwrights, I make the case that Shepard can be considered a defining SoCal voice because, in the words of Richard Gillman, the "vivid, disastrous milieu" of Southern California "has been the psychic and imaginative ground of all his plays, whatever their literal geography might be" (xiii). Shepard also anchors this sequence because of the way he bridges the geographical divide separating the Off-Off Broadway movement, in which he, like Fornés, played an important role, from Southern California. This under-theorized arena of American theater is situated between the accepted striations of the dramatic and the postdramatic, and along a seam separating tragedy and paradox from tyranny and *doxa* thereby troubling simplistic, commonsense-based political judgments and oppositions. My intention is not so much to claim that this sequence of plays or their playwrights have not been given their due—though I do believe this to be the case. Rather, my claim is that these works, because of how the nature of Los Angeles relates to the nature of theater, and of Beckettian theater in particular, are especially telling about the matrices of power animating neoliberalism and its trajectory up to today and forward.

3. The Boundary of Los Angeles as a Theater Marketplace

Broadway musicals notwithstanding, theater in general resists attempts to reduce it to a commodity of exchange. Challenging to mount and impossible to package in any easily reproducible commodity, theater has also been supplanted as a source of dramatic entertainment by film and television. The unique characteristics of Los Angeles as a cultural milieu amplify theater's economic non-viability. A rule of thumb in Los Angeles is that the most successful stage production will break even at best; theater in L.A. is, quite simply, not a part of the market economy. The city's suburban, or quasi-urban nature, the threadbare quality of public

transportation and the city's low population density when compared to New York or Chicago amplify the challenges of monetizing theater productions through the box office, even while the concentration of expressive talent in the city ensures theater will take place. These factors make theater in L.A. into a standing repudiation of the central thrust of neoliberal ideology—the idea that profit-seeking competition regulates productive social behaviors across the board. No doubt there are practical professional reasons for writers and actors to engage in the activity of theater—honing one's craft, maximizing any remote chance a theater performance might lead to a television or film role that pays real money, or even maintaining one's spirits for that next important audition. The fact remains, however, that the majority of theater taking place in Los Angeles happens for vocational and *expressive* rather than entrepreneurial and *financial* reasons. As a component of the city's cultural assemblage *not* bound by the dictates of the marketplace, theater in L.A. continually contradicted the neoliberal ideology rising to dominance across the U.S. during the 1980s.

The decisive moment when the L.A. theater community broke with the market economy can be traced back to a street protest in Los Angeles against Actor's Equity's market-based contract in 1972. This "March on Equity" gave rise to an entirely anomalous arrangement—the Equity Waiver—[x]in which the union agreed to suspend its pay scales, and allow actors to reach their own agreements with those organizing theater productions under a certain house size (100 seats). Over the next forty years, a core cadre of artist-producers (including Tom Ormeny and Maria Gobetti of the Colony, Joseph Stern of the Matrix, Simon Levy of The Fountain and others) defended this beachhead against repeated efforts by the union to dissolve the agreement, and the result was a proliferation of theatrical form as diverse (in both form and quality) as the lifeforms fossilized in the Burgess Shale (Gould). Today, in 2015, the battle continues: a new

regime at Actor's Equity is aggressively seeking to destroy the status quo. As journalist Kevin Delin puts it:

> …the future of this city-wide culture vibe came to a screeching halt on February 6, 2015 when Equity announced a new plan that would dramatically upset the stable, but delicate, economics created by its 99-Seat Theater Plan; effectively ending the intimate theater scene in Los Angeles. (Stage Raw)

Independent of any debate about the relative artistic value of this expressive field, the Equity Waiver established in 1972 and its subsequent formalization into the 99-Seat Contract in 1988 are interesting because they decisively removed L.A. theater from the exchange economy at a time when neoliberal financialization was shifting into high gear. The 99-Seat Plan is the product of a colorful history of conflicts between a group of producers entrusted by the courts (the Review Committee) to approve changes to the plan, and the national leadership of Actor's Equity, who viewed Los Angeles as an endless exercise in profitless administration enabling non-compensatory employment for their members. A study of this ongoing conflict, which burst into the open in 2013, and has played itself out over the past two years in a volatile back-and-forth between the L.A. theater community and the newly appointed Executive Director of AEA (Mary McColl), would be an entirely valid arena of study. For this dissertation the salient fact is the experience of the producer on the ground in Los Angeles in the 1980s, for whom Equity was a force to be reckoned with, but not feared. Ideally, such a producer would have wanted to maintain a good relationship with the local AEA office, but this was easily accomplished by embracing the few benign stipulations in the 99-Seat Plan. You had to file for a permit ahead of

rehearsals, and agree to post casting notices in the press. You had to pay a stipend of ten dollars or less (the amount varied over the years) per show to your performers. The required volunteer's insurance could be purchased for a small fee, and you had to post headshots of the cast in the lobby, or their thumbnail photos in the program. Nudity was prohibited except when the actor had agreed to it ahead of time. Only "portions" of performances could be videotaped or filmed, and the cast needed to be informed ahead of time. The actors elected an "equity deputy" to communicate with the AEA office in case of flagrant violations of these and other anodyne stipulations, and in some cases no doubt conflicts between the cast and the producers flared up and Equity issued fines. Doing so, however, would potentially mark an actor or cast as "difficult" within the community, a significant disinsentive.

It is in the area of enforcement that the limitations of the plan announce themselves. Equity's revenues flow from the kind of fully contracted commercial productions obviated by the 99-Seat plan. The small staff supported by the accumulated annual dues of L.A. members and the miniscule filing fees for 99-Seat shows made AEA into a largely toothless entity on the enforcement front. If you wanted to produce a new theater piece in an unusual locale, for example, and you didn't have time to get Equity around to inspect and, hopefully, approve of the venue, you might well proceed anyway, especially if you were planning a short run. If you didn't have time to file this paperwork, or if you violated their terms by asking the actors to forego their miniscule stipend to enable a show to be mounted, you didn't have to worry about any negative repercussions from the local AEA office. The cost of maintaining the appearance of compliance with these mild strictures was, again, quite low. Also, the robust membership theater movement in Los Angeles—companies of dues-paying actors such as The Actor's Gang or Theater of N.O.T.E.—obviate almost all of these strictures. At the same time, AEA did pose a threat to

egregious "slum lord" theater owners who operated dangerous or unsafe theater facilities, because AEA would take action against such facilities, coordinating with the City of Los Angeles to close them down (indeed it was designed to do so).

A detailed history of the relationship between Equity and the L.A. theater community would risk obscuring the most salient fact the anomalous cultural milieu the 99-Seat Plan helped to create, which is its existence outside the grid of the neoliberal economy. The Plan opened a space in Los Angeles for what Situationist architect Constant Nieuwenhuys called *homo ludens*[xi], even as the rational justification for this speculative activity—the hope that Hollywood casting agents might reward a great theater performance with a TV or movie job—became vanishingly unlikely. Working closely with Debord in the 1950s, Constant defined *homo ludens* as the man who, "freed from labor, will not have to make art, for he can be creative in the daily practice of his life" (de Zegher 3). Constant envisioned a *New Babylon* defined by collective ownership in which labor becomes so automated that the human population evolves into a new social type enjoying a life of pure expressivity or *play*. In his influential *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, Reyner Banham supports this view, calling L.A. a "scrambled egg" city in a parody of Corbusier's depiction of the urban-core city as an egg (Banham, "City as Scrambled Egg). Drawing liberally "from situationist unitary urbanism, stripping it of its politics and just as quickly placing it within planning discourse," Banham collides the planning and engineering virtuosity of Walt Disney with Constant's situationist *New Babylon*. While the kind of excess on display in L.A.'s unique cultural ecology can be interpreted in various ways, *homo ludens* flashes in the city's situated theater like an exotic particle created in an accelerator.

Much of the story of L.A. theater in this era also has to do with the ongoing diaspora of artists leaving New York for Los Angeles, a roster including Shepard and Fornés.[xii] Murray

Mednick's annual Padua Hills Festival (1978-1995) provided a major magnet for such artists, many of whom had worked Off-Off Broadway. Performers such as Bob Glaudini, O-Lan Jones and Lee Kissman played important roles in this proliferation of site-specific work, as did local L.A. based writer-directors John Steppling and Reza Abdoh. On one level, the tidal migration to L.A. from NYC is a late expression of the rootlessness that has always characterized theater artists, triggered this time by the steady gentrification transforming the creative ecology of New York City in the 1980s. But L.A.'s unique economic profile also meant that these New York artists could continue theatrical innovation and experimentation in unfettered ways, while also earning a living within the ranks of Hollywood's creative proletariat. L.A. theater thus benefited from the steady "gentrification of the mind" undermining sources of artistic vitality in New York during this period (Schulman). In Deleuzian terms, the nomadic zone of Manhattan below 14th street became increasingly *striated* during the 1980s, while the vast distributed semi-urban network of Los Angeles offered a new kind of nomadicism. Site-specific theater production, in part, expresses the exuberance of these artists' encounter with L.A.'s unique scrambled egg topography. The region's saturation with performative talent encouraged the growth of the actor-playwright dyad that is central to situated theater unmediated by financial transactions, or even producers in the normative sense of the term. Together, these factors gave rise to the situated aesthetic colliding at high speed with neoliberal values in the open cultural space finance capital had created in L.A.

Unsurprisingly, money and the process of financialization are themselves an explicit thematic and material presence in these four plays. In Shepard's *Starving Class*, finance arrives as the nefarious real estate agent Taylor. In Fornés's *Mud,* exchange and money manifest as Lloyd's three coins, and as the money stolen from Henry that drives the plot toward its

denouement. In Steppling's *Storyland,* the bombastic Conrad dreams of wealth in the context of transgressive sex and intoxication. Operating in the offstage, financial processes finally emerge, in Abdoh, as a full-fledged character—The Captain—whose entrance announces the arrival, in Los Angeles, of the postdramatic. By depicting Los Angeles as "a fugitive city" I mean to point toward the noir, shadow side of L.A. in flight from the capture of neoliberalism. Weston in *Starving Class* is a fugitive in this way, and so are Mae (*Mud*), Bat (*Storyland*) and Juliana-Orpheus (*Hip-Hop*). But even beyond this thematic presence, I am interested in the ways money is implicated in the spatial and temporal apparatus of the stage as it evolved over the trajectory I am mapping. Contemporary geographers such as Doreen Massey and Phillip Ethington are re-configuring space and place in ways that also re-orient us toward Aeschylus, and the ongoing impact of his archaic spatio-temporal innovations (especially the *skênê* with its central door). The sequence of plays examined here helps us track the tidal shift of the culture as it entered the neoliberal era, giving new expression to deep-seated oppositions between tragic drama (including its Beckettian "neo-tragic" correlates) and money that are often obscured. Before continuing with this investigation, we need, first, a working sketch of neoliberalism as a boundary condition. Secondly, it is important to show how neoliberalism's arrival as a regime of values in the 1980s relates to current ideas in anthropology about the origins of money.

4. Neoliberalism and the Entrepreneurial Subject

In the first chapter of her 2015 work *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, Wendy Brown links neoliberalism to a set of familiar-sounding policy positions "in accord with its root principle of affirming free markets."

> These include deregulation of industries and capital flows; radical reduction in welfare state provisions and protections for the vulnerable; privatized and outsourced public goods…; replacement of progressive with regressive tax and tariff schemes; the end of wealth redistribution as an economic or social-political policy; the conversion of every human need or desire into a profitable enterprise…; and, most recently, the financialization of everything and the increasing dominance of finance capital over productive capital in the dynamics of the economy and everyday life. (28)

Of great relevance to theater studies—and especially a study of theater of Los Angeles—is Brown's analysis of the new "entrepreneurial subject" at the heart of neoliberalism. Brown presents a new neoliberal version of *homo oeconomicus*, morphing from Adam Smith's merchant figure into Jeremy Bentham's cost-benefit utilitarian, "still oriented by interest and profit seeking, but now entrepreneurialized itself at every turn and…formulated as human capital" (32). Brown goes on to cite Foucault in order to underscore how "the subject was now submitted to diffusion and multiplication of the enterprise from within the social body." In Brown's analysis, this new neoliberal subject is defined at every turn as a form of financialized human capital, and "its project is to self-invest in ways that enhance its value or to attract investors through constant attention to its actual or figurative credit rating, and to do this across every sphere of its existence" (33). Playwrights working in L.A. intuitively responded to this new form of subjectivity by embracing instead an errant, singular and situated subject depicted very much as an emergent aspect of L.A.'s semi-urban landscape.

Like the anomalous (non)economy of L.A. theater under the 99-Seat Contract, the arrival of neoliberalism as a cultural force can be traced to a threshold event in the early 1970s. A year

before the March on Equity, in 1971, Lewis F. Powell Jr., whom Nixon would soon appoint to the Supreme Court, announced the rise of a newly emboldened business culture by sending his famous memorandum to the Business Roundtable. Citing Herbert Marcuse and Ralph Nader by name, Powell lays out a political program designed to reassert order and stability through the exertion of financial leverage against the many enemies of "the American free enterprise system." Commonly considered an important bellwether in the mobilization of conservative class-warfare from above (Hacker and Pierson 117–125), Powell's *cri de coeur* forms a second boundary constraint, along with the 99-Seat Contract, exerting a strong shaping pressure on L.A. theater during the era under examination. Powell's prognosis consists primarily in pointing out to his audience of business leaders the unused leverage at their disposal—the income people require in order to meet their daily needs. University professors stir up trouble while also getting paid by institutions susceptible to financial pressures via boards of directors and endowments funds. Television networks sponsoring the antibusiness cynicism of blockbuster shows like *M.A.S.H.* or *All In the Family* can be brought to heel. Left unmentioned was Richard Nixon's electoral "Southern strategy," featuring dog-whistle racism and wedge-issue politics designed to splinter the New Deal coalition. Powell's memo announced what can be viewed as a forty-year long, slow-motion *coup d'état* in which America's somewhat dysfunctional New Deal democracy was steadily transformed into the fully functioning neoliberal oligarchy recently documented in Thomas Piketty's 2013 *Capital in the 21st Century*. Along with the bonanza populism of "trickle-down economics," the Southern strategy has delivered the plutocratic dream of a return to McKinley era levels of stratification.[xiii] Both arms of this assault on the middle class were especially noticeable in the cultural ecology of Los Angeles in the 1980s, the home of Ronald Reagan and the white "homeowners' rebellion" of Proposition 13 in 1978 (Davis 182-186).

Apotheosized in the 1980s in the figure of Reagan, neoliberal thought normalized the rapid financialization of U.S. cultural life through the entrepreneurial subject, and framed it as a natural course of events. In terms of its *arche*, neoliberalism depends on a myth of origin—the idea that markets must dominate our lives because markets are *originary* and thus "natural." Yet one of the ironies of "free market" neoliberalism is the fact that its foundational mode of social interaction—entrepreneurial competition—does not come naturally to human beings, but must be enforced from above by the State (Brown 62). While this was often achieved by "fiat and force" (35) in the 1980s, Brown underscores the role of "soft power" that draws on "consensus and buy-in [rather] than violence, dictatorial command, or even overt political platforms" (35). Crucially, for Brown, neoliberal subjectivity is cultivated through a form of "sophisticated common sense, a reality principle remaking institutions and human beings everywhere it settles, nestles, and gains affirmation" (35). Brown's invocation in this context of "common sense" can be retraced, through the history of political thought, to what the Greeks would have called "*doxa*," the principle defined by Aristotle as the "opinions all men share," which provides the foundation of his logic, and of his brand of philosophical realism. *Doxa*,[xiv] in turn, emerges as a crucial preoccupation of the tragic dramatists, emphasizing intriguing continuities within these lines of inquiry across the intervening millennia.

The alignment of these cultural and social parameters in the years I want to study produced certain volatile anomalies which were often, but not always, expressed in unbounded urban space via site-specific production. Fornés, Shepard, Steppling, and Abdoh all participated in site-specific work in L.A. in this era, as did Murray Mednick, Lynn Manning, Luis Alfaro, Kelly Stuart, Eduardo Machado, Marlane Meyers and many others. This approach to theater-making involves the entire apparatus of dramatic production as a material-semiotic "object of

value" crucially linked to human embodiment, and more specifically to what Edward Casey has called the "return of place by way of the body" (202). Given the way Los Angeles is commonly viewed as the original *eutopic*, or placeless city, Casey's analysis suggests this immanent placelessness is part of what makes situated theater in Los Angeles implicitly transgressive and political. More recent work by geographers such as Doreen Massey and Phillip Ethington extend and deepen Casey's analysis, helping us to see that the aim of situated theater production in Los Angeles is to bring audiences into *place* as a way of re-connecting to the past, breaking an epistemic spell.

In terms of political philosophy, I am especially interested in how this perspective on theater-making in Los Angeles reflects the relationship between Deleuze's passive vitalism[xv] and Giorgio Agamben's exploration of political theology and the *state of exception*. I pursue these resonances through an engagement with the history of L.A. in the decade leading up to the Rodney King riots of 1992, when alternative theater in the city was arguably enjoying a creative peak and the site-specific impulse was in full bloom. Though situated theater continued into the new century, the scene was much smaller after the riots, and found itself in retreat. While the factors shifting the cultural ground in this way were no doubt complex, sacrificial aspects of anti-black racism active in Los Angeles in the 1980s help frame the riots as part of the same reaction to neoliberalism as situated theater in Los Angeles (see Chapter 5).

5. Non-Linear Continuities

Throughout the neoliberal era, money has exerted a powerful shaping force on a range of underlying cultural phenomena, and indeed on thought itself. The "financialization of daily life" (Randy Martin) aggressively re-making every sector of the cultural landscape today requires all

aspects of human experience to justify themselves according to marketplace valuations. In a remarkable statement, Phillip Goodchild speaks to this new relevance: "For me, money has displaced the pivotal concepts of twentieth-century European philosophy, such as being, time, difference, repetition, subjectivity, signifier, lack, void, and universality, as that which most demands thinking" (265).[xvi] The rise of money as *topos* coincides with a shift toward a new philosophical realism characterized by complex systems thinking[xvii] rather than phenomenology. The light that this new realism sheds on the profound socio-political changes elicited by neoliberalism, and the responses that the situated playwrights of Los Angeles offered through their theater-making, are central concerns of this dissertation.

Manuel DeLanda's "non-linear" approach to history, rooted in the ontological realism of Deleuze (and Deleuze and Guattari), provides a framework to understand the intertwined histories of tragic drama and coinage from Classical Athens up through the neoliberal valorization of money. In this non-linear approach, which is rooted in complex-systems thinking, analysis of two events can be highly pertinent despite their separation in space and time (Athens in the Classical era, and neoliberal L.A., for example). I also share DeLanda's poststructural materialism, which extends the new historicism of Foucault and the Annales School (especially the *longue durée* analyses of Fernand Braudel) into the domain of material processes. This genealogical approach allows us to see "all aspects of a society as interrelated," as Marvin Carlson puts it, such that we "may seek highly unconventional pairings of social phenomena to illuminate each other" (526). Contemporary modes of tragic theater thus have a role to play in illuminating the powerful social object—money—[xviii]dominating our lives today, in the form of financialization, in ways we still do not fully understand. Haraway's God trick, I maintain, is only half of the equation—the other half is *the trick of the coin*. To make sense of the God trick's

relation to situated theater, we must understand how tragic drama in Ancient Greece arose in response to the emergence of metal coinage. Particularly germane is the way the two sides of every coin bring the unitary sovereign and the differential market into a single, intensively charged social object. I make the case that, in the West, the division between ceremonial and mimetic modes of theater-making echo this split, with tragic drama always working to reconcile the two in the mode of performance.

Close readings of the four specific L.A.-based plays mentioned above anchor this study, framed by an analysis of Beckett's *Endgame*. This sequence of neo-tragic dramas draws attention to the relationship between theater's spatial dynamic and the facts of its presentation within the urbanized landscape of L.A. As a playwright and director, but also as a producer of over forty productions of new work in Los Angeles since the mid-1990s, I question any hard and fast distinction between authorship and immanence. Collective authorship and production often simply privilege the *social* expression of immanence over the more incisive immanent relations *within* the multiplicity of an individual (non)subject (Reza Abdoh or Irene Fornés, for example). Like the collectives such as The Living Theater or Goat Island (Cull 29), the situated L.A. playwrights also work in a robustly embodied mode of collective creation with an ensemble of actors, forming uniquely strong bonds with individual performers and fostering aleatory, self-organizing dynamics in their intensive engagement. These singular relationships between playwrights and specific performers give rise to the rich and various artistic effects characterizing the situated play. If anything, artistic collectives are often more constrained in their expressivity than are individual authors— collectives almost never reach down to the level at which language makes its claims on the real, artificially delimiting human identities. The processes of subject-formation remain the terrain of the individual author, and Beckett showed

the situated playwrights how deconstructive that terrain could be. It is crucial to note in passing that arguing in favor of the individual author does not entail a surrender to depth metaphors; the situated mode of working explicitly calls for direct and unmediated interaction between playwright/directors and specific performers, working closely over the course of a play's development. This unique relationship draws the social as well as the strictly individual aspects of emergent subjectivity and subject construction into play, bringing the "from above" dimension of the process together with the "from below."

6. Los Angeles as a Singular Anomaly

A thumbnail sketch of the social history of the Los Angeles region illustrates why the city is, paradigmatically, both a challenging landscape for theatrical expression *per se*, and also a good place to study social and theatrical performance within the hyper-mediated culture of neoliberalism. Among the qualities that have made Los Angeles intriguing to urban geographers is the speed with which the city took off between the 1870s and the 1940s, a finance-driven ascent that can be viewed against the yardstick of a single human lifetime. In L.A., the fervent spirit of unfettered capitalism now known as neoliberalism was present from the beginning. In the late 19th century, city fathers constructed L.A. as an open-shop alternative to the heavily unionized "Wobbly" city of San Francisco to the North (Davis 113). By the early 1960s, Los Angeles had emerged as not just a major world city, but as a paradigmatic 20th-century city. A product of corporate cronyism combined with real estate speculation and aggressive lifestyle marketing, L.A. is a Gilded Age gamble that paid off in spades.

What is distinctive about L.A. is not just that its origins are known, nor that they were conscious and intentional. The same, after all, could be said for many cities of the Colonial era in

particular, and, to a lesser extent, of cities in general. Rather, L.A.'s origins are monetary not in the mode of industrial production, but of *investment.* Los Angeles is the first city of finance. While cities are typically founded for some living reason, some embodied, material need, Los Angeles instead *gave birth* to a need, and to a very particular need at that—a need *for itself*. The "Comstock Kings" (Davis 107) who purchased vast tracts of failing ranch land in the depression of the 1870s and then pulled strings to direct the Southern Pacific railroad to L.A. rather than to the existing port city of San Diego to the South (110), created *the city-as-object-of-desire* that would become a cornerstone of the fetishized "lifestyle" consumer capitalism of the 20th century. In the speculative founding moment of L.A. we encounter cold hard business logic together with the production of desire—Apollo and Dionysus bound together in a two-chambered thermodynamic engine of the Anthropocene. Again, the chief point here is the crucial importance of origin—*arche,* as the Greeks would term it—-the "sensitivity to initial conditions" of chaos and complex systems thinking.[xix] This speculative origin continues to affect the work arising in Los Angeles, shaping it also in the mode of fractal self-symmetry, down to the speculative, self-investment perspective of the neoliberal subject (Brown 84). Los Angeles thus embodies the contradiction of Reiner Schürmann's "principle of an-archy" (Schürmann)—the oxymoronic construction in which what came first (i.e. the *principle*) precedes its own origin (i.e., *arch*e), and also, therefore, exists without any governing commandment. An urbanized expression of pure speculation, L.A., as I will show, can be viewed as a spatialized form of money itself, as if money, for the first time, had been able to found a city in the mode of pure action.

A sequence of historical analyses chronicles L.A.'s colorful history, a list including (to name only a few) Carrie McWilliams's *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land*

(1946), Reyner Banham's *Los Angeles: Architecture of Four Ecologies* (1971), Jan Morris's important essay *Los Angeles, the Know-How City* (1976), Mike Davis's celebrated *City of Quartz: a Future Archeology of Los Angeles* (1990), Edward Soja's *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, and D.J. Waldie's *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir* (1996), all of which provide important context and perspective on the fractured mirror that is Los Angeles. A final entry on this list, Meiling Cheng's *In Other Los Angeleses: Multicentric Performance Art* (2002), brings an analysis of L.A. as a Pacific Rim arena of multi-ethnicity into the realms of theater and performance.

L.A. is, famously, an important global center of the modern mass media that have played such a central role in the ability of neoliberal plutocrats to re-engineer the redistributive mechanisms of the New Deal and the Great Society, such that they now run in the opposite direction. The work of radical and progressive social scientists such as Wendy Brown, David Harvey, David Graeber, Kevin Phillips, Joseph Stieglitz, Paul Krugman, Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez provide the necessary context to connect the deregulatory, anti-tax populism of neoliberalism to the cultural arena. It is crucial to keep in mind the fact that theater is an urban rather than a suburban art form; however, this makes theater in Los Angeles by definition anomalous and singular as well as paradigmatic (*anomalous* being the word Deleuze and Guattari apply to the mode of thinking associated with sorcery). The high concentration of culture industry workers—actors, writers, directors, etc.—means theatrical and performative work will arise in Los Angeles *in spite of* its suburban nature, providing a kind of expressive X-Ray of a cultural mass that would otherwise remain opaque in theatrical terms.

Sprawling across the line that separates the urban from the suburban, L.A. also emblematizes the hyper-consumerism of postwar suburban America, and is thus also centrally

positioned with respect to the environmental crises of the Anthropocene. Coined by geologist Paul J. Crutzen in 2000 to demarcate the era in which human beings registered as a geological fact on the face of the earth, "Anthropocene" was quickly seized by those seeking to convey, in Sloterdijk's words:

> …a message of nearly unsurpassable moralist-political urgency; a message which, in explicit language, reads: Humans have become responsible for the inhabitation and business administration of the earth as a whole ever since their presence on it stopped unfolding in the mode of more or less traceless integration. (*Anthropocene* 327).[xx]

Debate quickly ensued as to whether the Anthropocene began with the Industrial Revolution, or 10,000 years earlier with the arrival of agriculture, a millennial indeterminacy that buttresses the *longue durée*[xxi] perspective of this dissertation. Ground zero of the automotive economy, and of the mode of urban design reliant upon the internal combustion engine, Los Angeles is directly implicated in global warming and the radical environmental dislocations now on the horizon.

7. Coins, Tyrants and Tragedy

This dissertation seeks articulate money's central role in setting the boundary constraints within which L.A. theater arises. A central premise is that combating the abstractive spell of financialization and *doxa* resides at the heart of tragic drama and it has been so since the Greeks. Despite all evidence to the contrary, we tend to believe what Graeber calls the "great founding myth of the discipline of economics" (25)—the idea that "property, money, and markets not only existed before political institutions but were the very foundation of human society" (24). The

only problem with this common sense story is that "there's no evidence that it ever happened, and an enormous amount of evidence suggesting it did not"[xxii] (28). Rather, monetary exchange, sources strongly suggest, were, from the beginning, a product of the state, and as such political rather than natural facts (Graeber 43–71). Graeber draws from multiple source, including the renewed scrutiny of money and financialization received in the New Economic Criticism of Marc Shell and Jean-Joseph Goux[xxiii], that also began in the 1980s. These scholars look back to the 6th century, BCE when metal coinage first appeared in three places on the globe (Graeber 224), one of them being Ionian Greece. The arrival of metal coinage in 6th-century Greece triggered a series of developments including the rise of secular tyranny and the shift from the ceremonial ritual of the Dionysian mystery cult to the innovation of tragic drama that began with Aeschylus. Spreading quickly, the hugely destabilizing innovation of coinage gave rise to a new kind of despot, the *tyrant*, whose claims on sovereignty arose solely from his ability to pay soldiers.[xxiv] Coins not only injected a dynamic system of exchange values into the space between the individual and the social, but also introduced a new realm of socially sanctioned abstraction into the cultural arena. The result was a startling dualism rooted, again, in the two sides of the coin. The "tail" of a coin identifies it as a *discrete thing* that can be owned and exchanged according to the fluctuating and immanent valuations of the marketplace. The "head," on the other hand, links to sovereignty, the transcendent power of the state, and the way the value of money is backed up by its relationality with the law. Poised "between a commodity and a debt-token" (Graeber 75) the coin united in a single object both sides of the poison-cure of civilization, the law and its violence combined into one meta-stable form.

Building on the work of Shell and Goux, Richard Seaford in particular explores ideas of a co-emergent entanglement between coins, tyrants and tragic drama.[xxv] In his *Money and the*

Early Greek Mind, Seaford notes that money enhances the boundary "between the autonomous self and the impersonal world" (274). He notes further that this self-reifying influence also "tends to diminish the role of magic, and correspondingly to increase the possibility of a sense of the distinction between the sign or symbol and its referent." Seaford links the personal autonomy amplified by the emergence of metal coinage in Athens to the "presocratic depersonalization of the cosmos," viewed as an analog of the mind (296). And yet, this idea of the mind "has itself been somewhat shaped by money." We are zeroing in here on the *material* aspect of what Stengers and Pignarre describe as the "sorcery" of capitalism. "Money" Seaford writes, "is created by the mind and, seeming to acquire autonomy, organises in various mutually reinforcing ways the shape of its creator" (296). Seaford goes on to assert a complex relationship:

> …between three similarly structured entities – money, mind and cosmos -- in all three of which concrete multiplicity is united and controlled (or, in Parmenidean ontology, replaced) by a single invisible abstraction. (296)

Endlessly mediating the differential binary of multiplicity and unity it created in the first place, money is viewed here as a kind of two-stroke engine. Driving the relentless, expansive dynamism that characterized Greek culture, coinage turbo-charges Western history from the colonial projects of Athens up through our current age of the Anthropocene.[xxvi] Socio-political developments since 2008, such as those documented by Thomas Piketty and his colleagues (Saez), buttress Seaford's account, suggesting we view neoliberalism as a late-phase echo of the monetization characterizing Athens when Aeschylus was coming of age.[xxvii]

To make this case, it is necessary to establish a meaningful continuity between contemporary Beckettian forms of drama and the Athenian tragedians, and this is the aim of Chapter 1. Working with the writings of Lehmann, Christoph Menke and Leonardo Gatti on *Endgame,* I demonstrate how Beckett's postmodern aesthetic can be understood as a late-phase expression of neo-tragic irony. The L.A.-based situated plays, much like *Oedipus, Tyrannus* and *Antigone*, are intricately designed to convey anew the paradoxical truths of the tragic, "from which nothing can be learned" (Billings 1), truths that are therefore unable to inform action. In their portrayal of human suffering, Aeschylus and Sophocles depicted the role of normative judgement in causality as suffused with irony and paradox.[xxviii] Asserting their own independence, their tragic characters discover themselves to be caught in a fate already determined, a fate that relied for its completion on their own self-inventive, entirely delusional *analogical* actions. In juridical terms, this irony makes the Greek tragedies antithetical to the atomistic model of causality underlying common sense versions of law, such as the presupposition that criminal acts are volitional, or at least can potentially be avoided:

> From the point of view of tragedy, human beings and human actions are seen, not as realities to be pinned down and defined in their essential qualities, in the manner of the philosophers of the succeeding century, but as problems that defy resolution, riddles with double meanings that are never fully decoded. (Vernant 242)

Through tragic irony, normative, analogical judgments are stripped of their link to causality: in the moment of crisis *doxa* becomes *paradoxa*. Oedipus's conception of himself as a causal agent is forced into a state of superimposition with a contradictory sense of himself as a groundless

condition, without essence, a purely differential assemblage in whose blindness we come to see. This reading makes the Greek tragic stage into a kind of anti-technology based on irony, paradox and contradiction rather than common sense and non-contradiction.

My analysis of *Endgame* shows how postmodern forms of tragedy (what I am calling "neo-tragic" drama) can also be considered a device for liberating captured intensities, through paradox and exhaustion returning the force of Aristotle's "excluded middle" (that which is true and also not-true) to civic life. The boundary constraints of ceremonial and mimetic forms of theater are set in opposition in the Beckettian, situated plays examined here, revealing their underlying continuity with the tragic drama of the past.[xxix] As a spatial form of paradox, in which the ceremonial and the mimetic aspects of drama are combined in contradictory ways, situated theater illuminates how tragic drama in general relates to money, logic and tyrannical sovereignty. Fittingly, the central theme of Wendy Brown's book is the incompatibility of neoliberalism and democracy across a range of definitions applied to either. Citing Agamben, Rancière and Balibar, Brown embraces this discordance as an accessory to the ongoing conflicts about how the *demos* is defined, beginning with Plato and Aristotle. L.A.'s situated playwrights engage with this set of questions in the affective mode of neo-tragic drama, creating in various ways a mode of situated indeterminacy that counters the insidious lure of neoliberal subjectivity. This contest against neoliberal subject-capture, a process in which "rule transmutes into governance and management" (20), arises in each of these plays. These factors, together with the city's unique origins in financial speculation, makes L.A. theater in the neoliberal era an ideal place to stage this investigation.

8. The Lingering Aristotelianism in Theater Studies

As implied above, I will argue that tragic experience retains a crucial relevance to contemporary life and culture, albeit in an ironic, postmodern mode. The work of the contemporary philosopher Christoph Menke supports this view, defining the tragic as the "irony of […] an action that, although it is only ever interested in its own success, necessarily brings about its own failure, and hence leads to misfortune for the doer" (viiii). Defined in this way, tragic irony continues to infuse our social milieu, and to underlie crucial paradoxes of judgment and law—an indeterminacy at the root of dualistic perception giving the lie to our fantasies regarding free will and agency. Our desire to avoid tragic irony relegates it to an aesthetic realm of "tragic play," (*x*) but this only contributes to the actualization of the tragic irony writ large in the collective form of the environmental crises of the Anthropocene. Menke's argument will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 1 in the context of Beckett's *Endgame* and its relation to Hans-Thies Lehmann's rubric of postdramatic theater.

But if tragic drama retains validity in a post-structural world, Aristotle's reading of tragic drama—in many ways the *arche* of theater theory—does not. Leading a poststructuralist re-evaluation of Aristotle's account of tragedy, the work of Vernant has had a significant influence on contemporary thinkers, especially Bernard Stiegler. According to Vernant, "when Aristotle in the fourth century set out, in his *Poetics*, to establish the theory of tragedy, he no longer understood tragic man who had, so to speak, become a stranger" (67). As noted above, Vernant depicts the tragic drama of Aeschylus and the other Athenians as the problematization of the human subject, involving a Dionysian conjuring "of the beyond in the here and now, to make us lose our sense of self-assurance and identity" (188). A hundred years after Aeschylus, as Athens was being torn apart by its long conflict with Sparta (431-404 BC), Aristotle provides a highly

intelligent, aristocratic *misreading* of tragic drama in *The Poetics* and *The Rhetoric* in which pity and fear are evoked by the art form in order to purge them via catharsis. This inadequate reading has distorted our view of the art form up through Nietzsche. It is a very convincing distortion—a syncretism lying across the existing cultural discourse of the tragic dramatists, commandeering it toward new purposes. In tragic drama Vernant finds a Dionysian indeterminacy, in which contradictory readings of tragic experience—action as a result of *ethos* and also as evidence of *daimon*—are simultaneously valid (37). Instead, in Aristotle, we get unity and non-contradiction.

Vernant's critique of Aristotle does not stand alone in this analysis. DeLanda, for instance, has been especially forceful in identifying the morphogenetic or "form-generating" (European Graduate School, "Manuel DeLanda") capacities of matter as the crucial difference between Deleuze's realism and that of Aristotle.[xxx] Rather than hylomorphism—in which substance is shaped into different forms through the operation of dialectics in the mode of essentialism—Deleuze reaches for the form-generating intensities of a thermodynamic reading of material.[xxxi] Deleuze's embrace of the singularity over the general-particular also marks him as a profoundly anti-Aristotelian thinker, for whom cultural entities draw on multiple modes of relating and boundary-mapping. With its unique explorations of spatiality, L.A. situated theater is an ideal milieu in which to examine the ontological underpinnings of this clash, and how it relates to art, performance and materiality. The fundamental question becomes whether the city is the inert social mass implied by Aristotelian hylomorphism, in which form only arrives from some external source (such as Platonic idea or dialectic), or whether it is inherently expressive, like all material objects and assemblages in Deleuze.

9. Anti-Market Capitalism

Foreshadowing the conclusions that Piketty and his colleagues would reach forty years later, Deleuze and Guattari draw on Fernand Braudel's analysis of anti-market forces in capitalism and describe the State as a "gigantic enterprise of anti-production…at the heart of production itself" (235). Thus, if the Powell memo announced the return of monopoly capitalism, it was arguably the booming postwar marketplace that created the cultural crises of the 1960s. By that era, the relatively open access to middle-class plenitude had cultivated in the population a willingness to question authority, and to subvert prevailing norms of social interaction. The differential frenzy of capitalist innovation also gave rise to birth control pills, vaccines and antibiotics, telecommunications and increasing food yields, all of which mitigated the common indices of misery that keep people following anti-hedonic rules. One of the ironies of American political history post-Nixon is the use by threatened elites, beginning in the 1970s, of the inverted Romanticism of supposedly "natural" free markets to cap and eventually reverse this destabilizing hedonic dynamism. Through a string of campaign finance legislation and other means, these elites have simply co-opted the state via corruption of the democratic process.[xxxii] As the corporate hegemon further erodes democratic institutions today (the academy very much included) and co-opts the state even more thoroughly, tragic theater in its postmodern form again faces its old adversary—tyranny—but in this instance it is a distributed tyranny, a tyranny of the boardroom that controls through a dispersed system of autonomous minions delivering a kind of generalized, systemic encoding.

In his 1990 essay "General Economics and Postmodern Capitalism" Jean-Joseph Goux identifies a paradox at the heart of neoliberalism that helps explain the left's inability to effectively counter its assault. Goux identifies George Gilder— Ronald Reagan's favorite

author—as the leading voice in the fashioning of a post-modern "conception of capitalism as potlatch" (213) profoundly in sync with Bataille's doctrine of excess. For Goux, this "irrationalist legitimation of the capitalist universe […] stands in sharp contrast to the Weberian theme of the genesis of modern rationality." Supply is viewed as preceding and creating demand, rather than the other way around, a claim resonating with the avant-garde project in intriguing ways. Valorizing the entrepreneurial subject, whose life is defined by never-ending self-evacuating competition neoliberalism parodies the avant-garde attempt to breach the boundary between art and life. As a thought experiment, Goux's work suggests it would be possible to relate population to theater production, deriving a demand-based ratio of so many theater productions for a given quanta of population. This ratio might go up a bit with additional factors such as population density, but would hold true across different urban environments even when historical particulars—the Broadway tradition in New York, or Chicago's unique relationship to theater—alter the final numbers. Los Angeles, however, is utterly anomalous in this respect because in L.A. it is *supply* that drives the production of theater, not demand. Theater happens in Los Angeles because the city houses a huge population of expressive talent, and this was even more the case in the 1980s when film and television production was concentrated in Los Angeles more than it is today. I will show how, in keeping with this anomalous aspect, L.A. theatre aligns with supply side neoliberalism with a certain intimacy, and thus offers a strong position from which to decode and deconstruct.

With the Powell Memo and the 99-Seat Contract defining the milieu's mobile parameters, L.A. theater artists responded to the neoliberal assault by embracing failure, the undistinguished aporia of the creature, and the easeful anomie of the slacker, while also allowing their work to spill over into urban space, riding the transversal energies Bryan Reynolds has

theorized in their site-specific stagings (*Transversal Subjects*). Rooted in *episteme*, neoliberal subjectivity runs on the particular and the general; *techne*, by contrast, is all about *singularities* and what Haraway calls "situated knowledges" ("Situated Knowledges"). As agents of *techne*—i.e. workers with *material*—artists are positioned to play a central role in locating viable modes of resistance to neoliberalism; focused as it is on the embodied individual, theater is the medium most suited to a deconstruction of the neoliberal subject. For these reasons, L.A.'s situated theater provides an ideal lens through which to scrutinize neoliberalism as a cultural dynamic.

CHAPTER 1

The Pathos of the Paradigm Without a Set:

Beckett's *Endgame* and Its Influence

1. The Hamm Lineage

In a recent interview published in *The Guardian*, playwright and actor Sam Shepard identified Samuel Beckett's plays as his primary inspiration for becoming a playwright ("Sam Shepard Opens Up"). The three other playwrights examined in this dissertation share this strong affinity with Beckett's work. Fornés and Steppling were associated with the Theater Genesis (Bottoms) branch of Off-Off Broadway, which was thoroughly steeped in Beckett's aesthetic. Abdoh, who lacks any direct link to the 1960s New York scene, is the exception that proves the rule—his mentor was Alan Mandell, who arrived in L.A. after years of close collaboration with Herbert Blau and Jules Irvine of The Actor's Workshop of San Francisco, including the celebrated staging of *Godot* at San Quentin State Prison (1957). Mandell then appeared as Nagg in a 1980 London production of *Endgame* directed by Beckett himself, forming a personal bond. Mandell was also working on a Beckett production when he met Abdoh, who asked to be his assistant.[xxxiii] Given this dissertation's focus on what Agamben calls *arche*, the Greek root meaning both "origin" and "commandment," the role Beckett plays in situated Angeleno theater calls for careful analysis.

Beckett's cultural influence is not limited to avant-garde literature and drama; a strong case can be made that the author's postwar work exerted an important transformational effect on popular culture as well. Consider the author's apocalyptic *Endgame* (1957), in which a decrepit, arm-chair bound patriarch (Hamm) endlessly harangues his genial but rebellious aide and

surrogate son (Clov). Only seven years later, Harold Pinter presented *Homecoming* (1964), in which the malevolent armchair-bound East Ender Max registers as a descendent of Beckett's grandiose and misanthropic Hamm. One can feel Max, in turn, in Alf Garnett, the racist East End *paterfamilias* of Johnny Speight's long-running British TV series *Till Death Us Do Part* (1965), which, in turn, served as the model for Norman Lear's American adaptation *All in the Family* (1971). From Hamm to Max, to Alf Garnett, Archie Bunker and beyond—misbegotten armchair patriarchs in the Hamm mode (including the hapless Homer Simpson) have presided over three generations of anti-authoritarian American pop culture. Through these conduits, *Endgame,* and Beckett's plays generally, helped to shape the worldview of several generations in the West. This larger relevance creates an additional dividend for examining Beckett's influence within the relatively contained setting of Los Angeles in the 1980s, and in his chosen art form. What is it about Beckett's work that continued, at least through the 1980s, to shape or "command" an influential component of theater emerging in Los Angeles? And how does that aspect of Beckett, reciprocally, relate to the nature of L.A., as an urban milieu conspicuously linked at its origins to finance?

Endgame's outsized influence suggests that, in Hamm and Clov's hammer-and-nail relationship, Beckett established what Marxist theorist Raymond Williams would call a new "structure of feeling" defined by tragicomic stasis, invective and aporia (*Marxism* 133). In the 1980s, the social-material processes animating the Beckettian structure of feeling would have clashed with the neoliberal worldview of Reagonomics. In contrast to the entrepreneurial subject valorized by neoliberalism, Archie Bunker, Homer Simpson and the others have nothing of value to offer those they berate, and they wear their impotence on their sleeves. Surrounded by the wreckage of a remembered dominion, these sons-of-Hamm have relinquished any privileged

access to knowing, and yet, through force of blind habit (Hamm, of course, is literally blind), they are still given to reflexive (and therefore comedic) exhortations and pronouncements, which are entirely ignored by their long-suffering counterparts. In all likelihood, the famously progressive Norman Lear would have embraced the anti-establishment implications of Beckett's depiction in a general way, as would Matt Groenig, who borrowed Archie Bunker's armchair for Homer Simpson. But these alignments aside, the play's true relevance to politics remains elusive, buried deep in its formal construction, and to the issue of performative force in general. Understanding *Endgame's* outsized influence, then, requires us to decode the Hamm-Clov dyad for what it reveals about how language relates to embodied action in the creation of contemporary theater.

2. Of Logic and Doxa

With respect to language, the chronicle Hamm endlessly recounts to Clov in *Endgame* underscores his link to dramatic form and narrative, to causality as an ordering principle, while Clov's punctilious physicality reminds us how all interpretive structures are instantly nullified by the simplest moment of performative *action*.[xxxiv] Supporting Agamben's exploration of *arche* mentioned earlier, this clash points us toward J.L. Austin's groundbreaking work on the performative or illocutionary force governing a class of speech acts. By rejecting the positivist emphasis on the truth value of statements, Austin placed an analysis of such speech acts at the center of philosophical inquiry into the nature of language. From the perspective of theater, however, Austin conspicuously echoes Plato's condemnation of *mimesis* in *The Republic*[xxxv]. As he defines illocutionary force Austin takes pains to bracket out "statements said by an actor on stage, or if introduced in a poem or spoken in a soliloquy," (22) characterizing such statements as

"in a peculiar way hollow or void." The terms Austin uses when he sets dramatic statements apart in this manner are telling:

> Language in such circumstances is in special ways intelligibly—used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the etiolations of language. All this we are excluding from consideration. (22)

To deliver the performative force of his own statement, Austin uses the word *"excluding,"* a choice fraught with sacrificial, political and philosophical resonances. Michel Serres, for example, locates exclusion in the basic act of discourse, writing that to hold a dialogue is "*to suppose a third man and to seek to exclude him*" (*Hermes*, 67). Serres's analysis also engages with the discussion of *mimesis* in Plato's *The Republic,* in which *mimesis* is treated as a mortal danger (324). What might be called the *excluded mimetic* in Austin also aligns suggestively with the *excluded middle* of Aristotle's Law of Non-Contradiction, namely the possibility that a statement might be both true and not-true at the same time. The contradictory truth and the mimetic performer both suggest a groundless mobility at the base of the world, in which *seeming to be* is no different than *to be*. In each case, the paradox exemplified by the slippery, Dionysian poison-cure of the *pharmakon*[xxxvi] is what causes alarm. By dissolving the foundations of fixed identity in this way, *mimesis* itself brings terror.

Ever since the Athenian *arche* or origin or philosophy, the contradictory true/not-true aspect of mimetic performance has drawn attention to the ways tragic performance relates to the metaphysics of non-contradiction. Can something be true and not true at the same time? Mainstream definitions of logic since Aristotle, of course, are based on the answer to this

question being "no," and yet this kind of true/not-true indeterminacy runs through the material world, defined as it is at its foundations by such stubborn indeterminacies as particle-wave dualism. Graham Priest in particular has explored alternative modes of logic, the paraconsistent and dialetheistic, that are based on "true contradictions" (e.g., again, the Liar's Paradox) which have dogged Western philosophy from the Pre-Socratics up through Kant, Hegel and Marx. In direct conflict with Aristotle's Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC), dialetheistic logic holds that a statement can be true while its negation is also true.[xxxvii] Priest identifies the LNC as:

> . . . "something of a shibboleth in Western philosophy." The thought that consistency is a *sine qua non* for central notions such as validity, truth, meaningfulness, rationality, is deeply ingrained into its psyche. One thing that has come out of the modern investigations into dialetheism appears to be how superficial such a thought is. If consistency is, indeed, a necessary condition for any of these notions, it would seem to be for reasons much deeper than anyone has yet succeeded in articulating. And if it is not, then the way is open for the exploration of all kinds of avenues and questions in philosophy and the sciences that have traditionally been closed off. [xxxviii]

As for the consistency of *doxa*—rhetorical common sense defined as "the opinions accepted by all men or by the majority among them" (Aristotle, 160)—Priest writes, "If someone has never found that their beliefs were inconsistent, this probably means that they just have not thought about them long enough" (*In Contradiction*, 96). He views paraconsistent dialetheism as lying closer to the Classical Asian logical systems (the *catuskoi* of Mahayana Buddhism, for example), in which statements can be both true and not-true, or neither true nor false. Meanwhile, the

central role played by doubling irony in the Greek tragedies (Oedipus is both guilty and innocent) arguably makes tragic drama the dialetheistic medium *par excellence*.

Beckett's postwar writing for the stage helps illuminate the relevance of Priest's work to the political dimension of what I am defining as Beckett's neo-tragic drama. The role paradox has played in formal logic, in turn, helps us understand how issues of *mimesis* and contradiction connect to neoliberalism, its governing "metaphysics of common sense" (Loy 234) and what Randy Martin has called "the financialization of daily life" unfolding since Reaganomics. The imperative of non-contradiction animating neoliberal forms of domination and social control—the imperative to "make an account of yourself" in entrepreneurial terms according to the iron laws of Maggie Thatcher's "There Is No Alternative"—amounts to what Pignarre and Stengers call an "infernal alternative" (40) or *spell* by which "the very mode of functioning of capitalism kills politics" (25). In this mode of capture "Whenever an infernal alternative is constituted, politics gives way to submission, and even those who resist may be trapped, that is to say, may define their opposition in the terms fabricated by the alternative" (25).

The issue of exclusion and *mimesis* thus provide a means to unite the various discourses colliding in the cultural arena of Los Angeles theater in the 1980s that proved so receptive to Beckett's new structure of feeling. The politics of *Endgame*, I propose, has to do with the relationship between the authoritarian father of Haraway's "God trick" (i.e. Hamm) defined as "the standpoint of the master, the Man, the One God, whose Eye produces, appropriates, and orders all difference" (587), and his radically differential subaltern (Clov). In *Endgame,* Beckett confounds the common sense assumption that we must choose between these two irreconcilables. By creating a new mode of drawing narrative-Hamm and performative-Clove into an an intensive embrace, Beckett forged a new mode of resistance to such spells, a mode of

resistance rooted in contradiction and aporia. In Deleuzian terms, the intensive differences of the Hamm-Clov dyad drives processes or becomings, specifically a "becomings-Beckett," that continues in the culture to this day. It is this kind of intensive and differential process—a cornerstone of Deleuze's topological and thermodynamic realism (DeLanda, *Intensive Science* 2–5)—that best explains *Endgame's* surprising cultural influence.

3. Attractors, Dual Strata and Capacities

To examine Beckett's *Endgame* from this point of view, it will be helpful to embrace a few additional taxonomic adjustments. Translated into the dynamic-systems style of thinking explored by Deleuze, Williams's "structure of feeling" can be thought of as a "basin of attractors," in which a baseline cultural milieu is topologically shaped to ensure that the development of form takes place along a set of stable pathways (Mitchell 28–32). While attractors are stable, they are not to be confused with *general* essences that get stamped onto *particular* forms—within certain limits, the forms generated by attractors continuously shift and change according to complex spatial and material dynamics. When attractors reach a certain level of complexity, they also exhibit the fractal self-symmetry across different scales described by chaos theory, and are referred to as "strange" attractors. A cultural milieu, from this point of view, is intensively charged—imbued with innate expressivity. Literary and performative texts emerging from this milieu do so by way of strange attractors; they are expressions in which the characteristic relationship of part and whole attains dynamic stability in the mode of a style or genre.

To track Beckett's influence on subsequent theater artists, it will also be useful to clarify the distinction Deleuze draws between *properties* and *capacities*. While the properties of an

object are actual, finite attributes that can be listed exhaustively, an object's capacities are relational in nature. In his gloss on this aspect of Deleuze, Manuel DeLanda uses the object called a knife to illustrate this relationality: a knife's capacity to cut is real even when the knife lies unused in the kitchen drawer. In order to actualize this virtual capacity to cut, the knife must be deployed *in relation to* something that can be cut. A lemon, for example, has the capacity to be cut, a capacity that is actualized in relation to the capacity of a knife to cut. A knife, as DeLanda clarifies in colorful terms (DeLanda, "Metaphysics As Ontology"), also has the capacity to be used to pin a threatening note to the door of an ex-lover, and this capacity is fully part of the real (though not, it is to be hoped, part of the actual). Properties, from this point of view, are reductive; capacities, in their inexhaustibility, are expansive, such that the virtual capacities of objects—human beings very much included—can never be tabulated exhaustively. From this perspective, human identity, like a literary or artistic style, becomes a pattern of actualization haloed by a virtual cloud of expansive, relational capacities.

Attractors and capacities provide a way to understand what makes *Endgame* so distinctively postmodern. Beckett not only established a new kind of attractor or structure of feeling; he then also placed this literary-performative attractor at the focal point of his work of art, actualizing a new way of enacting paradox that was designed to short out the logic circuits of postwar culture. The play opens with the first of a sequence of attempts to close, with Clov stating: "Finished. It's finished. Nearly finished. It must be nearly finished." With respect to closure, this sequence approximates the relationship of the Liar's Paradox ("everything I say is false") to truth. A creature of action, who only exists in an immanent mode, Clov, for his part, is constitutionally prevented from enunciating his own end. Hamm, next, opens a transcendental axis on this same predicament. His first line—"Has there ever been suffering loftier than

mine?"—is a concluding line, an ironic send-up of the kind of utterance that, conventionally, would arrive at the close of a cautionary parable—*The Book of Job*, perhaps. As an opener, the line announces a tragic drama with nowhere to go. Exchanges between the two characters are pulled by this powerful, self-negating attractor into a set of repetitive routines rooted equally in philosophy and in music-hall comedy. In Hamm and Clov, the transcendental (mimetic) and the immanent (ceremonial) have, at the outset, already exhausted all possible resolution. In *Endgame*, both mimesis and ceremony are forced to drop their totalizing and teleological claims, their wills-to-power.

In its intensive embrace with ceremony—an embrace that arises in the mode of mutual failure—*mimesis* in *Endgame* evades Austin's exclusion. Bridging the opposition between world and stage, between *being* and *seeming to be,* the mimetic thereby attains performative force. Austin's exclusion of the mimetic is what we leave behind at Beckett's stage door, in other words, and this is precisely what the situated theater-makers of L.A. seek to emulate. Beckett's unique way of countering Austin's mimetic exclusion supplied theater in Los Angeles—a city already in love with mimetic subjectivity (e.g., that of movie stars and celebrities)—with its defining characteristic. Embodied in the dyad of Hamm and Clov, this new link between body and mind suggests why *Endgame* is so illuminating with respect to Beckett's entire body of work. And yet, it would be reductive to define this dyad in strictly mind-body terms and identify Clov as the vehicle for mere physicality; doing so would preserve rather than dissolve the Cartesian opposition. The nature of the Hamm-Clov dyad warrants further inquiry: if the dyad is not a binary opposition, what is it?

4. The Animal in Language and the Corporate (Non)Person

Beckett scholars often trace Beckett's breach with Descartes—previously an important influence—to the writer's engagement in Paris with the psychotherapist Wilfred Bion, beginning in 1936 and lasting two years. Writing in 2008, Steven Connor, for example, views Paris for Beckett during the Bion period as "a place of play—a Winnicottian transitional space […] of which he had earlier been deprived by the suffocating influence of his mother and cultural context" (12). Bion's impact on Beckett was expressed in the form of struggle and conflict; in his hyper-productive postwar period, Beckett was able to transfer his contest with Bion into a pitched battle against the "symbolizing, integrating functions of language, and the concomitant claims of the analyst or interpreter" (12). The breach then picked up momentum during Beckett's wartime exile in Roussillon (1941-45), and was completed during an encounter with his mother in 1945, described by biographer James Knowlson as akin to the conversion of St. Paul on the road to Damascus (320). Knowlson goes to some lengths to contextualize this shattering event, which Beckett dramatized in a well-known passage of *Krapp's Last Tape*,[xxxix] writing that "'THE REVELATION' also hides several earlier and less sudden or dramatic revelations." These earlier revelations include the split from Joyce, his therapy with Bion, and his exile during the war. Describing the shift in his own work while in Roussillon, Beckett himself used a specific word for this exhaustion: "Molloy and what followed," he said to Ludovic Janvier, "became possible the day I became aware of my *stupidity*" (Cronin 373).[xl] This 1969 interview was conducted in French, and, intriguingly, the word Beckett used was *bêtise*: a term for foolishness derived from bête, meaning beast or animal. Descartes' forcefully rejected common sense as a basis for knowing[xli]. *Bêtise* allowed Beckett to preserve Descartes' radical doubt without surrendering to the consolation of the cogito on the one side, or *doxa* on the other.

Beckett's rejection of *episteme* was complete, and knowing, to the extent that it arose at all, becomes henceforth a matter of *techne*.

Beckett's crisis seems to have brought him close to what Agamben calls the "anthropogenic event"—the moment when the human species first "risked its being" in language, differentiating itself from the rest of the mammalian phylum. In a qualitative shift, direct and unmediated contact with sensate experience was, in that moment, interrupted, giving rise to the kind of gap found in the split subject of Lacan. To Agamben, something similar is at work in Joseph K's experience of being accused of unnamed crimes—our (Agamben, "Animal, Man and Language") linguistically mediated identity is forever haunted by its own inherent falseness, its fundamental nature as a lie or false story—a *fabulation*. To "stake one's nature in language" (this is Agamben's definition of *anthropos*) is to engage in a form of self-slander. To say animals do not "stake their being in language" is, by contrast, to say they do not embrace beliefs or stories about causality—they have no access to the "God trick," or to the self-affirming Cartesian utterance. Rooted in *bêtise*, the cultural force of Beckett's postwar work has to do, in part, with the breadth of the intensive difference it spans—a strongly linguistic, Cartesian sensibility coupled with the materiality of earth, mud, and the mute, suffering and performative animal body. The murky, dream-like fabulations of *Molloy*, the utterly abject and passive[xlii] Mahood plotting in his carafe in *The Unnameable—bêtise* involves a recognition of the machinic nature of *episteme*, and the way the Cogito arises out of relationality with embodiment. In its rejection of *episteme*, *bêtise* points toward *techne* as a mode of knowing: embodied rather than cognitive, concrete rather than abstract, unfazed by paradox and contradiction.

It is tempting to classify this *techne*-based mode of relating to experience as some new form of empiricism. This would be incorrect, however, because empiricism still aims to arrive at

some abstract truth, whereas *techne* remains blissfully pragmatic in its aims. The imperative to resolve contradictions such as those between theater-as-drama and theater-as-ceremony by knowing more or knowing better is entirely a function of *episteme*. In the mode of *techne,* such contradictions need not be resolved; instead, they may be exploited as a source of differential energy. *Bêtise* allows us to view the Hamm-Clov dyad as a thermodynamic coupling rather than a semiotic binary. The imperative to choose between two incommensurables now reveals its link to the "infernal" spell[xliii] of neoliberal capital, paving the way to capture and a reduced subjectivity, a spell anchored in the "trick" of the two-sided coin. In the mode of *techne*, by contrast even the *volition* of the Cogito to inquire becomes an expression of its relationship to material embodiment—an emergent property of a complex autogenic system navigating perturbations via acts of self-representation.

In the shift away from *episteme* and transcendence we begin to sense the profound continuity between Beckett's project, which began in *Watt* (completed in 1945) and then moved inexorably toward performance and the stage, and situated neo-tragic performance. Characters compulsively drawn toward unattainable states of epistemic closure and inaccessible operations of logic—these are the source of the deeply paradoxical and apophatic exhaustion Deleuze locates at the root of Beckett's mature aesthetic, which flows on through the Angeleno playwrights examined in subsequent chapters. In their theater work, Shepard, Fornés, Steppling and Abdoh each explore the implications of Beckettian stupidity or *bêtise* in different ways. Each of them, moreover, does so in ways that are strongly colored by Los Angeles's unique semi-urban profile, a master-planned consumer paradise actualized by the fabulations of speculative capitalism.

As noted in the Introduction, the view of capitalism as an expression of Cartesian dualism (capital as mind; labor as body), or as Weberian rationalism, is incomplete; by the mid-20th century, capital had already added to its bourgeois rationality a contradictory embrace of "animal spirits,"[xliv] the "irrational exuberance"[xlv] of supply side economics. Powell hints at this newfound respect for affective entrainment and capture in his use of the word "shaping" when he points out the role of television "in shaping the thinking, attitudes and emotions of our people." This revealing word choice indicates that "rational discussion" is not what Powell recommends to redress the situation. An effective response, Powell's language suggests, should unfold in the realm of affect rather than cognition. In this regard, Powell aligns himself with the deeper shift in the nature of capitalism emblematized by the 1980s work of the influential conservative theorist George Gilder.[xlvi] Published in 1981, ten years after the Powell Memo, Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty* drew on Mauss and Levi-Strauss (Goux 211) to present capitalism as a form of potlatch oriented toward profligate giving, paralleling Bataille's articulation of excess. In Gilder's thinking, neoliberal capitalism finds its own *bêtise*, its roots in the realm of animal spirits where "irrationality is no longer a denunciation but a justification, a defense" (Goux 214).

In its celebration of excess and chance, neoliberal supply-side capitalism revels in the irrational. In his 1997 *Postdramatic Theater*, Hans-Thies Lehmann identifies a split analogous to this divergence of the Dionysian from the rational aspects of the market economy: the division between ceremonial (i.e., postdramatic) and mimetic (i.e., dramatic) aesthetic regimes also mentioned in the Introduction. From the perspective of *techne*, again, it is the common sense insistence that the split must be resolved through allegiance to one or the other (but not both) that generates the ensorcellment, the spell. If Powell's memo illustrates the God trick, on a deeper level, it also reveals the even more fundamental dynamic of the coin trick, defined as that sleight-

of-hand reduction of limitless capacity to the choice between two arms of a false binary. What'll it be—capital as a rational system efficiently processing information about need, or capital as a Dionysian system continually generating excessive desire-production? Take your pick—either way, you lose, because what disappears in this false binary, along with the full spectrum of our capacities, is the actual role capital plays in the mode of anti-market monopoly. The illusion of choice acts as a kind of infernal spell—in the act of exercising free choice, we are captured. The basic strategy of the situated play, in turn, is to reject this trick by moving back into the realm of *bêtise,* a mode of being in which the rule of non-contradiction does not apply, and which is linked to the plenitude of capacity. These issues have to do with the nature of symbolic systems—i.e. both language and money— and what lies below them, closer to origins and to difference itself.

5. The Nature of Neo-tragic Irony

Returning to the issue of neoliberal financialization, we begin to see how money itself relates to Beckett's *bêtise*. Beckett's engagement at the level of the anthropogenic event—the arrival of language—resonates strongly with the financial valorizations of the neoliberal era. The connection between language and money is widely appreciated. In terms of the emergence of coinage in 6th century Greece, Seaford notes the analogy between "the centralization of value in money" and "the gathering of signification into language" (*Greek Mind* 294). In his view, this parallel development culminates in "the Heraclitean logos (6D), which means both verbal and monetary account" (12A). Coinage—money—echoes and amplifies the cultural effects of that more basic symbolic system—language. Hence, when Beckett writes in *Watt*: 'No symbols where none intended,' (255) he is linking himself to penury as well as to silence—to the

vulnerability of pennilessness in a social world defined by money. This is why an analysis of *Endgame's* formal dynamics—and especially the Hamm-Clov dyad—helps to clarify the relationship between the situated director-playwrights of L.A. and the ascendant, money-obsessed neoliberal culture they critique.

In *Endgame*, Beckett established the penury or exhaustion of the symbolic (i.e., *bêtise*) and its link to the situated practice of theater. As Steven Connor puts it, this struggle against the symbolic pits the Beckettian protagonist against "a series of mysteriously oppressing tyrants, whose motivation appears always to be to force a coherent ego or human nature upon the speaker of Beckett's fictions" (22). The elusive offstage presence in *Endgame*—the unnamed opponent on the opposite side of the chess board—can be felt in Shepard's character Taylor, in Fornés's Henry, and in the Parks Department officials operating offstage in Steppling's *Storyland*. In Reza Abdoh's *Hip-Hop*, this embodiment of instrumental reason finally appears on stage as the enigmatic and grotesque figure, the Captain, who, in the end, also reveals himself to be a figure of *bêtise.* In the context of the relationship between financialization and tragic drama, the situated aspect of Beckett's exhaustion is precisely what drives the aesthetic toward its expression in L.A. theater.

The *bêtise* Beckett located in Roussillon during the war also entailed his switch to composing in French. Writing in French allowed Beckett to retain some working relationship with language while sidestepping the personal affordances of origin, his own personal set of "initial conditions" encoded with confining maternal influences. Beckett's flight from his mother tongue clearly also liberated him from the weight of Joyce's influence, enabling his embrace of *lessness*[xlvii] and exhaustion as cardinal aesthetic markers. It is crucial to distinguish the exhaustion Beckett taps from mere *tiredness*. As Audrey Wasser points out, citing Deleuze, what

is exhausted in Beckett is the "set of possibilities" (125), conceived as something greater than the real. Defined with reference to capacities instead of possibilities, such an exhaustion pertains to Beckett's powerful reluctance to actualize these capacities, and his wariness with regard to the teleological commitments such actualizations might generate. Without teleology, there is no principle commanding the process of actualization, but only the blind expressivity of *bêtise*—in Beckett's famous 1949 statement to Georges Duthuit (*Proust and Three Dialogues* 139), "there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." Via exhaustion, the reign of Cartesian attractors is dissolved, giving rise to an inert plenitude that preempts all teleology, delivering the posthuman aporia of *bêtise*. How, then, does this aporia apply to Hamm and Clov?

In Beckett, we encounter the very opposite of regressive primitivism: a primitivism of the future, which finds a natural expression in the *future ruin*[xlviii] of Los Angeles, a milieu in which all desires could be actualized if only there were a reason to make the effort. All stories or fabulations, paradoxically, run their course without encountering closure. This kind of exhaustion entails *Endgame's* remarkably compressed redefinition of "nature":

> HAMM: Nature has forgotten us.
>
> CLOV: There's no more nature.
>
> HAMM: No more nature! You exaggerate.
>
> CLOV: In the vicinity.
>
> HAMM: But we breathe, we change! We lose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideals!
>
> CLOV: Then she hasn't forgotten us.
>
> HAMM: But you say there is none. (11)

In this world, the boundary between nature and culture has been dissolved. The entraining capacity of the symbolic has been neutralized by an underlying materiality, a smooth or un-striated mass of theatrical stasis. Like the Artaudian *body without organs*, this nature can only be experienced indirectly via the symbolic, but the symbolic also distorts its actual being. Exhaustion in the mode of *lessness* is the path Beckett takes to convey this entirely contradictory state of affairs, giving rise to the neo-tragic irony infusing his work. Inherently paradoxical, *lessness* is about a *plenitude of exhaustion*, and the overabundance of expressive potential in a world where any actualization delivers teleology and capture. If teleological volition and the storytelling or "fabulating" (Kerslake 161–162) function are no longer the defining attributes of the human, *Endgame* asks, what replaces them? The unique form of *Endgame* can be construed as an attempt to answer this question in the mode of *techne* rather than *episteme*. This suggests that the true source of *bêtise* in *Endgame* arrives in the directorial mode of staging the action, a perspective that has surfaced recently in a recent debate between Hans-Thies Lehmann and Christoph Menke that also pertains to the relevance of tragic drama to contemporary life.

6. Lehmann Contra Menke

Drama, to Lehmann, is a performative mode that has lost much of its meaningful relevance to contemporary theater as an evolving art form. Published in 1997, Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theater* has served as an organizing document for those seeking clarity about the postdramatic movement that began in the late 1960s, with a shift toward deconstructed *mise-en-scene*, non-representational staging, and a distancing from the written text, in work by Robert Wilson, Pina Bausch, Richard Foreman and a host of others. Lehmann traces the roots of these

developments back into the 19th century and beyond, situating the postdramatic in a broad historical arc that includes also the arrival of cinema as culture's primary dramatic vehicle (50), and the growing internationalism of culture in the post-war era. From Lehmann's point of view, representational narratives in which dramatic situations are contrived to steer fictional characters into dialogue-driven conflict have become inherently conservative in the way they reaffirm self-other binaries that underwrite the oppressive operations of power. Such dramatic tropes no longer suit the expressive needs of artists working in the theater, nor do they reward the attention of theater audiences, theorists or critics. The cultural upheavals of the 1960s mark a breach with the intersubjective dramatic norms of the past, Lehmann maintains, inaugurating a new epoch defined by performance art, meta-theatrical ironies and expansive, quasi-ceremonial spectacles. Lehmann's analysis clarifies the aesthetic continuities within what might otherwise appear to be a chaotic proliferation of theatrical experimentation.

Since the rejection of teleological readings of history is a common thread among the diverse artists of the postdramatic movement, Lehmann views Beckett as a crucial forerunner. In Lehmann's view, Beckett's postwar rejection of dramatic form in plays like *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* expresses a discomfort with the "teleology of history" (39) dramatic form implies. Beckett's work aside, Lehmann's focus on performance risks undervaluing the textual innovations of postwar dramatic writers, from Pinter and Albee to Caryl Churchill, Peter Handke, Mac Wellman, Len Jenkin, Suzan-Lori Parks, Sarah Kane, Wallace Shawn, Douglas Crimp and many others.[xlix] Such writers focus first and foremost on the literary object, which makes claims of its own on performativity, and its own developmental trajectory as well. If the thrust of the postdramatic is, in Luciano Gatti's words, "to discard concepts such as *mimesis* and representation in order to assert a *theater of the real"* (224), avant-garde dramatic writers since

the 1960s have devoted themselves to exactly that. As a result, such playwrights must grapple—just as their purely performative colleagues do—with how contemporary theater also "makes the terms *reality* and *representation* quite indistinguishable." L.A.'s situated theater did not only participate in this approach; it was, arguably, the ground zero of experimentation in *Endgame's* anomalous balancing act between ceremony and representation.

In examining these Beckettian roots of the postdramatic, Lehmann explores how dramatic form dialectically negates the philosophical implications it also inaugurates. Yet while Lehmann's reading of Beckett is richly suggestive in its own right, it involves Hegelian presuppositions fundamentally at odds with Beckett's postmodernism. The "beautiful ideal" in Lehmann becomes the "sensuous appearance of the idea" as it is actualized from Spirit into material forms, but the key to understanding the change in Beckett's aesthetic in the mid 1940s—including both his transition to composing in French, and his move toward the embodied voices of the stage—has to do instead with the sudden breach in his alignment with Descartes mentioned earlier, which turned him away from idealism and cognition to face instead the dark and chaotic material processes of affect and embodiment—*bêtise*, again. This view of Beckett promises to alter, in turn, how we interpret the postdramatic, and how it relates both to the neoliberal milieu in which it arose and to the tradition of tragic drama all the way back to the Greeks.

In 2005, Menke articulated a forceful critique of Lehmann's work, providing a new reading of tragedy's presence in the modern world based not on Hegel, but on the work the poet Friedrich Hölderlin. Menke rejects the notion that either Enlightenment reason or Christian religiosity have rendered tragedy into an obsolete theatrical genre. *Oedipus, Tyrannus* looms large in Menke's argument, and especially the manner in which Oedipus launches his own

demise when he levels a curse against whoever killed Laius. In the grip of *doxa*, Menke writes, Oedipus passes judgment on the killer of Laius and, in so doing, curses himself.

> Oedipus secured his fate when he passed judgment**s** on himself and, indeed, because he passed judgment on himself. Oedipus failed to transform his judgment into an act over which he had power, instead, his judgment acquired power over him. (*x*)

Menke views *Oedipus*—and indeed all tragedy—as inherently ironic in the way character and plot arise co-dependently in the manner of a hermeneutic circle. Tragedy provides the viewer of catastrophe with a deep immersion in aporia, the circuits of reason shorted out in a crisis delivering us to ground(lessness). The effects of the mimetic exclusion have been reversed.

From this point of view *Oedipus, Tyrannus* is intricately designed to frustrate any impulse to derive lessons from tragic suffering, or any reading that might serve as a guide for future action. Oedipus curses himself when he embraces the universal-particular form of the law, and his suffering, in contrast, will be entirely *singular*—historically contingent in ways never to be repeated. The act of passing judgment, for Menke, entails a separation from the actual ground of action, thereby amplifying destabilizing intensities that return to undermine the judger. The loss of an epistemology based on general-particular classifications spells the end of a categorical ethic; this is, of course, profoundly at odds with many common sense readings of tragic drama as an edifying cautionary tale. The thrust of Menke's thinking here, in how it critiques normative judgment, supports Haraway's indictment of the God trick for establishing a zone of abstract reason apart from material human action. This kind of normative judgment—oriented toward separation and autonomy at the expense of communal or social bonds—is precisely what coinage

amplified when it arrived in the Greek world of the 6th century BCE. It seems possible to view coinage or money as a social object that, through its atomizing effects, amplified our faith in such judgments, thus providing the transformative force mentioned above. In a 20th century postwar context, neoliberalism, valorizing money anew, had similar effects.

What is new in Menke is *katharsis* defined as an evacuation of the identity, the self as a unity, an evacuation that entails the embrace of what Mahayana Buddhism is called "emptiness," a quality rooted in emergence, or "codependent arising," rather than in a void. The standard definition of the *katharsis* of pity and terror arising through imitation takes on new overtones: imitation itself (i.e. *mimesis*) is what causes pity and terror, by underscoring the groundlessness and plasticity of identity. Confronted with these unsettling but also liberative experiences, the only viable response is a self-contradictory *blindness in which one can see*, a multiple/identity or a *principle of anarchy* that echo the irony of the postmodern author. In his stage work generally, Beckett's response to this incommensurable position was not to set up contradictory oppositions so much as to include both sides of the game, rejecting in his authorship and his stagecraft the false alternative or infernal choice. If classical tragedy accessed irony through additive means, superimposing incommensurable affects (i.e., pity and terror), Beckett achieves the same effect by way of subtraction and exhaustion. His approach, born while hiding from the Nazi terror, turned out to be remarkably prescient regarding the trajectory of the postwar world toward neoliberal sovereignty and capital's discovery of its own access to "animal spirits" and "irrational exuberance"—to *bêtise*.

7. Exhaustion Directed

The debate between Menke and Lehmann has been examined by Luciano Gatti in ways that are especially useful to this analysis of Beckett's influence in Los Angeles. Writing in 2013, Gatti uses *Endgame* as a test case by which to referee the debate. Lehmann, writes Gatti, looks at "a number of developments which, since the 1960s, have moved theater closer to *performance*, *happenings* and the visual arts," and "presents an argument that situates drama as an outmoded historical form" (224). Gatti instead views Beckett's work as relevant today because of how it embraces precisely that failure:

> The object of post-avant-gardist theater, in its turn, would be precisely that failure, which is raised to the condition of a theme. As such the final *tableau* in *Endgame*—the impossibility for Clov to reach his freedom—defines it as meta-tragedy: Beckett stages the tragedy of the game, that is, the failure of the passage between game and praxis…This interpretation is conceived in the context of a controversy against one of the central components of the conception of post-dramatic theater, namely, the pretension of theater flooding into life. (227)

Gatti positions the conflict between Lehmann's "organization of drama around a totalizing principle," against Menke's "equation of dramatic composition and the materiality of the stage" at the center of *Endgame,* and "all of Beckett's activities as playwright and stager" (224). In this reading, Beckett deploys Clov to draw Hamm's self-fabulating project into an assemblage of dual boundaries or strata, the play containing within itself articulations of two opposing positions; as noted earlier, it is the intensive differential between them that explains *Endgame's* remarkable and enduring cultural impact. Basing his analysis on the directorial notebooks from

Beckett's 1967 Berlin production, Gatti locates in Hamm the dramatic or mimetic impulse, and in Clov the purely theatrical or ceremonial one, with Beckett's staging of the play acting to resolve the tension between them. The re-inclusion of the mimetic (contra Austin) can not be accomplished through text alone, but requires bodies on a stage. *Bêtise* in *Endgame* is neither Hamm nor Clov but the incommensurability that became clear when Beckett himself staged their interactions. *Bêtise* becomes about accenting or foregrounding the tension between language (the symbolic) and the body on stage. Beckett's experience of *bêtise* drove him toward writing texts for the stage and then, in a final evolution, toward participating directly in their staging. This contradictory coupling registers as "folly" to the Cartesian mind, but not to the embodied mind of the craftsman. We tip over out of *episteme* into the mode of knowing called *techne*, craft. The dichotomy in *The Republic* between making couches and making images of couches disappears—both simply involve different *techne*; when difference rather than identity is primary, representation no longer delivers a crisis, but is simply another form of craft.

Gatti thus suggests that an overly strict, if not entirely false, dichotomy is at work in the Lehmann-Menke debate. In Gatti's words:

> […] it is not a matter of constructing a dichotomy between autonomy of representation and reality of performance, but of showing Beckett's contradictory approach to these issues, which he does in such a way that this conflict becomes the very *raison d'être* of theatrical experience. (224)

From a Deleuzian perspective, these two modes or "dual strata" of theater-making animating *Endgame* can be viewed as *intensively* distinct constraints, such that the tension between them,

embodied in Hamm and Clov, gives rise to a cultural correlate of a thermodynamic process, a flow. To use Haraway's language, the situated nature of assemblages counters the operations of the God trick. *Endgame* thus dramatizes the ways in which the intensive dynamics inherent in a metastable world—a world of constant change and process—drive aesthetic development in singular, non-linear and paradigmatic ways without intentional actors. Actualization certainly takes place when artists such as Beckett work, but it is the virtual *capacities* immanent to material that are being actualized, through the artist and in relational couplings with the audience, rather than transcendent Spirit descending from the mind of God, as in Hegel. While Lehmann embraces the Aristotelian conception of the beautiful "according to the model of the logical, as its variant," (41) Deleuze and Guattari reject any such totalizing schema at their ontological roots: the logical itself is a product of intensities.[1]

Hence, while Lehmann is certainly correct to frame Beckett as a precursor to postdramatic work, this influence can only be properly understood as a result of the way Beckett fatally problematizes *episteme* and noncontradicton by binding them to *bêtise*. From the foundations of logic, action and idea,[li] this problematization clashes with Lehmann's Hegelian presuppositions. Consistent with his emphasis on "real-corporeal praxis" (Gatti 228), the "game" in *Endgame* becomes a virtual capacity for exhaustion endlessly reiterated for the audience, never fully actualized but still very much a part of the real—a fairly good definition of what it means to stage a play. By making it impossible for Hamm to complete his chronicle, and by preventing Clov from "reaching a permanent immobilization of scenic resources" Beckett inaugurated a new, problematic mode of tragic-comedic, anti-catastrophe which Gatti calls "repetition against resolution" (240). By emphasizing "the symmetry of beginning and end," he writes, "Hamm and Clov decipher the very theatrical experience of which they are part" (240).

This meta-theatrical effect erases any boundary between the world of the audience and the world of "the game." *Mimesis* in Beckett attains performative force, but only in the mode of exhaustion; *Endgame* offers an ironic version of the tragic mechanism, and then immediately takes it up as the object of representation. As unpoetic as it might seem, *Endgame* is, in a sense, a postmodern attractor turning to look back at itself.

8. Dyadic Oppositions and the Beckett Paradigm

While *mimesis* and ceremonial play are distinct modes of theatrical expression, this does not mean theatrical form cannot accommodate both at once. As Gatti emphasizes, doing so is the entire point of Beckett's work in the theater—the clash between these modes manifesting as the dyadic oppositions of Didi and Gogo, Lucky and Pozzo, Winnie and Willie, and even Krapp and his tape recorder. Beckett's theater, in other words, seeks to dramatize a fundamental incommensurability at work in the "real" world, an incommensurability concealed by the Aristotelian imperative to pursue truth through rational inquiry by way of logical rules and non-contradiction—by the choice, once again, between two arms of a false binary. In terms of subjective experience, similar "dual strata" arise in the distinction Agamben draws between the linguistically constructed "I" of semiotic annunciation and the experiential self of the embodied, performative individual. In the current context, the two sides here quickly materialize into familiar characterizations, and begin to speak as Hamm and Clov. To Agamben, the "I" and the individual are incommensurable, separated by a gap (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* 130). This is precisely where Beckett situates *Endgame*, thereby theatricalizing the basic ethical stance of postmodernism.[lii] Through his stagings of Hamm and Clov, it is as if Beckett re-coupled tragic drama to the *aporia* Agamben later calls for, undermining any faith in the logical as a guide for

action (Halpern). Beckett deploys Clov and Hamm in an effort to illuminate the deeper affective dynamics in play, contradiction be damned. The "sense" of "common sense" is dismantled in their exchanges, which traffic not in standard dramatic conflict but in "mutually exclusive language practices" (Gatti 159). A refusal to stand in the gap Agamben places between the semiotically-constructed "I" and the relational individual, to be *situated* there, leads to a cultural milieu in which performative force must be smuggled in through the side door of the exception, claimed by the sovereign as his exclusive domain. *Endgame* shows how Agamben's state of exception stands right next door to the essentially *theatrical* (i.e., groundless) violence of political power and law.

In terms of the political thrust of *Endgame,* we note how the paradigm, to Agamben,[liii] is the *inverse* of the exception—whereas the exception is the singularity whose exclusion creates the set, the paradigm is a singularity "excluded through its inclusion" or, even better, "a singularity extracted from its context so it speaks for more than itself" (*Media, Language, Politics* 54:02). Deriving illuminating singularities—the panopticon, for example—Foucault works through paradigms rather than by deriving general laws.[liv] In *Endgame* we see a similar collapse of the general-particular into the paradigm and the singular. The play thus becomes *a paradigm without a set,* a truly ironic literary-performative object aimed toward the roots of authoritarian power.

This analysis of *bêtise*, finally, sheds light on the cultural politics by which playwright and director functions are often separated. Many of the postdramatic theater-makers Lehmann valorizes are non-writers. Wilson, Bausch, Castallucci—these artists seek to work without text, i.e. the symbolic. Those figures of the postdramatic who do work with texts—Heiner Mueller, Jan Lauwers and Richard Foreman, for example—do so for the most part in the mode of

bricolage via discontinuous routines, which seek to cancel out their own signification. In Menke's view, this is Clov's entire mode:

> Clov's strategies for disrupting communication are prosaic in a modern, even avant-garde sense: he tells no stories, but by performing operations on language that reduce it to its verbal material, he instead 'maims' all narratively constituted and metaphorically poeticized meaning through small acts of 'sabotage' of which Adorno speaks with reference to Kafka. (160)

Each in their different ways, the situated L.A. playwrights locate their fundamental stance as theater artists in Beckett's inquiry into exhaustion, *bêtise* and aporia. To work within this quasi-ceremonial aesthetic requires the author to engage with staging in the mode of *techne*, and with the charismatic *bêtise* of the actor. Each of these playwrights attempts to actualize a link between the aesthetic and the political, which is where Gatti positions the debate between Menke and Lehmann about the possibilities of the tragic form in contemporary culture. By crafting a form that could act in this way, Beckett revamped tragedy to fit a new postmodern context. In this new form, the incommensurable tensions between meaning and presence are transferred to those "playing" from their seats: Beckett's *bêtise* was designed to be contagious, and so it would be.

9. Endgame and the "Fin" of Finance

The ways in which *bêtise* and *lessness* relate to Agamben's analysis of sovereignty and ethics begin to bring us even closer to clarity about the source of *Endgame's* enduring cultural

impact. The politics of this new aesthetic pertains to freedom understood in a specific way. In *Endgame,* as Gatti states it:

> The scenic apparatus does not captivate the audience through its senses. By dispensing with the spectator's intellectual and affective engagement with the play, Beckett merely seeks to circumscribe the social reach of his theater: to build a moment of freedom in relation to the previous determination of meaning. (241)

"The moment of freedom" Gatti cites is a freedom from the underlying teleology of the symbolic, which includes the financial as well as the linguistic. This is highly suggestive regarding the ethical implications of financialization, and the way coinage amplifies the allure of non-contradictory choice—once coins have been tossed, one of their two sides must be chosen. Coins, after all, seldom land on their edges. A refusal to occupy Agamben's gap drives the mindless, anti-situated "fin" of the *end*game of postmodern, financialized consumer capitalism, and this refusal takes material form in the two-sided object of money. The reification of Agamben's gap into a two-sided object thus helps explain the immense impact coinage had on social structures and cultural interactions when it arrived in the 6th Century BCE,[lv] an impact that continues all the way forward through today.

How do we connect the dynamics of Beckett's *Endgame* to broader developments in the culture at large? The truth expressed by *Endgame*—and both Gatti and Menke underscore this—is the affirmative capacity of irony to bridge the incommensurable gap between the dramatic and the performative in a way that opens onto a new form of politics. This is Beckett's relevance to those who resist the common sense capture of neoliberalism, and the challenge he poses to its

propagation of entrepreneurial subjectivity as identified by Foucault.[lvi] Clarifying this challenge is one of the chief aims of this investigation of the Beckett lineage within the cultural assemblage of neoliberal L.A. Beckett's re-enclosure of the stage—his re-working of its boundaries—is precisely the gesture called for to redress the immense irony of neoliberalism construed as the cultural "victory" of the avant-garde in its effort to bridge the gap between praxis and life. As Goux puts it:

> We must add, of course, that it is precisely at the moment when the entrepreneur must think himself into the model of the most advanced artistic genius, at the moment when the avant-gardist strategy of innovation at any price becomes the paradigm of dominant economic practice, that the artistic avant-garde necessarily loses its difference, its marginality, its deviance-value. The aesthetic avant-gardes have won (218).

This ironic win threatens to reduce the postdramatic project to an endless victory lap in a conflict that has moved elsewhere. This is a crucial theme. We see here the underlying logic of the relationship L.A. artists cultivated with failure and errancy as a rebellion against the competition-imperative of neoliberalism, a re-working of art and life to reclaim deviance in a nontrivial mode.

CHAPTER 2

Speculative Ruin: Sam Shepard and the Heterotopic Plenitude of Celebrity

Mike Davis begins his *City of Quartz*, *Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* by examining the speculative origin of the city, detailing how a group of Comstock millionaires purchased huge tracts of sparsely-populated L.A. basin land in the 1870s depression. Shifting the course of the Southern Pacific northwards to Los Angeles, from San Diego, where a port already existed, these Northern Californian visionaries inaugurated an era of multigenerational real estate speculation, rapidly propelling Los Angeles to a prominent position among global cities (107). In the space of a single lifetime, L.A. built itself up around this series of speculations, which remain the source of the city's febrile vitality. This speculative origin underlies L.A.'s reputation as an energized, postmodern void in which all marks of culture disappear[lvii], and which periodically explodes in psychotic caesura of noir dysfunction—riots, murders, fires—only to be mastered again in a new assertion of imaginary unity. Lying across fault lines between psychic interiority and social exteriority as they are configured by Los Angeles, the "family" plays written by Sam Shepard in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when neoliberalism was in its ascendency, gave birth to a new structure of feeling expressing the city's hyperactive, deterritorializing energies.

1. Placelessness and Ceremonial Memory

Shepard's early work anticipated Lehmann's postdramatic. Plays like *Chicago* (1965) and *The Tooth of Crime* (1972) deploy collage and syncopated discontinuity built around sketched-in dramatic armatures (24). The family plays, by contrast, unfold in a definite time and place, and involve the kind of inter-generational conflicts that are a mainstay of domestic

melodrama. Beginning with *Curse of the Starving Class* (1977), the plays of this third phase of Shepard's writing career include *Buried Child* (1979), *True West* (1980), *Fool for Love* (1983) and *A Lie of the Mind* (1985). These plays collide the minimalism of Beckett and Pinter with the family-based, Ibsen-esque realism of Inge and Miller, to create an unstable poetic hybrid. With an imagistic intensity, they give voice to the displaced Midwesterners who migrated *en masse* to the paradise of Southern California in the first half of the 20th century, their intergenerational conflicts animated by debt, eros and the ever-present threat of violence (Davis 24). While at first glance these plays seem firmly anchored in the mimetic traditions of dramatic realism, they are also marked by a feverish instability, and by a resistance to closure that connects them also to Shepard's first plays.

Starving Class and Shepard's other family plays are strongly linked to *place*, and to Southern California in particular. Shepard is a SoCal playwright precisely *because* he was born elsewhere (in Illinois). His family moved to Duarte outside L.A. in the mid-1950s along a geographical and cultural track that has stamped the region in fundamental ways. By the 1950s, the diaspora of Midwesterners that gave L.A. the name "Iowa by the Sea" (Terry) had been eclipsed by waves of Pacific Rim and Latino immigration. While white Midwesterners still laid claim to an originary position in the region complete with ideas of "tradition," and a heartland ideology, the "roots" of these Midwesterners were themselves exceedingly shallow. They were settlers, pioneers, nomadic dreamers on their second time around the roulette wheel of American mobility. Invocations of "how things used to be" is always, for these people, an assertive confidence act, a bid for positional advantage and cultural dominance. Such nomadic posturing is deconstructed in Shepard's family plays, foundational family myths dissolving under scrutiny to release an anarchic openness of feeling. Whether they unfold in Southern California (*Starving*

Class, *True West*, *Fool for Love*, *Simpatico*) or "back home" in the Midwest (*Buried Child*, *A Lie of the Mind*), the family plays depict a people who have lost their connection to place, perhaps even their capacity to take a place. And the capital of this loss, this placelessness, the first city built out of its unique energies, is Los Angeles. Place, in Shepard's family plays, is a memory and, as such, a trap; space, meanwhile, is charged with magical but also dehumanizing potential.

Thus, while Shepard had nothing to do with theater production under L.A.'s 99-Seat plan in any direct way, he is nonetheless a *situated* playwright, his work infused from the beginning with the Beckettian *lessness* and exhaustion of Los Angeles. Shepard, moreover, was strongly situated at the roots of the Off-Off movement that later found an after-life in Southern California following a diaspora of its own. This after-life began at around the same time—the late 1970s—that L.A. and its suburbs arrived in Shepard's plays as explicit locations. In *True West* and *Buried Child* the theme of a return home becomes explicit, urban hipsters colliding in those plays with their SoCal or Midwestern kin. In *Starving Class*, the play itself is a return, a work of memory, a homecoming in which Shepard's style reconnects to the material SoCal milieu out of which it arose. As a final marker setting him apart but also linking him to Los Angeles, Shepard's charisma as a literary icon and movie star—an apotheosis taking place during this period—served to draw theater as an art form into hip, pop-culture discourse, inoculating it against elitist or bourgeoise associations that often limit its appeal.

Completed in 1978, *Starving Class* is a strongly auto-biographical play. Set in the late 1950s in Duarte outside of Los Angeles, the play unfolds as the populist idealism of the New Deal is already beginning to curdle into free-market, neoliberal rapacity. This is the semi-urban landscape in which Shepard grew up, the new and improved form of urban planning influenced by progressive humanists such as Lewis Mumford (Hise 25–46), who conceived of low

population density as a rational and more utilitarian mode of development. The cancerous profusion of "development" set loose by supposedly rational planning led, by the 1950s, to an endless frenzy of profit self-generating monstrously. Weston, the *paterfamilias* in *Starving Class*, is a hold-out against the inhuman proliferation, and his resistance marks him as a failure. The play's central image, present in the stage set at the opening, is a shattered kitchen door. This door, we discover, was kicked in by an enraged Weston when he stumbled home the previous night in a drunken stupor. Financial hardship and bankruptcy anchor the play's dramatic concerns. Wesley and his sister (Emma) watch powerless as their mother (Ella) races against Weston to sell the family farm out from under them, and make off with the cash. Pulling the strings is a shadowy lawyer, Taylor, who works for an "Agency developer." Taylor has an affair with Ella and sells an acre and a half of worthless desert land to Weston. Weston describes this plot of land to his son as "a real piece of shit. Just a bunch of strings on sticks, with the lizards blowing across it" (158). Suburban sprawl was supposed to make Weston's investment into a bonanza—"all kinds of great things were going to be developed"—but time has run out. Increasingly, Weston retreats into drunken reveries recalling the awe and terror of his days as a World War Two bombardier, dropping curtains of fire across the cities of the Europe.

2. Infernal Cool and Proliferating Objects

A moment arrives in Shepard's family plays in which *objects* suddenly begin to multiply—the sacks of artichokes Weston brings home in *Curse of the Starving Class* are echoed in the ears of corn and the endless liquor bottles Vince bombards the family with at the close of *Buried Child*, and also the herd of toasters Austin brings home from his late night crime spree in *True West*. Shepard's proliferating objects are anti-symbolic; connoting only themselves, they

are emblems of an inability to transcend material limits. To look at these objects for purely symbolic meaning is to repeat the error Deleuze and Guattari locate in Freud's reading of the tree full of wolves in the Wolf-Man's dreams—it is the *multiplicity* of the wolves that conveys the dream's significance (*Plateaus* 239). Schizoanalytically, the de-individuating, multiple nature of becomings-animal is the aspect that calls to us most strongly in dreams of this kind. In their becomings-multiple, Shepard's objects drive a similarly uncanny affect, underscoring the baseline relationality of all objects. The proliferations of Shepard's objects also register as a moment of ceremonial mystery. "Well, it is like salvation, sort of," says Austin in *True West*, pointing us toward the sacramental proliferation of bread and fish in Jesus's feeding of the five thousand (48).

On one level, the proliferation of objects in the plays is a symptom of an accursed, cancer-like dynamism run wild. But while this sudden, monstrous becomings-multiple is linked to the final epochal collapse of a mode of existence—a cataclysm common to the family plays—it also connects to furtive stirrings, in their matrices of power and knowledge, of something new. "Sun's coming up," says Austin about the stack of toast he makes with the purloined toasters in *True West*, "it makes me feel like anything's possible" (48). This hint of futurity pertains to Walter Benjamin's idea that at the heart of every "true work of art" we find a "coolness like the wind of a coming dawn," a coolness in which "something truly New for the first time makes itself felt" (Benjamin 474). In his extended analysis of this passage from *The Arcades Project*, Gerhard Richter describes this "singular and radically idiomatic" place (*Stelle*) "saturated with the possibility of futurity itself" as positioned "in contradistinction to all the other places, spots, or passages that surround it in the texture of the work" (102). This "radically idiomatic" *Stelle* is what we encounter in Shepard's late plays when objects begin to multiply vertiginously. As

noted above, the mode of futurity of Los Angeles has a similar speculative quality, giving the passage of time in the region a strangely iterative quality.

Richter uses the *Arcades* passage to track a fertile tension in Benjamin's thought, the tension between his Nietzschean embrace of genealogy and his Kantian convictions regarding the *a priori* nature of metaphysical thinking. In Richter's reading, the truth of an art object lies in a kind of "double mediation" that transforms both the work itself and its social context. "To suggest that there is such a *Stelle* in the artwork," Richter writes, "is to imagine the work as a form that is at odds with itself, a formal structure patterned according to certain rules and laws whose consistency is interrupted by the unexpected emergence of a radical singularity" (103). The land deals driving the plot of *Starving Class* position the financial as an active force in the play, the two sides of the coin mirroring the double mediation Richter identifies within the art object. The frenzy of speculative real estate development that Shepard builds his play around is the *arche* of Southern California and Los Angeles. The irrational *bêtise* George Gilder would identify in neoliberal "supply side" economics is a powerful, zombie force pressing in on the Tate family, foreclosing their future. Everyone in the play feels this pressure, the family members cycling through various modes of resistance—collaboration, rebellion, surrender—in order to survive. Weston's arrival at the end of Act One with a sack full of artichokes (157), purchased near the barren plot of desert he has traded for the family farm, represents a desperate lunge in the direction of sorcery. All but inedible, the artichokes' armored, iterative self-similarity threads forward into Ella's rapturous monologue about the curse of life (173), and is countered by the zombified mode of being emblematized by the play's real estate developer (Taylor). As Shepard's surrogate in the play, Wesley, the son, brings his own more adept gesture of sorcery to bear. By butchering the lamb at the center of the action while completely naked

(191), Wesley anchors Shepard's future celebrity in a rite of blood and offering. Weston underscores the sacrificial dimensions of this act by pointing out that the refrigerator now stuffed with food and the lamb was no longer sick but "getting better."

As in *Endgame,* failure and exhaustion in *Starving Class* deliver us to the avant-garde caesura between art and reality, the contested terrain to which Shepard's object proliferations draw our attention. Everywhere in *Starving Class,* we feel neoliberal attractors are at work, entraining the human along the fault lines of self-disempowering behaviors and dysfunctions. On a formal level, the play itself has one foot in the mimetic and one foot in the ceremonial—and it is here, between the two, that Shepard locates the beginnings of situated, Deleuzian sorcery. It is as if, in a literalization of the self-metastasizing properties of interest on a loan, even material objects in this world have begun to proliferate wildly. They do so, moreover, on the boundary identified above, which traces the line of flight Shepard's alter ego, Wesley, will take as the play closes. With Wesley's subsequent transformation into a celebrity (i.e., Sam Shepard), it is as if this odd and inhuman magic has been internalized by the character, at the cost of his bond to his father. Heroically doomed, Weston (the father) is the play's sacrificial victim, a *homo sacer* already stripped of legal protections, delaying the inevitable procession toward the altar, where his demise will deliver the sacrificial magic.

The postdramatic jaggedness or instability in the play arrives in the form of imagistic monologues and arias of improvisation, in which the characters recount luminous memories, like Wesley and Weston (137, 182), or, like Ella, wonderstruck speculations about the connective nature of things (173). Fully motivated in dramaturgical terms, these monologues also break frame, bridging the gap between audience and stage with an uncanny and lyrical intimacy. Through these moments of connection, the playwright counters the inexorable and alienating

dynamics of financial debt and exchange unfolding on stage. These monologues are, in Lehmann's terms, *ceremonial* (69). In their capacity to generate a modern equivalent of Dionysian *thiasos*—a state of connective intoxication—they also relate strongly to the ceremonial ground of Greek tragedy, buttressing the liturgical effects of Shepard's proliferating objects. And yet, without their strong foundation in fully mimetic scenes, these passages would lose their powerful affective resonance.

It is crucial to point out that the boundary between festive enactment or ceremony and *mimesis* in Shepard's brand of Beckettian theater work was present in tragic drama from the beginning. Calling to mind George Simmel's theorizing of doorways and bridges, Classicist David Wiles views the Aeschylean innovation of the *skênê* door as the actual source of *mimesis* in theater:

> In the internal relationship of acting area to auditorium, we can discern a historical shift upon the introduction of the *skênê* or façade. Initially there was no stage wall, and the audience gathered around a dancing space which did not in any way purport to mirror reality. Such a performance would be termed by Ubersfeld as *ludus* (festive enactment) rather than *mimesis* (imitation of reality) within an acting space which approximates to her 'platform' model. The *skênê* created a hidden off-stage area and the consequent illusion that the visible action extended where the audience could not see it. (15)

Citing Anne Ubersfeld's work on theatrical space, Wiles analyzes the *skênê* as a correlate of the fertile incompleteness of the dramatic text. To Ubersfeld, Beckett's *Endgame* exemplifies the way postwar dramatists seek to conceal the rules governing the "production of discourse" in their

plays, thereby creating a tension that compensates for the absence of dramatic conflict (183). This indeterminacy extends to how the stage space relates to the offstage world that begins across the invisible boundaries of the stage—or, in *Starving Class*, through the shattered kitchen door. It is crucial to note that the offstage can only be deployed in this manner when the mimetic mode of theater has been invoked through some version of the Aeschylian *skênê.* Ubersfeld's festive re-enactment alone lacks this capacity for supplanting dramatic conflict as a source of tension.

3. The Postdramatic Ceremony of Sorcery

"Postdramatic theatre," Lehmann writes, "liberates the formal, ostentatious moment of ceremony from its sole function of enhancing attention and valorizes it for its own sake, as an aesthetic quality, detached from all religious and civic reference" (69). Lehmann links this shift to a disinclination on the part of postdramatic theater artists to embrace synthesis as an artistic principle, a disinclination that to some extent informs Shepard's project as well. Shepard, though, wants it both ways; the fertile tensions of the family plays—their instabilities and porosities—express an ambition to occupy the hyper-charged liminal region between the ceremonial and the mimetic. Though steeped in Artaud and Beckett, Shepard is not seeking to apply pressure to the representational aspect of theater, or problematize it in some other way. Accepting the limitations of mimetic form, he looks instead for something Grotowski would recognize, as would Peter Brook and Joseph Chaiken. The dramatic text is a vehicle for arriving at a collective immanence, the representational dramatic scenario providing the affective fuel for the journey.

The postmodernist quality of Shepard's work—its link to Beckett and his aesthetic of *lessness*—relates to Shepard's immersion in the Off-Off Broadway movement that flourished in the Lower East Side of New York in the late 1960s, and with Chaikin's Open Theater in particular. This deterritorialized, counter-cultural zone was a hotbed of theatrical experimentation. Richard Schechner's Grotowskian production of Shepard's *Tooth of Crime* in 1973 remains an important landmark in the history of postdramatic theater, for example, leading directly to the Elizabeth LeCompte-Spaulding Gray collaboration of The Wooster Group (both artists performed in the Schechner production). While Shepard apparently never saw the production, he criticized Schechner for taking Grotowskian liberties with the staging (Schechner and Wolford 76). And yet Shepard's family plays also give literary form to Grotowski's oddly futuristic archaicism, expressing the tension to be found at the core of the *via negativa*. As Schechner puts it,

> The dominating images of the Laboratory Theatre are those of Pietà—the exhausted, sacrificial deity; the dominating tones are longing and questing, a double pull back and forth. Literally the performances go 'back and forth' until (again literally) the performers 'give up.' This is Grotowski's celebrated *via negativa*. (157)

A similar back and forth pulsation in *Starving Class* and the other family plays arises from their animating tensions, one moment ceremonial, the next overtly dramatic.

Schechner emphasizes the role of objects in Grotowski that suggest the director's importance to postdramatic theory: "Grotowski's genius is to find the physical objective correlatives for this double tension, to cast it in exquisitely balanced and counterpointed spatial

and spiritual processions" (157). In his plastiques and in his focus on embodiment and physicality at the expense of *mimesis*, Grotowski himself anticipates the postdramatic. To Lehmann, the ceremonialism of the postdramatic is also rooted in such "objective correlatives"—literal objects:

> Theatre takes place as a practice that is at once signifying and entirely real. All theatrical signs are at the same time physically real things: a tree is a cardboard tree, sometimes also a real tree on stage; a chair in Ibsen's Alving house is a real chair on stage that the spectator locates not only in the fictive cosmos of the drama but also in its real spatio-temporal situation onstage. (102)

Lehmann's statement suggests we can read Shepard's object-proliferations as the expression of an impulse to stitch the audience to the virtual world off-stage by a tactic of multiplying fetishes. Fighting fire with fire, so to speak, Shepard commandeers the commodity fetishism fueling the new Bataillean version of neoliberal capitalism, and reconfigures it for his own purposes.

The way Shepard manages to integrate a postdramatic "valorization" of ceremony within the confines of representational dramaturgy complicates Lehmann's neat categorizations. Lehmann's firm grasp on what is taking place in the postdramatic exists in tension with a Hegelian framework that saddles him with doctrines of unity, and categories of form and content that obscure the fertile connections he might otherwise draw between theatrical practice and contemporary political developments. Viewing the landscape Lehmann describes through a Nietzschean lens, and particularly one crafted in the glassworks of Deleuze, yields some interesting clarity. From a Nietzschean rather than a Hegelian perspective, for example, the

aesthetic realm already precedes the religious and the civic so fundamentally as to make Lehmann's ceremonial rubric overly reductive. To Nietzsche, "ostentatious" ceremony is *aesthetic* long before it is religious or civic. A figure personifying this ostentation "detached from all civic and religious references" is the sorcerer, the liminal figure who Deleuze and Guattari reintroduced into civilized discourse in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In the *Stelle* in which objects multiply, Shepard's family plays reveal their link to this kind of anti-capitalist sorcery.

Sorcery in Deleuze and Guattari involves the *anomalous*, a quality associated with the boundary between a group and its border—the point at which a group "deterritorializes" into a multiplicity, a non-group. As Joshua Ramey states: "What is anomalous is not that which is outside of the group or divergent within it, but that individual who forms a porous border between the group and its Outside" (*SubStance* 13). Shepard's family plays seek this pharmacological porosity, their anchored dramatic conflicts giving rise to the sudden bursts of lyricism cited above, drawing an audience into a highly-charged ceremonial space of collective becomings. The matriarch Ella in *Starving Class*, for example, expands on the nature of "the curse" in starkly Deleuzian terms, connecting it to a perverse will in the substance of things:

> It's invisible but it's there. It's always there. It comes onto us like nighttime. Every day I can feel it. Every day I can see it coming. And it always comes. Repeats itself. It comes even when you do everything to stop it from coming. Even when you try to change it. And it goes back. Deep. It goes way back to tiny little cells and genes. To atoms. To tiny little swimming things making up their minds without us. Plotting in the womb. Before that even. In the air. We're surrounded with it. It's bigger than government even. It goes

> forward too. We spread it. We pass it on. We inherit it and pass it down, and then pass it down again. It goes on and on like that without us. (174)

In a connection we will return to in later chapters, the passage calls to mind Phillip Ethington's recent assertion, in the context of space and place, that we *are* boundary states (466).

Shepard's intuitive sense of how psychic, biological and physical systems intersect with each other give such ceremonial passages their rhetorical force and their theoretical heft. In a similar fashion, Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* theorizes how intensive differences between these "domains of actualization" are interiorized in human cultural production. In the glittering monologues of *Starving Class*, the present-ness of the remembered past forms a virtual body that is, like Shepard's proliferating objects, *multiple*. Shepard's characters embrace the blurring of the fault lines between the past and the present in the differential unconscious, energizing a search for the noumenal nature of intensity itself through an "interriorization of difference" (*Difference* 256). If the human psychic system in Deleuze is the site where this noumenal intensity manifests, we can look to the two other system-types in Deleuze's schema—physical and biological—for feedback effects. In Shepard's family plays, one major arena for these feedback effects is the speculative system of capitalism, with its zombie-like frenzy of differentiation. As Wesley says:

> There'll be bulldozers crashing through the orchard. There'll be giant steel balls crashing through the walls. There'll be foremen with their sleeves rolled up and blueprints under their arms. There'll be steel girders spanning acres of land. Cement pilings. Prefab walls. Zombie architecture, owned by invisible zombies, built by zombies for the use and

convenience of all other zombies. A zombie city! Right here! Right where we're living now! (163)

Shepard's aim here has a powerful political dimension, and its full scope only begins to make sense today, in retrospect, as a response to capitalist sorcery. Entrained by an over-determined, analogical mode of thought, the Tate family is being lured away from the contradictory space of the virtual, whose plenitude can only be accessed via sacrificial mechanisms increasingly focused on Weston. This seemingly placid state of entrainment—Taylor's rapturous vision of a future paradise and "Of building this country up, not tearing it down" (179)—is actually the zombification of those existing within a spell. Re-accessing their multiple capacities, each of the Tates step out of the mimetic spectacle or narrative to re-claim wonder and agency. In Deleuzian terms, these ceremonial monologues express a crucial aspect of sorcery—its focus on "the reintegration of instinct and intelligence" (Kerslake 161). And it is here, in the tragic counter-sorcery of the family plays, that we encounter again the cool wind of Benjamin's *Stelle*. The future is an intensive, unbounded multiplicity—pure capacity—but the mechanisms by which it will be actualized have been seized, creating the new form of capture personified in *Starving Class* by Taylor.

4. Los Angeles and Its Speculative Arche

"He's a speculator," Ella says about Taylor, "That's his job. It's very important in this day and age to have someone who can accurately assess the value of land. To see its potential for the future" (172). By its nature, speculation involves an engagement with *aporia*, and this engagement has a strong creative component, as emphasized by George Gilder in his valorization

of the financier-as-artist. As noted in the previous chapter, Reagan's "theologist of capital," (i.e. Gilder) is the source of a postmodern "conception of capitalism as potlatch" (Goux 213) profoundly in sync with Bataille's doctrine of excess. This "irrationalist legitimation of the capitalist universe," according to Goux, "stands in sharp contrast to the Weberian theme of the genesis of modern rationality" (213). Supply precedes and creates demand rather than the other way around. The artist and the speculator bring all available *techne* to bear on maximizing the prospects for success, and minimizing the costs of failure, but in both cases, finally, a deterritorializing leap into the unknown must be taken. What Benjamin calls the *Stelle* of the true work of art is arguably the point of departure. Driven by contradictions within the work, the artist arrives at a place where a speculative leap into an unknown futurity becomes the only way forward. The monstrous proliferation Shepard arrives at in his family plays is also what the financier is looking for—in the form of profit.

In *Starving Class*, this speculative quality registers as an originary emptiness surrounding the Tate family home, sucking away all fixed meanings and stable values. But the region's vacuousness also has an energizing influence, its deterritorialization leading to a productive overdrive, a speculative frenzy. The villainous Taylor cloaks this frenzy in the language of instrumental logic and the futurity of utilitarianism: "There's simply more people on the planet these days," he tells Emma:

> That's all there is to it. Simple mathematics. More people demand more shelter. More shelter demands more land. It's an equation. We have to provide for the people some way. The new people. (153)

This genial utilitarianism is nothing but a paper-thin diversion from an underlying greed**,** and in the end Taylor departs with a curse of pure negation: "there'll be nothing to save you. Nothing and nobody" (179). Theater becomes one of the ways the differential frenzy of deterritorialized financialism is neutralized, framing Shepard's work in historical terms as a late version of the cultural apparatus of tragic drama playing its traditional role. Issues of debt and renewal come to a head in Act Three of *Starving Class*, Weston's passionate assertion of re-birth—"I'M A WHOLE NEW PERSON NOW!"—being met with his son's mordant comment "They're going to kill you" (192). With a long, bewildered confession about the "invisibility"[lviii] of money, Weston departs, penniless and alone, to Mexico. We meet him again in *True West*, in a memory Austin recounts to his brother, the father now remembered as a toothless drunkard. This downbeat figure, beloved despite his destitution, haunts the rest of Shepard's work, a martyr to the forces of debt and necessity, a bewildered, spent Prometheus with nothing to offer, his liver swollen by drink, haunted by his memory of flying "giants" in the great war, a late, ironic echo of Greek tragic heroes filled with memories of Troy.

The figure of Taylor in Shepard's *Starving Class* is a personification of Gilder's new Dionysian capitalism. Making no gestures in the direction of bourgeois morality, Taylor is quick to leverage the family debt in return for sexual favors from Ella. In this world, the very nature of capitalism is anomalous, a form of sorcery rather than reason, the proliferations of objects indicating the profound alignment of the material world with Bataille's laws of excess, and the Deleuzian spirit of expressive multiplicity. With its emphasis on speculation in the Gilder mode, the founders of L.A. created a surplus supply of suburban living, and let demand take care of itself (stimulated, of course, by endless American-dream hucksterism). And yet the speculation was carefully bounded by legal and political structures—so how risky was this investment?

The prominence of Bataille in Goux's analysis only amplifies Deleuze and Guattari's earlier elevation of Nietzsche over Mauss.[lix] Debt, to Deleuze and Guattari as to Shepard, "turns out to be a matter of memory—a memory straining toward the future" (*Anti-Oedipus* 191). In a passage rich in implication for the nature of Los Angeles, Deleuze and Guattari continue:

> Far from being an appearance assumed by exchange, debt is the immediate effect or the direct means of the territorial and corporal inscription process. Debt is the direct result of inscription. Once again no revenge, no ressentiment will be invoked here—that is not the ground they grow on, any more than does Oedipus. (191)

The authors go on to examine the nature of the "evaluating eye, or the eye of the gods who enjoy cruel spectacles" that must be invoked in order to balance the pain of the punished criminal against the damage he has done to the inscription process. This calls to mind the Classical theater of Athens, in which the statue of the god is placed with a view into the depths of the *skênê* where the sacrificial altar resides. Deleuze and Guattari are describing what Haraway would later call the God trick, defined as "seeing everything from nowhere" (594) seeking through monotheism and doctrines of original sin to end the tragic mechanism by making debt infinite, so that all citizens confront "one and the same crushing fate" (Graeber 192). My argument is that tragic drama, via the *skênê*, is designed to resist this authoritarian, debt-driven imperative, and energize its opposite. As *Starving Class* opens the door into the *skênê* has been shattered, and it is up to the son to repair this regulative mechanism (160) even as the Tate family has already been "inscribed" with the curse.

5. The Expressive Metastability of L.A.

As a part of a basin of attractors, the situated cultural stance described above was hardly limited to Shepard's work. The forces driving the ceremonialism of Shepard's family plays also express themselves in the ensemble-based theater company that proliferated in Los Angeles after the 1980s, and in the 1990s came to play a dominant role in the city's theater scene. L.A.'s dominant impresario-based companies—*The Matrix* (Joesph Stern), *The Cast* (Diana Gibson), *the Wallenboyd* (Scott Kellman), *L.A.T.C.* (Bill Bushnell), *The Odyssey* (Ron Sossi), *The Fountain* (Stephen Sachs and Deborah Lawlor), *Stages* (Paul Verdier) gave ground in this period to membership ensemble companies that proliferated under the Equity Waiver contract—*Theater of NOTE*, *Zoo District*, *Sacred Fools*, *Open Fist*, *Circle X*, *Antaeus*, *Ghost Road*, *EST*, *Rogue Machine*, *Critical Mass*—and to anamalous hybrids like *The EvidenceRoom*, *Ziggurat*, *The Echo*, *The Black Dahlia* and *Wolfskill,* to name a few. With a strong ensemble mission, many of these companies are influenced to one degree or another by the countercultural theatrical practices of Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski and Richard Schechner as their performative emphasis stamped the curricula of theater training programs across the country. Whether or not they embrace an explicit countercultural or political position, such companies exist in sharp contrast to the prevailing commercialism of neoliberal culture.

A faith in the "big score" hovers above Shepard's family plays, forming part of their mythic structure. This same bonanza mentality has a strong shaping influence on what might be called the "public ethos" of Hollywood. Both are in keeping with the city's origins in speculation. From the perspective of the creative labor force, showbiz is a huge casino in which a single phone call can alter the trajectory of any life, upwards or down. Aleatory effects hold sway; all values are negotiable and in flux. The volatility of the success-failure binary

encourages a kind of anxious tolerance—the man selling you coffee today could offer you a job tomorrow (stranger things have happened). Subjectivities based on a fixed ethic of Kantian prohibitions and imperatives often find such immanent and transversal environments challenging—hence the typical dismissals of the entertainment business as vapid and superficial—*effeminate*—by more traditional and paternalistic corporate elites. To be complete, a critical account of the city and its performance traditions would show how L.A. theater gives expression to this characteristically Angeleno structure of feeling. On a meta-theatrical level, the L.A. showcase theater production reconciles the bonanza mentality of Comstock with the multiple fluidity of Deleuzian alliances, the boundary constraints of the Powell Memo and the 99-Seat Contract marking off the arena of production.

On the level of urban form, Los Angeles works hard to continually "fail" as a city, falling back to become indistinguishable from the more generalized SoCal suburban sprawl. This errancy on the part of the city delivers a kind of transparency with respect to urban processes, L.A. continually revealing its nature as what Deleuze and Guattari would call an *assemblage*. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari differentiate two distinct types of social bond: filiations and alliances (especially 147-184). While filiations—blood relations—are "concrete," alliances are "abstract." The difference between these two kinds of bonds echoes the difference between "relations of exteriority" that characterize decomposable assemblages, and the more problematic (from a Deleuzian point of view) "relations of interiority" in which component parts are thought to fuse together into a new unity (DeLanda, "Assemblage Theory"). Alliances in Deleuze are linked to sorcery, according to Ramey, having their basis in

> …contract or agreement—it is not obligation or connection transmitted through blood, but agreement 'bound' through words or signs or gestures. The power that such tokens have is mysterious, elusive, evasive, 'fetishistic,' which is why sorcery often appears when alliances are formed. (15)

In his *Dionysos*, Seaford describes actor guilds in similar terms: "From the early 3rd century BC, and for six centuries thereafter, we find evidence (mostly inscriptional) of guilds of performers, called Technitai ('artists' or 'artisans') of Dionysos, organizing the affairs and representing the interests of the performers" (101). These guilds prefigure Actors Equity and the Screen Actors Guild,[lx] the dominant unions representing the interests of performers in the entertainment industry the post-war era. The product of hard-fought labor battles of earlier decades, these unions play a crucial role in sustaining theatrical activity in L.A. Their ancient roots focus attention on the deterritorial community of the performer as an under-examined component of cultural history, figuring prominently in the ceremonial dimension of the postdramatic. Just as, in postdramatic theater, dramatic action is replaced by ceremonial effects, in L.A.'s ensemble scene, making theater takes on meta-theatrical and quasi-ceremonial effects that need to be taken seriously. Quite naturally, these contracts are, again, expressions of deeper ontological fault lines separating corporate idealism from an underlying materialism defined by apophatic irony.

Surveying this cultural ecology, Los Angeles emerges as an undifferentiated mass in a state of expressive metastability, a milieu in which theatrical assemblages arise and trace a line of flight away from alienated labor, forming a collective body. From Andy Rooney's "let's put on a show!" amateurism to demanding ensemble-based work like *Actors Gang*, *Orphean Circus*, *Critical Mass* or *Oguri*, the city foams with proliferating theatrical formations. Post-Grotowskian

training regimes such as Anne Bogart's Viewpoints Training have provided this proliferation with a common performative language. Even as they embrace the dramatic norms of the entertainment complex, artists are also drawn in the direction of the postdramatic and collaborative, performance-based modes of collective authorship. Literary voice, where it is defended, is defended in a minimalist, Beckettian mode that resonates with the performative apophaticism of Grotowski's *via negativa*. A social expression of the spatial nomadicism of the stage, the collective body of the actor-based company carried with it some potent political implications. The pack-like alliances driving these companies link them to the proliferation of objects found in Shepard's family plays. In both cases, we find new seeds of resistance to the restless, chaotic and ungrounded sovereign of neoliberal capital, the play shedding light on the anti-democratic economic and social dynamics of the Reagan era. A crucial question, moving forward, has to do with the specific differences between contemporary forms of tyranny, and those at work immediately after the birth of coinage.

6. The Topology of Necessity

When, at the close of the first act of *Starving Class*, Weston wanders in to find the lamb feeding in the kitchen, he wonders about the nature of the space he inhabits: "Is this inside or outside? This is inside, right? This is inside of the house. Even with the door out it's still the inside. (*to lamb*) Right?" (156). In Agamben's work on the fascist political theology of Carl Schmitt, the *state of exception* is rooted in this same issue of *locus*, of placement, and the topology of inside and out (*Exception* 24). The outside-in-ness of the state of exception with respect to the corpus of the law *is* the theatrical component of sovereignty. It actualizes the outside/in-ness of tragic space of the *skênê* on the Classical stage where the tyrant is sacrificed,

his bloody corpse then displayed before the audience. The threatening groundlessness blowing in through the broken kitchen door at the top of *Starving Class* begins to dissolve boundary between order and chaos, law and criminality has dissolved in the play, revealing sovereignty itself to be a theatrical trick, at root an *exception* from the body of law it inaugurates. The lamb's matter-of-fact butchery by Wesley in Act Three registers as an uncanny parallel to the meta-theatrical offering Shepard the playwright makes of his father, who insists on the iconic routines of family life even while recognizing the need to flee immediately to Mexico. "I could start a whole new life down there," he muses, embracing the idea of life outside of law (194). Celebrity, in turn, acts as a constrained transgression from within structures of power, an assertion of sovereign charisma. The gathering of a collective body through tragic sorcery counters the relentless abstraction of speculative frenzy and the psychic reduction entailed by debt.

Animated by a passionate "scorn for all those who haven't yet understood, who are still 'dreaming'" Taylor, meanwhile, is the ultimate "minion" of capital, as Stengers and Pignarre describe it (34), offering his infernal alternatives: adultery or bankruptcy. Necessity, to Agamben, is always an entirely *subjective* judgment and a *revolutionary* act. Before his final, exasperated exit, Taylor tells Wesley: "there's corporations behind me! Executive management!" (179). The tyrant Taylor serves is a truly exceptional being, the corporate (non)person with all the rights of a fully embodied individual, but without the mortal flesh. Remarkably enough, this corporate person also has roots in the Californian frontier during the Gilded Age—the obscure piece of late-19th century jurisprudence: *Santa Clara County versus Southern Pacific Railroad*. This is the case in which the Supreme Court held that corporations enjoy the full protections of the 14th Amendment, as if they were individuals. The case was triggered by the railroad's insistence on deducting "the value of their debts from the taxable value of their property," a right

enjoyed by individuals. The case has several anomalous aspects to it (Horwitz 173–224), but for our present purposes it is enough to simply point to the conspicuous presence of the same deterritorializing railroad behemoth playing a central role in the origins of Los Angeles. Corporate personhood is arguably the ultimate displacement of the human as an embodied, *material* object, the ultimate dis-incorporation, in other words. The corporation is an inside-out person, the institutionalization of the state of exception, an anti-pharmakos enforcing reductive psychic unity, proletarianization and its post-Fordist equivalents. Operating, increasingly, through the Dionysian discourse identified by Gilder, the function of the corporate structure is to distribute the tyrannical subject in such a way that its capacity for hegemonic action is amplified, while its separate components enjoy full immunity from accountability and retribution.

A deep continuity characterizes the lineage of postwar dramatists who, following Beckett's lead, engaged in a pitched battle against this new corporate form of tyranny. Pinter, Albee, Mednick, Shepard, Fornés, Caryl Churchill, Wallace Shawn and, arguably, Suzan Lori Parks all work in this same vein, articulating in dramatic terms the dark connections Agamben has fleshed out between Schmitt's fascism and neoliberal political economy: the idea of "glory" as the unity between the idea of a single monolithic state and a single all-encompassing market (Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*). Through the archeology of ruin in *Starving Class*, Shepard dramatizes the stripping away of theatrical contrivances down to the bare stage, the "open space" and its affective counterpart in Grotowski's *via negativa*. His aim is consistent with the aesthetic lineage to which he belongs: to counter fascist assertions of transcendental unity by dissolving the onto-theological ground on which they stand. In his early plays, Shepard attempted this through ceremonial means; in the family plays he moves forcefully in the direction of mimetic drama, but keeps one foot, as it were, in his earlier, more immanent mode.

Necessity and proliferation are counterposed in *Starving Class* in ways that retain cultural relevance today. As Taylor says to Wesley, "The wheels are in motion. There's nothing you can do to turn it back. The only thing you can do is cooperate" (179). Wesley later expresses clearly what it means to "lose a country" through this kind of dark zombie magic or sorcery. "So it means more than losing a house," he tells his sister, "It means losing a country…. It's a zombie invasion…They'll be filing through the door pretty soon" (163). The zombie automatism of the perpetual seeking of profit is the core of the free-market neoliberal ideology on the rise when the play was written, reminding us that Los Angeles is the city where New Deal communitarianism came to die. The Watts riots (1965), the Tate and LaBianca murders (1969), Bobby Kennedy breathing his last on the floor of the Ambassador Hotel (1968)—these are the emblems of a darkening of the future, the era of postwar plenitude giving way to the scarcity and re-stratification of the neoliberal era (1968-2008). The pallbearers at this funeral, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, were both Southern California men. It is their minions—Cheney, Rumsfeld, Roger Ailes et al.—who have presided over its interment with a forty-year swing to the hard right, in which panoptic mechanisms and a campaign of perception management and cognitive dissonance have been deployed in a highly effective class war, transferring much of the vast wealth of the American middle class into the coffers of a new Oligarchy, and creating the second Gilded Age currently unfolding. Deploying an American version of Beckett's situated approach to theater-making *Starving Class* depicts this transition.

7. The Anthropocene and the Greek Arche

Margaret Thatcher's infamous *There is No Alternative* (T.I.N.A.) formulation articulates the principle of *necessity* that is always used by sovereign power to justify the imposition of the

state of exception. This is a modern version of the *moira* to which Zeus alone among the gods had access, and against which Prometheus rebelled. Graeber's account of the social pathologies attending the birth of money in Mesopotamia point toward the dramatic situation of *Starving Class*, which provides a strikingly accurate recapitulation. "The poor became indebted to rich neighbors or to wealthy moneylenders in the towns," Graeber writes, "they would begin to lose title to their fields and to become tenants on what had been their own land, and their sons and daughters would be removed to serve as servants in their creditors' households, or even sold abroad as slaves" (81). These pathologies rose to a new level with the emergence, in Ionia around 600 BC, of metal coinage. In *Starving Class* this relationship between Classical tragedy and money registers in the play's jaggedness of form, and also in its relentless focus on pathologies of debt and penury and their psychic and social corollaries. Weston's plight, his entanglement with debt, connects back to the sources of the Western dramatic tradition in Athens, and the imperative animating Aeschylus and his descendants to counter the abstractive, tyranny-empowering effects of metal coinage.

Graeber also articulates an elaborate parallelism between the two-sided, binary aspect of coinage and the dualism of Platonic idealism:

> So already in any materialist philosophy, we are dealing with an opposition between form and content, substance and shape; a clash between the idea, sign, emblem, or model in the creator's mind, and the physical qualities of the materials on which it is to be stamped, built, or imposed, from which it will be brought into reality. (246)

Philosophy, according to this perspective, is in many ways the child of coinage, the abstractive engine of the coin seeding into the cultural body proto-concepts that later sprout as metaphysics. *Episteme* in particular is taking flight, in conjunction with the countering *techne* activated by Aeschylus and the other tragic poets. Leaping forward in time, Graeber links this same impulse toward *episteme* and abstraction to the birth, during the Middle Ages, of corporations, which he defines as "entities that, through a charming legal fiction, we imagine to be persons, just like human beings, but immortal, never having to go through all the human untidiness of marriage, reproduction, infirmity, and death" (304). Graeber underscores that, though we view corporations as quasi-natural features of our world, "in historical terms, they are actually strange, exotic creatures... the most peculiarly European addition to that endless proliferation of metaphysical entities so characteristic of the Middle Ages." Citing the medievalist Ernst Kantorowicz, he locates the roots of the modern corporation: "in properly medieval terms, they are very much like angels [linked to Thomas Aquinas'] notion that angels were just the personification of Platonic Ideas" (304). Angels, the entities that give the city of Los Angeles its name, are, like animals, *multiple,* a *host*. Their existence as social and legal correlates of ideal forms allows them to proliferate in ways not available to embodied entities. The corporate backers of Taylor in *Starving Class* get caught up in this transcendent *thiasos*.[lxi] Inebriated with the abstraction of profit and surplus value, they preside over the spatial conquest of the American West. With the multiplying objects in his family plays, Shepard stages a clash of two modes of proliferation—ideal and material—and the play unfolds in the liminal boundary region between them. The gathering of a collective body through tragic sorcery counters the relentless abstraction of speculative frenzy and the psychic reduction entailed by debt.

8. Monstrous Memory and the Differential Unconscious

His psyche collapsing under the assault of speculative capitalism, Weston finally undergoes a process of trans-individuation:

> And every time I bent down to pick up somebody's clothes I could feel that person like they were right there in the room. Like the clothes were still attached to the person they belonged to. And I felt like I knew every single one of you. Every one. Like I knew you through the flesh and blood. Like our bodies were connected and we could never escape that. (186)

The richly imagistic language and the high affective charge in this passage may obscure that what Weston describes here is a set of complex systems entangled at their origins. The passage, in fact, illuminates the heart of Deleuze's view of noumenal intensities:

> Complex systems increasingly tend to interiorize their constitutive differences …the more the difference on which the system depends is interiorized in the phenomena, the more the repetition finds itself interior, the less it depends on exterior conditions which are supposed to ensure the reproduction of the 'same' differences. (*Difference* 256)

Deleuze is describing the recursive tendency of complex adaptive systems, their capacity for repetition as they draw energy and material resources from their environment. Deleuze's aim is a concept of human identity as the fullest expression of this interriorization of difference, our inner psychic life defined (at least in part) by a repetitive tendency to repeat the same, and to recede

from the new and the immanent. As Weston's identity begins to dissolve he gives voice to an underlying connectivity, as if he were a human corollary to the play's shattered kitchen door. Weston is fleeing money, fleeing form, breaching the divide between nature and culture, and in doing so he plays out the traditional role in tragic drama of the pharmakos, the dismembered tragic victim. The relationship of the financial to this process becomes clear if we consider this Deleuzian recursivity as, in Hanjo Berressem's words, an "uncoupling of culture (the plane of transcendence/ organization) from nature (the plane of consistency/composition, which is a plane of immanence/univocality)" (61). Driven by these repetitive dynamics, the arrival of metal coinage fueled the culture-nature distinction at the root of Socratic philosophy, giving rise to a new subjectivity characterized by atomized individualism. The Ayn Randian, entrepreneurial subjectivity of neoliberalism can be viewed as simply a late-phase manifestation of this same emergence.

Shepard deploys the machinery of tragic drama to counteract or commandeer the same deterritorializing frenzy also encountered by the Greek tragedians in the effects of money on their cultural milieu. He uses the stage to launch ceremonial acts of collective interriorization that seek a powerful connective (rather than separating) effect. In *Starving Class* he mobilizes our collective attention in order to subject apparent unities to an intensive pressure, under which their aura of necessity decomposes into a poignant immanence charged with open-ended, "speculative" potential. The play's complexity arises from the fact that a speculative dynamism of this kind also infuses the origins of Los Angeles, manifesting pathologically as a *frenzy* of development that runs unchecked, undermining all other human values or connectivity. This nuanced complexity means the contest between theater artist and tyrannical hegemon must take

place in the covert, aesthetic and affective modes of sorcery and counter-sorcery, rather than through direct ideological conflict.

9. The Curse as Celebrity and as Errancy

Pertaining to the removal of curses, the image of sacrifice in *Starving Class* prods us to locate the nature of the Tate family's "curse" with greater precision. One interpretation would hold the "curse" of the play to be procreation without sustenance, automatic self-reiteration without meaning or ground. Ella, about to leave with Taylor for a "for a little lunch and to discuss our business" then remarks that her daughter Emma is dealing with her first menses—"the curse," in other words (155). Emma's menses comes up again a few pages later when Weston enters with news that he, too, has found a buyer for the property. Later in the play, Shepard equates the curse of starvation with the curse of the menses, but also counters the death-curse of exchange with the emergent life force of embryo-genesis (173).[lxii] Only in a place-without-a-place, like the speculative void of L.A., could this underlying expressive nature become visible. The differential unconscious of Deleuze also announces itself through a foaming proliferation of material objects and fabulations (Kerslake 161) This active element exists in the past behind us but also in the future that "goes on and on like that without us." Taking our cues from Ella (as well as from Deleuze), we may view matter itself, in an anti-idealist fashion, as inherently monstrous—intrinsically loaded with morphogenetic, form-giving capacities.

There is also *erotic power* in this curse, Emma discovering the criminal potential of her appeal to the opposite sex: "It's the perfect self-employment. Crime. No credentials. No diplomas. No overhead. No upkeep. Just straight profit. Right off the top" (197). Emma's embrace of this becomings-prostitute criminality can be read in Foucauldian terms as her

capacity to act in opposition to the dominant modes of knowing inscribed by the asymmetric power relationships of neoliberalism. By embracing criminal errancy, Emma sheds the recursive formations of power in which her innate agency has been extracted or dominated, limiting her capacities to act on herself and others. The political relevance of Emma's errancy is itself a feature of Anthropocenic thinking. For those familiar with the details of resource depletion and living-systems collapse (Klein), our current transition is not just another "turn," but rather a fundamental shift loaded with epochal dangers. Errancy with respect to prevailing modes of behavior is urgently called for, and Emma's anarchic responsiveness has ecological value in a time when the "curse of the starving class" begins to weigh on everyone's mind. How fabulation (i.e., storytelling) and errancy relate to the neoliberal "attractor," meanwhile, becomes clearer in the work of Shepard's descendants John Steppling and Reza Abdoh.

To decipher the proliferation of objects in the family plays, we must remember, finally, Shepard's very personal relationship with the particular brand of proliferating objectification known as celebrity. A year after *Starving Class* first opened, Shepard played the romantic lead in Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven* (1978) beside Richard Gere and Brooke Adams, launching his career as a "social object," or celebrity.[lxiii] It is not insignificant that the object-proliferations in Shepard sometimes have to do with organic objects (the ears of corn in *Buried Child*, or the artichokes in *Starving Class*) and sometimes mechanical ones (e.g., Austin's toasters in *True West*). In the moment of proliferation we feel Shepard's ontology "flattening" away from anthropocentric humanism with its emphasis on unity and transcendence, and toward the connectivity and emergent forms of Deleuzian materialism, and the animism of the shamanic (DeLanda 47). The nature of celebrity within the hyper-mediated culture of late capitalism, however, also expresses the two-sided dualism of the coin, the corporatized "city of angels," the

urbanization of money and the financial as what Deleuze and Guattari called "an apparatus of capture."

Shepard's embrace of celebrity thus resonates back through the urgent becomings of his characters with an intriguing complexity. In valorizing Weston, making us care for him, Shepard, the celebrity-playwright and American icon, seeks to embrace the anomalous status of the shaman or sorcerer, neither inside nor outside, but able to maintain a position in both at once. A deadbeat like Weston is dynamically linked to the charismatic star. On the one hand, the playwright emerges as an autopoietic Dionysus in the age of rock and roll. Relaxed, immanent, powerful, the celebrity embodies an effortless plenitude, devoid of lack or shadow, that lines up with the "anything goes" nature of the stage space. But as an icon and a commodity, the celebrity also serves the status quo, reconciling us with our Oedipalized, lack-based existence within the neoliberal *episteme.* These generative oppositions have a pharmacological dimension to them, delivering toxicity or cure depending on the array of forces conditioning the underlying cultural topology. Through intentional acts of self-deterritorialization in the mode of sorcery, Shepard seeks to commandeer the distributed aura Benjamin linked to mechanical *mimesis* or reproduction. In his dark and spiky public persona, Shepard embraces a *becomings-artichoke* lifted from the proliferation of artichokes in *Starving Class*, redeeming the disgraced father; in the temple of success, failure becomes an act of defiance and a transgression. Herein lies the political dimension of his plays: reconciling success and failure, Shepard's complex celebrity-playwright identity registers ultimately as a rebellion against the reductive power of debt and exchange.

10. Politics and the Curse

The curse afflicting the Tate family has to do with how the Dionysian magic of capitalism, its capacities for producing object proliferations and profit, arrive at the expense of the relational bonds out of which family is constituted. What is *situated* about Shepard's play is the way he addresses this in the formal deployment of mimetic and ceremonial effects and in the meta-theatrical aspect of his own celebrity. Shepard's object proliferation take place along the line between these two boundary constraints--the ceremonial and he mimetic--and resonate with the theme of familial relations, and their rich ceremonial aspect, under assault by a neoliberal dynamism rooted in the force of the Dionysian. Shepard's objects entail a confrontation with the originary, speculative emptiness of Los Angeles, re-directing the energies of the bonanza toward a freedom infused with aporia and creative subjectivity. If the proliferation of objects is a "curse," there's also *difference* in these repetitions, as if the playwright sensed an opening there, a way out of the Oedipal nightmare of consumer culture, a line of flight across Deleuze's plane of immanence. This is also the *kühle Winde* of self-creation, the errant "art of living," in Foucault's terms, an art in which Shepard demonstrates gifts on par with those he brings to the making of plays. The past as a place in Beckett's *Endgame* becomes, in Shepard, kitschy icons trying to shed their own irony, fully aware of the fascistic dimension of doing so. As Malkin states it "History, through which identity is rooted in collective memory over time, is unavailable in Shepard's plays except as mediated replacement-image or parodic icon" (118). The anguish in Shepard's play can be viewed as the anguish of the victorious avant-garde, which must now shift into a new and as-yet-unrecognized mode of engagement. In a world where the gadget-makers and real estate developers have become vessels for the avant-garde project, the artist has no choice but to make himself into a commodity.

Ultimately, the proliferating objects of Shepard's plays embody not transcendence, but a release from transcendent operations and lack-based strivings—the sorcerer is arming himself and his allies to enter into combat against the proliferating zombies of Capital. The intricate transaction Benjamin locates in our encounter with the work of art suggests the kind of shift called for in our relations to objects more generally—the Dionysian proliferations of this political moment. Shepard's family plays express this nomadic structure of feeling, which only began to take concrete social form later in the Battle of Seattle and Occupy Wall Street. This affective *techne*, and the cultural attractors that support it, seeks to reclaim from money the transformative magic of mind. In the age of Sub-Commander Marcos and Occupy, revolution has arguably become a posthuman, Nietzschean affair rather than a Hegelian one, with Deleuze drawing Marx from the old camp to the new through a new "intelligent" materialism. Phenomenology, and what Quentin Meillassoux calls "correlationism" that has roots in Kant, give way to various forms of post-human ontological realism in which objects return with errant new capacities (5). The an-archism or same-otherness of the Occupier echo and subvert the phenomenological dualism of money; in the masked militants of the Zapatistas, the masked hackers of Anonymous and the faceless activists of Occupy, we catch an echo of Shepard's proliferating objects.

CHAPTER 3

Site-Specific Placement and the Techno-pharmacology of Fornés's *Mud*

Many who write about the work of playwright Maria Irene Fornés have commented with reverence about the experience of watching the productions she directed herself.[lxiv] Combining frank depictions of cruelty and violence with an odd, other-worldly charm, Fornés's direction conveys a distinct *sui generis* quality that has deflected analytic scrutiny – the exterior operates in such an exquisite fashion that one hesitates to lift the hood and look beneath.

1. Fractal Echoing

> *The set is a wooden room which sits on an earth promontory. The promontory is five feet high and covers the same periphery as the room. The wood has the color and texture of bone that has dried in the sun. It is ashen and cold.* (*Norton* 1234)

In *Mud's* opening notes, Fornés provides the reader with a vivid and precise stage picture that underscores her background as a painter,[lxv] and links her work to the image-based directorial signatures of both Samuel Beckett and Robert Wilson. Those familiar with Fornés's work as a director will recognize this visual precision as the source of the relaxed but hallucinatory clarity that characterize her staging. Objects also figure prominently in *Mud's* preliminary stage directions—an ironing board, a plate with green beans on it, an axe, etc.—as do the two doors at the back of the playing space, one leading to the blue sky SoCal exterior, and the other to a dark corridor. In performance, the role of objects and the uncanny precision of Fornés's direction gives her work a palpable aura of *discontinuity* in which the part seems subtly privileged at the

expense of the whole, as if the work were resisting the allure of unity. This reluctance to seek synthesis in an easy manner has the effect of defamiliarizing or "queering" Fornés's work in ways that illustrate how the pharmacological capacity of tragic drama relates to its technical nature.

Fornés's emphasis on discontinuity within the precise image is amplified in *Mud's* scene transitions, where the playwright specifies an explicitly photographic freeze effect that *dis-places* us in temporal terms even while the play, which was first staged by Fornés in "site-specific" mode at the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival in Claremont outside of Los Angeles in 1983, insists on its own *placement*. This emphatic placement, in turn, gains additional force from its local context—the outskirts of a city that, with its history as one extended real estate speculation, can credibly claim to be the capital of *placelessness* (Davis 23). The play enforces a kind of epochal displacement as well. With its doorway in the upstage wall, the box-like set is a rough facsimile of the Theater of Dionysus after Aeschylus added the shed-like *skênê* (Seaford 161). The play begins with two characters in a chorus-protagonist dyad, a third entering in a manner echoing Aeschylus's addition of a second autonomous character. Near the close, one of the characters, Lloyd, also fulfills the role of the *ekkyklema*, entering from offstage with a dead body in his arms. During performance, all the machinic elements of the artistic form first actualized by Aeschylus arrive in the correct sequence, as if to recapitulate the concretization of the technical object of tragic drama.

The more recent influence of Beckett can also be felt in the minimalist imagery of Fornés's text, and in its prevailing tone of mordant comedy. *Mud* takes place in a small house or hovel on a dog patch bit of farm governed by young man and woman who were raised as brother and sisters but have been lovers too. The man, Lloyd, is reconciled to his bestial condition; the

woman, Mae, longs for knowledge and the world. Pursuing language lessons in a nearby town, Mae brings a language tutor, Henry, home with her. Henry moves into the house and shares Mae's bed. He catches Lloyd stealing money from his wallet and then, while storming out of the house, Henry slips and falls disabling himself. Once again Mae is trapped, two men now dependent on her instead of only one. She packs a bag and leaves, but Lloyd shoots Mae and she dies. In these broad strokes, Fornés creates a vivid but claustrophobic world in which the symbolic and the animal vie for dominance. The play's elemental formalism clarifies the incommensurability of Beckett's situated aesthetic, and especially its implications with respect to logic and computation. The spatial *techne* of Aeschylus once again works its singular magic.

Godot's Pozzo and Lucky are echoed in the abusive dyad that forms between Henry and Lloyd, the reversal in their power dynamic after Scene 12 also echoing the shift between the two characters in *Godot*. The absent father who brought Lloyd into the house in the distant past calls to mind *Watt's* patriarch Mr. Knott, and also *Endgame's* Hamm. *Mud's* bare bones enclosure of a set is also a variant of the set of *Endgame*. And yet, while *Mud* is rooted in the *end-ness* that characterizes Beckett's play, it also takes place from within what Agamben calls the "anthropogenic event," placing *arche*— origin—as its central concern. Agamben defines this event as the moment at which man first "put his very nature at stake in language" leaping across the abyss between the unmediated, direct experience of animals, and the symbolically mediated existence of the anthropos (*Sacrament* 68). The first scene of the play establishes Mae and Lloyd as *creaturely*; they straddle the boundary between animal and man, and, as such, are ontologically meta-stable, or intensively charged. The dramatic engine of *Mud* is Mae's soulful desire to learn how to read—to internalize the grammatological object of language—a project acutely threatening to Lloyd.

This journey out of pre-individuation, and this recapitulation of tragic form, have special resonance and poignancy in L.A., a city that assembled itself out of open ranch land in the space of a human lifetime, and became a defining model of the suburbanized city, as well as a center of the global culture industry, in the second half of the 20th century (Davis 107). If "open ranch land" seems to deny the existence of the indigenous Amerindian and Latino populations of the region, the point is well taken. The visionary capitalists who so accurately measured the future monetary value of the rolling pastures of the Los Angeles basin were equally prescient in their assumption that the indigenous population would not pose any serious obstacle. The hegemonic racism implicit in their reckoning is undeniable, and is as integral a part of the story of Los Angeles as its strongly technological aspect. The capacity for abstraction, for the deterritorializing glance, is a capacity implicated in the technological prowess that made Los Angeles into a livable metropolis. This impulse toward urban individuation through spatial abstraction and speculation is the force site-specific theater engages, seeking to redirect and reverse it. Fornés's *Mud,* in its emphasis on emplacement, and in its dramatizing of its own relational construction, represents an artistic response to the contradictions of a distinctly Angeleno mode of subjectivity.

In *Mud*, Fornés's characters are gripped by individuating forces in a theatrical framework that itself recapitulates the individuation of the art form. They are placed in a semi-urban landscape that is also caught up in a process of individuation. This hallucinatory, telescoping effect only grows stronger as we widen our view and take in the immediate historical context. Produced in 1983, *Mud* coincided with the rise to cultural dominance of neoliberal political economics, the quasi-religious valorization of market-driven *laissez-faire* capitalism (Harvey 43). This era of financialization, in which Southern California figured prominently, is, in turn, a

fractal echo of the monetized cultural milieu of the Peisistratids tyranny in 6th century Athens, in response to which the tragic dramatic form first emerged (Seaford 99).

2. The Act of Placement

In *Mud's* site-specific origins we encounter a link between the faint aura of surreal dislocation mentioned earlier and the dominant characteristic of site-specific art *per se*—defined by the purely *external* act of placement*,* the site-specific work counters our tendency to attribute to art-objects a unity based on relations of *interiority*. The distinction between relations of interiority and exteriority anchors Manuel DeLanda's work on the assemblage theory of Deleuze and Guattari, and pertains also to Donna Haraway's cyborg-focused feminism. We tend to assume the various elements combining in a new emergent form *fuse together* through "relations of interiority" to form a new entity. The artist, we often hear, creates new "wholes" that add up to "more than the sum of their parts," a feat demarcating the boundary that separates the creative artist from, say, the mechanical engineer. DeLanda, however, underscores the "exteriority of relations" that make assemblages inherently decomposable, provided we possess adequate *techne*-—technical skill (*Philosophy* 185). To illustrate assemblage theory, DeLanda cites the advance of medical *techne* that now allows us to transplant hearts and kidneys from one body to another, the human body having previously seemed the very definition of the term "organic whole." By focusing us on the external relationality of art objects, the act of placement that defines site-specific work underscores the *decomposability* of objects in general.

Viewing the object as a decomposable assemblage does not undermine what Deleuze would call its *actualization*—the immanent unity on which its claim to a unique identity is based (Smith 252). Each object is both at once, in a contradictory "double articulation" arguably

complicating the basic principles of instrumental reason, such as the law of non-contradiction. Importantly, DeLanda *parameterizes* assemblages, setting the degree of territorialization off against the degree of encoding, as if they were two knobs on a console—a high degree of both settings produces a stratum. If the "territorialization" knob is set high and the "encoding" knob low, the result is an assemblage. With a setting of both absolute deterritorialization and absolute decoding, the result is the plane of immanence and the Body without Organs (*Assemblage Theory podcast*). The distinction DeLanda makes between assemblages and strata aligns well with the distinction Bryan Reynolds draws in his Transversal Poetics between becomings and comings-to-be (*Transversal Subjects* 273). Both theorists deploy a schema of parameterization in which the inherent decomposability of assemblages is arrayed against an entropic tendency to lock into stable arrangements that have the appearance, but never the reality, of new totalities. In her theater work, Fornés excelled at continuously working both knobs, delivering the subtle hallucinatory effects described above.

Overall, *Mud* itself remains insistently bi-valent in its realization as a dramatic object, involving fully rounded, aspirational characters in a coherent narrative, while also reminding us always of its own auto-poietical self-contrivance. A subtle resistance to synthesis contributes to the uncanny affects Fornés conveys in *Mud*, affects that trouble our felt-sense of secure psychic unity. Part of the appeal of the whole-is-greater-than-its-parts line of thinking, Fornés reminds us, is the enchanting quality of that residual essentialism regarding our own nature. Resigned and deadened to the desperate automatisms of Oedipalized identity, we find in the seamlessness of the classically constructed art object an affirmation of our covert longing for an innate unity or transcendent soul. Intentional discontinuities and fractures in the work of art are, conversely, often taut with challenging, pre-subjective affects linked to our fear of chaos and death, affects

such as awe and terror. Exemplary or emblematic of the independence of all objects, yet loaded with the challenging pre-subjective affects of decomposability—it is in these terms that *Mud* embodies the pharmacological aspect of art.

3. The Pharmacological Creature

A materialist account of the assemblage of tragic drama and the way it functions on a mechanical level requires immersion in process. This is simplified in the case of *Mud* because of how Fornés combines the roles of writer, director and (co)-producer into one agent, and because she has spoken publicly about the particularities of *Mud's* emergence. In a 1984 interview with Allen Frame, Fornés narrates how the play arose, under pressure of a deadline, from a trip to a flea market in Pomona. Here again, objects are central (Robinson 224). The ironing board Fornés encountered that day established the profession of her protagonist, Mae. A table and chairs from the market furnished the set, a raised, bleached-wood enclosure atop a mound of red earth. In *Mud*, these objects are precisely placed within a set that is itself a placement. The emphatic precision of this placement underscores the importance of the mechanism by which the world of Mae and Lloyd is concretized or actualized through the ironing board, the chairs, the kitchen table. The full individuation of an assemblage requires relations with objects, and especially, in the case of dramatic characters, *social* objects such as language and money. Moreover, in her Frame interview, Fornés draws attention to the way the interactions of Mae, Lloyd and Henry were *entailed by* the objects she encountered in Pomona—"The reason why [Mae]'s ironing all the time is because that ironing board was so pretty and so cheap"—an uncanny and distinctly posthuman effect (228).

The role of objects in the processes of individuation depicted in *Mud* call to mind the work of the early 20th century social theorist George Simmel. Promoting Simmel's renewed relevance to social theory, theorist Olli Pyyhtinen describes social objects as 'internal externalities' that knit the worlds of private and public to each other in inextricable ways (115). "The development of selfhood always involves 'something external to the subject itself," Pyyhtinen continues, "The cornerstone of Simmel's conception of culture is the idea that subjects could not exist as they do were it not for the creation and assimilation of objects." Simmel's Kantian presuppositions, in Pyyhtinen's view, lock him into a discourse of mastery that obscures the complexity of our object-entanglements, which have been brought to light by Bruno Latour (129). Stripped of this Kantian bias, Simmel's work on social objects becomes relevant to an investigation of the pharmacological capacity of objects in *Mud*. The social objects of language and money are two forms of poison-cure that draw Mae into the transformative processes of the tragic.

Circling around pharmacology, *Mud*, not coincidentally, also circles around money. The play's action is driven by Lloyd's illness, the diagnosis and treatment of which entail visits to the clinic, and prescriptions for medicine that are then paid for by money stolen from the newcomer, Henry. This theft leads, in turn, to Henry's calamitous fall on the stone path, his subsequent dependence on Mae, and, finally, her need to flee his toxic dependency. Mae's attempts to learn how to read are pharmacological as well, Henry's arrival drawing out of her a self-remembered knowing akin to what the Greeks called *anamnesis*. "I am not an animal," she tells Henry, "I care about things, Henry, I do. I know some things that I never learned. It's just that I don't what they are. I cannot grasp them" (1244). A Stieglerian "trans-individuation"[lxvi] is taking place out of the pre-anthropic, pre-urban, pre-individual milieu Mae shared with Lloyd before the play began.

We have the sense that Henry's presence is part of this trans-individuation, but Fornés manages to implicate us in this as well—with his curious and somewhat ghostly presence, Henry registers as a kind of quasi-divine emissary for, or surrogate of, the observing audience. *Knowing*, in *Mud*, is deeply theatrical and also deeply paradoxical. Mae comes to learn things she already knows through a becoming-other that is drawn out of her by way of her dialogue with Henry and by our watchful presence. The way she lets go of barriers to knowing has an apophatic quality akin to a Zen koan—it is a *not-doing* in which her automatic will-to-ignorance is set against an innate noetic capacity.

A close reading of object-related, pharmacological tensions in *Mud*, in turn, illuminates the cultural milieu of avant-garde theater in Los Angeles in the 1980s out of which the play emerged. As it turns out, *Mud* is an emblematic work with respect to its place and time. Part of the diaspora of Off-Off Broadway playwrights to the wilderness of Los Angeles (though she never re-located, Fornés arrived seasonally, as if by migratory instinct), Fornés contributed to the genesis of the psychosocial type of the creature we encounter in Lloyd and Mae. In their becomings-animal, Fornés's characters speak to each other from within the anthropogenic moment in which gesture—*acting*—becomes as expressive as language, and in which language is always collapsing toward the purely physical expression. Their tenuous connection to the social object of language makes Mae, Lloyd and Henry ideal pharmacological vehicles. The way these characters move back and forth between the creaturely and the human is, in turn, revealing about Los Angeles, a vast assemblage continually navigating the boundaries between the pre-urban and the urban.

In the 1980s and 90s, this anomic being, who first emerged in purest form in the work of Fornés and John Steppling,[lxvii] can be linked to Agamben's *homo sacer* and the *Musselman* of the

Nazi camps. The creature is linked to Constant Nieuwenhuys's *homo ludens* (de Zegher 3) and retains elements of the picaresque, the Shakespearean fool, as well as Falstaff and his band. Curdled by *ressentiment* and alienation, this figure arises in a new, post-Romantic manifestation as Büchner's *Woyzeck*, Dostoyevsky's Underground Man and Melville's Bartleby, as well as in Kafka's beatific Gregor Samsa. He can be felt in larval form in the nomadic authorial personae of Knut Hamsun and Henry Miller, in Céline's misanthropic Bardamu, and in Camus' Meursault. The slacker genre in L.A. also runs back to John Fante and Jack London, with Charles Bukowski adding a conspicuous pulp coda. William Burroughs then darkens this trajectory with his junkie alter-ego Bill Lee. In theater, this figure does not manifest until the 60s, as Albee's generation (*Zoo Story's* Jerry performs creatureliness) connects to Samuel Beckett's tramps and post-apocalyptic destitutes. In L.A., the milieu has minoritarian aspects in relationship to the majoritarian shift of neoliberalism.

During this era, the creature entered the cultural landscape of Los Angeles arm-in-arm with his more commercial cousin, *the slacker*. With the slacker, a being comically devoid of potential, anomie is domesticated, becoming endearing instead of apocalyptic. Defined as a happy failure, a genial scapegoat, the creaturely slacker puts a happy face on the deadbeat, the drunkard, the layabout, ignoring the imperatives of the social code. In Los Angeles, Justin Tanner's slacker comedies *Zombie Attack! (1989)*, *Pot Mom (1994)* and *The Intervention* (1995), which ran for months on end at the Cast Theatre, showed how the comic tropes of this aesthetic could work for a more-or-less mainstream audience. Edgier and more transgressive were Michael Sargent's plays such as *Big Boy (1988)* and *I Hate (1990)*. A punk, D.I.Y. ("Do It Yourself") directness characterized both these writers, applying to the spirit of the whole low-rent theater scene in Los Angeles. Sargent's 1998 production of *Steeltown* at the Actors Gang

Annex,[lxviii] featuring the porn actress Leena, played like an anthropological study in hetero-normative mating rituals as Robert Mapplethorpe might have conducted it. Marlane Meyers's *Etta Jenks* (1990) is among the most successful of these slacker plays, traveling to Playwrights Horizons in New York. Kelly Stuart, a close ally and former housemate of Steppling's, wrote in a similar vein of sun-blasted SoCal anomie and transgressive creatureliness. Like Meyers, Stuart has also been embraced by New York audiences, her *Demonology* (1996) transitioning to Playwrights, with Marisa Tomei in the lead. By the end of the 1990s, the slacker genre had reached a kind of minoritarian mainstream, with the Coen Brothers' *The Big Lebowski* (1998) completing the pop culture valorization of the inarticulate, creaturely slacker that had begun, arguably, with Sean Penn's iconic creation, Jeff Spicoli, in Amy Heckerling's *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982).

In the 1980s and 1990s this downbeat pharmacological aesthetic anchored a cultural apparatus that plugged workshop programs run by the Mark Taper Forum and the Audrey Skirball Kenis center into the city's galaxy of Equity Waiver venues, including The Cast, Theatre-Theater, The Lost Studio, the string of 99-seat theaters along Theatre Row on Santa Monica Boulevard, and myriad other venues. Playwrights Lynn Manning, Luis Alfaro and Eduardo Machado were active in this milieu as well, each of them directly influenced by Fornés through the playwriting workshops she held annually in Los Angeles up through the 1990s. To cite just one example, Fornés's influence at Highways in Santa Monica, one of the region's most important theater venues and a national center for queer theater, was deep and enduring, offering a crucial West Coast platform for transgressive artists such as John Fleck and Karen Finley of the NEA Four. In her roles as director and teacher, Fornés helped to validate a quasi-punk, D.I.Y. rejection of the professionalization swamping American theater elsewhere. There were other

strategies of resistance to the cultural onslaught of neoliberalism, but Fornés played a role in defining a dominant, L.A.-based mode.

4. Placement and the Language Object

The localism of *Mud's* origin—its placement in the pre-urban landscape of Claremont in 1983—relates directly to the *creatureliness* of its characters, their pre-individuated condition. Mae and Lloyd are over-full of un-actualized capacity, and since the capacities of an object in Deleuze are actualized in relation to other objects, this also suggest they exist in a state of hyper-relationality with the set pieces and props in this ramshackle, box-like room. In dramatic terms the result is a kind of *tautness*, a gripping, urgent quality that registers as an intensive charge, drawing our affective awareness out of us as through differential pressure. The placement of this site-specific art object inaugurates what Deleuze would call an intensive spatial difference with its surroundings, and in so doing drives a relational process, a mutual becoming or affective transduction. Part of the sophistication of Fornés's play resides in the way she draws this issue of placement down also into the grammatological object called language.

The use of the language lesson in Scene 6 of *Mud* revisits a motif that appeared also in Fornés's *The Danube (1982)*. In both plays the found grammatological object of the pre-recorded language lesson underscores the playwright's minoritarian engagement with English, the language of Capital. As a writer, Fornés engages with this second language, we sense, in a mode similar to Beckett's engagement with French—to problematize the seamless grip of the complex technical object of language, to which both writers draw our attention. Mae's quasi-erotic engagement with the project of language acquisition is fraught with danger, haunted by the becomings-animal of the marine fauna who appear in her audio lessons. Animals in *Mud* arrive

via these machinic, pedagogical voiceovers in a disorienting cyborg move that collides their pre-linguistic being with the semantic and the technological. As the lights rise in *Scene 6*, Mae carefully enunciates this text, repeating the calm voice of the recording. This ghostly intruder from a different time and place invokes the starfish, cataloguing facts about its morphology, its life cycle, its mode of vision. This is an act of sorcery; a sinister possession is taking place through the voice of the master discourse. Lloyd, bewildered and anxious, looks on, a pale, bent figure. The effect is jarring and uncanny, and the content of the lesson, combining the vulnerability and impersonal viciousness of animal behavior, only amplifies the disquieting affect. Processes are in motion that we, like Fornés's characters, interpret at our peril. The lesson about the hermit crab, for example, is an invitation to interpret metaphorically—Henry is the hermit crab, we think, stealing a new shell as he moves into Mae and Lloyd's home. The analogy hangs in the air, crossing the barrier between stage and audience. It would be reductive and an error, however, to attribute this reading of the play to Fornés.

By placing the technical object of the language lesson into the set, Fornés changes everything in the world of the play. Driven by her newly-awakened sense of her own potential, Mae runs directly into the imperatives of official pedagogy, the encodings of language. Our own affective entanglements with the unfolding events on stage are complicated suddenly by hints of powerful, machinic forces that had not announced themselves previously. The centers of power and knowledge that had been situated comfortably off-stage have suddenly arrived in all their potency, and our own position with respect to the drama seems suddenly fraught with danger. Fornés, the playwright, has placed the language lesson about the starfish into the set of the play, which, again, is also a placement. The fractal quality of these nested emplacements is part of the pleasure of the play; it is linked also to *Mud's* capacity to invoke a quiet terror. Trapped by the

tendrils of power she has internalized, Mae too in the end is reduced to the status of an object, inert, devoid of life—a corpse-object—that implicates us in disturbing ways.

Lloyd and Mae's creatureliness is a quality shared with Fornés's characters across the board, not as pre-cultural, Romantic ideals of natural man, but as the "initial conditions" of emergent proto-cyborgs. This is what makes her plays post-human *avant la lettre*, even to the frustration of some feminists. Despite the ease with which one could view Lloyd and Henry as different forms of the male oppressor, for example, Fornés steadfastly refused to endorse views of Mae as a victim. In Fornés's view, *Mud* is feminist precisely because it centers around a character—in this case a woman—whose mind is beginning to open, "and she begins to feel obsessed with it, and she would do anything in the world to find the light" (Robinson 227). Mae's desire is engaged in the effort to emerge from the pre-linguistic, and yet this effort is *framed* in crucial respects by the set, the placement, the site. In seeking to escape her creaturely origins and enact her potentiality, Mae is acting out a commandment that is equally entrapping and recursive.

As Agamben delineates, *arche* has a split meaning in Greek, denoting *origin* but also *commandment*. An emergent social form "commands" compliance through the passive agency of affordance—how the form of the doorknob requires us to open the door in a certain way and no other. In Agamben's view, the deconstructive project calls for a dual-strata approach in which the two meanings of *arche—arche* as origin and *arche* as commandment—are engaged simultaneously. He associates *arche* as pure origin with the deconstructive agenda of Reiner Schürmann, for whom the anarchistic gesture is to "neutralize commandment" through a pure "coming to presence with no history" (*Archeology* 46:40). Derrida, on the other hand, attempts to neutralize origin through a democratic gesture involving the pure commandment: interpret!

Deconstruct! (48:29). While the localism of truth claims in Fornés's work places her in Schürmann's anarchist camp, Mae's susceptibility to the imperatives of the language lesson suggests that Fornés also leans in the direction of Derrida. Her mind opens to the lure of depth, a new semiotic temporality propelling her toward transcendental pursuits. It is through this will to individuate that Mae is, finally, entrapped; in *Mud*, the object-animal in man vies against the individuating, anthropic impulse. Very much in the mode of Beckettian *bêtise*, Fornés straddles the line between affect and the symbolic, in an act of situated defiance of neoliberalism and the abstracting, binary force of financialization.

5. Fluid Space and Configurational Variance

In terms of its *arche*, *Mud* arose, as mentioned, as an assemblage involving: a site within Los Angeles, a preliminary scene establishing two of the play's three characters, a cast of actors and a visit, on deadline, to a flea market. This assemblage strongly resembles a network of actants, in Bruno Latour's terminology—combining "people able to talk and things unable to talk" (83). Such networks raise the spatial question of how network space pertains to Euclidian space. Fornés's characters, moreover, inhabit what DeLanda has called a "flat ontology" in which their own being has the same ontological status as the objects—chairs, ironing boards, guns, books—with which they interact in intensive and affective relations. Fornés, finally, is not simply a playwright—she is writing as a playwright-director, and the gestural dignity she accorded her characters as they inhabit and activate the stage space in performance is crucial to the meaning of her work as a writer. The gestural precision of Fornés's directing style amplifies this flat aspect; she grants the finger wetted to turn the page the same weight as an entrance or a speech act.

The issue of spatiality is also central to the propagation of theater pieces, a process drastically complicated by the local placement of site-specific work. The re-mounting of plays resembles the repetition of experiments in scientific method that Latour and Actant Network Theory (ANT) have problematized. The simple Euclidean space of Newton is augmented, in Latour's analysis, by "network space" in which the "network object" of a scientific experiment holds its configuration together through the work of "immutable mobiles" analogous to a play text that can be re-mounted anywhere and at any time (227). Theatre, as an artistic practice that depends on re-stagings, has clear affinities to the 'network space' of ANT, a topology that remains immutable over time and in a variety of local contexts. It would be tempting to say that in *Mud* Fornés produced a template that was then reproduced in different contexts. The network spatial form, however, has been challenged by technoscience theorists—John Law and Annemarie Mol, for instance—in ways that are relevant to the stakes in Fornés's act of placing *Mud* as she does (613). We follow their example when we ask, about a 1991 production of *Mud* at the Milwaukee Rep: what is the *spatial* relationship between this production and the original 1983 production mounted in Claremont under the direction of the playwright?

Those who worked with Fornés, or observed her directing actors in rehearsals, will testify to the magical precision of her entirely idiosyncratic methods.[lxix] The relaxed but exacting attentiveness characterizing Fornés's rehearsal room, in which the actors tune in to an entirely singular vision linked to the feeling-tone of the text, infuses both dialogue and stage description. The second scene of *Mud*, for instance, begins with Mae and Lloyd alone on this set discussing his ill health. After an exchange of insults and imprecations, Mae tells Lloyd that her friend (and future lover) Henry has arrived to decipher the medicinal pamphlet given to her by the local clinic. The passage reads:

[*She opens the door and walks to the left of the center chair*.] ‘ Come in, Henry.’

“[*HENRY enters, and stands by the fireplace. He places his left hand on the mantelpiece*.] (1239)

With great economy—the *placement* of a hand on a mantelpiece—a life springs into view. In full immanence, Henry has arrived. But why the left hand? Why the mantelpiece? Or, more to the point, why would this specific gesture elicit trust and expressive compliance in the actor, rather than resentment and rebellion? Furthermore, how could this direction work if delivered by anyone but Fornés? Fornés’s emphatic precision only underscores the singularity of her staging: out of the profuse and chaotic set of all possible gestures, she selects this specific one, as if through a dramaturgical version of Simondon’s process of transduction[lxx], by which techne actualizes itself through the human. It would be quite challenging for a director other than Fornés to duplicate this directorial act, let alone replicate such highly mutable and determinant factors as the specific exterior milieu in which the play was mounted, or the unique physicalities of the specific actors Fornés collaborated with during the play’s initial concretization.

These issues, along with Fornés’s object-centered, “flat” dramaturgical *techne,* point toward what Law and Mol call “fluid space” in their “*Situating Technoscience: an Inquiry into Spacialities.*” To discuss this “fluid space” of network objects in technoscience, Law and Mol use an invention called the “Zimbabwe bush pump” (613). In high contrast to the universalism of the vacuum pump anchoring Latour’s analysis in *We Have Never Been Modern*, the bush pump is a simple device that can be radically reconfigured in different local contexts. Deployed throughout villages in Africa, the bush pump functions with a “configurational variance”

analogous to how play texts are reconfigured every time they are mounted in a new context or by a new director (613). Law and Mol's exploration of the situational aspect of science runs parallel to the *placement* of the site-specific play.

The singular results of Fornés's directorial style heighten the emphasis Law and Mol place on the inevitable local variants of the bush pump, whose differential nature as a spatial construct cannot be minimized or wished away for the sake of theoretical convenience. Specific versions of the bush pump are not particular expressions of some general form unfolding in Euclidean space. Each iteration remains stubbornly independent, yet also connected to all others through a particularly adaptive kind of shape invariance—each is a new object unfolding in a fluid space all its own. This deterritorialized space includes the material elements, and also the other local actants—well-shaft, townspeople, water table, etc. In Law and Moll's view it is "continuity [that] precisely demands gradual change: a world…in which the attempt to hold relations constant is likely to erode continuity. To lead to death" (614). With her production of her performative text *Mud*, Fornés created a bush pump-like "fluid object," one that will be adapted by subsequent actants within a variety of Euclidian and network spaces. And, once again, the assemblage aspect of Los Angeles echoes and informs this articulation.

6. The Originary Placement of Tragic Drama

While applying the bush pump analogy to Fornés's *Mud* helps explain the play's initial placement in Claremont, it also directs us backwards in time toward the origins of tragic drama. Combining doors, implements of violence, a male-female relationship troubled by old grievances, the premonition of sacrifice (i.e., pigs plus axe), money, and a murdered sovereign in a single technical object, *Mud* is itself a local variant of the spatio-temporal, dramaturgical bush

pump apparatus first devised by Aeschylus in *Agammemnon*. In Aeschylus we see what Simondon would call the *individuation*[lxxi] of a cultural apparatus or machine that came to be called tragic drama, a "technical object" that has adapted itself in a multitude of ways, propagating through fluid space up through Fornés and Sarah Kane, concretizing out of the "pre-individuated" milieu of Dionysian ceremony. Fornés's box-like set speaks to the conditions of its site and also reiterates Aeschylus' placement of the *skênê* on the stage at Theater of Dionysus in Athens.

To engage as a contemporary artist with the work of Aeschylus is to grapple again with the two meanings of *arche*—origin and commandment—as embodied in the affordances of dramatic *techne*. The playwright, director or performer who takes up this work encounters a technical object linked in fluid space to Aeschylus's initial staging. The result is a multivalent assemblage designed to drive a differential process of tragic becoming, drawing the audience into a unified host or *demos* inhabiting the fluid space of the city. This view of the originary technical dimension of tragic drama only enhances critical assessments that explore the technological innovations of the intermedial and postdramatic theater of Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman and the Wooster Group: tragic drama has *always been* a cyborg operation. Indeed, cyborg-ism, together with becomings-animal, can usefully be construed as the defining features of tragic drama. By becomings-cyborg, postdramatic theater (Lehmann) today is simply making explicit a machinic dimension the tragic form has already implicitly embodied.

Intriguingly, this mechanization of presence-absence can be seen as already latent in the mask work of pre-tragic Dionysian ritual performance, as a virtual capacity waiting to be actualized. "The precise meaning of *mimeisthai*, to imitate," writes Jean-Pierre Vernant, "is to simulate the presence of one who is absent" (243)—yet not completely absent; rather, the Greek

myths comprise what Simondon would call a *milieu*, a pre-existing set of virtual personages the tragedians concretize through a process of transduction that resulted in the tragic object. The ancient hero was "no longer put forward as a model, as he used to be in epic and lyric poetry," writes Vernant, "Now he has become a problem" (242). The statement immediately triggers a question: what is it that transformed the hero from a model into a problem? "Human beings and human actions," notes Vernant, came to be seen in Greek tragedy "not as realities to be pinned down and defined in their essential qualities, in the manner of the philosophers of the succeeding century, but as problems that defy resolution, riddles with double meanings that are never fully decoded." To define this shift in terms of simple *mimesis* or "imitation" is already a political framing, casting unity and multiplicity as a binary opposition, and then expressing a preference for unity. If the creaturely engagements of *Mud* trouble this opposition and this preference, so did *Agammemnon*.

7. Doors and Money

In what way could the outskirts of Los Angeles in the 1980s reasonably be seen to recapitulate 5th century Athens? Recent anthropology (e.g. the work of Seaford and Wiles) suggests that the answer to this question is the arrival of metal coinage in Lydia and, soon after, in Greece itself, in the 6th century (Graeber 225–227). This transformative social object drastically amplified the tendency of human beings to individuate, giving rise to social pathologies such as tyranny, extreme social stratification and militarization, as well as to restless and innovative technical dynamism. This development was linked from the beginning to politics and, because money operates on affective as well as cognitive levels, registers as a version of

"political sorcery" (Pignarre and Stengers). Georg Simmel, in turn, views the two-sided nature of coinage as a materialization of the two-sided relationality of the door.

> …the acts of separating and connecting are but two sides of the same act' (GSG 12, p. 57). Because of the possibility of its being closed, the door marks off a limited and finite space. It brings order out of and into the openness of chaos, and this protects us from the chaos gaping wide. (118)

And, a few pages later: "As money is relationality reified, nothing in it is immediate. It is all about mediation" (120).

The mediating aspect of money relates to the technical object of the *skênê*, which placed a door at the center of the Classical stage. Wiles describes the *skênê* as analogous to the dramatic character, "a mask with nothing behind it" (169). And just as *Mud* dramatizes Fornés's act of placing her bare-bones set on a mound of earth in Claremont, and then populating it with objects from a thrift store, Wiles views the *skênê* as "the protagonist" of *Agamemnon* (168), with its own voice, its own capacity for shedding blood, and its own "material and animate identity" (169). Both plays, from this point of view, suggest an elusive but crucial link between the material form of the theatrical set and the immaterial form of money. Wiles underscores this point when he connects the experience of the Greek spectator watching a familiar myth unfolding in tragic form to Derridian *différance* "in the manner of its retelling, the way it differentiates itself from other tellings" (209). Wiles also supports Vernant's idea that tragic drama played a role in the creation of the bi-valent democratic sensibility in Athens. Tragedy, as a historical phenomenon, he writes, "is tied to the moment when Athenians could make sense of the world in terms both of heroic

myth and democratic politics" (209). Wiles' work suggests that the purpose of the tragic apparatus was the computation of new structures of feeling to be actualized through new psycho-social types—e.g., the Athenian citizen, the Elizabethan self-innovator, and, more recently, the Beckettian SoCal creatures on stage in *Mud*.

Seaford's historical analysis of coinage is equally suggestive with respect to the emergence of that fundamental symbol system—language—an event figuring prominently in *Mud*. We have no direct access, obviously, to Agamben's anthropogenic event. It is intriguing to consider, however, that certain important features of this boundary-crossing may be discerned in the later emergence of coinage, and in its cultural ramifications. "Significance, value, enduring essence, and power," Seaford writes, "all tend to be gathered into a transcendent signifier and universal equivalent, money, with the result that personal power is not extended into objects such as seals (or indeed gifts) but consists of possession of the universal impersonal power of money." He notes that this self-containment tends to enhance the boundary "between the autonomous self and the impersonal world" and that this self-containment also amplifies "the distinction between the sign or symbol and its referent." The link to the technology of language becomes explicit:

> One such sign is that other transcendent signifier and universal equivalent, the word. Analogous to the centralization of value in money is the gathering of signification into language, which also locates it within the subject as producer of language. (294)

Both coins and words are two-sided, like doors. A coin can be either heads or tails; a word, sound or sense. In the age of neoliberal financialization, this either/or quality plays a

fundamental role as logic gate—the binary open-closed action at the root of Turing machine algorithms and the binary code of computer software.

Among other things, we locate an opposition here between the lingering Hegelian idealism of Lacan, in which the infant's first encounter with the symbolic domain entails a permanent capture, and the more spacious post-humanist "intelligent materialism" of Deleuze. Deleuze's new materialism suggests that far from foreclosing liberation, the symbolic system of language is as inherently decomposable as any assemblage, provided we deploy adequate *techne*. The possible nature of this kind of deconstructive pharmacological *techne*—challenging in the ways it engages with the fundamental processes of individuation—needs to be addressed separately. Tragic drama, in the meantime, can be viewed as a cultural mutation that quickly evolved in a non-linear and emergent way, producing unforeseen effects, hybrid forms and disjunctions. Were one given to reckless hyperbole, one might describe Aeschylus as a rogue cultural epi-geneticist, releasing into the rich social milieu of Classical Athens a super-active technical object that gave rise to the pharmacological arts (defined to include technology) and their reactive twin: the Western metaphysics of presence. The "object" being decoded was the new social form of the tyrant, a source of threatening social "invariance" itself recently energized by the arrival of money.

8. The Logic Gate of Tragic Drama

The Aeschylean *skênê* created a unique topological formation—an *outside* positioned *inside* the theatrical space. The *skênê*, it might be said, *presents an absence*, allows an absence to be present in the stage space. An information theory perspective suggests that, in his tragedies, Aeschylus created an archaic, psycho-affective computational software to run on the newly

reconfigured spatial hardware of the stage. The crucial feature was his placement of the *skênê* with its central door, its "anti-logic gate," opening into the exterior-interior to reveal the murdered hero. The binary of the *skênê* doors—open or closed—resonates with the poison-cure binarism of the pharmakon in a way that undermines the metaphysics of presence. The tragic stage space, with its present-absent offstage element behind the doors, also inherently challenges the law of non-contradiction on which Aristotelian logic is based; on the tragic stage, Agamemnon is, in a way, both mortal and immortal, complicating the classic Aristotelian syllogism with respect to Socrates. It is as if Aeschylean tragedy contains a culturally dynamic *logic of contradiction* Aristotle sought to commandeer, repurposing it to serve unity rather than multiplicity. In his keynote address at the Society of Literature Science and the Arts in 2013, postnatural theorist Timothy Morton stated that "logic is the drill-bit of metaphysics" (35:43). The phrase adds weight to Simondon's call for the development of a "theory of being as it exists previous to any logic" (*Genesis* 317). Simondon goes on to table the startling notion that "if many types of individuation existed, similarly there ought to be many types of logic, each one corresponding to a definite type of individuation." If Morton's drill-bit analogy is correct, Aeschylus seems to have anticipated the dynamic of instrumental reason that lay dormant within the metaphysics of presence, and the arrival of metal coinage as "currency."

The stakes are high on the Aeschylean stage: a de-individuation is taking place. Tyrannical sovereignty is being de-computed. The coinage-driven "logic of sense" that delivers unity is being problematized and then challenged by a "logic of sensation" in which pre-subjective affects claim their primacy over cognition and ratiocination. The Aristotelian law of identity is being pre-empted in a becomings-collective through an amplification of "awe, pity and terror." The placement of the *skênê* on the tragic stage loops negentropy and entropy into a

single pharmacological circuit, delivering the potent *demos* of 5th century Athens. The capacity to intensify and de-individuate is being celebrated in Aeschylus at the expense of the asymmetric power of the tyrant. Through the power of *techne,* Aeschylus actualizes the capacity of the art form to reconcile inside and outside, presence and absence. In *Agamemnon*, what comes in from offstage is not just the sacrificial body of the tyrant, but also the *machine*; the technical and the sacrificial objects in conjunction with each other. These emphatically "technical" objects are an integral part of how the larger dramatic "object" (i.e., *Agamemnon*) in which they are deployed operates. Lloyd in *Mud* becomes machinic in a similar way through the automatism of his murderous, limbic-brain response to Mae's final departure.

In the fluid space *Mud* shares with *Agamemnon*, the act of placement creates what Deleuze would call an affective differential, giving rise to a transformative psycho-social flow or process. The act of placement on the stage *deterritorializes* both the site and the object placed. The tragic drama runs on this disarticulatory energy instantiating or "computing" groundlessness and contradiction, including the pharmacological "middle" whose exclusion is the cornerstone of Aristotelian logic. In *Mud,* money is announced in the first scene as an object-other alongside language, destabilizing Mae and Lloyd's binary relationship. Three coins are cited (to comic effect) early on by Lloyd as evidence of his mastery of symbolic systems of exchange that also include language, which is the force that will displace him. "This is money. It's mine. It's three nickels. I'm Lloyd. That's arithmetic" (1236). Henry's mastery, in turn, is the erotic fascination he evokes in Mae, who is explicit in her desire to escape from her quasi-animalistic, creaturely existence. Later, money is the object that mediates these relationships, Lloyd stealing from Henry as a kind of "rent" for his bed (attempting, essentially, to pimp Mae). Henry then

retaliates by stealing from Mae, and the theft precipitates her departure and her death. The killing that ends the play underscores the final role death plays in the mediation of objects and relations.

9. Fluid, Yes, But Even More so Fire Space

Halfway through their analysis, Law and Mol shift from using fluidity as a spatial metaphor and embrace instead the imagery of fire. Citing Bachelard, they "call for attending to discontinuous transformation as a flickering relation between presence and absence" (615). "Fire," they write,

> is a metaphor for thinking about the dependence of that which cannot be made present – that which is absent – on that which is indeed present. Or as the poststructuralist literatures sometimes put it, the way in which the authority of presence depends on the alterity of Otherness. (615)

Artaud would smile in assent at this passage, because of the light it casts on the basic nature of performance, and so would Fornés. The furious alternation in Grotowski's *via negativa* between "back to the source" and "on to the end" is a similar kind of flickering in fire space (Schechner and Wolford 157). Such flickering also characterizes the metaphysics of presence (absence) and the antinomy of place and space, and these flickering forms are what drive the catalytic engine of Western technical development. Tragic theater conveys, in the shadows so to speak, an alternative realist ontology of *contradiction* rather than non-contradiction. We find here traces of Bernard Stiegler's working through of the relationship between noetic autonomy and reactive automatism,[lxxii] a relationship that Mae and Lloyd come to embody.

Law and Mol focus on the engineering problem of "gust response" in aerodynamics, and how aircraft designers defined the relations between a set of terms that, in flat-ontology style, included the "lift curve slope" of aircraft wings, the weight of the aircraft and also the susceptibility to nausea of human pilots (616). The human pilot in this problem stands in for the localized particulars that flicker along with universal law in the unique "space of fire" of techno-science. Law and Mol use the image of the vomiting pilot to bring home the stubborn particularity of the human body, and its furious conjunction with the abstract aspect of technological design, creating a fire dance of presence and absence. And the image of their vomiting pilot directs our gaze toward *Mud's* neo-tragic stage where this same flickering of presence and absence resides at the heart of theatrical performance. The audience looks across the liminal boundary of Fornés's stage at figures who, as they embody the abstraction of her text, flicker between particular human and performative character.

Law and Mol's fire space finds a concrete theatrical correlate in tragic drama, a flickering that begins when Aeschylus placed the *skênê* on the classical stage and opened a door in it, transforming the space of the stage from a site of ceremony ritual into a mutable fire-space of *mimesis* and otherness. Just as Fornés' problematizes Mae's efforts to shed the affective multiplicity of the pre-anthropic, so too did Aeschylus problematize the seamless unity of the Homeric figures that buttressed the confining forms of social hierarchy. The decomposability of the human psychic object is what Simondon describes as "forgotten" when Socrates later invents humanism as "a doctrine according to which man is a reality that is not comparable whatsoever to any other found in nature" (*Two Lessons* 37). The impulse to make this assertion, and then to buttress it in the conceptual armatures of idealism and empiricism, lends credibility to those who, like Seaford, look to tragic drama for the first split between being and seeming (291).

10. Lava Space

As a network object, theater inhabits a *fluid* space; concretizing the presence-absence of performance, theater also inhabits a space of *fire*. When theater is tragic—i.e. pharmacological in the way that *Mud* is—both spaces combine in a kind of lava-like amalgam. Mae and Lloyd are loaded with differential capacities, and this differential drives lava-space processes that are mediated by the symbolic objects of language and money. Mae's engagement with culture—language lessons, the clinic, lectures from Henry—are individuating but also, ultimately, tragic. George Simmel anchors his view of a tragic dimension inherent to culture in this "subjective spirit and objective formation," (*Philosophy of Money*, 35) the hinge across which the Classical stage is constructed. The individuation of objects conceals the panpsychism hinted at by Mae's *anamnesis*, her awakening to *things she already knows*. Her error, if it can be called that, is the conviction that the erotic knowing she experiences is located in *Henry's* mind.

In Pyyhtinen's account of money as a Simmelian object we encounter again terms associated with tragic drama:

> To the basic unit of economy, the exchange of sacrifices between two subjects, money presents a third…By mediating subjective valuations and providing the exchange parties an objective measure of value, money forces subjective value through a metamorphosis: via money, value becomes an objective 'social fact'. Exchangeability becomes reified in money. (120)

In Simmel's social theory, triads are metastable or intensively charged, meaning they generate individuation processes (as Simondon would call them) or becomings (as Deleuze would call them). When the two members of a dyad enter into a financial transaction, a triad is formed; the two members of the dyad are joined by the virtual absent-presence of the financial Other, i.e. money. It is in this shift from dyad to triad that tragic drama echoes the emergence of metal coinage. From *Agamemnon* forward, the tragic form requires the arrival of a new presence joining chorus and hero; in *Mud* it is Henry who arrives, as if Lloyd's three coins had to be materialized in a human triad. In psychological terms, one member of a triad is always threatened with a possible loss of individuation, a collapse from a subjectivity to a mere object of the remaining, fully individuated dyad. This third member becomes a present-absence, a pharmakos or sacrificial victim and, potentially, the kind of scapegoat Mae becomes. From the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari, this particular kind of triangulation is the Oedipal nightmare, a capture to be avoided by embracing the "witch's flight" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* 41) of the anomalous.

On stage it is a case of musical chairs—the metastability of the triad means that somebody's got to go. In *Mud*, it is Lloyd who initially occupies the scapegoat position. Replaced in Mae's bed, and unable to hold his own against the potent Henry, he cowers, afraid for his life. With Henry's fall after Scene 11, however, the unstable tensions of the triadic relationship re-assert themselves (1247). It is finally Mae who occupies the role of the excluded middle, Henry and Lloyd bonding over their mutual dependence on the fruits of her labor. As mentioned earlier, money in the play mediates these negotiations—Lloyd's three coins, the money he steals from Henry to pay for his medicine, the money Mae earns with her ironing, and,

finally, Henry's act of thievery. On a subtle level, the play conveys the chilling idea that the Aristotelian law of non-contradiction was drafted by the daemon of money.

To say tragic drama emerged in response to the arrival of money is, in Simmelian terms, to suggest it arose in response to the sudden radical increase in energy flowing within the circuit of the triad, with money a virtual "other" haunting every social transaction. Ceremonial ritual was no longer sufficient, and the polis had to respond with a cultural innovation: tragic drama. The anti-logic gate of the *skênê* seeks to reverse the effects of exchange—the triad relation—spatializing the construct of the alienating, destabilizing third to include the audience (i.e. the *demos*), inoculating it against the triangulation of tyrant and money. The triad of tragic drama is nested within the surrounding triad of text, performance and audience, and the corresponding *spatial* triad of offstage, stage and house. As noted earlier, Seaford locates an echo here of what took place at the anthropogenic event—the symbolic Other of language mediating all social relations, delivering radical increase in power and hierarchy at the cost of the "free" play of instinct.

11. A Flickering in the Shadows

In *Mud*, Fornés actualizes a potent challenge to the monetary valorization at the heart of the panoptic neoliberal episteme, which recapitulates some of the signature dynamics of Greece immediately after the Peisistratids tyranny when Aeschylus began to mount his plays. *Mud* could only have happened in L.A., and at a certain time—the aftermath of the 1960s when a diaspora brought a significant portion of the Off-Off Broadway counterculture to Los Angeles, a hotbed of neoliberal corporatism, where it collided in interesting ways with the machine of cultural production called Hollywood. The photographic freeze frames Fornés uses to close each scene of

Mud speaks to the encounter between the Off-Off Broadway poet's sensibility and the cinematic aesthetic of Hollywood, a diachronic collision of what Stiegler calls "tertiary retentions"[lxxiii] across two and a half millennia. In its persistence across time, the tragic bush pump becomes crucially different from, if not an antidote to, the aggressive, transindividuating process of *adoption* Stiegler has theorized extensively about in the context of Hollywood (*Technics and Time I,* 79). It is no coincidence that site-specific L.A. theater, viewed as a late 20th century iteration of the enduring bush pump form, coincided with the shift in American cinema toward Aristotelian effects—the formulaic blockbuster that arrived with Lucas and Spielberg, and that has emerged in the current reign of Marvel Comic book movies. Tragic irony has always been a response to the imminent fascism of the exceptional hero. In the modern blockbuster, it is as if the culture were producing a postwar American version of the Homeric figures valorized by Peisistratos in the tyranny of the 6th century. And alongside the blockbuster, we find in L.A.'s situated theater of the 1980s another echo, Beckettian and neo-tragic, of the Aeschylean response. A Stieglerian *politics of memory* unfolds in this context, contemporary Beckettian theater countering the tertiary retentions of global tele-technology, which are consuming every last moment of our "free" time, and obviating our capacities for care.

Law and Mol suggest how the embodied human retains a position on the cultural scene of late-phase neoliberal capitalism as a vestigial presence-absence within the abstract realms of technology and engineering. This line of thinking again points toward Stiegler, this time in the context of noetic autonomy. The trans-individuation of the creature, and the collective becomings-animal, represent the promise in every noetic bond, offering a collective experience of the kind of presence delivered by tragic dramas in the moment of catharsis. Simondon's thesis in *The Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*—that we have been unable to relate in any

balanced way with our machines, either valorizing them as a source of salvation, or vilifying them as demonic—recommends a reevaluation of the familiar role played by tragic drama machinery in the disowning of our own automatisms (1). The chief source of our recoil from the machine is its obvious decomposability, its Dionysian aspect. We love its object-ness but, again, don't want to look beneath the hood. Like the site-specific work of art, money everywhere underscores the decomposability of assemblages, but this has to be covered up continually by ideologies of unity—we simply cannot bear the assemblage-aspect of our nature.

Allowed to run rampant in the shadows, the flickering oppositions of fire space can be found virtually everywhere in the developed world. As a theatrical text and as a directorial staging, Fornés's *Mud* suggests that the city of Los Angeles, with its flagrant transparency, its cultural exhibitionism, is a good place to study this phenomenon. The dual boundary constraints of the 99-Seat Contract and the Powell memo elicited from Fornés the anti-entreprenuerial subjectivity of the creature and the spatial computation of contradiction that counter the hegemony of the symbolic. *Apparatus* in Fornés becomes performative in ways that arrange the animal and the machinic aspects of theater into productive opposition, and that problematize the assumptions undergirding the regime of logic and *episteme*. Fornés's unique approach to directing her plays illuminates the nature of this city-theater apparatus, and suggests how it embodies an opposition to the false winners-losers binary at the heart of neoliberalism.

CHAPTER 4

Pinocchio L.A.: the Mechanization of Absence

in *Storyland* by John Steppling

1. The Rise of Techne in "Do It Yourself" (D.I.Y.)

Launching their creative careers at the beginning of the 1960s era of revolutionary idealism, Shepard and Fornés reached their peak in the late 1970s, as the cultural mood within the counterculture began to shift toward the defiant aggressiveness and nihilistic tribalism of punk. During this same time radical and progressive critique in political philosophy had become increasingly disillusioned with the totalitarian aspects of state socialism and was abandoned teleology and *episteme* in favor of the embodied knowing of *techne,* and the poststructuralist terrain Deleuze and Guattari would then explore. Assemblage theory lies right next door to the "Do It Yourself" (D.I.Y.) punk aesthetic, both privileging of *techne* over the categorical imperatives and reified generalities of *episteme*. The Off-Off Broadway theater artists—Mednick, Glaudini, Lee Kissman, O-Lan Jones, Kathleen Cramer and many others—who migrated from the Lower East Side of Manhattan to Los Angeles in the mid-seventies found in Southern California the means to continue their creative evolution through a similar embrace of *techne* over *episteme*, working with the materials at hand. Enabled by the scrambled egg topology of Los Angeles, and by the abundance of acting talent in the region a unique city-theater coupling arose. In Los Angeles, playwright-directors John Steppling and Reza Abdoh emblematized the next generation of Beckettian theater artists, indicating how the situated aesthetic would adaptively respond to the growing assault of neoliberal capitalism during the Reagan era.

What has evaporated in Steppling and Abdoh is the lingering sense in Shepard that a clear dramatic representation of dynamics at work in the culture might yield beneficial effects. The collective mood has darkened. In L.A. artistic circles, the Reagan years were the Beyond Baroque era, when the novelist Benjamin Weisman took over the institution from Dennis Cooper (1983), who had had moved his seminal journal *Little Ceasar* to New York City and was establishing a place on the national stage (Cooper). Featuring also Amy Gerstler and the visual artist Mike Kelley, this "no wave" movement was so anti-establishment that it didn't even want to register as a movement. Linked to CalArts, this singular anti-movement sought the eradication of ideology in ways Foucault and Deleuze would have understood. The arrival of a deconstructive, punk edge in L.A. theater in the 1980s, in the form of Steppling, Abdoh and others[lxxiv] is part of this larger cultural history.

Sara Jane Bailes links punk with the "poetics of failure" (Bailes) pioneered by Beckett, which arose in various quarters during the 1980s as "minimalism" or "lessness." The punk aesthetic is designed, I would further maintain, to direct attention toward the symbolic systems—language and coinage—underlying confining modes of thought. Syd Vicious's safety pin comes complete with its infantile diaper imagery connected to the pre-linguistic site of origin. *Repurposing* in D.I.Y. becomes a political act; Debord and the Situationist project of re-mapping urban landscapes met L.A. youth culture in the repurposing by skate punks of[lxxv] drained backyard pools of the San Fernando Valley during the drought of the late 1970s, for example. High school kids ditched school and invaded backyards with new skateboards with neoprene wheels, transforming the flowing topologies of the waterless cement basins into prototypical skate parks and igniting a national fascination with extreme sports. DeLanda's gloss on Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory is crucial to an understanding of the dynamics at work in L.A.

theater, illuminating the sacrificial dimensions of both tragic drama and coinage, and Steppling and Abdoh's new ways of dramatizing these connections.[lxxvi] In this chapter we take a close look at Steppling's site-specific *Storyland*, which illustrates the role of absence in the thermodynamic assemblages of Beckettian situated theater.

2. Instinct and Intelligence in Place

If Sam Shepard is an Angeleno playwright precisely because he was born in the Midwest, Steppling is L.A. all the way through. By moving to Azusa as a boy, Shepard lived one of the geographical and cultural transitions that has stamped the region in fundamental ways; Steppling's background is entirely local. The grandson of a silent film actor whose father worked for the studios as a costume designer, Steppling attended Hollywood High in the late 1960s before beginning a life on the street defined by left-wing politics, social transgression and art-making. A decade later, the playwright escaped a prison term for armed robbery when, on the day he was arraigned in 1980, the public defender handed the judge the glowing review of his first play, *Exhaling Zero*, which had opened the previous night at the Wallenboyd in downtown L.A. A few years after being released, Steppling was signed to write the script for John Frankenheimer's film *52 Pickup* (released in 1986) starring Roy Scheider and Ann-Margret, and the assignment launched his career as a highly-paid Hollywood screenwriter. This non-linear proximity of the high and the low is one of many distinctively L.A. aspects of Steppling's biography, as are the ways Dionysian force and Apollonian appearance interact in his work.

Staged site-specifically in 1990 at the end of this era, *Storyland* takes place in a bedraggled suburban park in the San Fernando Valley. The park contains a thematic child's playground in decline—a busted set of Disney-inspired figurines with speakers playing a warped and broken narration of Collodi's iconic *Pinocchio*. Over the course of several days a series of

local residents visit the park and interact with each other and with the caretaker, Bat. It is hot. These people have come to the park because they have nothing better to do. The mordantly comedic scenes are very brief. There's a film noir tone to their boredom—the edgy ennui of those waking up to the fact that they have been sold a bill of goods. As in most of Steppling's plays nothing much seems to be happening, and the anti-dramatic technique presses back against our expectations of drama, our attention sustained in its engagement by the accuracy of Steppling's ear. Difference is repeating itself. There's a strongly ceremonial aspect to this aesthetic, but *Storyland* also engages narrative. Subtle patterns begin to emerge into feedback loops and, eventually, a story begins to form. Phyllis is sick to death of her husband Conrad and his terminally deadbeat vacuousness. Wanda, a former beauty queen, is attempting to make sense of her life now that youth and beauty have fled. Despite having served as the caretaker of this absurd city park for seven years Bat retains big dreams for his future. In typical Steppling fashion these lines of narrative begin to converge and build towards a crisis, a moment of chaos or psychosis that returns us again to immanence. In his brief exchanges with Bat, Conrad reveals instabilities and violent fantasies, and we begin to worry about the resentment he feels for his step-son Daniel. The anti-dramatic style has a political dimension—our teleological expectations with respect to dramatic closure are being teased into the open and critiqued.

The spaces in *Storyland* ironically evoke the folksy quotidian landscapes we find in the 1953 play *Picnic* by William Inge, or Douglas Sirk's 1959 film *Imitation of Life* (Steppling and Walsh), which Steppling has cited as influences. Steppling updates these plain American spaces to include the tawdry middle-class transgressions of coke and porn that are signifiers of the 1980s, during which postwar boredom morphed into neoliberal anxiety. To some extent, Steppling is fashioning stage correlates for the emphasis in film noir of the plasticity of identity

and social role—power here is nothing but a Braudelian conspiracy from above working in collusion with blind social and psychological habit to generate alienated existence. If Fornés's *Mud* provides a synchronic collision between a poet's sensibility and the cinematic aesthetic of Hollywood, we can look to Steppling's work as the maturation of this mode of engaging with the dominant media of the neoliberal era. Boredom in this world of suburban anomie gives way in *Storyland* to noir psychosis and violent crime.

The iterative nature of *Storyland's* formal structure invites us to return to its original moment with each blackout, as in a series of plateaus, and to ask what it is we see there. If artists are familiar with the important role of *arche*, the first note, in the birth of an organic work of art, Steppling is particularly so. *Storyland* seems to begin again and again; Steppling is directing our attention toward the moment of origin, the first note, the *arche*, of the play, as if echoing in fractal way L.A.'s financial *arche*. "They stare at each other. Conrad backs away…" the text reads, "Lights fade out. Story resumes" (261). "Conrad nods" is the direction elsewhere: "Lights out" (264). If all roads in *Storyland* lead back to the play's moment of origin or *arche*, it is L.A.'s speculative *arche* which keeps us close to that anthropogenic event, close to Deleuzian becomings-animal and becomings-imperceptible.[lxxvii] Just as the Parks Department planners imposed the Collodi-Disney theme park onto *Storyland's* domesticated patch of land, a city that was "master-planned" by generations of real-estate developers and financial speculators emblematizes the epistemic imposition of form onto passive landscape. If speculation involves the recognition of virtual capacity for profit and the potential of actualizing it, *Storyland* shows how the site-specific play simply reminds L.A. of its own entirely speculative origins. The initial 1870s land grab by L.A.'s city fathers (they were, of course, from elsewhere) (Davis 107–108) involved this kind of calculation—an astute assessment of the region's capacity to prove

magically productive in some as-yet-unforeseen way. But the nature of L.A. points toward a paradox implicit in the act of speculation providing the *originary ground* of an urban entity. Arising out of its own (speculative) future, the city came to occupy an odd fold in time. Through a kind of speculative an-*archy* (no-beginning) L.A.'s origin becomes one that cannot fully *take a place*, an origin always *failing to command*, to shape or determine. In Steppling's insistently situated *Storyland*, the paradoxical future-anarchy that is L.A.'s initial condition gets forced into the light.

If, in *Starving Class* and *Mud,* Shepard and Fornés explore *domestic* space, in *Storyland* Steppling examines a *work* site, and a distinctly Angeleno one at that—a workplace of storytelling, dream-making, and fabulation. In terms of the "L.A. creature" explored in Chapter 3, Fornés's Lloyd has gotten a job and become Bat. Having circled the issue of narrative construction through the preceding chapters, we now arrive in Steppling's play at story as *place*. In *Storyland*, the temporal construct of the story has been made into a unique stage topology defined by the commodified icons of Walt Disney's "imagineering." *Storyland* makes a place out of the storytelling or fabulating function, which Deleuze posits, following Bergson, as an "equivalent of instinct" (Kerslake 161). What is most disturbing about Disney's cutesy brand of anthropomorphizing, the play reminds us, is the way his designs draw the instinctive into the realm of intelligence through a kind of aggressive commodification. The looping lines of Disney's draftsmanship denigrate the "universal sympathy" of animal feeling (164), deploying the *techne* of graphic composition to bring about the affective entrainment of the viewer. Mickey Mouse is a graphic form of *spell*, one designed to bring the instinctive firmly into the realm of *Logos*. This view of Disney is suggestive with regard to *Storyland*; the struggle for dominance

between the creaturely figure of Bat and the Disney-fied Pinocchio figurines in the play trouble the prevailing categories of knowledge and power.

The performers in *Storyland*, along with much of its audience in Northridge, were intimately acquainted with the culture industry and its proletarianizing influence. Labor in this social milieu takes the form of storytelling and mimetic talent rather than muscular energy. As a "company town," and the home of Hollywood, Los Angeles runs on the opposition between habit and force in the construction of ends-directed narratives, becoming an urbanized form of pure fabulation that both resists and embodies the operations of analogical intelligence. While this kind of labor is different from that required for industrial production, the capture is the same. Bat's liminal domain reveals the tattered edges of L.A.'s technicolor dream-tapestry as it begins to unravel onto the barren ground. His faded ruin of a theme park becomes a fractal echo of the entertainment colossus of Los Angeles, and its dysfunction conveys the teleological dysfunction of the city itself: a theme park of perfectible consumer happiness that has fallen into disrepair, but which thereby provides access to the alternative ontology of *techne*.

The theatrical investigation of the speculative originary ground of Los Angeles (i.e., its *lessness*) is one that can only take place in the site-specific urban space, stripped of the structures of ownership, property, money. It is, also, by definition, a *nomadic* investigation launched within the striated space of settlement. Wanda in particular falls under the spell of Storyland and, to some extent also, of Bat. Hostile at first, in the end Bat allows Wanda to sleep in the park, a policy violation for which he is blamed at the end by the intruding "Parks Department Men." What preoccupies Wanda is the nature of desire, of instinct and feeling. Fatal agreements, or spells, are being broken or superseded in *Storyland*. The recursive neoliberal story of reified identity weighs on these characters, acting as a force entraining them in spell-like ways. Through

the imposition of general-and-particular classifications, this collapsive weight threatens to reduce these people to generalized social roles, stripping them of all singular attributes and leaving them ontologically on par with the ossified Disney figurines. As *Storyland* unfolds, we come to understand the ways in which Bat's little park is a sanctuary or refuge against the coercive and extractive forces that dominate the world offstage.

3. Pinocchio L.A.

In *Storyland* we encounter the Noh-like, spectral aspect of Steppling's aesthetic. Bat is not the protagonist of this drama so much as an embodiment or expression of the *place* itself—a human correlate of this bedraggled corner of a suburban park somewhere in the San Fernando Valley, which is filled with crumbling icons of a captured childhood. With a minimum of narrative tension, the suburban L.A. types who visit the park—Wanda the faded beauty, Phyllis the acerbic middle-class termagant, and her loser husband Conrad, stepfather to her son whom he secretly despises—are also deployed to illustrate the form-giving capacities of this singular place. These figures and their modes of interaction have simply arisen as an expression of L.A.'s dissipative social topology. In this they resemble the soap bubbles the Post-War German architect Frei Otto used to "calculate" the parabolic forms of the Olympic village in 1972, an example DeLanda often cites to illustrate the way materials' immanent capacities generate form (DeLanda, "Deleuze, Morphogenesis" 4:58). In *Storyland*, the embodied presence of these characters exists in dynamic tension with the causal determinism Disney has laid over the story of Pinocchio.

In their short, cinematic interactions, Steppling's characters reveal both their defining attributes, and the way they are haunted by the un-actualized capacities (for meaning or true

connection, for example) that they sense nearby but can never access. In the page-long second scene (it is not the shortest in the play), a family photo-op around Storyland's blue whale figurine says everything about the failed marriage of Conrad and Phyllis. *Scene 3* manages to introduce Wanda, and to foreshadow her relationship to both Bat and to Collodi's story, in a single line of dialogue—"*Bat: We're closing. (Beat.) Storyland is closing"* (249).[lxxviii] For these Oedipalized characters, Storyland's decrepitude creates a kind of refuge, an unencoded space in which they find perspective—welcome and unwelcome—on the forces shaping their lives, and on the passage of time. Conrad, embodying the force of Oedipal lack, is defined by a haunted sense of inadequacy. His *ressentiment* builds palpably as he gives voice to complaints about the weather, the deficiencies of his wardrobe, and his inability to participate freely in the Bacchanalia of porn and drugs unfolding around him in the anomic paradise of the San Fernando Valley. For these displaced characters, desire is never more than a memory—they literally can't remember what they are supposed to want—and their failure to locate any transformational magic represents an indictment of *episteme*, returning us again to a Dionysian groundlessness as origin. The boundaries separating these characters from each other are lowered in Steppling's aesthetic of noir *lessness*, and they are unusually permeable.

Appropriately enough, the story *Pinocchio* also hinges on an anomalous moment of sorcery in which a semiotic capacity suddenly announces itself in a chunk of wood. As noted previously, in Agamben, to "take one's place in language" entails the claim to a false definitiveness or bounded-ness, making one guilty, like Josef K, of self-slander. Collodi's story makes a folk tale out of this anthropogenic event, complete with the attendant motif of the lie. Collodi's story narrativizes the constitution of a subject purely out of language, a "wee voice" that emerges from an inanimate chunk of wood just as the carpenter is about to strike it with his

axe. The speaking wooden puppet fashioned from this piece of wood, defined both by language and by a pervasive sense of lack, remains oddly anomalous within the boundaries of a hylomorphic ontology,[lxxix] the product of childish fantasy and the bedtime story. The puppet has already begun to use language, but still longs to become human. A semiotic capacity is counterposed here against the innate instinctual and affective life defining the human, and both emerge from embodied materiality. While intelligence and instinct pertain to different registers of being, the sense of uncanniness in Collodi's folk tale comes from the way it undermines our typical assumptions about origins. Intelligence, we tend to think, comes from above and outside, but here, like instinct, it comes from beneath and within. Steppling's play amplifies this uncanniness, setting Collodi's story in a place of fabulation and the instinctive (Kerslake 161). In its state of decay, *Storyland* provides access to this nomadicism in the context of the meta-narrative frame of Collodi's resonant tale. Like us (perhaps), the play's characters are looking for the zero degree of the human, trying to get as close as possible to the anthropogenic event in order to then actualize new capacities, as if by covert magic.

The collision between Collodi's haunting source material and Disney's kitschy appropriation of it becomes central to the unspoken politics of *Storyland*. As *particular* expressions of general entities, the figurines in Storyland return to absence and non-being as the play progresses, even as the play's *singular* human characters rise to presence. This cinematic cross-fade effect resonates elegantly with Collodi's fable of the coming-to-consciousness of inanimate matter. Like Collodi's story, Steppling's play occupies the fault lines between two very different realist ontologies—an Aristotelian realism in which Pinocchio is forever deprived of human form for "hylomorphic" reasons, and a thermodynamic, Deleuzian realism in which emergent consciousness can suddenly arise from within to deliver a very real transformation. A

site-specific venue in Los Angeles is, in many ways, an ideal one for this clash. The origins of Los Angeles were equally anomalous—Pinocchio-L.A. called out to the Comstock millionaires (Davis 107) from the sparsely populated ranch lands west of the San Gabriel mountains. Steppling's site-specific staging of *Storyland* only accents these fractal symmetries.

4. Determinism and Instinct, Lessness and Exhaustion

In its basic situatedness, *Storyland* thus commandeers the urban fabric of the city itself to oppose the prevailing neoliberal ethos of the time. This opposition, while it manifests in the content of the play, is primarily a formal one. *Storyland* works by a kind of corrosive apophaticism linked to the *lessness* of Beckett, and it anticipates the defining moves Jean-Joseph Goux detected in neoliberal, supply-side capitalism. Following Beckett, Steppling uses two modes of expression—ceremonial and dramatic—as boundary constraints leaning against each other. The ceremonial arrives as a function of stasis and radical foreclosure, the singular image followed by a blackout or a long fade to black. The dramatic takes the form of terse interactions between fully rendered three-dimensional characters. With each blackout we are returned to an originary aporia in which our capacities for discernment are thrown into a heightened state of alertness with respect to the recursive and automatic forces shaping the course of events.

The issue is as temporal as it is spatial—in *Storyland* Steppling joins those who are motivated by "a determination not to submit to determinism" (Massey 32). Steppling's characters, in fact, seem mineralized into a deceptively placid suburban landscape in which the passage of time has been oddly suspended. Wanda laments her faded beauty; the "greasy, unshaven" Bat, half-blind and creaturely, wears the same kitschy suit—powder blue with piping—that he was issued seven years earlier by the L.A. Department of Parks. Through these

spatial and temporal manipulations, the play draws the city itself into the differential intensities of mimesis and ceremonial play defining situated theater; in *Storyland*, the city of L.A. speaks in the causeless Beckettian register of *bêtise*.

The space in which *Storyland* unfolds is, finally, a mnemonic one, mnemonic in the complex way its boundaries are defined by the half-ruined recording of *Pinocchio*, a tale of reactive automaticism and lack, unfurling in the darkness between scenes. Here again we encounter the element of time and history—in Bernard Stiegler's terms, Storyland is itself a "temporal object," (33) a tertiary retention device that has sunk so far into the depths of dysfunction that its component pieces (including Bat) are coming apart, their "relations of exteriority" ready for repurposing in the mode of *techne*. "Today is different," Bat tells Wanda, "today we gotta fix some stuff" (251). There's a sense that *Storyland*'s characters are attracted by the scent of this decomposition and the process of Dionysian dismemberment it foreshadows. Like the hermit crabs in Fornés's *Mud*, these scavengers seek to commandeer Collodi-Gepetto-Disney's magic in order to reinvent themselves more completely through something like an act of Deleuzian sorcery. Pinocchio's desire to become other-than-he-is emblematizes the paradox of lack-based desire *per se*. By implication we in the audience are invited to contemplate our own stratifications and, at the same time, our own refusal to submit to determinism; in our affective engagement with the dream of the play we are inducted into the pre-individuated, pack-like existence of becomings-animal.

Women are drawn to Bat's domain, Phyllis and Wanda seeking a kind of solace in this dysfunctional and only semi-regulated zone. Just as in *Mud,* the fracturing of Mae's stasis by her linguistic exercises attracts the predatory Henry, men—in the form of Conrad and then the Park Rangers who come for Bat at the close—follow the women, registering unease with the things

that can happen in Storyland. It is as if the single loose thread of Bat's errant Dionysian expressivity might lead to a cataclysmic unraveling of the surrounding "story machine" of L.A. Under Steppling's direction, Bat also comes to embody the Beckettian irony of virtuosity and misperformance juxtaposed. Beckettian *lessness* is about the plenitude of exhaustion, and the over-abundance of expressive potential in virtuosity. Talent changes nothing because true virtuosity, after Beckett, involves the exhaustion of capacities. In this situated mode, virtuosity and misperformance become another set of parameters or boundary constraints, the playwright-director riding the edge of representational transparency the way a painter such as Francis Bacon rides the edge of figuration—evoking the figure in order to deconstruct it; deconstructing the figure in order to re-present it again. This flashing back and forth is not gratuitous. Like Shepard's shamanic proliferations and Fornés's lava space, the tension in Steppling's plays informs a processual subjectivity at odds with the entrepreneurial subject of neoliberalism. There is thus an ethical dimension to these issues of formal dramaturgy, and to the way *lessness* and exhaustion relate to the kind of errancy Foucault embraced in his later work.

5. Errancy and Ethics

Given the central role of self, knowledge, and power in dramatic expression, it is not surprising to find Foucault embraced in David Wiles' recent account of the spatial dimension of Greek tragedy. In his last two books,[lxxx] Foucault engaged extensively with the classicist Pierre Hadot, and the trajectory of the relationship is illuminating. Hadot ultimately disputed the Classical connection Foucault claimed for his ethics, stating that Foucault "misreads the Stoics and the Epicureans in a way that vitiates his own ethic" (Connolly 116). Arnold Davidson suggests instead that Foucault was exploring the resemblance between the ancient sage and

Nietzsche's *Übermensch* through ascetic practices such as meditations on death that deliver spiritual transformation by activating errant subjectivity (133). In his *Foucault*, Deleuze depicts this new subjectivity as the completion of the "ontological fold" Foucault was intent on exploring, a fold with "three dimensions – knowledge, power and self" that "are irreducible, yet constantly imply one another" (*Foucault* 114). Deleuze's interpretation underscores the continuity of Foucault's turn to the Classical with his earlier explorations of the ontologies of power and knowledge.

Wiles names Aeschylus as the first dramatist to shift the sacrifice into the offstage through the central door of the *skênê*, commenting that "the relationship between the space of tragic performance and the space of sacrifice has great symbolic importance" (58). It seems likely that this spatial shift was as potent in its effects on the dynamics of Athenian thought as the panopticon was on the dynamics of the modern era. Just as panoptic architecture led to the study and categorization of prisoners and the whole discourse of criminology, the architectural form of the Greek stage arguably led to the differential *praxis* of tragic drama and the political discourse it enabled. The unique configuration of Los Angeles in the 1980s encouraged recapitulations of this theatrical *praxis* in the open space of the city, such as the site-specific emplacements of *Mud* and *Storyland*.

In Agamben's view, Hadot simply failed to understand the nature of Foucault's ethical project.[lxxxi] Just as, to Nietzsche, the work of art could be separated from the artist and considered as an autonomous entity, so Foucault considered the life of each individual to be a work of art devoid of independent authorship. It is not the individual who becomes an author, in other words, shaping his or her life as a work of art. Rather, Agamben asserts, Foucault follows Nietzsche in positing an entirely *processual* subject, a subject who is the process of

transformation itself, a singularity unfolding by a self-actualizing process devoid of any fundamental position. Quoting Foucault from a 1984 interview with Paul Rabinow, Agamben stresses that the Foucauldian subject is "never already given." The subject that is "never already given" can, furthermore, only be a work of art. Thus, Foucault's intention was not "to link an individual's creative activity to the relationship he has with himself, but rather to link this relationship to himself to a creative praxis" (Agamben, "The Problem of Subjectivity" 5:01).[lxxxii] Because the artist herself cannot be an already-given subject, in other words, she lacks any inherent sovereignty over the work, a remarkable insight when that "work" is a person's life. The connections between the processual subject described by Agamben and the situated theater project are strong. Foucault's aim is not merely to tinker with the interlocking mechanisms of power, knowledge, and self, but rather to dispense entirely with an ethic based on prohibitions and imperatives.

These frameworks have obvious relevance for an investigation of *Storyland's* relationship to the processual city of Los Angeles. Christoph Menke's short-circuiting irony inhabits the boundary between *Storyland* and the city of L.A., registering most strongly in a moment in *Scene 7* where Bat, talking with Wanda, states: "The others here resent me. That work here, those others resent me. Because I have ambition, and I don't think I will work for the parks department for that much longer" (257). The pathos at work in the exchange is multi-tiered. Bat's ambition parodies the secret knowledge lodged in the heart of every middle class American that he or she too will someday realize the ever-present potential to become one of the "winners." In Bat, the play locates the sorcery at the core of neoliberalism, the spell by which the American middle class was being entrained to sell itself into servitude, defending the prerogatives of the extremely wealthy in return for the illusion that one day "all this" might also be theirs. There is also the

pathos of Rick Dean, an actor of astonishing gifts, performing in a site-specific venue in Northridge. Steppling keeps the forgotten, off-the-grid nature of the venue at the front and center of the theatrical event. It is as if, in the moment of Bat's confession, the play seeks to redeem the city from its own narrative and teleological self-conceits, and to return it to itself as a place actual lives are led in all their hopeless glory. The irony is built in, because L.A. is also *entirely the product* of these self-conceits, so there is nothing underneath to fall back on. This nothing was present outside the shattered door in Shepard's *Starving Class* as well, but here it is even more the focus of the theatrical event. As *Storyland's* abbreviated scenes of largely accidental encounters unfold, the playwright tracks how the reductive, biopolitical force of capital resonates with the magical narrative of Collodi's story.

6. The Creature and Becomings-animal: The Entirely Secular Holiness of Rick Dean

Steppling's processual aesthetic is strongly rooted in the self-organizing properties of actors in a place, a location. The playwright is a poet who listens intently to this assemblage to see what rises into form. We look to Stengers and Pignarre to remind us what is political here. Replacing *ideology* with the affective entrainment of sorcery rather than cognitive agreement, Stengers and Pignarre point toward the forces at work in the creation of subjects. They clarify the dynamics of *capture* as a political force involving instinctive automatisms. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, they focus especially on "infernal alternatives" defined as a strategy of mind-killing. "Economic exploitation," write Stengers and Pignarre,

> …really only defines capitalism very partially. It should be affirmed that capitalism works continuously to reduce the intelligence of its agents, to replace it by automatic

> behavior that can in turn become the matter of infernal alternatives…it is always a question of capturing without creating too much alarm, or by creating false alarms. (28)

This mode of capture is intrinsic to the false binary materialized in the two-sided trick of the coin, and Steppling's aesthetic is oriented toward focussing our attention on subtle moments of capture of this kind as they manifest within the mimetic *techne* of the actor.

In *Storyland* the creaturely *bêtise* of the lead character Bat and the "God trick" of Walt Disney buttress the dual boundaries of ceremony and *mimesis* creating an emergent assemblage combining Beckett and aspects of film noir, a balancing act in which the singular urban space of L.A. offers key support. Of particular interest is the light Steppling's work sheds on the role of the actor in Beckettian theater—how embodied expressivity contests mimetic representation in the reconfigured affective machinery of the situated aesthetic. Specifically, an examination of *Storyland* shows how the "creaturely" and the "becomings-animal" aspects of the performer in 1980s L.A. theater express Edward Casey's "return of place by way of the body" (Casey, *The Fate of Place* 202). *Storyland* illustrates how the "metaphysics of causes" arising from Aristotelian materialism—the play makes a *place* out of causality, out of "the story"—does not apply when matter is defined in Deleuzian terms as inherently imbued with morphogenetic capacity of its own.

Given *Storyland's* thematic emphasis on re-coding it is not surprising that the reigning animal metaphors (the Benjaminian creature and the Deleuzian becomings-animal) of critical theory collide in the play. If "devolution" relates to the creature, "becomings-animal" relates instead to the sorcerer, and the tension between these two modes of being animates Bat's powerful tragic presence. The creature in Benjamin-Agamben has been reduced by biopolitics to

a strictly physiological capacity, the basic biological functions of the body—shorn, precisely, of any emergent properties. Embodying becomings-animal, the Deleuzian sorcerer, by contrast, is infused with the abundant capacities of *instinctual life*, the emergent, re-combinatory adaptability of expressive materiality. While in ontological terms the creature is a figure out of *episteme*, the sorcerer arises in the realm of *techne*. Just as the Disneyfied figurines are a residue of a powerful anthropomorphizing and epistemic impulse linked to intelligence, Bat represents a contradictory lunge "back" toward the non-semiotic domain of animal and instinct.[lxxxiii]

The underlying question posed by Steppling's hybridization of *lessness* and film noir involves the actor's relationship to assemblage theory—the construction of a subjectivity taking place when an actor crafts a performance, becoming an Other. As DeLanda has emphasized, given adequate *techne*—technical skill—objects in general can be pulled apart and recombined or repurposed (while also remaining stubbornly independent), and are, by definition, free of "relations of interiority." The city of Los Angeles can be viewed as an assemblage of this kind; so is the theme park of Storyland, and so, on a psychological and affective level, are these characters. *Interiority* itself is revealed to be the emergent product of intensive becomings in an immanent assemblage, and the absence of any transcendental essence also grounds our capacity for feeling, uniting the audience across the boundaries of self and Other that would usually pertain. In this performative mode, the actor's mimetic capacity becomes simply an extension of assemblage theory into the domain of consciousness.

If this valorization of the actor seems new, we should remember that, to Grotowski, the "holy" actor is identified by "inductive technique (i.e., a technique of elimination)" rather than the "deductive technique (accumulation of skills)" deployed by what Grotowski calls the "courtesan" (93). To embrace the primacy of affect over cognition the way an actor does is

already to privilege *techne* over *episteme*.[lxxxiv] In the more standard formulation, just as the play occupies the site, the role (i.e. Bat) occupies the actor. Complicating matters is Steppling's uniquely paradigmatic approach to scripting the roles in his plays, and then directing his performers. Typically, playwrights are thought to create generalized roles, which particular actors then embody through a performative version of the Aristotelian syllogism. Steppling's approach, however, troubles the accepted relationship of actor and role—specific actors, and Rick Dean especially, become a kind of raw material out of which the character will arise.

Like Fornés, Steppling composed for his favorite actors—Rick Dean, Lee Kissman, Mick Collins and Kathleen Cramer, for example—much as he wrote for *specific places* in Los Angeles.[lxxxv] If anything, the bonds of the alliance between writer and actor in Steppling have only become stronger since Fornés. With Steppling, this is not just a matter of scripting roles he knew these actors could handle. Rather, these characters resonate powerfully with some deep un-actualized capacities in the performers as living singularities, who trusted him enough to surrender to a kind of psychic excavation in public view. In *Storyland*, Steppling takes Grotowski's eliminative gesture a step further—in the case of Rick Dean, the actor is already a ruin, a being defined by a psychological variant of Terrence Deacon's "constitutive absence" (*Incomplete Nature* 1–17). Deacon uses this term to identify a relationship to that which is not present (3), such as the off stage space through the doors of the skênê. David Wiles's work on the centrality of this absence to the art of *mimesis* is embodied, in Steppling's version of *lessness*, in the sensitive work he was able to elicit from Dean and his other favorite performers. The crucial point is how this constructive or *speculative* emptiness also characterizes the region and its unique future-past mode of temporality: Los Angeles has always been an invitation to self-

reinvention, and emblematized the anonymity of the new and the un-encoded *as a place,* an emptiness at once utopian and dystopian.[lxxxvi]

The specifics are important here. An unlikely cross between Harry Dean Stanton and John Malkovich, Dean can be viewed as an ironic, SoCal equivalent of Grotowski's iconic collaborator Ryszard Cieslak[lxxxvii] in all the dysfunctional, creaturely glory that image implies. You knew, watching Dean perform, that his life was not going to end nicely,[lxxxviii] and you knew he understood this too. In *Storyland*, the tension between creature and sorcerer—between Benjamin and Agamben on the one hand, and Deleuze and Guattari on the other—is resolved in the living, meta-theatrical presence of the actor, Rick Dean, which provides a ceremonial and sacrificial dimension to the "performance." This broken, yet charismatic performer offering his fractured psyche to the audience superimposes Agemben's *homo sacer* with the field of sensation of Deleuze's becomings-animal. Bat/Dean became even more sacrificial than Cieslak because his ruination was real and intentional, only delayed in time. In Dean's performance of Bat, we were being given a preview of a tragic fate already embraced, a slow-motion, meta-theatrical self-deconstruction aiming for the grave, and Steppling wrote with this fact firmly in mind. The open dismemberment-to-come of this Dionysian surrogate performing his sacrificial magic reconciles us with multiplicity. Inoculating us against groundlessness, the resulting pathos releases us from the psychic violence of *ressentiment* and the false appearance of unity it elicits.

In Steppling's approach to staging his work, actors become exquisitely complex assemblages wanting to locate and re-stage in front of an audience the mechanisms of their own emergence as subjects, but *as someone else.* This someone else is unreal, or at least real only in the separate, unactualized register of the virtual. Re-mounting *Storyland* would require casting, not an actor to play Bat, but rather an actor to play Rick-Dean-playing-Bat. The pathos of Bat

thus has to do with his status as a living endgame, his *bêtise* collapsing general-particular into a singular example of nothing in particular. Included by being excluded, Bat is the opposite of a paradigm, achieved through the intensive constraints of the poetic and the performative: a living, breathing version of Agamben's *exception,* a human *singularity* or *fold*.[lxxxix] Now we understand where the relationship of alliance in *Starving Class* and the idiosyncratic nature of Fornés's direction have been heading. Performance in situated theater becomes a slow-motion mode of catastrophe, and a phase shift of "a life"[xc] toward the ceremonial register theatricalized in the postdramatic (see Chapter 5). Just as the site-specific play sprawls into the urban space, the situated performance sprawls into life, and both dynamics have special strength in L.A.'s unique, actor-saturated cultural ecology.

Our largely unexamined assumptions about the relationship between a dramatic role and an individual performance of that role replicate the general-particular rubric of Aristotelian logic. The role, according to this view, is a general mold to be particularized by each performer. As indicated above, the picture looks very different when viewed from the perspective of the *paradigmatic*. In this mode, the role is a singular example extracted from its context in such a way that it speaks for more than itself. Seemingly innocuous, this shift alters the relationship of the audience to the performative event. Bat, the central character of *Storyland*, is not some essence of the set of possible characters named Bat—he is, rather, paradigmatic of *us*, the individuals comprising the audience, and this is because the role of Bat is not separable from the performer Rick Dean. Dean/Bat straddles the boundary between the virtual space and time of the play, and the actual place and time of the audience, thereby providing a mediating conduit. In *Storyland*, as in several of Steppling's other plays (*Standard of the Breed* and *The Dream Coast*, for example), the playwright wrote to bring the situated capacity of his performers' lives to light.

7. The Time of D.I.Y. and Neoliberalism: Storyland as Foucauldian Ruin

Thematically, in Steppling's plays, someone is always making a last stand against the invisible forces of fate and capital, a stand that reaches down to the level of ontology within the performer. The text of *Storyland* was written specifically for Dean, for his "self" defined as a collection of self-images, together with a *rejection* of such self-images and their recursive, adaptive force. This kind of bond between playwrights and specific actors is not unique to SoCal situated plays, but it is seldom the working mode of a major playwright, and in Steppling the political dimension is fully intentional, if never directly articulated. In this aspect of his work as a playwright-director, Steppling connects the actors company in Shepard, and the creature in Fornés, to the intimate dyadic relationship Grotowski cultivated with his actors. The audience becomes almost an intruding presence, disrupting the dyad and making it into an unstable but dynamic triad.[xci]

To some extent, the clash of ontologies in Steppling's play is a function of his time—the 1980s in Los Angeles. Again, we turn to Bailes for the link between the punk and post-punk era with Beckett's "poetics of failure," and the aesthetic of minimalism or *lessness* in the 1980s. In *Storyland*'s mytho-ironic space, structures of power and knowledge break down, making Storyland an entropic Foucauldian ruin—everything is dented or damaged, on the edge of dysfunction. In *Starving Class* Shepard engaged in an "archeology of ruin" in order to counter the coin-trick binarism of the rational and the Dionysian at the core of neoliberalism; in *Storyland* Steppling draws us into an affective circuit with a virtual Los Angeles through a site-specific, actor-based version of the Grotowskian *via negativa*. If the *placement* of the site-specific work is less emphatic in Steppling than in Fornés, it is so for interesting strategic

reasons. The absence of a spatial frame in *Storyland*—a proscenium or other demarcation—underscores the plasticity of urban space on the one hand, and with the "sensitivity to initial conditions" of L.A.—financial speculation—on the other. The embodied and expressive (materialization) aspects of the stage are counterpoints to the abstract, epistemic encodings and symbolic materializations of financial exchange—as if the city has caught itself dreaming (and, of course, dreaming something noir). This tension, finally, is explicitly reflected in the content of the play, and in its constant referencing of Collodi's text—deconstructing *arche,* we move out from beneath the spell of unity as a Beckettian *story* we tell ourselves, and the groundlessness of this excavation into *lessness* is sacrificial.

As Bat and Wanda meet for the last time in *Scene 13* (265), we feel we are participating in an inversion of the *extensive* urban space into a purely *intensive* one. Fueling the transformation with our attention, we give rise to a de-invagination or prolapsis of urban topology that recalls the feminized theatrical womb-space Irigaray has theorized (Irigaray, "Plato's Hystera," 243-363). In all its freedom, the immanence of the city is being heard and then transmitted--*actualized,* in Deleuzian terms, out of the virtual. Through this process of cultural embryogenesis, situated plays like *Storyland* give expression to a new structure of feeling or cultural attractor, a new kind of anti-entrepreneurial Angeleno subjectivity in which difference precedes identity. The interactions in *Storyland* define this odd and groundless, *speculative identity* Angelenos are familiar with—I *might be* this person talking to you right now…*or I might be someone else entirely*. Widely lampooned, the vacuous, immanent L.A. persona is also (Sean Penn's memorable surfer-dude Spicoli in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* is emblematic here, a SoCal version of Constant's *homo ludens*), on an evolutionary level, adaptive. And this shifting, transversal, Dionysian identity actually speaks the truth about capital as a differential

force, albeit cryptically. Social life shifts into a different intensive register, with *techne* playing an increasingly central role in the processual mechanisms of subjectivity. This is a bargain L.A. has made with the Deleuzian "society of control" (Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," 3–7) and despite its tendency to lead to fragile relationships, vulnerable to pressure or strain, it is also the source of some optimism. In the society of control, panoptic domination has never been stronger, and yet, in L.A., there is nothing fixed and definite left to control.

Suitably, while Bat is utterly abject, he is also relatively free of *ressentiment*. His personality, as Deleuze puts it, does not say with every breath "it's your fault" (*Immanence* 77). The work of *ressentiment* is precisely this kind of automatic reactivity in service of a search for unity. *Ressentiment* is, at root, a covetousness toward the *apparent* unity of the other—his facticity cemented into a seamless whole by what appear to be "relations of interiority." In the name of epistemic representation and unity, the reactive dominates by being pushed away from conscious awareness, and therefore getting actualized as an automaticism. The reactive, the automatic, dominates by being pushed away *into the actual,* where it is materialized into money and finance. This is exactly what Stengers and Pignarre mean by the "sorcerer's spell" which exerts its forces most powerfully in the representational dynamics of disembodied, abstract *episteme* where the entropic effects of materiality do not arise. Precisely because it is only an appearance, this spurious, representational unity can only be experienced as an aspect *of the Other,* inaugurating a tortured process of introjected semiosis—the self seeks to become the unified representation glimpsed in the eyes of the Other. This inattention to our own reactivity drives the sorcery of capitalism—we fuel our own capture, and are carried away by reactive automaticisms or encodings that are also materialized into technologies.[xcii] And yet while the abstraction of the symbolic lends additional energy to reductive social forces of this kind,

moments of crisis, like the ones that finally manifest in Steppling's play, re-connect us to unencoded lines of flight, hinting at the new modes of political activism mentioned earlier.

In *Storyland*, Wanda is the character most sensitive to such lines of flight. Haunted by her past experience as a woman so beautiful strangers "stopped and applauded" as she entered a restaurant (259), Wanda locates a new mode of being through her bond with Bat. In the penultimate scene—after Conrad's psychotic break at the nearby pony rides—Wanda confesses to Bat that she refused to attend her mother's funeral, asking for Bat's absolution. Some weight is lifted for both characters, and in their overnight proximity in Storyland, the darkness following the scene takes on the erotic, Dionysian charge of impending destruction. Even in the suburban exhaustion of this little park, the material world conveys a pulse, a living charge. In *Storyland,* the cultural mechanism of site-specific theater iconicizes the suburban morphology of L.A. The production itself makes the site into a semiotic event, drawing its audience across an intensive fold into a temporary, immanent organ involved in a process of transformation. A new set of collective capacities begins to be actualized, and the scene is suddenly alive with the uncanny. We sense here a Derridean trace or supplement, associated with the sacrificial *pharmakos*. As in classical tragedy, the life of the scapegoat is sacrificed offstage in order to amplify the pharmacological magic of the act. The "poison" dissolves our prevailing unity and the "cure" inaugurates a new one, marking, in Deleuzian terms, a fold or singularity. As a result of these singular anomalies, the transformation promised by Collodi, the longed-for magic, does indeed happen in Storyland, but through Bat/Dean—the dramatic and the ceremonial in one incommensurable whole—rather than through Disney.

9. Theater as Thermodynamic Machine

In terms of aesthetics, the shift to *techne* involves a new focus on the mechanisms of embodiment and nomadic materiality, mechanisms conspicuously organized around what evolutionary biologist and anthropologist Terrence Deacon calls a "constitutive absence." Deacon's work on constitutive absence (1–17) underscores the very different (and perhaps defining) role absence plays in *episteme* and in *techne*. The barren and infertile nothing of *episteme* is very different than the fertile nothing of *techne*, which unlocks capacities. This is what the *skênê* provided—the sacrificial zone is set apart off-stage, creating a constitutive absence, a "present-absence." Deacon's thinking suggests that Aeschylus's technical achievement was to spatialize this constitutive absence on the stage via the *skênê*, and then mechanize it through deconstructive representations of the Greek myths. In so doing, Aeschylus actualized new civic capacities, helping to stabilize the fractious and contradictory dynamics of Athenian democracy. This theatrical "bush-pump" device has then propagated forward in the "fluid space" (see Chapter 3) of historical time to manifest in Los Angeles in site-specific guise and in a situated, Beckettian mode exemplified by *Storyland*. Here the pharmacological disassemblage of the actor points toward a mimetic absence at the center of the thermodynamic machine of the stage.

The fact that *Storyland* is being performed in the open, without the enclosure of a theater or a stage, only makes the sudden appearance of this generative offstage more remarkable—what is being encoded or re-encoded by the play is a virtual aspect of the city of Los Angeles arising in the minds of those watching the play. And while this non-representational envelope of the stage event shows up for every representational drama, what is new in Steppling's stripped-down aesthetic is how this nonrepresentational and site-specific offstage has become one of the main

focuses of the theatrical event. This is where Steppling's debt to Beckett becomes most visible. As analyzed in Chapter 1, Beckett also used theater to focus on a formal issue—the ceremonial and dramatic aspects of theater—a focus Steppling redirected toward the situated aspects of his L.A. noir. Delivering the unseen force of the offstage to our collective experience is, in fact, the de-centering aim of *Storyland*. In Steppling's *archeological* drama, the audience is immersed in an excavation of Los Angeles as a singular psychological and political construct, which the play seeks to recreate and commandeer for new, sorcerer-like purposes. The city itself, in *Storyland*, participates on both sides of this situated theatrical apparatus. The experience for the audience embodies the reiterative nature of subjectivity in Los Angeles—each day a fresh start, as vacuous as the one before. With respect to Beckett, there is no longer any *game*, but only a protracted series of endings, as if the play were skipping, like the malfunctioning tape of Collodi's story with which the play begins.

But the poignant irony is that *Storyland*, despite Disney, remains an authentically magical realm. Bat/Dean is thus a kind of fractured shaman maintaining this zone of de-individuation against the storm of neoliberal dynamism that rises as a "God trick" out of money. The apophaticism of Steppling's text is designed to enable the actor to strip everything down to the vulnerability of pure presence—bare life as the expression of a minimal surface tension in the empty space opened by speculative capital. A boundary condition is being violated and breached, suggesting the challenge that comes with the politics of anarchy—how much pure presence can we endure in our resistance to the differential energies of speculative capitalism? After Beckett, the literary *techne* of the poet brings surprise—aporia and groundlessness—into play at the roots of the symbolic, the *arche* of the anthropos. The effects of this intervention ripple outward

through the nested, symbolic complexities of language and money, whose grip on thought and action sacrificial rituals were designed to break from the beginning.

10. Noir and Sorcery in Site-Specific L.A.

When it comes to sorcery, Stengers and Pignarre suggest, "any agreement is fatal," leading to a loss of agency, and the production of true-believing "minions" such as Taylor in *Starving Class*. One implication of a differential view of the unconscious is that disintegration is never far away. As a character's psyche is held up to the light, all one must do is wait for the fractures to reveal themselves—magically, the assemblage will begin to decompose before our eyes. In *Storyland* it is Conrad who illustrates this form of capture at work. In Conrad, lack-based structures come to echo the commodification of instinctive archetypes expressed by the Disney figurines, inexorably drawing him toward violence and psychosis. The offstage in Steppling's work is a *differential* unconscious, revealing that which middle class existence ferociously attempts to hide—the psychosis Deleuze places at the root of the self-formation process. Through the self-cloaking aspect of the God trick, schizoid multiplicity is drawn into fragile, unstable semblance of unity (Kerslake 173). Steppling's plays aim for a moment of disarticulation that is always a kind of nested psychosis, resonating outwards into the urban space. Errancy and violent crime in *The Shaper*, the scattering of the dog pack in *Standard of the Breed*; in Steppling's plays, it is always noir and it is always L.A.[xciii]

Storyland circles around Conrad in this way, a subtle, underlying tension steadily rising. Silence and distance separate the characters, yet this is also what draws them to each other. We feel that some kind of affective charge is forming in this relational circuit, and that we are implicated in some obscure way—as if our attention were one node giving rise to the differential.

An awareness of the plenitude of the virtual, of capacity, is exactly what triggers Conrad's psychotic break: “It’s scary, isn’t it—that we might do something—be in the middle of something that’d be whipping around us” (260). And, of course, this break is about money—and also it is a psychological equivalent of the *state of exception*—in a sacrificial becoming-exceptional, Conrad can’t “keep it together.” Circling, the play arrives in *Scene 9* at a theme of sorts, the character Conrad predicting a typical evening eating Chinese takeout at home with his wife and step-son and then declaring: “But it could be different. One time it could all be some other way” (260). This declaration is forced out of Conrad as if by Dionysian force, and now everything is in motion, Conrad’s invocation of difference, his rejection of *necessity*, of Thatcher’s neoliberal T.I.N.A., inaugurates a small but irreversible cascade building inexorably toward chaos and dissolution. At the same time, a world of infinite capacities has been invoked; the purview of the real has suddenly expanded to include the virtual.

The break in *Storyland* happens offstage, both spatially and temporally, in the virtual city, the constitutive absence that the play has conjured into being. Having taken the boy Daniel and his friend Eric to a nearby pony ride, Conrad returns alone appearing suddenly disheveled—his shirt is out and his hands are dirty. Engaging Bat as the two women, Wanda and Phyllis, look for the boys, Conrad confesses about his taste in pornography and his sexual proclivities. There’s a psychotic edge to this confession—some irreparable rupture has taken place, but we don’t find out what it is until the next scene. Here, the two women suddenly appear as dual antagonists, Bat as a sorcerer-chorus. The staging is formal, Wanda and Phyllis simply appear behind Conrad as he describes hitting the “boy” (he’s not sure which boy) in the face: “I hit him fuck’n hard.” A unity has shattered as the psychosis at its roots emerges into actuality in the form of relational violence. The open *skênê* of the site-specific play creates a superposition—a present-absence—in

which incommensurable capacities are actualized simultaneously. Collodi's haunting tale abruptly encompasses these characters, its circuit of authority looping around the audience as well, accenting our automatisms, our puppet-nature, the entirely constructed aspect of our sense of things, together with a transversal freedom we sense but can never fully tap, the play challenging us to actualize it more and more fully. Some new stability will arrive, but nothing will be forgotten, and so nothing will ever be the same. The damaged boy now looms over the action, a sacrificial victim, in that virtual, offstage city. This is the psychotic moment of L.A.—the nameless panic of Conrad—that is dramatized extensively by Adboh (see Chapter 5), the panic of the Anthropocene. The *skênê* in *Storyland's* site-specific location is vast, existing in the urban offstage: L.A. itself has been "skênê-exified."

11. Less Than the Sum of Its Parts

Terrence Deacon provides an evolutionary account of *absence* as a crucial component of living systems, an account that resonates powerfully with the fertile "present-absence" of the Aeschylean *skênê*. Seaford, Wiles and Graeber suggest that coinage in a sense created the barren "nothing" defined by *episteme*, and helped to conceal the fertile, chaotic, intoxicated, morphogenetically charged, constitutive "nothing" linked to the virtual defined by *techne*. The bush-pump device of tragic drama invented by Aeschylus spatializes and materializes the two sides of the coin, as if to rob its power. It is not the issue of transcendence (the separate) or immanence (the connected), it is the presence of both at once in the coin that seems inconceivable, contradictory, incommensurable. And this is precisely what Aristotle's law of non-contradiction disallows, with the result that the differential aspect of mind spins out into technological innovation and relentless, lack-based dynamism. Concealed is the strangeness of

our actual situation, the Moebius strip, Klein-bottle nature of things in a world we share with Conrad and Wanda. Steppling's actor-based aesthetic completes the process of rehabilitating *mimesis* from Austinian (and other) exclusions that was implicit in Beckett's stage work. The aesthetic reveals *mimesis* as not simply a capacity; rather *mimesis* is capacity. An actor playing a role embraces a real-but-not-actual subjectivity, capacity *per se*. Theater thus mediates between actual and virtual registers, connecting us to the limitlessness and relationality within the subject: multiplicity. Money, on the other hand, constrains and reduces this expressive virtuality to a productive encoding. By excluding *mimesis* from illocutionary force, Austin also excludes the real-but-not-actual, i.e. the virtual.

In *Storyland* the dysfunctions of violence and intoxication which followed 1968's Summer of Love are aesthetically affirmed in a punk, D.I.Y. mode, and an engagement with material ground. Bernard Stiegler theorizes the "no future" moment of post-punk "blank-generation" culture in a similar vein, connecting it to a "techno-logico-instrumental condition in which *time is the technological synthesis of, and in, mortality*" (*Technics and Time 1*, 222). In Bat, creaturely powerlessness is being embraced as a defiant vehicle to move in the direction of becomings-animal. The character exemplifies the creaturely failures and slackers—variants of *homo sacer*—populating the L.A. stage in the 1980s. As the play ends, the city is being repurposed, but we feel that in this repurposing it is actually being most true to itself. The paradigmatic "stupidity" Beckett discovered in Roussillon finds a SoCal expression in *Storyland*, and the site-specific nature of the event is anything but accidental. Aeschylus's bush pump has been reconfigured once again. At the close of the play, two L.A. Parks' Department groundskeepers enter the scene, walking with laconic menace toward Bat's little area—the offstage in *Storyland* is the world of interdictions, prohibitions, and coercive power these men

have entered from. This realm of generative absence extends out in a contiguous fashion from the scene in Bat's seedy little park, but unlike the settings of the play, *Storyland's* offstage remains insistently inaccessible to us; like the Freudian unconscious, we can only know it by what it releases onto the stage. *Storyland* demonstrates how the situated *lessness* practiced by Beckett and his descendents directs the generative energies of this absent offstage toward the totalizing presuppositions and convictions of neoliberalism and its T.I.N.A. ("there is no alternative") mindset. By activating the self care Foucault calls for in his late works, the situated aesthetic renovates the liberative capacities of theater.

CHAPTER 5

The Captain in L.A.:

Heterotemporality and Reza Abdoh's *Hip-Hop Waltz of Eurydice*

1. Bricolage and Boundary Practices

From its hybridized title to its final tableaux, Reza Abdoh's *The Hip-Hop Waltz of Eurydice* (1990) announces an aesthetic practice based on bricolage—the improvisatory assemblage of heterogeneous spatial and temporal elements rich in boundaries and edges. Productive in the late 1980s and early '90s with his company Dar a Luz, Abdoh (1963-1995) rejected the autobiographical focus that his equally controversial contemporaries David Wojnarowicz, Karen Finley and Tim Miller brought to their work (Carlson 122). Instead, he embraced a volatile and highly integrated postdramatic stagecraft, deploying everything from sitcom chatter and subaltern movement traditions such as hip-hop and capoeira to the proverbial kitchen sink (see below) to liberate errant flows of desire. If Steppling can be said to straddle the line between the dramatic and the postdramatic, Adboh looks back at us from the other side of the divide. *Hip-Hop* exemplifies Abdoh's theatrical palette: he used theater to aggressively puncture the urban space, and then flood it with viral, repurposing codes, shifting our affective metabolism past its neoliberal stupor toward the final, complete destratification of pure immanence.

The continued relevance of Abdoh's work has to do with the defiant, post-punk ferocity with which he manipulated the spatial and temporal boundaries of the stage. His aesthetic was cultivated through site-specific engagements with the city of L.A., arguably the emblematic "nowhere" urban space, including his adaptations of *Medea* (staged at the Hollywood

Gymnasium, 1986), and his original text *Peep Show* (staged in a downbeat motel on Hollywood Boulevard, 1988). Through his intensive bricolage and his riotous, high-energy layering of images, Abdoh commandeered the corporatized "nowhere" of the postmodern city as a vehicle for culturally active transgression. Although *Hip-Hop* was mounted in a conventional theater, Abdoh brought the boundary-crossing spatiality of his site-specific L.A. theater work with him to this venue. As a result, the play speaks with particular force about the *situated* nature of resistance to the spatio-temporal assault of globalization, clarifying the political implications of the postdramatic. By *situated*, I mean, once again, to evoke Debord and the Situationist effort to actualize an urban topography of desire, as well as Haraway's call for a situated mode of knowing to counter the God trick "of seeing everything from nowhere" (594).

Abdoh's unique boundary practices clash against what Doreen Massey calls "the a-spatial story of globalization" which was already in high gear in the 1980s. This story, as Massey goes on to point out, "obliterates the spatial into the temporal, and, in that very move, also impoverishes the temporal (there is only one story to tell)" (89). Abdoh's *Hip-Hop* takes place within this obliteration, and seeks to reverse it. Specifically, Abdoh's bricolage straddles the ceremonial and the mimetic modes of theater-making as a way to center the boundary between them. Obviously, this is an iterative tactic—once centered, a boundary is no longer located at the boundary, so you have to center it again and again—and Abdoh did not hold back. As Marvin Carlson wrote about Abdoh, "The constant mixture of text, music, movement, video, film, and visual spectacle is disturbing, moving so rapidly as to defy analysis" but conveying also an "astonishing control of this complex material" (123). Here again, the city of L.A. plays a formative role, reflecting the fractured subjectivity of Abdoh's characters, whose chaotic and

connective quality can be viewed as temporal correlates of the city's uniquely "open" spatial topography.

2. Time Takes Place

Mentored by the Beckett actor and producer Alan Mandell, Abdoh was in his early twenties when he began producing theater. He quickly achieved local notoriety through inventive stagings of classics (*King Lear*, *Oedipus the King*, and *Medea*), and also innovative original texts (*Peep Show* and *Minimata*). Their strongly transgressive impact was based in anti-authoritarian politics and exuberant displays of queer randiness. From Richard Foreman, Abdoh derived a love of outrageous discontinuity, but with sex and desire replacing ratiocination and cognition; from Robert Wilson he absorbed the theatrical impact of duration and tableaux. His site-specific re-mappings of urban space were not limited to L.A.—in 1990 Abdoh staged *Father Was a Peculiar Man*, a version of Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* featuring a cast of fifty, in New York City's Meatpacking District. That same year, *The Hip-Hop Waltz of Eurydice* opened at L.A.T.C. in downtown Los Angeles, with Mandell himself appearing as the remarkable figure, the Captain. This production later went on tour to Montreal, Paris and other international venues, augmenting Abdoh's growing reputation as an innovative maker of theater. Like so many creative talents of his generation, Abdoh's trajectory was foreshortened by AIDS when he died in 1995 at the age of thirty-two.

Hip-Hop opens with an ironic nod in the direction of "kitchen sink" realism mentioned above. The lights rise on a domestic interior in which a gender-crossed version of Eurydice and Orpheus (both of them completely bald) are relaxing at home. Their peace is abruptly shattered by a repeatedly dripping faucet, and Eurydice, played by Tom Fitzpatrick (and referred to in the

text as "Tom") in evening wear and heels, repeatedly crosses the stage to deal with the annoying drip. Orpheus, played by Juliana Francis (and referred to as "Juliana"), watches this mechanical repetition, which, we sense, happens often in precisely this way, with mounting anxiety. As their dismal marital *habitus* continues, the two characters are beset by what Steigler calls mass-produced 'temporal objects,' mnemonic loops of random dialogue precipitating out of commercial Hollywood vehicles (the comedies *9 to 5* and *The Bickersons*, for example). Through this assaultive barrage of incursive, "supply side" entertainment, the financialized, global economy of the Reagan era invades Eurydice and Orpheus's home. Then the figure of neoliberal capital itself enters as the "Captain," a salacious dancer, costumed for performance in a fat-suit, grotesque and carnivalesque.

Abdoh's debt to Beckett has to do with the way his high-energy bricolage undermines the teleological implications of dramatic form. The basic gesture of Beckett's work, in which the mind is arrested through the deployment of the singular image—Winnie of *Happy Days* in her heap of sand, the isolated lips, teeth and tongue speaking to us in *Not I*, the three urns of *Play*—is the basis of Abdoh's work as well. The images in Abdoh simply arrive at a much greater pace than they do in Beckett—in Adboh, Beckett's exhaustion arrives ready to party. In Hip-Hop, Abdoh uses found text and snippets of dialogue pilfered from Hollywood vehicles to re-stage in broad, associational terms the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and their descent into hell. When the Captain (Hades or Minos) steals away with Tom/Eurydice, Juliana/Orpheus climbs aboard a motorcycle, and, backed by rear-projected imagery, begins her descent. This broad-strokes, associational narrative is continually subverted by image-based bricolage. There is no one-to-one re-capitulation of the myth—no moment at which Juliana/Orpheus looks back at Tom/Eurydice while leaving hell and loses her forever, but the archetypal associations hover in the background.

Arriving to abduct Tom/Eurydice, the Captain announces his approach from offstage with a reference to Aristophanes's *The Birds*: "From the egg laid by night, say the birds, came Eros" (239). A short while later, he promises to cure Eurydice of her "perversions" and to "bore desire right out of [her]" (61). As Daniel Mufson puts it, the Captain is "Satan ascendant, a sadistic glutton determined to forbid anyone else the very indulgences he most avidly seeks" (3). An uncanny and enigmatic authority figure, who seems to personify in quasi-human form the ubiquitous force Deleuze would call "desiring production," the Captain dominates the space and the action of the play, and his perversity knows no bounds. Soon after his entrance, Orpheus begins dreaming out loud about a medical experiment in which patients are provided with "assembly kit photographs of sexual partners during intercourse," only with Ronald Reagan's face "superimposed on the original partner" (62). Egged on by the Captain, Orpheus explains a significant finding of the study, how "vaginal intercourse with Reagan proves uniformly disappointing. . . The preferred mode of entry overwhelmingly proves to be rectal." The exchange continues into even more surreal territory involving rear-end auto collisions, Reagan campaign speeches, "Vietnamese child atrocity victims" and the plot of a movie thriller involving kidnapping, a shuffling ex-boxer, and a diabetic child. The scene closes with the Captain strapping a BDSM torture mask over Orpheus's head. Toward the close of *Hip-Hop*, the Captain is finally dispatched by a sword-wielding Orpheus, only to return after a brief pastoral sequence in which Orpheus and Eurydice dance together across the stage. Thin now, and shivering, the Captain laments his inability to pay the tab for a life of erotic transgression. As he embraces death, the play cycles back to a version of its opening image: Eurydice plagued by the same leaky faucet, while Orpheus sings to their newborn child about the lack of refuge in this world.

3. Thanato-aesthetics and L.A.

Assembling his heterogenous elements, Abdoh was, at the risk of mixing metaphors, simply fighting fire with fire—the corrosive liquidity at work in the financialization of daily life in 1990 was itself an entirely theatrical transformation played out in the public spheres of production and representation. Capital itself was morphing on a global scale, and Abdoh's work traces its shift toward a ludic, post-bourgeois, post-rationalist mode of neoliberalism. Citing Ronald Reagan's favorite author—the free-market evangelist George Gilder—Jean-Joseph Goux tracks this postmodernization of capital back to Bataille, describing an "irrationalist legitimation of the capitalist universe that stands in sharp contrast to the Weberian theme of the genesis of modern rationality" (212). Supply preceding and creating demand—this is an imperative that, minus the commodification, can also be applied to avant-garde artistic innovations, such as those of Reza Abdoh. The abundant supply of expressive performers in the L.A. theater underground provided Abdoh with a pool of talent and energy to draw from in his assault on hetero-normal American culture, and he did not hold back. His company Dar a Luz became a mobile and resourceful pack, a collective becomings-animal that followed Adboh to New York City through his final productions until he was too weak to attend rehearsals. Decades later, its members—Fitzpatrick and Francis, Adam Soch, Ken Roht, Tony Torn, Anita Durst, Brenden Doyle, Peter Jacobos and many others—testify to the lasting impact on their lives of this engagement (Soch). Abdoh was at war against neoliberal American culture, and Dar a Luz worked on the front lines.

Through the myth of Orpheus's descent into hell to rescue Eurydice, *Hip-Hop* dramatizes the struggle against the Manichean absolutism of Margaret Thatcher's infamous "There Is No Alternative," and its corollary, Doreen Massey's "there is only one story." In this neoliberal

Weltanschauung, market valuations are held as sacrosanct, and any deviation from the entrepreneurial subjectivity required by neoliberalism becomes an act of heresy. The Captain sums up the infernal values of this regime with fascistic bluntness in the scene titled "Alan's Final Solution." "One God. One Party" (80) he begins, giving voice to the totalitarian preference for unity over multiplicity. But the Captain ultimately fails in his bid to contain the sex-positive and life-affirming energies of Orpheus and Eurydice, who in the end escape from the hell of reductive consumerism. The Captain is unmasked in *Hip-Hop*, stripped of his shining future and his command, along with his promise of a unity-to-come in an overdetermined future. In response to neoliberalism's "there is only one story," Abdoh provides innumerable stories. They are happening all at once, and none of them lead toward Reagan's "shining city on a hill."

Through his terminal illness, the issue of determinism finds a particularly grim expression in Abdoh's body of work. HIV-positive for most of his creative life, Abdoh was creating—or rather *locating*—the new from under a death sentence. The stage in *Hip-Hop* is a battlefield on which opposing forces clash over who gets to construct and control the past and thus, also, the imagined future. As Massey views it, what is crucial "is that the future must be open, must be there to be made." In Abdoh's play, the politics of the "society of control" and the politics of temporality coincide in a similar "determination not to submit to determinism" (32). Under the steady pressure of imminent death, the body in Abdoh becomes not only the source of this affective freedom, but also the site of infection. This intensive coupling between freedom and infection generates in Abdoh's work an Artaudian energy that can be described via Lehmann's Hegelian "postdramatic," but can only be properly understood from a Deleuzian perspective embracing thermodynamic intensities. Composed immediately after his diagnosis, *Hip-Hop* cemented what might be called Abdoh's thanato-aesthetics, in which allure and

contagion operate along the same continuum, bringing the audience into a kind of energized immanence via infectious spectacle, the radical freedom of the body temporally foreclosed, but therefore all the more precious.

Embodying with his monstrous strap-ons and sex toys closeted homosexual desire and sadistic anality, the Captain gives voice to the supply-side ontology of neoliberal capital.

> Boy, I couldn't take no more. I started busting my nuts and Safi started sucking cum from my cock till I was weak. (He sings.) "Love, your magic spell is everywhere. Love, I saw you and I knew…" They had this rice wine and I started drinking it. I got drunker than a coot. We are as driven to kill as we are to live and let live. Isn't that so? (82)

In this new mode, capital is exuberant in its embrace of the irrational and the speculative, relying on "a theology of chance ultimately opening to the divine, to creativity and to the future" (Goux 214). An obnoxiously creative presence, the Captain operates like an avant-garde director, commanding Orpheus and Eurydice to enact clichéd scenarios of transgressive desire —"Don't stop. Don't stop. Go. Go. Go" (82). As Goux emphasizes, neoliberalism is defined by "the moment when the entrepreneur must think himself into the model of the most advanced artistic genius…the moment when the avant-gardist strategy of innovation at any price becomes the paradigm of dominant economic practice…" (218). From this perspective, the problem with the avant-garde is not that it failed in its project to eliminate the boundary between life and art, but that it succeeded all too well. Its success, in fact, only anticipated the transformation of capitalism from its bourgeois, rationalist phase into its even more problematic neoliberal phase, characterized by Dionysian "creative destruction" (Schumpeter). As Goux puts it: "the artistic

avant-garde necessarily loses its difference, its marginality, its deviance-value. The aesthetic avant-gardes have won" (218). This victory threatens to reduce the postmodern artist's project to an endless round of ironic self-commodification. Recognizing this development, Abdoh was intuitively drawn in the direction of the anomalous and the immanent, locating the vantage point he needed to examine the veracity of neoliberalism's Dionysian claims. The Captain's lurid and salacious prominence in *Hip-Hop* suggests Abdoh recognized the avant-garde stance of neoliberal capital, but also positioned it for analytical scrutiny—is neoliberal capital as Dionysian as it claims? Is it ready to go all the way, as Abdoh and Dar a Luz always were? Doesn't the Dionysian fluidity of capital George Gilder celebrates end at the edge of the property line? All can be mobile and changeable, but surely not private property.

4. Assemblage Theory and Bricolage in L.A.

The infernal assault suffered by Orpheus and Eurydice in *Hip-Hop* conveys how, in the society of control, even our bodies are shaped and molded as raw material by the social forces that also shape and mold minerals or bio-mass for myriad productive purposes. Massumi views this subjectifying process as the meaning of the "'real subsumption' of society by the capitalist relation," in which capital (i.e., money) "surfaces as a fractal attractor whose operational arena is immediately coextensive with the social field" (132). In dynamic systems thinking, "attractor" refers to a stable pathway of development in a material milieu, with such pathways ensuring that new forms emerge and develop in certain prescribed ways. While not deterministic in any closed way, complex systems are famously "sensitive to initial conditions," which is when these attractors are established. Origins *command* development, explaining the dual meaning of the Greek word *arche*—both "origin" and "commandment."[xciv] As with the fabulation-based setting

of *Storyland*, *Hip-Hop's* temporal emphasis—even the title evokes the temporality of *the beat*—speaks to Abdoh's intuitive sense of where the new lines of resistance against neoliberal hegemony now fall. In *Hip-Hop*, Abdoh is depicting something very much like a psycho-affective guerrilla war against Massumi's attractor-driven 'real subsumption,' a war that unfolds across the boundary between the temporal and the spatial.

To Lehmann, the non-mimetic, ceremonial emphasis in postdramatic work like Abdoh's trumps the mimetic, Aristotelian features of mythos or plot. Working within a Hegelian framework, Lehmann views the heart of the postdramatic impulse to be the "valorization" of the ceremonial "as an aesthetic quality, detached from all religious and civic reference" (69). But in a Nietzschean framework—in which aesthetic considerations underlie all else—this opposition makes little sense. The intensive repurposing of Abdoh's bricolage is more compatible with the assemblage theory of Deleuze and Guattari (DeLanda, "Assemblage Theory"), which views all objects as inherently decomposable, and devoid of any "relations of interiority" that might entail essentialist commitments. Abdoh's depiction of recursive self-representation in the constitution and maintenance of subjects and social collectives is deeply materialist in the Nietzschean and Deleuzian sense. The ceremonial and the mimetic become simply a set of opposing boundary constraints specific to theater, to be arranged in transformative ways as elements of bricolage. Abdoh's stage, in short, is a place of assemblage and disassemblage. Through *bricolage*,[xcv] Abdoh theatricalizes the political implications of neoliberalism, returning them to public gaze. Perturbed by destabilizing forces, complex assemblages such as Tom/Eurydice and Juliana/Orpheus reconstitute themselves in adaptive ways via acts of self-representation strongly influenced by an underlying attractor linked to money. Embodied in the form of the Captain, this

neoliberal attractor enters, and is itself disassembled through a quasi-sacrificial act of violence. Assemblage theory and *bricolage*, in this aesthetic terrain, go hand in hand.

To understand what is distinctly West Coast about Abdoh's approach, we must remember here that L.A. is the global capital of media production, and thus arguably the ultimate "knowledge economy." A template for urban development in the postwar period, L.A. was founded in the Gilded Age of the late 19th century in a speculative, differential mode, and explicitly designed for an economy of surplus desire and spectacle. From Carrie McWilliams to Reyner Banham, Mike Davis and Edward Soja, perceptive commentators have underscored the city's alignment with the millennial and visionary impulses of capital. Soja's concept of "thirdspace" as "an-Other" form of spaciality,[xcvi] (5) for example, can be productively linked to situated L.A. theater such as Abdoh's. Abdoh's company, Dar A Luz, was a form of collective resistance to being marginalized by mainstream logics of lucrative production, and the confining definitions of real and imagined space governing the production of spectacle in L.A. Adboh was empowered to claim space for alternative "spatial imaginaries" (5) by the essential otherness of the "Equity Waiver," which points toward the alternative ontologies Soja locates in all urban collectivities. At the same time, Hollywood's immaterial labor force also embodies what architect Douglas Spencer calls an "organizational paradigm designed to generate and service mobility, connectivity and flexibility" (13)— spatializing the liquidity of the monetary and the financial. This paradigm is the product of the second boundary constraint situating L.A. theater—the neoliberal economy and the politics of the Powell memo. The aim, again, is temporal: the neoliberal economy, according to Spencer, wants us to communicate and network feverishly, and the urban space is designed to be "landscaped, borderless and reprogrammable" in order to foster these same qualities. The temporal corollary of L.A.'s fluid spatiality is a

speculative state of mind rooted in immanence: "I *might* be the person you are talking to, but then again..." The spatial in L.A. is configured to enable temporal capture; theater in the city, by its durational nature, does the opposite.

With a postmodern version of tragic irony, Abdoh maps what I am calling the "heterotemporal*,"* defined as a temporal corollary of Foucault's heterotopic, in which our place in time is as multiple, and as rooted in diverse relationalities, as our spatial location. From the perspective of the heterotemporal, we are embedded in multiple lines of differential influence entailing the possibility of non-linear leaps and folds that undo deterministic causality. With respect to Abdoh's work, the paradoxical openness of Los Angeles acts here as both a source of energy and as a field of capture. In *Hip-Hop*, the city arises as the site of mythic conflict in an ironic mode, its appeal as a locus for suburban lifestyle consumerism parodied in both overt and subtle ways. With their deviant accoutrements, Eurydice and Orpheus, for example, read like members of the mobile, creative elite described above. They are the kind of autonomous, inventive people needed for flexible, borderless management. The couple's initial exchanges around the dripping faucet dramatize the clash between the quiet liberty of gaps in the working day, and the linear and reductive temporality of the Captain's realm.

The Captain's temporal hegemony has only tightened its grip since *Hip-Hop* premiered, such that today we exist within what Jonathan Crary calls the "24/7 economy." Driven by advanced info-processing technologies, the extraction of human energies now bumps up against the basic operational capacities of the physical body. Abdoh's dual protagonists don't impede this force so much as attempt to climb aboard and steer it back in directions of their own, a project that leads into apocalyptic terrain. To fully understand the ways Abdoh anticipates the temporal collapse of the 24/7 economy requires an exploration of how *Hip-Hop* relates to space

and place, and an analysis of the final scene where the Captain enters stripped of his fat suit to deliver his final monologue of anguish and desire. The Captain, it is crucial to note, has not just been defeated—he has been moved to seek absolution from the audience. What happens, the play asks, when the Captain of unity, the king of our consumerist hell, succumbs to Beckettian exhaustion? Here we find the tragic irony of the Anthropocene: the neoliberal regime of success announcing itself as a devastating failure. *Hip-Hop's* startling denouement suggests Abdoh was aware of how, in the society of control, *failure* has become taboo, a transgression punishable in the harshest terms. This transgression points toward Foucault, whose ethic of self-care aligns in telling ways with Doreen Massey's relational ontology. Assemblage theory and Foucault, again, provide mediating links.

5. Errancy, Immanence and the Infected Body

In Foucault's late works, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self,* and his last lectures and interviews, the philosopher focuses on the relationship of power to "what I cannot do" as the basis of an ethic of self-care in which errancy figures prominently. Addressing this ethical turn in *Life: Experience and Science*, Foucault asks "Should not the whole theory of the subject be reformulated, seeing that knowledge, rather than opening onto the truth of the world, is deeply rooted in the 'errors' of life?" (477). This kind of errancy stands against Nietzsche's "promise behavior," and the psychically reductive and hypostasizing imperative to "give an account of oneself" in Judith Butler's terms. Such an account can only unfold in the abstract space of analogic thinking where comparisons can be made, rather than in the bounded place of the anomalous singular body recovered by errancy. Through reconstitutive acts of rebellion, the ethical being sheds the recursive formations of power in which her agency has been extracted or

dominated, limiting her capacities to act for herself. This is a good description of the main conflict in *Hip-Hop*, Eurydice and Orpheus seeking to evade and, finally, to vanquish the Captain's dominion. In so doing, they reveal how the "closed geographical imagination of openness," as Massey calls it (175), is, in reality, completely unstable.

Via errancy, Abdoh's fractured boundary practice counters the entropic influence of symbolic complexities, such as language and money. The crucial importance of boundaries arises because of how self-organizing systems dissipate their own resources—"fail," in other words—more efficiently than chaotic ones do. To illustrate this, Terrence Deacon uses the example of a whirlpool forming in a stream.[xcvii] The structure of the whirlpool enables turbulent water to flow more efficiently, thus undermining the imbalance that gave rise to the whirlpool in the first place, and that sustains its structure. This self-depleting effect of emergent structure only becomes problematic when it comes to living systems—since living systems are clearly self-organizing, how do they evade the entropic effects of structure? Deacon answers this mystery through what he calls "opposing boundary constraints," (235-259) where entropic effects of one set of constraints act as a kind of negentropic fuel for the opposing constraint. Through this kind of looping, recursive feedback mechanism, living autogens, according to Deacon, sidestep entropy. The list of binaries embodied by situated theater—*mimesis* and ceremony, intelligence and instinct, unity and multiplicity, Powell and 99-Seat Contract, L.A. as city versus L.A. as SoCal suburb—become both/and prerequisites for adaptive resilience rather than either/or decision points.

Complexity theorists in contemporary biology like Deacon also, crucially, distinguish between the ends-directed behavior of inanimate self-organizing systems, such as hurricanes and financial markets, and animate ones. Animate systems deploy opposing boundary constraints to

avoid the dissipative effects of organization and structure. Falling under the sway of our symbolic systems results in dissipative effects and, eventually, in collapse. In the case of the hyper-dynamic symbolic systems at work in human cultural ecologies, misperformance, errancy and failure[xcviii] can be thought of in these same terms: as boundary constraints performed against the entropic hegemony of the symbolic. In the shadow of the Anthropocene, the performance of failure comes to exert a paradoxical negentropy linked to adaptive resilience, duration and emplacement. A subtlety in play is the way the two sides of the coin truly do resemble opposing boundary constraints, materializing root capacities of human consciousness in highly seductive ways. The power of the "coin trick," in other words, is not to be underestimated, and the elaborate doublings of tragic irony developed by Aeschylus and Sophocles can be viewed as only the first of many attempts to neutralize this powerful but inanimate agent of change. Abdoh's high-energy bricolage reads like a late-phase version of this kind of confrontation with the entropic effects of the symbolic through adaptive transgression and queer errancy.

Abdoh's theater of errancy thus cuts against the habit-based automatisms fueling the consumer economy, in which libidinal drives are activated by a barrage of sophisticated marketing campaigns in order to stimulate surplus consumption. It is the boundary between living and nonliving complexities that Abdoh dramatizes through the Captain's clash with Orpheus and Eurydice. Recapturing heterotemporal errancy from the Captain, stripping him of his false *bêtise*, becomes a crucial part of the process of liberation, the escape from hell. Theatrical production becomes a reclamation project taking temporal form in an embrace of immanence: reclaiming specifically the prerogatives of errancy and creation and the heterotemporal space of otherness. The dominion of the symbolic is revealed, in a schizoanalytical fashion, to be a rejection of the immanence of assemblages, and a bid for a kind

of totalization that can only exist within the immaterial realm of the idea. Conversely, it is because we don't see the autonomous life of the financial—the way its opposing boundary constraints mimic those of life—that we are powerless against it. Abdoh's postdramatic *techne* can thus be viewed as an attempt to mechanize immanence in a social (and hence political) mode, in opposition to the neoliberal mechanization of unity and linear causality centered in the financial. Given the obvious link between neoliberal hyper-consumerism and the galloping environmental dysfunctions of the Anthropocene, Abdoh's situated bricolage—alongside Foucault's ethic of errancy—takes on new, utilitarian resonances.

What, finally, is at stake in the kind of failure or errancy we are describing? Assemblage theory suggests, again, that it is the failure of *relations of interiority* to manifest and produce the totalization and unity promised by the symbolic. In a cultural context defined by the atomizing values of neoliberalism, the recognition that our identities are dependent on the immanent day-to-day interactions of our component parts, and thus entirely ephemeral, is experienced as acutely bewildering. We turn to the theater for affirmation because, on stage, the nature of the spectacle as assemblage is right near the surface. The risk of failure inherent to these immanent relationships is also very much a part of the pleasure of the art form. "Alan" has to show up on cue; "Juliana" and "Tom" have to recite the text and follow the blocking of the show. The audience must arrive, the stage manager and running crew as well. In standard postdramatic form, *Hip-Hop* wants continually to remind us of its own confection, and of the entropy it defies, but to which it nevertheless remains inseparably linked. And in *Hip-Hop*, the forces blocking access to this heterotemporal ground are emblematized by Abdoh's peculiar and yet defining costume choice: the Captain's fat suit.

6. The Captain as an Archon of Corporate Personhood

In a 2014 interview,[xcix] Mandell identifies his fat suit in *Hip-Hop* as the lynchpin of Abdoh's conception of the Captain:

> [Reza] called me one day and said they were having a meeting for the first rehearsal of this new piece he was creating and I said, oh, okay and I went to the rehearsal…I said 'where's the script?' and he said 'we don't have a script. . .but I see you as a fat man. We're going to start with dances.' (Interview with author).

Abdoh's choice of the fat suit links *Hip-Hop* to several other conspicuous landmarks on the cultural scene of the Reaganite 1980s, including David Byrne's iconic 1984 *Stop Making Sense* costume, and the obese and murderous Judge Holden in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* from 1985. In different ways each of these uncanny figures implicates what David Graeber calls the "strange, exotic" and "peculiarly European" invention: the corporation. Graeber defines corporations as those entities that, "through a charming legal fiction, we imagine to be persons, just like human beings, but immortal, never having to go through all the human untidiness of marriage, reproduction, infirmity, and death" (304). Graeber underscores that although we view corporations as quasi-natural features of our world, "in historical terms, they are actually strange, exotic creatures. . . the most peculiarly European addition to that endless proliferation of metaphysical entities so characteristic of the Middle Ages." As mentioned in Chapter 2, Graeber draws on Kantorowicz, to link the lynchpin legal conceit of neoliberalism—corporate personhood—to the philosophical underpinnings of the medieval figure of the angel. Abdoh's work returns us to the politics at work in Shepard's *Starving Class* and sheds new light.

If the Captain is an angel, he is a dark one, and this explains the presence in *Hip-Hop* of imagery out of Gnostic theology. In "Alan's Final Solution," for example, the Captain asks "what is the name shared by the Zoroastrian Creator God of Light and a popular cat?" (82). Abdoh, in fact, takes the Manichean absolutism mentioned earlier—Thatcher's T.I.N.A.—at face value by embracing a Gnostic dualism. Personifying our reactive idealism, the Captain can be thought of as an Archon—one of the malevolent angels[c] in Gnostic theogony deputized by the Creator God to extract human energies for his own dark purposes. The Captain's name itself, in fact, is a version of "archon"—one who commands. Abdoh's use of Gnostic imagery indicates a level of awareness of what was at stake in neoliberal globalization: money as *dis-emplacing*; errancy, rooted in the body, as *emplacing*. The uncanniness of the Captain comes from the way he is simultaneously disembodied, because fundamentally unreal, and also fully present and bent on destruction. In the context of neoliberalism, these immortal Archons, super-sized but fundamentally empty (and thus entirely free of entropy), bear a striking resemblance to the corporate (non)person.

Certain new perspectives on the link between the spatial and the temporal cast this issue, and Abdoh's dramatization of it in Los Angeles, in an interesting light. Intriguingly, the doctrine of corporate personhood was first promulgated in the 1886 case of *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railway Co.*, in which the court extended 14th Amendment protections to the railroad. As noted in Chapter 2, Los Angeles owes its existence to the machinations of a group of wealthy silver miners (the "Comstock Kings") who purchased vast tracts of Southern Californian ranch land in the depression of the 1860s. Exerting political and financial pressure, this group of Gilded Age speculators was able to steer the Southern Pacific Railroad to a terminus in Los Angeles instead of to the existing port city of San Diego (110). Given the importance of the

Southern Pacific to the city,[ci] the Santa Clara case thus has an eerie provenance to it. As Alan Trachtenberg underscores, the railroads were the first major corporations, driving the 19th century "incorporation of America," and also collapsing spatial boundaries in ways that have only accelerated over the subsequent decades. Using terms very close to those of Massey, he writes:

> The railroad (…) in its increased velocity of transport included the incorporation of space and time as factors among the elements of production: the necessary act of overcoming barriers, of virtually annihilating space or distance by reconceiving it as time (places becoming identified as scheduled moments of departure and arrival), emerging as the major capital industry in the age of steam. (59)

In this passage, Trachtenberg neatly links the corporate archon with Massey's collapse of space into time in the context of the thermodynamism of the steam engine. The passage suggests ways the spatio-temporal dynamics of globalization are intertwined with the origins of the city of L.A. Works of art such as Abdoh's *Hip-Hop* can be seen as expressions of cultural resistance to the temporal capture now driving our second Gilded Age. A distinct attractor is at work in L.A.'s origins, gearing the region for the emergence of the entrepreneurial subject and a neoliberal mode of existence. As Davis writes, surveying the first wave of emigration to Los Angeles in the 1890s, "[t]his massive flow of wealth between regions produced population, income and consumption structures seemingly out of all proportion to Los Angeles's actual production base: the paradox of the first 'postindustrial' city in its preindustrial guise" (25). Situated plays like *Hip-Hop* are devoted to providing us with a window into this attractor.

7. Immanence Neutralized

How can the temporal folding achieved by Abdoh's bricolage be accounted for without resorting to a linear and deterministic neoliberal world view, or to an equally troublesome Gnostic dualism? The answer to this question lies in a new deconstruction of the time-space binary by Phillip Ethington and other philosophers, following Edward Casey's phenomenological approach to space and place. Carrying Massey's concerns out of the arena of the social into a more cosmopolitical framework, Ethington draws on Georg Simmel's notion that the human being can itself be understood as a boundary-form situated where space and time meet (480). Place, then, becomes an event anchoring us to a cartographic past:

> Experiential or memorial time is very real because it takes a place. The past cannot exist *in* time: only *in* space. Histories representing the past represent the places (*topoi*) of human action. History is not an account of 'change over time,' as the cliche´ goes, but rather, change through space. Knowledge of the past, therefore, is literally cartographic: a mapping of the places of history indexed to the coordinates of spacetime. (466)

Edward Casey himself praises Ethington's thinking about boundaries, writing: "a boundary is something that is not just 'geometrically and metaphorically spatial' (in Ethington's phrase) but inseparably temporal as well." For Ethington, our habit of metaphorizing time in spatial terms arises from a fruitful intuition of the actual truth: time is entirely spatial and has no reality outside of space. "In nature, time—*by itself*—has no being whatsoever," writes Ethington. "It is a mere measurement of spatial motion. But human or *lived* time is another matter" (508).

In light of Ethington's thinking, Abdoh's embrace of bricolage begins to take on new, heterotemporal overtones rich in implications for the ways space and time are woven together within human subjectivity. Since the stage is a liminal or boundary space, and since Abdoh's bricolage is devoted to repeatedly centering—and thus deconstructing—this boundary on a temporal level, it is as if the force driving the collapse of space into time gets reversed on his stage to fracture out into new geographies of immanence. Abdoh's bricolage begins to bring our lived experience of time into closer alignment with its actual unity with space. And because, in contrast to what happens in the cinema, we share time with the performers on stage, this re-spatialization of the temporal enters our memory as a lived experience. To stage a piece of theater of this kind is thus to scramble the coordinates power has laid down to temporally map our private geographies, revealing the past to be already heterotemporal. And since, as Ethington reminds us, "the knowing subject is the material world reaching back to itself" (487), this postdramatic *techne* provides ground for—i.e., actualizes—what Lawrence Grossberg calls a new "relational ontology" (Bond and Kindon 213).

Ethington's language about the material world "reaching back to itself" also recalls Bergson's configuration of the play of instinct and intelligence as the site of the "interriorization" of difference. Of Bergson's thinking, Deleuze states,

> It seems to us that Duration essentially defines a virtual multiplicity (what differs in nature). Memory then appears as the coexistence of all the degrees of difference in this multiplicity, in this vitality. The élan vital, finally, designates the actualization of this virtual according to the lines of differentiation that correspond to the degrees—up to this precise line of man where the Elan Vital gains self-consciousness. (*Bergsonism* 113)

In a similar key, Massey suggests that "a full recognition of the characteristics of space" entails interconnectivity and constitutive relationality (189). Assemblage theory, with its emphasis on relations of immanence, is, then, a framework by which the heterotopic and the heterotemporal can be reconciled on Massey's new relational ground. Corporations, conversely, materialize in collective form our idealist longing for access to heavenly realms free of entropy, and of the entanglements of relationality. And yet, what actually gets delivered by neoliberalism is precisely the entropic effect of Deacon's self-organizing whirlpool—the increased dissipation of constituent resources in systems devoid of opposing constraints. The Captain, in other words, personifies the entropic capacities of a world in which reductive causal mechanisms, precisely because they are subject to control, are imposed on a heterogenous temporal ground to the exclusion of contradiction and dissonant errancy.

The end-directed or "teleodynamic"[cii] aspect of self-organizing systems is also relevant to an understanding of Abdoh's chaotic bricolage, which is designed precisely to tease this teleodynamic aspect of the symbolic into the light. Viewed as features of material, rather than products of any Hegelian dialectic of Spirit, symbolic systems emerge as extended, parasitic selves that maintain themselves, resetting after perturbations: Captain as Archon, a Gnostic opponent. Though they are devoid of reflexive awareness, inanimate complexities like our symbolic systems nevertheless exhibit the ends-directed, adaptive capacities of selves. In evolutionary terms, Deacon describes our relationship to language in a similar way: "modern humans need the language parasite in order to flourish and reproduce, just as much as it needs humans to reproduce" (*Species* 113.) Epochs of financialization such as the neoliberalism of the 1980s and '90s hark back to the initial conditions of the monetary and the financial as a meta-

system of archon-like dimensions. The degree to which *idea* can actualize and materialize its entropic capacities via money is the extent to which the Creator God (i.e., the symbolic) can dominate and feed off the energies of the human.

Abdoh's boundary-crossing work thus anticipates a new politics in which Gilder's style of capitalism is revealed to be based, not on the market, but rather on the very opposite of the market—a variant of what Braudel referred to as "anti-market capitalism" (Braudel 223–230). Thomas Piketty and his colleagues document the full extent of this too-big-to-fail mode of neoliberal gangsterism, which only became apparent after the 2008 collapse of the financial markets. Massey's observation that "relations of dominance may be maintained precisely through the instabilities of meaning" (175) was demonstrated with great vividness by the spectacle of wealthy financiers funneling flood-tides of public monies into their private offshore accounts in the form of lavish bonuses. Self-organizing marketplace dynamics, such as those celebrated by Gilder, had nothing to do with the arrival of this bounty. Even before the 2008 crash, the lion's share of the new wealth produced in the era of de-regulation flowed into the coffers of the traditional oligarchy. This trajectory undermines neoliberalism's avant-garde posturings, and makes the crisis into an aperture or a lens through which we can look back across the decades for some sobering perspective. The Big Lie that operates at the heart of neoliberalism is, again, the claim anti-market capital makes on the populism of the market. The distinction between the marketplace—with all its magical, decentered and non-hierarchical complexity—and the entropic, profoundly un-democratic, top-down force of anti-market capital, is what must be concealed at all costs.

Spatial domination and temporal control arise as dual boundary constraints of this too-big-to-fail financialism, debunking the postmodern, liturgical claims of neoliberal capital

outlined by Goux. In the 2008 crash, *failure* itself was turned into a lucrative opportunity, as if to parody Foucauldian self-care at the corporate level. But the fluidity of relationships cultivated in the neoliberal marketplace was carefully contained through an elaborate substratum of law, while the ever-present barrage of the Debordian spectacle directed the public gaze away from liberative boundary practices like Abdoh's. Bedrock institutions of private property and ownership were carefully protected from the "fluidity" encouraged elsewhere. Neoliberal justifications thus express only a very qualified Nietzschianism: a carefully selected subset of self-organizing processes (i.e., the financial markets) are valorized, while everywhere else Kantian prohibitions hold sway.

8. The An-archy of Taking No Place

There are strong resonances between the way Foucault uses the notion of errancy and how Deleuze and Guattari discuss the anomalous, "becomings-animal" nature of the sorcerer and her (or his) power. As an "apparatus of capture," money organizes and commandeers transgression. It does so in the Aristotelian mode of the analogic, in which thought is organized around general and particular classifications that restrict thought's scope and impact. In opposition to the analogical, Deleuze and Guattari identify the "blocks of becoming" as the anomalous, in which difference operates in the world *as difference*. The figure of the sorcerer, who had seemed so unusual when first reintroduced by Deleuze and Guattari in the 1980s, is the *anomalous* persona Deleuze and Guattari deploy to challenge the *analogic* status quo of the Captain's domain.

Based instead on difference, Deleuze's conceptual framework clashes with analogical thinking with particular force. Truth as *differential* becomes something other than an underlying

simplicity we can never quite arrive at because our minds are, *qua* Augustine, just too sinful or, *qua* Kant, too inherently limited. From the perspective of difference, the seductions of analogy derive "from a philosophical will to unify generic and specific difference in a single coherent, 'organic,' representable whole of being" (Ramey 133). With its heads-and-tails binarism, money is a good vehicle for this "God trick" of thinking from nowhere (as Haraway called it) because of how it lies at the boundaries between interior and exterior, private and public, abstract and concrete. A coin—money—is an analogic machine, in other words, efficiently mediating between the entire range of objects and actions in a way that *seems to* reconcile them into unity. Money thus *seems to* eliminate difference as a root force, while still allowing transactional values to remain responsive and mobile—differential, in a word. Pushed away, immanence returns, like Abdoh's Captain, in the form of destructive, automatic *ressentiment* in search of unity.

Recognizing the primacy of these self-representational processes would seem to be the basis of a posthuman ethic of immanence, which immediately takes on a situated quality. These are precisely the aspects of the postdramatic most effectively actualized by Abdoh's bricolage, the discontinuities and layerings of his Beckettian imagery undoing the unitary and hetero-normative codes functioning as deep-seated attractors in the minds of the audience. L.A.'s particular configuration, and its speculative origins, made it the ideal ground for this kind of cultural resistance. The reversal in the affective processes of the theater machine we see in plays like *Hip-Hop* registers as a furious battle against what Randy Martin calls the "financialization of daily life" that began in the late 1980s. In contradiction to this globalizing force, Abdoh's work dramatizes how the linear causality of the machinic can allow the human to cross more fully into the embodied, non-causal temporality of immanence. In this mode, Stiegler references the "new

optimism" arriving with the advent of cybernetic machines "capable of producing negentropy" (52). Various forms of techno-pastoralism have competed with various forms of technophobia ever since, with the Anthropocene tilting the scales in the direction of the latter. Stiegler, for his part, focuses on a distinct affect or feeling-tone that arrived along with the computational or information processing machines that have become so ubiquitous. "More profoundly than the relinquishment of the human's place as technical individual beside the machine," he writes, "the threat of entropy makes possible the anguish in which the human experiences technical evolution" (52). This anguish, it seems to me, is precisely the dominant feeling-tone of Abdoh's work, altering our understanding of the purpose of dramatic representation.

Via entropy, the links between coinage and tragic drama become clearer: Archons, and the corporations they represent, are agents of entropy; tragic irony, meanwhile, is calibrated precisely to oppose the entropic effects of the coin. The thanatopolitical aspect of the Anthropocene actualizes the profound pessimism of Gnostic cosmology, which was born the moment man glimpsed in the mirror of the coin the monstrous face of his own capacity for recursivity and automaticism: the Logos. More specifically, money is a self-cloaking social object that generates the ensorcelment of "philosophies of access" which, via some version of correlationism, excel in amplifying the original atomistic effects of coinage, shielding the entire process from scrutiny, critique and deconstruction. A little button of entropy, a constitutive absence in the machine of the Anthropocene, the coin materializes this separation and, acting as a kind of ratchet, draws us inexorably forward toward *ressentiment* and the pursuit of an unattainable unity—toward a final catastrophic encounter with the entropic hyper-object of the Anthropocene. With the heterotemporality of his stage craft, I would make the case that Abdoh anticipates this development, and shows a way forward.

9. Rene Girard and the Virtual Scapegoat

There is one remaining element of *Hip-Hop* on which we have not touched, and it involves the two black figures, *Borracha* and *Amen*, who appear half-naked, playing drums and dancing as the Captain's engagement with Orpheus and Eurydice travels to its conclusion. A send-up or running gag rooted in gay male kitsch (i.e., the naked Brazilian house boy), these characters could be said to play a choral role. The Brazilians haunt the interstices of the play, appearing first at the bedroom window with an offering of cookies, then entering to enable bits of staging, then dancing themselves and playing drums, then helping to dress Orpheus in her leather jacket and pushing her into position on her motorcycle, etc. The pair are present throughout as almost scenic elements, returning at the close to offer cookies once again. It is in this pair of figures that Abdoh's postdramatic stagecraft collides with race in ways that could appear fetishizing or worse. My admittedly untestable hypothesis is that Amen and Borracha would not have been included in *Hip-Hop* after 1992, at least not in the same way—events surrounding the beating of Rodney King revealed a certain kind of irony as untenable.

By echoing the Watts uprising of 1965, the civic violence following the acquittal of the LAPD officers responsible for Rodney King's beating in 1992 stripped away the illusion that the Civil Rights movement of the late 1960s had fundamentally altered the role anti-black racism plays in American cultural life. In so doing the '92 uprising revived the question of the role of anti-black racism in late-phase capitalism. While Amen and Borracha play largely a *ceremonial* role in *Hip-Hop*, it is the *mimetic* dimension of the anti-black racism at the core of white dominance in the U.S. that illuminates their place in Abdoh's schema. While certainly liminal, as choral figures are, Amen and Borracha can more usefully be considered embodied aspects of the

apparatus of theater. As such, they connect in suggestive ways to the foundational role slavery played in the origins of modern capitalism, as an ever-present reserve of sacrificial fodder framing the descent into hell. The intersections of *mimesis* and sacrifice are crucial to an understanding of Abdoh's intentions here.

Addressing the nature of sacrificial violence, Rene Girard underscores that human beings "…are competitive rather than aggressive." He adds:

> In addition to the appetites we share with animals, we have a more problematic yearning that lacks any instinctual object: desire. We literally do not know what to desire and, in order to find out, we watch the people we admire: we imitate their desires. (*Violence and Religion*)

Mimetic, triangulating impulses lead to murderous rivalries, in Girard's view, and these rivalries often lead to murder and a plague of tit-for-tat killings. Spreading to engulf entire communities, such mimetic violence "probably would have annihilated our species if something had not prevented this outcome" (Girard 8). Girard's "something" is the sacrificial victim, and the cultural processes of the scapegoat mechanism. Arising from the groundlessness mentioned earlier with respect to Michel Serres,[ciii] this generalized form of mimetic violence is turned against a single victim who is then worshipped as a savior (which he certainly was), becoming the source of myth and the differential processes of culture all the way down to the level of language. Girard's thesis hinges on triangular, mimetic desire—I want what I see you wanting—which, in the absence of restraining social hierarchies, inevitably leads to violence. Our fundamental lack of any stable or essential identity (i.e. what Steigler depicts as the "the fault of

Epimetheus")[civ] makes the social arena into a desperate and inherently contradictory competition for *difference through mimesis*. The figure of the Greek pharmakos—the victim conveyed through the city and then ritually slaughtered—conveys the dualism of poison-cure that defines the Girardian scapegoat, while the figure of Jesus Christ demonstrates the ongoing cultural power of the scapegoat mechanism.

Several areas of relevance to the status of the black subject within racist white culture immediately suggest themselves. The scapegoat, to Girard, is sacrificed in order to *create* difference. The mimetic violence brought on by destabilizing sameness is transformed by sacrifice into the worship of the fundamentally different status of the sacrificial victim. In order to fulfill this function, the scapegoat must be selected from among the pool of the same, and then raised into difference, so to speak, through sacrificial violence. Due to his lower status within the racial hierarchies of white European-dominated societies, the African was not, according to these requirements, an ideal scapegoat. The radically abject status imposed upon the African in the form of enslavement also militated against the sameness required for the scapegoat mechanism to function. How then could enough of a sacrificial "surplus value" be extracted from the black to support the continuing horizontality of the capitalist enterprise? The supplement needed to activate this sacrificial agent was the projection of a humanizing, affective bond between the white woman and the black slave, a bond so threatening on existential grounds it needed to be instantly pathologized into a rape imago: Amen and Borracha offering cookies at the bedroom window. Hence, in Amen and Borracha, Adboh is intuiting something of the liminal role white culture casts the black citizen to play. Arriving first, Amen and Borracha haunt the bedroom window, as if scouting out Orpheus's and Eurydice's domestic environment for information about their susceptibility to temptation and desire, and for signs of entry. And yet, while they

attend the Captain, Amen and Borracha also survive him, remaining strong presences in the newly configured world at the close of the play.

The white man in the modern anti-black era, from this point of view, is permitted to differentiate—in Deleuzian language to *territorialize*—while all efforts are made to keep the American black in a liminal state of suspended being.[cv] Sacrificial crises arise when social distinctions dissolve—when an underlying sameness asserts itself too strongly—as happened in the post-Civil Rights era and the Dionysian "summer of love" era. The violent assault on Rodney King performed in plain view the neoliberal bid to re-install hierarchy and social distinctions that had been operating in the shadows for the previous decade. The urban ecology was passing through a phase shift, the white middle class already in the grip of a ferocious assault from above that would only be amplified during the Clinton years as NAFTA dissolved the leverage of organized labor, and the Telecommunications Act of 1997 cemented the right's grip on the organs of culture. After the leveling impact of the Civil Rights movement, anti-black racism was re-animated through the social policies and discourses of the Southern Strategy, the black subject re-pathologized through the "dog-whistle" dimensions of anti-welfare rhetoric, the reinstatement of the death penalty, the War on Drugs and myriad other repressive mechanisms. This bid for a new Gilded Age stratification is entropic, Abdoh's demonic Captain ascendant.

Interestingly, the liminal state mentioned above also bears a striking resemblance to the situated gap Agamben theorizes as the seat of true ethics (*Remnants of Auschwitz* 130). Agamben's articulation of this kind of situated ethics also resonates strongly with Steigler's "politics of attention" and care (*Taking Care of Youth*). In a suggestive alignment, both also align suggestively with the "yearning" Stengers and Pignarre locate within the American Civil Rights movement (48) as the most adequate response to "capitalist sorcery."[cvi] We sense in this

conceptual ecology the possibility of a new response to the atomizing influence of money and its political theology: neoliberalism. One paradox central to a politics of care of this kind is that we are never more the same than when we strive for difference. The Oedipalized identity at the core of consumer capitalism is defined by this self-contradictory dynamism, as is Wendy Brown's competitive entrepreneurial subject (60). In actuality, as tragic dramatists from Aeschylus to Beckett (and beyond) have emphasized in different ways, human identity is defined by contradiction rather than non-contradiction. Reversing Austin's exclusion of the mimetic from the domain of illocutionary force, our fundamental political imperative thus becomes the dissolution of the presupposition of unity, which is nothing, in the end, but the parasite of the symbolic thinking through us. Hence, while Adboh's use of Amen and Borracha appears dated, their presence also points in the direction of the more truly multicultural city L.A. would increasingly become over the next couple of decades.[cvii]

10. The Endgame of the Southern Strategy

Steppling's and Abdoh's careers coincide with the rise of neoliberalism in American political culture. In direct and indirect ways, the playwrights continually reject and undermine the worship of self-anointed winners at the heart of neoliberalism. The rise of neoliberalism to a dominant position within American culture coincides with the strongest period of site-specific experimentation in L.A. theater. Situated between Prop 13 in 1978 and the riots of 1992, this cultural moment was shaped by the last phase of the Cold War and the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union. By the time the Berlin Wall came down, the market forces of Wall Street had already transformed L.A.'s cultural atmosphere through the economics of the blockbuster, closing the brief window of expressive freedom the film business had enjoyed between the

downfall of the studio model in the early 1960s and the advent of *Jaws* and *Star Wars*. After the '92 uprising, the apotheosis of the transgressive DIY slacker in Los Angeles continues in the hip-hop artist—Snoop Dog or Dr. Dre with his mic-and-turntable assemblage, appropriating and re-purposing industrial-grade music tracks for deployment in Compton and Watts. Neoliberalism's valorization of money is commandeered and re-combined in joyful, errant fashion with sex and drugs, the whole tantalizing package then exported to suburban white kids from sea to shining sea.

In 2011, as income inequality reaches levels seldom seen in the West since pre-Revolutionary France (Saez), the true aims of neoliberalism are much clearer. The formerly commonplace trickle-down claims, with their assumption that neoliberal policies are designed to benefit anyone other than a small elite, can no longer be made with a straight face. If, via Archie Bunker and the other sons of Hamm, Samuel Beckett had the patriarchy on its heels on the eve of the Powell memo in 1972, by the middle of the first decade of the 21st Century this threat had largely been neutralized. And yet, this discourse is historical, in motion, evolving. The neoliberal experiment is a form of what Sheldon Wolin has called *managed democracy*, a form of "inverted totalitarianism." Forty years after the Business Roundtable convened in 1972 to address William Powell's memo, this effort has been remarkably successful. And yet, the Republican party that has served as neoliberalism's chief vehicle is now in danger of becoming a regional party, its signature Southern Strategy no longer producing the desired results.

CONCLUSION

The Situated Subject: Toward a Politics of the Anthropocene

1. Simonized at Home

Playing at Home for Contemporary Theater and Art in Tribeca, *Teenage Wedding*, written and directed by Steppling, shambled into New York in August of 1991 with a confusing insouciance—an underlying tone of yawning disdain, as if New York audiences were fortunate to be able to sample the edgy literary and theatrical plenitude on offer. This was not the posture New York mandarins expected from voices arriving from the benighted cultural colony of Los Angeles, and John Simon, for one, was scathing in his review.[cviii] Most scandalously, *Teenage Wedding* was infused with the pathos and the mordant comedy of quasi-criminal, working class failure. This is where the production clashed most fundamentally with the *haut-bourgeois* milieu of the celebrated but melodramatic *Substance of Fire* authored by Jon Robin Baitz (a Steppling protégé), a play which also opened in New York in 1991 to a much warmer reception. The post-AIDS "gentrification of the mind" documented by Sarah Schulman was already beginning to transform the progressive arts community, with the theater world in particular focused increasingly on "the small concerns of recognizable bourgeois types" (83) moving along predetermined, assimilationist narratives. The return of a Beckettian aesthetic in this SoCal form suggests how inhospitable downtown New York was becoming for a brand of errancy rooted in the Off-Off Broadway movement.

2. Beckett in L.A.: The Dual Strata of Theater

Tracking Beckett's influence through L.A.-based plays by Shepard, Fornés, Steppling and Abdoh, this dissertation has explored themes of displacement, deterritorialization, monetization and the neoliberal *episteme* with a focus on individually authored works, beginning with *Endgame*. The distinctive attributes of these individual playwrights, I argue, is deeply revealing about the nature of the city they are coupled to in their different ways. Shepard's object proliferations, Fornés's anti-computational, flat ontology, Steppling's actor-centered deconstructions and his deployment of absence, and Abdoh's bricolage are all products of a coupling between Los Angeles and Beckett's aesthetic of *lessness*. Beckett's encounter with his own *bêtise* in Roussillon foreshadowed how these L.A. Playwrights would respond to neoliberalism by embracing the exhaustion and errancy found within the gap Agamben locates between the semiotically constructed "I" and the experiential self. The image of the gap in Agamben, however, still nods in the direction of non-contradiction. Better is the both/and framework of dialetheism—as if Beckett sought not to occupy this gap so much as to embrace both its constraining boundaries simultaneously, despite the seeming impossibility of doing so. This embrace of *techne* and the body is particularly resonant in Los Angeles because L.A., the original placeless city, is where *telos* and *episteme* of the West reach their full expression and also, arguably, their full exhaustion in the Anthropocene.

Flourishing in the 1980s, Beckettian auteur theater in Los Angeles generated errant, processual modes of subjectivity (Weston, Mae, Bat, Juliana/Orpheus) that clashed against the entrepreneurial subject of neoliberalism (Taylor, Conrad, the Captain), creating intriguing interference patterns and fractal emergences. Materializing this clash, the situated play was defined by engagement with the urban site, direct playwright-actor collaboration in both the

composition and the staging of the dramatic text, and a simultaneous and contradictory embrace of both ceremonial and mimetic modes of performance. Oriented toward new modes of *techne*-based and logic, the situated play arises between a ceremonial-immanent theater on one side, and a mimetic-transcendental theater on the other. Its expressive trajectory has roots in the Off-Off Broadway tradition that quickly adapted and evolved in L.A.'s new, more open, nomadic *speculative* topography. In Shepard's *Starving Class*, objects proliferate monstrously at the boundary line between the mimetic and the ceremonial modes of theatrical expression. In *Mud,* Fornés drew this boundary line in the direction of what might be called a situated logic based on dialetheism and contradiction, and then spatialized it in the apparatus of neo-tragic drama. Steppling's *Storyland* is characterized by an equally spatialized deconstruction of the actor, dramatizing the constitutive absence L.A.'s speculative *arche* shares with the processual subject. Abdoh's *Hip-Hop* explored, finally, the development of a new kind of heterotemporal immanence that undermines the sovereign command to "make an account of yourself." This hybrid Beckettian aesthetic was commensurate with the challenge posed by the Dionysian posturings of neoliberal capitalism Goux and Wendy Brown point to: the way neoliberalism seizes the avant-garde imperative of breaching the boundary separating *praxis* from life.

If neoliberalism kills politics, the situated play attempts to bring it back to life, and this aesthetic EMT operation is accomplished via the differential charge between the ceremonial and the mimetic. Even as the monetary values of neoliberalism came to dominate U.S. culture, authorial engagement in the process of staging dramatic texts remained possible for playwright-directors in Los Angeles in ways that were no longer possible elsewhere. The unique aspects of Los Angeles as a cultural ecology include the comparatively low rents for theater spaces, and the mild weather encouraging site-specific work. The city's unique configuration as the center of

film and television production provided playwrights with a vast pool of expressive talent looking for new challenges. Together, these factors allowed Beckett's neo-tragic irony to flourish in L.A. as a material knowing rooted in the body—i.e. *techne*. In the 1980s, Beckett's "stupidity" found in Los Angeles, the speculative city built from the start from constitutive absences, its postmodern home. The basic political act becomes an embrace of common sense and non-contradiction setting up the conditions for the binarism of the coin trick. Resuscitating politics thus involves the paradox and contradictory both/and truths characterizing the situated play.

Defined as they are by the noir-ish errancy of L.A. as an urban place, the Angeleno auteurs can also be considered part of the queer counterculture described by Schulman in compelling terms:

> The dominant culture told us we were outcasts and alone and then did everything they could to make that come true. Out of the conflict between our determination to truly exist fully as ourselves, and our clash with highly propagandized false stories and even more powerful silences, came queer culture, the marvel that produced many of the great art ideas of the twentieth century. (84)

Whether the marvel Schulman describes lived on longer in Los Angeles than in New York could be endlessly debated. What is clear is that this cultural attractor began in L.A. in the 1970s, reached full expression in the late 1980s, and then began to slowly lose energy after the L.A. riots of '92, finally dissolving in the first decade of the 21st Century. Theater in the city thrived in other ways, particularly the exploration of diverse subjectivities and configurations of desire linked to the city's role as among the most ethnically diverse on the planet. In her 2002 work *In*

Other Los Angeleses, Meiling Cheng makes a compelling case for this very different, multi-ethnic Pacific Rim aesthetic as L.A.'s most vibrant arena for contemporary theater and performance. In Cheng's new SoCal version of *New Babylon,* Constant's *homo ludens* becomes a truly differential being.

The errant Angeleno subjectivities expressed by the situated playwrights are nonetheless characterized by a discontinuous, hyper-mediated, negentropic temporality dynamically linked to what theorists such as Felix Guattari and Bryan Reynolds call the "transversal." Luridly self-conscious and self-referential, the L.A. state of mind moves in the direction of becomings-animal, resisting the teleology and the competitive imperatives governing the entrepreneurial subject of neoliberalism. This mode of situated subjectivity creates a need for acts of spontaneity and "transversal" errancy, and an autonomy geared toward an immanent "no future" mode of existence. The situated subject rejects a vision of life as endless default functioning, dispels also the entropic psychosis of certainty, embracing instead a politics of presence, joyful errancy and failure. Linked genealogically to L.A.'s speculative origins, these same dynamics can be detected within the distributed activism we have begun to see in periodic uprisings, from Zapatistas (1994), to the Battle for Seattle (1999), the Arab Spring (2010) and Occupy Wall Street (2011). This de-centered, nonviolent activism aims at issues upstream, as it were, of the question of who owns the means of production, issues involving ontology—*difference at the origins*—and the deep-seated cultural attractors fueling the dynamism of symbolic systems such as money. Situated theater connects to the rules by which the world gets segmented in other words, and illuminates the entropic and predatory volition of our symbolic systems. From Beckett onward, this is where the affective energies of anomalous, situated theater-makers have been drawn.

3. The Metaphysics of the Coin: Financialization and Biopolitics

The situated play suggests that the real significance of Los Angeles arises from the way it exists at the threshold of failure as a city. Its "scrambled egg" quality makes L.A. an incommensurable assemblage: simultaneously an urban correlative of both the one and the many. The smooth and boundary-less expanse of the 1870s ranchlands enabled L.A.'s speculative origin, making it the perfect milieu for an ongoing experiment in place-as-finance—*fin*-ance, endgames of the dynamism that originated long ago with the advent of coinage in Greece. Drawing on the city's unique, quasi-disassembled transparency, the situated play allows us to see into the material attractors governing this cultural evolution, and provides a glimpse of dynamics that are usually concealed beneath more seamless urban facades. In this way, the aesthetic helps to reveal cultural mechanisms buried deep in our fundamental assumptions about thought and politics, mechanisms controlling which human capacities are actualized out of the virtual. One sobering implication of this study is that man's symbolic and technical systems—e.g., language, money and technology—have developed what Deacon calls "teleodynamisms" all their own (*Nature* 264), adaptive wills-to-power dragging us into places we might not wish to go. The possibility that this may hold true for the symbolic system of monetary exchange—and the connection to the art form of theater—is a major implication of this analysis.

While practices within a regional cultural ecology such as L.A. theater might seem an odd place to advance a case for the adaptive utility of transgression, the current environmental crisis makes for strange bedfellows. The problematics of errancy—its social capacities and expressions good and bad—are especially visible in the situated theater work that arose in Los Angeles in the 1980s. After the '92 riots, practitioners of the situated aesthetic in Los Angeles began to face bigger obstacles. Public interest in new work leveled off and the institutions that

had supported younger playwrights—the Taper Too and the Audry Skirball Kennis new works program, for example—began to close. Long before the financial crisis of 2008 a creeping, Neo-Victorian stupor composed of familiar pieties and vaguely liberationist political declarations—Schulman's "gentrification of the mind"—began to announce the arrival of our new Gilded Age.[cix] In terms of the demise of the situated play, how could it be otherwise? How could an aesthetic based on a rejection of exchange and the entraining capacities of money possibly survive the kind of massive socioeconomic shift taking place in the neoliberal era? The period between the 1970s and 2008, after all, witnessed an astonishing transformation. From the era of maximum income equality—the early 1970s, according to Emmanuel Saez (7)—the U.S. moved to levels of stratification not seen since the McKinley administration, all in the space of a few decades. That the avant-garde survived as long as it did in Los Angeles can only be attributed to the confluence of anomalous factors (e.g., the 99-Seat Contract, and the region's position at the heart of the entertainment industry) cited in this study. Increasingly, the ceremonial and the mimetic were decoupled in L.A. theater, and the same factors that had provided such a boon to auteur directors working in an *avant-garde* mode now degraded into norms of mimetic melodrama on the one side, and performance art on the other. And, given the opposition between the neoliberal agenda and Beckett's transformative aesthetic, it is not surprising to discover that new dramatic texts after 1992 were increasingly composed as if Beckett had never put pen to paper, let alone sent a body out onto the stage (on a national level Suzi-Lori Parks is a conspicuous exception here, as is Eric Ehn.)

In cultural remission since the political disappointments of the late 1960s, the ethos of what Nancy Fraser calls "the politics of redistribution" (Fraser 2), as exemplified by the socialist tradition, lived on in the guise of a punk "Do It Yourself" (D.I.Y.) pragmatism predisposed

toward Beckett's *bêtise* and toward assemblage theory. Remarkably, the massive transfer of material wealth from the American middle class noted above took place with only the most scattered and diffuse public protests, and it scarcely registers in the drama of the era, which was almost entirely oriented toward the politics of recognition rather than those of redistribution. The demise of socialism announced by the fall of the Berlin Wall (1990) deprived the left of a unifying vision, and social mechanisms for placating, marginalizing, co-opting or otherwise domesticating outraged social justice advocates were not hard for neoliberal hegemons to find. Middle class rewards could be doled out, even as the middle class as a whole was being subjected to a relentless assault from above. The fascistic dynamic of downward mobility in the lower middle class could be fed back into the project via the politics of resentment perfected by Roger Ailes and the Fox News behemoth.[cx] Politically speaking, we remember here the role of *doxa* in neoliberalism, the "common sense" appeal of its icons Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, the *doxa* at the heart of neoliberalism's faux populism. The shift to *techne* was not simply a prerogative of the left. Far from it—Fraser's "politics of recognition" (2) takes place within the realm of *episteme*, while the upward redistribution of wealth engineered by oligarchic capital in this same period is very much a product of neoliberal *techne*—the minute re-calibration of trade deals, regulatory structures and campaign finance legislation. The antidote—redistribution in the direction of the *demos* by Keynesian mechanisms wholly familiar from the New Deal era—would require a return to the same *techne*-based approach, a "politics of redistribution," as well as an ability to awake from the neoliberal spell based on the coin trick.

Intriguingly, Wendy Brown's 2015 analysis of neoliberalism supports the idea of political and cultural continuities between Athens after the birth of coinage and Los Angeles in the neoliberal era, a major theme of this dissertation. Brown's critique defines neoliberalism as a

final, revolutionary eclipse of *homo politicus* by *homo oeconomicus,* a move first perceived as a mortal danger by Plato and Aristotle[cxi] two centuries after the arrival of metal coinage. In a similar vein, Phillip Goodchild suggests that the threefold division—subject, object and knowledge—defining metaphysics in the modern era, has begun to unravel in the culture of neoliberalism. Today we no longer believe in "the passive, material object; the free, evaluating subject; and the neutral truth as genuine metaphysical entities" (204).[cxii] The modern trinity of thinking, being and truth rested on a *belief* in knowing, and this recognition of knowing-as-belief dissolves the ontological ground, returning us to the negentropic aporia and apophaticism of tragic irony, or to the false comforts of common sense nihilism. Because it seems the same for being and thinking, money registers affectively as a nihilistic version of the philosopher's stone. Money is *not* the philosopher's stone, but Goodchild's analysis (*Theology* 206) suggests that money preys on a human longing for that hidden unity underlying all, constituting a kind of passive ensorcelment. With seductive simplicity and bluntness, money seems to promise exactly that unity, a unity that could only unfold in the common sense mode of non-contradiction which comes down to us from Aristotle. The situated play, I have maintained, needs to be understood in this context as a rejection of the coin trick and its totalizing claims. We found that epochs of financialization such as the neoliberalism of the past forty years resonate with the initial conditions of coinage as a meta-system of archon-like dimensions, and we located in L.A. theater revealing echoes of these earlier transformations.

4. Broken Symmetry—Immanence, the Coin and the Sacrificial Third

We have traced the source of the coin's magic to the way its two-sided materiality links at once to aspects of thought and mind, and to broader bifurcations in the social arena. Coinage

and the monetary system mechanize a dynamism between relativism and totalization which is based on an absence—on what Haraway in 1988 called the "conquering gaze from nowhere" (581). Beckett's work, by contrast, located a new kind of neo-tragic irony in the *bêtise* of the animal body. The penury, the pennilessness of Beckett's protagonists counteract, if not mitigate, financialization in the form of a phase shift via catastrophe—down to the *Unnamable* who is poor even in symbolic substance, a bare metastability on the edge of what Artaud (and Deleuze) would call the *body without organs*. Sensing this mirroring relation between tragic drama and money, we tested the intuition that money is itself simply a concretization of the two aspects of immanence as Deleuze defines it. Analyzing this aspect of Deleuze, Joshua Ramey defines immanence as "an 'implication' of the absolute in the relative term, and that of an 'inherence' of the relative in the absolute" (47). Meister Eckhart, according to Ramey, is Deleuze's source for a tripartite expression of immanence, including "complication, explication, implication where implication or inherence is modeled by the paradoxical instance of the absolute maximum in the relative maximum" (47). Remarkably, Ramey identifies the real model for Deleuze of implication in this trinity, the mediating element, is the man-God Jesus Christ. The obvious sacrificial dimension of this idea draws us back toward tragic drama[cxiii] as a *praxis* of paradox, implication and *mimesis*.

The various threads of this argument converge on the suggestion that the two-sided coin materializes *implication* between absolute/sovereign and relative/marketplace, a position also occupied by the mediating scapegoat or sacrificial victim. The link between coins and the sacrificial, it turns out, is material to an uncanny degree: in ancient Greece *drachma* was the name of the spit on which meat was burnt in sacrifice to the gods. According to Seaford, these metallic nubs were hammered flat into tokens of binarism to make the two-sided coin, drawing

the sovereign power and the emergent marketplace into a single, deceptively simple, easily transportable material form. With coinage, a sacrificial third now joins the dyadic moment of all two-way social transactions, collapsing them from the intimate connection of the dyad to the separation and alienation of the triad and the collective. We are playing here with the fundamental units of social experience in Simmel's sociology, the dyad being defined by connection and reciprocity, the triad by collapse, domination and constraint.[cxiv]

This reading suggests that, at the basic moment of exchange, coinage inaugurates a qualitative and intensive shift; the dyadic bond between two people is dissolved, its energy flowing via the Other of money into a collective economic dynamism which finds its outlet in restless innovation and foreign conquest and dominion. In Graeber's view, coinage "predominates above all in periods of generalized violence"[cxv] (213); in Greece this dynamism found an outlet Alexander's expansive colonialism, inaugurating a long Fall toward the Anthropocene and the entrepreneurial subject of neoliberalism. Money undermines the intimacy and care of Simmel's dyads. The sacrificial aspect arrives because the coin in such transactions is the missing third, the sacrificial object, what the Greeks called the *pharmakon*, the poison that is, paradoxically, also a cure… which, in turn, is also a poison, and on and on *ad infinitum*. Transactions based in monetary exchange create instead a steady stream of excluded thirds, and a social dynamic of alienation and lack. In this way, the broken symmetry of the coin creates a ratchet mechanism running on the sacrificial thirds it also generates. Based on the non-material (and therefore non-entropic) form of the symbolic, this ratchet moves in only a single direction—toward unity, encoding, hierarchy: the Anthropocene.

Materializing the sacrificial in a collapsive moment of exchange, coinage orchestrated the progressive disenchantment of the world, generating the modes of thought that would effectively

cloak what was going on, the real processes actually taking place. This elusive process, the process by which the *apparatus* of sacrifice develops a horizontal life of its own, distinct from the verticality of its role mediating between the human and the divine. The doubled vision of tragic irony is an attempt to drag these self-cloaking, invisible dynamics into view. This is what Beckett sought to dramatize by combining mimetic and ceremonial performance effects in an oppositional stasis in *Endgame*. The two sides of the coin, as Hamm and Clov, enact the recursive, horizontal "fin" or endgame of finance. The situated playwrights analyzed here extend and deepen that enactment within the anomalous milieu of Los Angeles.

The relationship of two-sided coins to Michel Serres' analysis of dialogue helps to further illuminate this sacrificial dimension of logic. The binary created by the coin runs parallel to Serres' assertion that "a successful communication is the exclusion of the third man," and this exclusion is linked directly to the creation of unity via sacrifice (*Hermes* 67). Sacrifice unifies by giving all the same absence—the social body is organized around the present-absence of the victim, which now points upwards toward the transcendent realm of the gods, where Aristotelian logic, also centered around an "excluded third," waits as well. In passing, it is interesting to note the *relational* quality of this excluded "middle" or "third" as it undermines the specious mind/body dualism of the newly distilled mode of entrepreneurial subjectivity inaugurated by neoliberalism. Austin's exclusion of the mimetic from illocutionary force continues this same impulse, expelling the indeterminacy of the pharmakon. One of the premises of this dissertation is that the sacrificial dimension of tragic drama provides a window into how this relational indeterminacy continues to manifest as a cultural phenomenon.

Hiding in plain sight, the key to the performative present-absent dynamism described above is the *skênê* Aeschylus placed at the center of the stage space. This shed, first used in

Agammemnon, became a central feature of tragic drama, creating a present-absent space at the focal point of the stage where sacrifice would be enacted out of view of the audience and then ritually displayed. The complex implications of this innovation have come to light over the course of this analysis of situated drama in Los Angeles. The L.A. situated play reveals the odd, present-absent space of the *skênê*—the space in which the sacrifice is enacted—in the "fire-space" Annemarie Mol and John Law locate at the root of technology. It is as if the coin materialized in highly dynamic form a *sacrificial* logic, a baroque folding whose living edge defines the fire space of technological development and its urban correlates up to the threshold of the Anthropocene. The profoundly undemocratic psychological, social and political transformations of neoliberalism are best viewed as an aspect of this larger unfolding.

5. Default Encodings and Un-commonsense

With its ontological elegance, the coin is what allows common sense or default encodings to gain control over the human assemblage. Neoliberal thinking is simply a late-phase manifestation of this same force. One of the coin's first effects in its capacity as a sorcery-object is to generate in the human mind a mode of thought (*episteme*) in which money's own powers to make and remake entities (i.e., *techne*) becomes invisible, imperceptible, and thus also impossible to oppose. Coinage appears here as a material emergence generating modes of cognition that render its properties, effects and dynamics invisible.[cxvi] This is the opposite of what tragic drama seeks to do as it indicts normative judgement. The problem with normative judgment is the way it de-situates individuals in the name of common sense, delivering an atomized subjectivity and leading to the lose-lose structure of Isabelle Stengers's infernal

choices. These false binaries—the state versus the marketplace, for example—entail a belief that we must choose one or the other or fall under the shadow of the contradictory.

The ratcheting effect of money's *techne* continues inexorably along its track of dynamic encoding and production, spreading entrepreneurial values into every corner of the culture. In this encoded way of thinking, all problems arising from the application of neoliberal principles may only be solved by more neoliberalism, more deregulation, more "free market" protection of the inviolable claims of ownership and capital, more hierarchy and more cognitive dissonance clothing itself in non-contradiction and common sense: more *doxa*. Future action is pre-determined by the attractors of a complex historical system defined by its initial conditions—the birth of coinage in Greece. Is is precisely the kind of bewildering self-symmetry so beautifully represented by Sophocles in *Oedipus, Tyrannus*. The tragic irony developed by Aeschylus in opposition to tyranny can be viewed as a pre-emptive embrace of contradiction, superposition, and radical doubt. Undermining common sense beliefs about linear causality, the tragic spectacle offers pity and terror as the affective ground of authentic democracy. You can have either your common sense or your democracy, but not both[cxvii], as if Aristotle's Law of Non-Contradiction were an idea coinage had passed to man like a virus.

This perspective on the normative impact of coinage allows us to grasp the continued relevance of tragic irony to our world, a relevance exemplified by these plays. Money, again, materializes our capacity for normative judgment and *doxa*. Money becomes the social object by which *the metaphysics of common sense* (Loy) exerts dominion. In the neoliberal era, the central issue in politics has become the way normative judgment collapses truth to one pole or the other: the corporate sovereign or the marketplace. *Doxa* requires us to select between the alternatives, both of which, according to *doxa*, cannot be true. The L.A. playwrights at work during the rise of

neoliberalism drew in part on Beckett's postwar aesthetic stance for the means to combat this form of affective entrainment or spell. In L.A., the very marginality of theater was its protection—a form of invisibility that allowed it to contend with the self-cloaking capacities of the coin. By engaging in the way that they did, these playwrights entered a kind of shadow, a place where the culture was strongly conditioned us not to look. Because we don't see the life of money or the way its opposing boundary constraints fuel a dangerous and inhuman teleodynamism of its own, we are defenseless against its imperatives.

Once again, we find ourselves in a fold in time. Theatrical techniques that address the first arrival of coinage clearly must evolve in order to address the much later arrival of a social reality utterly transformed by the financial, and Beckett showed how this evolution could proceed. And yet, on the neo-tragic stage, paradox continues to contest *doxa*. Beginning with Sam Shepard, the four playwrights examined here dramatize the way we are captivated by money's dual boundaries, believing we must choose between overbearing corporate sovereign on the one hand, or the implacable, distributed mechanisms of the market on the other—as if this binary defines the range of choices available to us. Weston's appeal in *Starving Class* for values not governed by the logic of exchange—money as an "invisible" and unreal abstraction (194)—falls on deaf ears. Fornés's *Mud* is in many ways the story of a sacrificial dynamic, driven by money and language, working its will on the triad of Mae, Lloyd and Henry. Steppling's *Storyland* evokes a realm where chronic dysfunction temporarily suspends—or at least slows—the operation of similar mechanisms. Abdoh's *Hip-Hop*, finally, personifies this binary force in the dynamic figure of The Captain, and then disassembles him.[cxviii] Capitalism is a mode of interaction that makes us *forget* alternatives of non-transactional reciprocity through a spell based on Stengers's framework of a capitalist "sorcery without sorcerers." Once I agree to the

foundational nature of exchange, or to the fundamental division of humanity into "winners" and "losers," I have lost.

6. Opposing Versions of Nothing

The figure of nothing as it appears in *episteme* as negation is very different than the figure of nothing as it appears in *techne* as constitutive absence, and the Beckett lineage in L.A. has explored that difference in dramatic form. For the playwrights examined here, characters are not generalized roles to be filled by strangers, but are, instead, generatively linked to individual performers in entirely singular ways. Performers are intimately involved with the development of these plays at their origins, but *as performers* rather than as co-authors. This, it seems to me, amounts to collective authorship in a truly immanent mode. The opposition between drama and theater—*mimesis* and the ceremonial, unity and multiplicity—begins to soften when playwright and director combine into one person. Shakespeare, Goethe, Ibsen, Brecht and Beckett—a brief review of playwright-director hyphenates makes the issue a central one. What needs analysis in each of these couplings are the singular connections between individual playwrights and the individual performers they wrote for. Also germane is the question of the larger philosophical and political implications for the separation of playwright and actor into distinct roles. To turn the issue around and make it a question—what is served by making the playwright-director into a rare anomaly?

In neoliberal L.A., the secondary boundary of the 99-Seat Contract allowed playwright-directors to survive as expressive artists despite the rightward turn in the culture at large. As a result, theater in L.A. was able to maintain its errant force, at least for a time. The current (2015) battle between the L.A. theater community and Actors Equity is, at root, the dissolution of this

opposing boundary constraints, delivering the L.A. theater community to the entropic force of neoliberal order. Arriving now in L.A.'s anomalous cultural milieu wearing a union label, the gentrified, neoliberal mind wants to eliminate the distinction between the two, so that artistic value is brought into alignment with the supposedly democratic populism of the marketplace. No more anomalous exploration, no more errant failure or radical re-codings via assemblage theory and bricolage; analogic thinking only. Neoliberalism underwrites the professionalization of the arts as part of a more general effort to eliminate social cooperation as an operative capacity. The era of postwar cultural vivacity and experimentation was simply a hiatus from an anti-theatrical bias theorists such as Tony Kubiak have located underlying American culture[cxix] (13).

We feel the pull here of what Deleuze describes as the "dogmatic image of thought," which he roots in how Aristotle invited rhetorical *doxa* into the process of judging which problems should be adopted for syllogistic analysis. "If the dialectic appears devalued in Aristotle, reduced to the simple probabilities of opinion or the *doxa*," Deleuze writes, "this is not because he misunderstood the essential task but, on the contrary, because he conceived the realization of that task badly" (160). Confronted with what Aristotle called the "most secure" of all principles (i.e. non-contradiction), the contemporary theorist locates contradiction on the molar level (e.g. Russell's paradox)[cxx] as well as the molecular level (particle-wave duality). For Deleuze, to complete this circle with respect to Beckett (and his shift away from Cartesian thinking), the issue of how problems are defined in Aristotle lives on in Descartes, who also derived a "method for solving supposedly given problems" (*Difference* 161). The teleological commitment to unity becomes a fundamental commitment to *ressentiment.*[cxxi] The contrary idea that "only partial perspective promises objective vision" (583) is the crux of Haraway's call for "situated knowledge." Beckett's *Endgame*, finally, is a paradigmatic expression of what this

problem-object might look like; not just a corollary of Sloterdijk's "thinker on stage" but the play as a *problem on stage*, and an invitation to *bêtise* and aporia. This aesthetic of problematization operates at the heart of the situated plays of L.A. in the 1980s.

This analysis of L.A.'s situated aesthetic delivers a hypothesis: in Deleuzo-Guattarian terminology, it is when cultural ecologies form in such a way that playwright-sorcerers serve as the heads of the alliances composing theater companies—hence delivering the semiotic/animal assemblage—that truly transformative theater emerges. This is when cities think *with coherence* through theater: Aeschylean Athens, for example, or Elizabethan London. A cultural milieu of this kind *almost* formed in Los Angeles in the 1980s, and then began to collapse after the riots of 1992. Because the peculiarities of L.A. deliver an unusual transparency, however, we can still see this intricate cultural bio-chemistry at work. The process of transduction that leads to monetary teleodynamisms such as neoliberalism triggers in the culture a resistance taking the form of tragic, or in the current case, neo-tragic drama embracing *techne* as a line of flight. Thus, in the demise of the 99-Seat contract in Los Angeles, we encounter the destruction of alternative theater, of difference that doesn't aspire to be included in the same. An expression of nihilism and *doxa*, neoliberal T.I.N.A. is now poised to rule over theater in the city of Los Angeles, reduced once again to a colony status, where celebrity-driven productions[cxxii] from elsewhere are flown in and presented to wealthy patrons at pricey venues like RedCat and UCLA Live. When L.A. *lived* its contradictions, its theater was vibrant and transformational. When those contradictions disappeared in the shadow of neoliberalism's rapidly inflating *doxa*, it lost vitality and relevance; this is the central and defining paradox of L.A. theater.

7. Toward a New Politics: *Resilience, Errancy, Para-doxa and Democracy*

The account of monetization provided by Marc Shell and Jean-Joseph Goux accumulates force with the addition of Deleuze's intensive, complex systems thinking. Goux, in turn, underscores the Bataillean dimension of supply-side neoliberal economics, in which capital co-opts avant-garde *praxis*. How is the left supposed to respond? *Endgame* and the situated plays of neoliberal Los Angeles suggest the way forward involves rejecting the non-contradiction on which neoliberal binaries are founded, thereby re-entering the domain of the anomalous. Stripping *doxa* from the right via Braudel's *longue durée* critique of anti-market capital—this should be the first aim of a new situated politics of care. Doing so would deprive neoliberalism of its great weapon: the claim anti-market capital makes on the populism of the marketplace. This false populism is the Big Lie of neoliberalism that is never accurately called out. Opponents battle the inhuman effects of free markets, or lose themselves in denunciations of oppressive state power—it is the incompleteness of both critiques that prevents this opposition from effectively countering the social and environmental depredations of anti-market capital, or from impeding the ratchet-like advance of the neoliberal mindset. Big business is both monopolistic *and* anti-market—the populist, retail marketplace is not the domain of capital, but rather the *victim* of capital. The marketplace, moreover, is simply one of many arenas of human social life in which complexity generates emergent magic.

Because it is a cornerstone of our ensorcellment, the distinction between the market and capital ought to be insistently asserted and defended in public debate. Doing so would require a crucial adjustment in progressive habits when it comes to political rhetoric. DeLanda points in the right direction when he cautions against our habit of lacing political discourse with reified generalities—"Capital," "Justice," "the American people," etc. By dispensing with such

generalities, we begin to break the epistemic spell in the mode of *techne*, bringing Stengers "yearning" and Stiegler's "care" into alignment with the non-separation of compassion arising in the moment of *katharsis*. Drawing the public after them, the L.A. playwright-directors of the 1980s rehearsed this same spell-breaking via the language of the stage. In so doing, they were merely observing the norms of their vocation, even as their vocation became ever more relevant to philosophical discourse.

NOTES

[i] While only two of the four plays (*Mud* and *Storyland*) are site-specific *per se*, all four are *situated*, as defined above.

[ii] In addition to the boundary element foregrounded here, I invoke several other Harawayian elements of "situatedness:" situatedness as communitarian, embodied, and body to body (p 17-18); as partial and subjective (L.A. theater's indeterminancy, reflexively spatiality, and alterity); as anti-logos (p 25); as anchored in singularity and conditional particularity vs. universality (L.A. as a singular anomaly); and as a mode that honors persons, theaters, plays, writing, etc as semiotic-material "agents" not simply as abstracted "resources" (my critique of money's destructive role, the 99-Seat theater controversy, etc.).

[iii] Coetzee links lessness to: "…the plight of consciousness in a void, compelled to reflect on itself, capable of doing so only by splitting itself and recombining the fragments in wholes which are never greater than the sums of their parts. This endless enterprise of splitting and recombining is language, and it offers not the promise of the charm, the ever-awaited magical combination that will bring wealth or salvation, but the solace of the game, the killing of time." See Coetzee 198.

[iv] "There was, first, the Ordoliberal or Freiburg School, comprising sociologists, economists, and philosophers, which emerged in Germany and Austria in the mid-1930s and gained serious traction at the close of World War II. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Chicago School of economics emberged in the 1950s" (Brown 59).

[v] Goux writes: "But the capitalist economy is founded on a meta- physical uncertainty regarding the object of human desire. It must create this desire through the invention of the new,

the production of the unpredictable. It supplies in order to create desire, instead of satisfying a desire that would already be known by the person who experiences it" (Goux, "General Economics" 212).

[vi] For the assessment of a sober capitalist, see Rotella.

[vii] Playwrights Steppling has influenced strongly include Jon Robin Baitz, Kelly Stuart, Eduardo Machado, Michael Sergeant, Marlane Meyer and many others.

[viii] I'm using UCI's ANPAC catalogue as evidence here. X citations refer to Shepard's own work; Y to critical works about his writing.

[ix] Out of 149 entries in U.C. Irvine's ANTPAC library catalogue on September 15th over 100 by my count are entries for Shepard's own creative output.

[x] Referred to after 1988 as the 99-Seat Plan.

[xi] Victor Turner's exploration of ludic space provides a different avenue of approach to this terrain. While rich in its own right, Turner's framework clashed with the poststructuralist methodology of this dissertation in ways I chose to avoid.

[xii] Shepard belongs to L.A. as a celebrity, Fornés as a migratory presence who for two decades spent summers in the city, teaching and directing new work in the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival/Workshop.

[xiii] "Rove's idea was to use the levers of government to create an effect that ordinarily occurs only in the most tumultuous periods in American history. He believed he could force a realignment himself through a series of far-reaching policies. Rove's plan had five major components: establish education standards, pass a "faith-based initiative" directing government funds to religious organizations, partially privatize Social Security, offer private health-savings

accounts as an alternative to Medicare, and reform immigration laws to appeal to the growing Hispanic population. Each of these, if enacted, would weaken the Democratic Party by drawing some of its core supporters into the Republican column. His plan would lead, he believed, to a period of Republican dominance like the one that followed McKinley's election" (Green).

[xiv] Pierre Bourdieu's use of *doxa* in the context of his term habitus (168) aligns in many ways with how I am using it. Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus applies to the study of neoliberalism, and his entire view of "communities of practice," applies also to the community of L.A.-based theater, but I am using doxa in the simpler terms of conventional, common sense beliefs. It's also crucial to underscore the subtle distinction between *doxa* as an aspect of rhetoric and Aristotle's less exacting use of *koina*, or shared or common things.

[xv] "The Cartesian subject for Bergson and Ruyer, and the self-enclosed ego whose behavior is characterized by parapraxis for Freud, become significant and justifiable points of departure for the beginning of a *vitalism without a subject* [i.e. "passive vitalism"] precisely because of their incomplete and self-contradictory nature" (Colebrook 185).

[xvi] "Since money discloses its essence as credit, philosophy rejoins theology in a synthesis that modifies both" (Goodchild 265). Interestingly, while Deleuze scarcely appears in *Theology of Money*, Goodchild's first three books were about Deleuze.

[xvii] The increasing power of information processing technologies allowed scientists to model (and therefore study) the emergent aspects of complex systems, which offered a way to reverse the reductive view that for centuries had made ever smaller bits of matter and energy the province of scientific inquiry.

[xviii] For a survey of current thinking regarding the origins of money, see David Graeber 212–224, and the later emergence of coinage.

[xix] The ability of origins to command is also central to complexity theory in the way that chaotic systems are said to exhibit "sensitive dependence on initial conditions." (Mitchell 20).

[xx] Perceptively, Sloterdijk goes on to write: "The logical grammar of the 'Anthropocene' belongs to the group of pragmatic epochal theories, of which Marx's grand narrative delivered a prototype. It makes a case for a state of terrene metabolism, in which human-made emissions have begun to influence the course of 'planetary history.' The term 'emission' makes apparent that so far this influence has occurred in the mode of a side effect—for otherwise one would be speaking of a 'mission' or a 'project.' The 'e' in 'emission' betrays the involuntary character of the anthropogenic impact on the exo-human dimension. The term 'Anthropocene' thus contains nothing less than the task of verifying whether the agency of 'humanity' is capable of making an 'eject' into a project, or of transforming an emission into a mission" (330).

[xxi] *Longue durée* describes the focus of the Annales School of Post-War French historian to focus on structures that evolve slowly rather than sequences of events. See Braudel.

[xxii] "Rarely has an historical theory been so absolutely and systematically refuted" (Graeber 40).

[xxiii] Characterized by a phenomenological cast of mind that, as a form of idealism, can itself be traced the analogical influence of the coin, the insights of this previous generation of scholars can be productively countered in the mode of new materialism.

[xxiv] "This brave new world of money is a very recent development in the experience of the human species, and the first poetic genre to be created in it was tragedy, which centres

around an unprecedented individual known also from historiography and philosophy: the tyrant, isolated from the gods and even from his own kin, obsessed with money, a transgressor against the ancient moral codes of reciprocity, the sacred, and kinship…" (Seaford, *Dionysus* 149)

[xxv] Tragic drama arose in Athens after the Peisistratids tyranny was finally unseated in 510 BCE (a struggle in which Aeschylus took part as a young man), and Seaford views it as a cultural response to the threatening new psycho-social type of the tyrant.

[xxvi] The story of the social effects of money's arrival is far from entirely negative, according to Seaford. Mediating between individuation and multiplicity, he explains, money strengthens civic bonds even as it complicates them.

[xxvii] It is intriguing to consider figures like Donald Trump as modern versions of the Athenian tyrants—experts at triangulating the aristocracy and the merchant class and addicted to commonsense solutions—Aeschylus and his fellow tragedians deconstructed through their dramas.

[xxviii] The analyses of Classicists Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, in turn, alert us to the danger of projecting Kantian presuppositions about subjects and objects back onto the Greeks, to whom they do not apply.

[xxix] The continuities between neoliberal Los Angeles and Classical Athens call to mind DeLanda's non-linear history and the *longue durée* perspective of the Anthropocene.

[xxx] At the same time, Aristotle's fears about the totalizing potential of homo oecinomicus play a central role in Wendy Brown's critique of neoliberalism and its "stealth revolution" (59).

[xxxi] In thermodynamic terms, differences in *intensive* properties—e.g. pressure, density, temperature—drive processes, of what Deleuze calls "becomings." Differences in ex*tensive*

properties, such as length, width, or area, are, by contrast inert in terms of processes. Perhaps the best way to understand the difference is to consider the intensive maps used by weather forecasters on the evening news—differentials between pressure zones and temperature driving the processes of weather, versus the *extensive* maps that appear in atlases.

[xxxii] This co-option is perhaps most vividly expressed in the image of Ayn Rand adherent Alan Greenspan encouraging the removal of the Glass-Steagall barriers to banks investing federally protected deposit in the stock market.

[xxxiii] Alan Mandell, in an interview with the author, 3-10-14 Santa Monica. "And in fact when we began working, he had called me. This was at LATC in 19 81, 82. I was doing some Beckett piece and he asked if he could be my assistant. I said, Reza I really didn't need an assistant – these were one person things. He begged me. I said, okay, you can be my assistant and so he was there taking notes and it was actually very helpful."

[xxxiv] In a similar key, J. Hillis Miller writes that it is "the performative aspect of literature, philosophy, and criticism, of language and other signs generally, make history" (313).

[xxxv] See all of Book 10 of Plato's *Republic*, but perhaps most succinctly stated here: "Painting—and imitation in general—operates in an area of its own, far removed from the truth, and that it associates with that element in us which is far removed from intelligence—a liaison and friendship from which nothing healthy or true can result" (324).

[xxxvi] In their *Introduction* to *Performativity and Performance*, Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick track Derrida's insistence, *contra* Austin, of a "general iterability" as crucial to any performative. As the authors point out, the danger of this iterability is the way "it threatens to blur the difference between theater and World" (4).

[xxxvii] Logical dialestheism, it is important to emphasize, does not assert that all truths are valid; only that the law of non-contradiction is *invalid*.

[xxxviii] Section 6: "If metaphysics should be placed (once again) at the very core of philosophy, the debate on the possibility of dialetheias occupies a central place in the core. This was, after all, Aristotle's view, too: he decided to speak on behalf of the unconditional validity of the LNC, not in his *Organon* (his writings on the subject of logic), but in the *Metaphysics*, for this was for him an issue to be addressed ontologically, not (only) via formal logical tools" (Priest and Berto).

[xxxix] "What I suddenly saw then was this, that the belief I had been going on all my life, namely—(*Krapp switches off impatiently, winds tape foreward, switches on again*)—great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighhouse and thw wind-gauge spinning like a propellor, clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality—(*Krapp curses, switches off, winds tape foreward, switches on again*)—unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire—(*Krapp curses loader, switches off, winds tape foreward, switches on again*)—my face in her breasts and my hand on her" (Beckett, "Krapp's Last Tape" 220).

[xl] Knowlson also quotes Beckett writing to Gabriel d'Aubarede that "Molloy and the others came to me the day I became aware of my own folly" (319).

[xli] "Thus it is more custom and example that persuades us than any certain knowledge; and yet the majority opinion is worthless as a proof of truths that are at all difficult to discover, since it is much more likely that one man would have found them than a whole multitude of people. Hence I could not choose anyone whose opinions seemed to me should be preferred over

those of the others, and I found myself, as it were, constrained to try to guide myself on my own" (Descartes 10).

[xlii] "… The absolute passiveness of total abjection" (Blanchot 15).

[xliii] Pignarre and Stengers track the "spell" by which "the very mode of functioning of capitalism kills politics" (25) to "infernal alternatives," the lose-lose propositions by which any effort to address a social problem—wages or working conditions, for example—are instantly linked to a dire picture of unacceptable consequences—factories shuttered and moved abroad, for example.

[xliv] Among Alan Greenspan's favorite expressions: see Lenzner.

[xlv] "Animal spirits" and "irrational exuberance" are among the favorite descriptions used by neoliberal figures such as Gilder and Greenspan.

[xlvi] Jean-Joseph Goux analyzes Gilder extensively in "General Economics and Postmodern Capitalism."

[xlvii] Drawn from the title of Beckett's 1970 prose fragment of the same name, *lessness* has a more exacting meaning than the more general term "minimalism" typically applied to any stripped-down aesthetic. The emphasis with *lessness* is on the capacity of the fragment to evoke the whole, while also fatally problematizing any impulse toward wholeness and completion. See Barker, "Nietzsche/Derrida, Blanchot/Beckett." In a passage that applies to one degree or another to the situated L.A. playwrights covered here, Barker writes of Beckett: "His style is subtly and powerfully anti-representational, rewriting the relationship between the individual word and image and their cumulative result, seemingly attempting to form an additive agency (to "amount to something," as in Beckett's image of the impossible heap in *Endgame* and elsewhere)

but always problematizing that agency through a fragmented aphoristics that denies morality, "author," subject, and *telos*, fabricating a solipsistic prose."

[xlviii] "The best place to view Los Angeles of the next millennium is fem the ruins of its alternative future" (Davis 3).

[xlix] A complete list would also include Peter Handke, Michel Vinaver, Elfriede Jelinik, and Thomas Bernhard.

[l] Mathew David Segall, *Footnotes to Plato*: "Deleuze's philosophy of difference is a direct assault upon…a Cartesian science," Deleuzian scholar Mathew David Segall observers. Segall continues, "on the way it covers over the implication of ideal intensities *without affirming the virtual processes that remain behind or beneath these coverings*, processes which Deleuze argues provide the conditions for the actuality of the qualitative extensities measured by the scientist."

[li] While I take issue with aspects of Lehmann's analysis, I acknowledge the importance of his 1999 *Postdramatic Theater* as a landmark text in the field of performance studies and theater.

[lii] Foucault's "errancy" becomes important here. See Chapter 4.

[liii] While *space* and *place* belong to the general and particular categories of Aristotelian logic, the words *site* and *specific* in "site-specific theater" connect instead to what Agamben views as Foucault's favorite mode of reasoning—reasoning by way of the paradigm or example.

[liv] Kuhn showed the power of the paradigm in science—that what seems like the articulation of general laws was just the following of paradigmatic examples or singularities (Kuhn).

[lv] Graeber views the range of Axial Age religions as largely a response to the emergence of coinage (212–224).

[lvi] See Chapter II, "Foucault's *Birth of Biopolitics* Lectures: Charting Neoliberal Political Reality" (Brown 18–47).

[lvii] "Disneyland is not the only one. Enchanted Village, Magic Mountain, Marine World: Los Angeles is surrounded by these imaginary stations that feed reality, the energy of the real to a city whose mystery is that of no longer being anything but a network of incessant unreal circulation—a city of incredible proportions, but without space, without dimension" (Baudrillard 13).

[lviii] Shell also highlights the problematic invisibility of money: "Plato's tale of Gyges' rise to power elucidates both Herodotus's account and various problems raised in the *Republic*. In Plato's dialogue, Gyges is an archetype of one who seems to be but is not good. His tyrannic power of invisibility is a hypothetical device that neatly defines one of the extreme positions in the debate about virtue and justice" (21).

[lix] "The great book of modern ethnology is not so much Mauss's *The Gift* as Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*. For the Genealogy, the second essay, is an attempt—and a success without equal—at interpreting primitive economy in terms of debt, in the debtor-creditor relationship, by eliminating every consideration of exchange or interest 'a l'anglais'" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 190).

[lx] AEA's importance to the fundamental practice of mimetic art becomes highly ironic given their efforts, in 2015, to destroy the cultural ecology of L.A. Theater. See Dellin, Stage Raw.

[lxi] In Athens, the *thiasos,* which was the drunken procession through the city with which the festival of Dionysus began, required a dissolution of boundaries: "But this power to dissolve the boundaries of the individual is required also for the collective frenzy of the Dionysiac thiasos, as well as for the mystic initiation of the individual into the thiasos. Fundamental to Dionysiac mystic initiation is radical transformation of identity. This transformation may involve the temporary dissolution of the boundaries between male and female, between human and animal, and – above all – between life and death. And the epiphany of the deity may serve both as a focus for the unity of thiasos or of community and as the embodiment of salvation for the terrified initiand" (Seaford 96).

[lxii] The monologue belongs to Ella: "Do you know what this is? It's a curse. I can feel it. It's invisible but it's there. It's always there. It comes onto us like a nightmare. Every day I can feel it. Every day I can see it coming. And it always comes. Repeats itself. It comes even when you do everything to stop it from coming. Even when you try to change it. And it goes back. Deep. It goes back and back to tiny cells and genes. To atoms. To tiny little swimming things making up their minds without us. Plotting in the womb. Before that even. In the air. We're surrounded with it. It's bigger than governments even. It goes forward too. We spread it. We pass it on. We inherit it and pass it down, and then pass it down again. It goes on and on like that without us."

[lxiii] Shepard's next role, as Chuck Yeager in *The Right Stuff* (1983), would complete his ascent into stardom.

[lxiv] See, for example, chapters by Susan Sontag, Bonnie Marranca and Herbert Blau, among others (Robinson).

[lxv] "From an Interview with Allen Frame" (Robinson 245). Fornés was a student of Hans Hoffman.

[lxvi] "My theory now—I am bringing out a new book next week - is that the relations between individuation and technics are the object of a pharmacology. This means that general organology describes relational processes in a manner I would call non-vectorised by politics; that is, by desire and, properly understood, by desire at the psychic and social levels, but not by a desire in particular. General organology does not mean libidinal economy in the Freudian sense. A pharmacological approach analyses how organological development will either short circuit psychic or social individuation and thus dis-individuate them, or, on the contrary, intensify them, to use Deleuze's term; and this inquiry makes much use of the Deleuzian viewpoint. It is obvious, meanwhile, that the other extremely important concept that has appeared is desire" (Stiegler, "A Rational Theory of Miracles" 167).

[lxvii] See Bat in *Storyland* or Jack in *Standard of the Breed* (Steppling, *Sea of Cortez*).

[lxviii] The production was directed by David Schweitzer.

[lxix] See especially Fornés' comment to an actor surprised by her gestural precision: "Wait till I get to the fingers" (Robinson 226).

[lxx] Describing *transduction*, Stephen Barker writes: "'Transindividuation' or 'transduction,' terms and concepts explored by Simondon, entails the psychic and collective individuation by which humans reach 'maturity.' Psychic individuation, the physiological process of maturation, must be accompanied by 'collective' individuation (the learning of a long-term cultural archive, what Stiegler calls 'tertiary retentions') in order for true maturity to take

place; without such maturity, culture becomes gadgetry and 'drives': immaturity." ("Bernard Stiegler" N6).

[lxxi] In a post on his blog *Pinocchio Theory* Steven Shaviro provides context on Simondon's theory of individuation. The entire post is illuminating, but this passage in particular pertains to my usage here: "The individual, as (continually) produced in a process of individuation, is never an isolated Self. It is always coupled or coordinated with a milieu; the individual can only be understood together with its milieu, and cannot subsist as a unity without it. The contact between individual and milieu (the membrane between them, though Simondon doesn't emphasize this aspect of the matter) is mediated by affect. Affectivity comes in between inside and outside, just as it comes in between sensation and action. Just as sensation gets oriented along a series of gradients in order to become perception, so (unconscious or preconscious) affect gets oriented along a series of processes of becoming in order to become (conscious) emotion. (The contrast between unconscious, presubjective affect and conscious, subjective emotion is something that both Deleuze and Brian Massumi take ultimately from Simondon).

[lxxii] "… I call the noetic soul sensational, the sensational as experience being then the act of *nous* and at the same time that of *logos*. And I further propose that *dunamis* cannot be thought according to the hylomorphic schema. It already carries within it, as a pre individual milieu, the potential to act, which when it is intermittently produced, is its *knowledge*" (Stiegler, *The Decadence of Industrial Democracies* 136).

[lxxiii] In *Technics and Time, 3*, Stiegler sets tertiary retentions against Husserl's two-part concept of retention and memory. Tertiary memory refers to the prosthetic memory of digital or

analogue recordings, which Stiegler views as a new kind of temporal object. He writes "…the problematic of tertiary memory…will force us to disturb the old metaphysical *doxa* according to which, at least from Aristotle to Kant, technics (which is also the organized milieu of tetiary retentions) arises from neither the practical domain as such no the theoretical domain, in which it is canceled" (67).

[lxxiv] For example Michael Sargent, Marlane Meyers, Kelly Stuart, Justin Tanner, and Bob Glaudini.

[lxxv] Stacy Peralta's 2001 documentary film *Dogtown and Z-Boys* tracks this colorful history.

[lxxvi] Tragic drama and coinage, not surprisingly, share roots in sacrificial rituals, according to Seaford. In a very material way the drachma was derived from the spits used to burn sacrificial meat in shares that were then distributed among the population: "The level of technology required for making coins had long existed in the Near East no less than the money functions of metal. What was new, among the Greeks, was rather the synthesis of this ability and these functions with the social centrality of sacrificial communality. The collective confidence in the guarantee of future conventional value bestowed by the standard stamp on pieces of precious metal…arises – at least in part – from the entry of precious metal into the communal sacrificial distributions in which each individual citizen has the right to (ownership of) a standard portion of communally sacrificed meat, just as most citizens in a polis like Athens own a plot of land" (113).

[lxxvii] I am defining Deleuze and Guattari's "becoming imperceptible," as the shedding of all encodings linked to identity and an engagement with the immanent and the virtual.

[lxxviii] Delivering powerfully lyrical effects through this kind of extreme dramatic compression has always been one of Steppling's main gifts as a playwright. Steppling's work might also be included among the literature of luminous fragments, a category in which we also find Denis Johnson's *Jesus Son* and Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* and the plays of the German playwright Hans Xavier Kroetz. *Woyzech* by Buchner is among the first and most influential of these fragments.

[lxxix] Hylomorphism, once again, defines matter as inherently inert, such that *difference* or *form* can only arise through the action of some exterior force – Platonic ideas, for example, or the functioning of dialectical oppositions. In Deleuze, by contrast, the inherent form-giving (or *morphogenetic*) capacity of matter itself provides a crucial refutation of hylomorphic materialism: matter is inherently expressive and morphogenetically charged, giving rise to differences at every scale through the operation of the thermodynamic processes of a metastable (Simondon's term) world.

[lxxx] *History of Sexuality, Volume 2* and *History of Sexuality, Volume 3*.

[lxxxi] "Hadot is unable to abandon the conception of subjectivity as something transcendent with respect to life or praxis" (Agamben, "The Problem of Subjectivity" 1:14).

[lxxxii] Giorgio Agamben, "The Problem of Subjectivity." European Graduate School. 2009 127:

[lxxxiii] See Kerslake on feeling as the mediation of instinct and intelligence, associated with Deleuze's "occult unconscious" (164).

[lxxxiv] "… One of the most important aspects of *Capitalist Sorcery* is its refusal to privilege *episteme* over *techne,* with all the consequences this entails" (Murphy 2).

[lxxxv] This directly echoes Edward Casey's account of "the return of place by way of body" (202).

[lxxxvi] Climatologically and geologically neutral, featureless in its inert, vacuous plenitude, the urban topography lends itself to metaphors of nullity and lessness, such as Steppling's play *Exhaling Zero*, or Bret Easton Ellis's *Less than Zero*. In *Storyland*, site-specific work becomes the ultimate expression of the *poor theater* and the *holy actor*, dragged in the direction of the political. "Each challenge from the actor, each of his magical acts (which the audience is incapable of reproducing) becomes something great, something extraordinary, something close to ecstasy" (988).

[lxxxvii] Cieslak appeared in the lead of Jerzy Grotowski's celebrated 1967 production of Calderon's *The Constant Prince*. Anchored in Cieslak's performance, the production is perhaps the most influential of the 20th century, inaugurating further Grotowski-Cieslak collaborations at the Teatr Laboratorium.

[lxxxviii] Rick Dean died in 2006 after a long battle against alcoholism and other forms of substance abuse.

[lxxxix] "In mathematics," as Daniel Smith puts it, "the singular is precisely that which escapes the regularity of the rule—it is the production of the new" (31).

[xc] As, in other words, what Deleuze would call an *empirical* transcendence (*Pure Immanence*).

[xci] The workshops at the Grotowski Workcenter in the 1990s became extended engagements on the edge of spiritual practice, with performance playing an increasingly marginal role.

[xcii] Rather than the result of some agency the Anthropocene may simply be the expression of a fundamental reactive tendency within human consciousness that drives subject formation in a specific direction, a tendency that has been exteriorized in the form of technology (retentional and otherwise) that accrues, developing powerful emergent dynamics of its own. This tendency may in fact be intrinsic to complex adaptive systems per se—the tendency to grasp for more of what seems to affirm and strengthen, and to simultaneously reject whatever seems threatening or irrelevant.

[xciii] Marlane Meyers, Kelly Stuart, Michael Sargent and many others extended this exploration of the transgressive in L.A. theater, establishing Steppling's ongoing influence in Los Angeles.

[xciv] Agamben has explored this extensively in a series of lectures and publications. See "The Archeology of Commandment."

[xcv] Intriguingly, bricolage is also the nature of Agamben's approach to philosophy. "The French *bricolage*," writes David Kishik as he traces the roots of Agamben's brachyology, "which is close to the English notion of 'do it yourself,' received its paradigmatic sense in 'The Science of the Concrete,' the opening chapter of Claude Levi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind*."

[xcvi] Soja's rejection of "all binarisms, to any attempt to confine thought and political action to only two alternatives" runs parallel to my critique of the "coin trick" of neoliberalism in Los Angeles.

[xcvii] In Deacon's *Incomplete Nature*, the discussion of the structure of a whirlpool begins at 19:32.

[xcviii] The link between Abdoh's aesthetic of errancy and Bailes' "poetics of failure" are strong. Bailes praises Abdoh directly for his use of language directly to temporal concerns: "for its rhythms, motifs and densities which are temporally arranged to repeat, interrupt, and physically amplify the space" (Bailes 20).

[xcix] Alan Mandell, in discussion with the author, March 10, 2014.

[c] Rather than question how evil came into the world, according to Leo Daugherty, "the Gnostics looked at the world, and asked, How did good get into it?" (162). The good in human beings manifests as a fundamental alienation from the material processes of the social, and from history as a temporal construct.

[ci] In *City of Quartz* (110), Davis states: ". . . the first coordinated initiative of [L.A.'s] new ruling class…was lobbying to make Los Angeles the primary rail center of the Southwest. . . [by pre-empting] San Diego's bid to become Southern California's transcontinental railroad terminal."

[cii] See Deacon's lecture "Incomplete Nature," 22:05.

[ciii] Johnsen analyses connections between this intriguing triad of thinkers in "*Frères Amis, Not Enemies*."

[civ] The brother of the Titan Prometheus, Epimetheus was entrusted with the task of giving each animal a positive attribute. Calculating incorrectly he arrived at man and had no positive attributes left, and so man, according to this myth, is defined by lack. Steigler connects this lack to man's need to steal attributes from other animals in the form of technics (Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1*).

[cv] Like the "slime" Gordon Lewis analyzes, referencing Sartre, in his Chapter "White and Black Bodies in Bad Faith" (*Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism*).

[cvi] Yearning "conjugates hope, the plaintive cry and desire, that for which the soul at one and the same time has a thirst and does not have the power to define what it thirsts for" (Pignarre and Stengers 48).

[cvii] See Meilin Cheng's *In Other Los Angeleses* for an in-depth analysis of how this new Pacific Rim L.A. manifests in theater and performance.

[cviii] For example, "Steppling can now add to his show dogs this prizewinning dog of a show" (Simon 45). Simon also complained about the lack of air-conditioning in the theater, the heat reminding him of the Mojave desert, where *Teenage Wedding* is set.

[cix] i.e. Sarah Schulman's "gentrification of the mind."

[cx] Triangulation of this kind, again, echoes the 5th century strategy of Peisistratos in Athens.

[cxi] Wendy Brown 99, but the entire discussion from 87–99 pertains.

[cxii] This dissolution of ontological ground was anticipated by Nietzsche and his emphasis on truth—that which provides the metaphysical supplement mediating between, and underlying, both being and knowing—as "coins which have lost their impressions, and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins" (*Truth and Lies* 10).

[cxiii] The figure of Prometheus, appropriately enough, was hung in the same central place on stage as the door, prefiguring Christ as "the door," and underscoring the sacrificial dimension of technology's origins.

[cxiv] "Everyday experiences show the specific character that a relationship attains by the fact that only two elements participate in it. A common fate or enterprise, an agreement or secret between two persons, ties each of them in a very different manner than if even only three have a part in it." (Simmel, "Quantitative Aspects" 123).

[cxv] The relentless dynamism associated with coinage gave rise to an expansive coinage-slavery-warfare cycle, driving the Macedonian Empire to new heights of colonial expansion. The transportability of the coin was as important as the sovereign's guarantee of its value because coins were minted to pay mercenaries, and mercenaries tend to move around in pursuit of employment (Graeber 229–30).

[cxvi] As a matter of practical politics, the efficacy of the strategy laid out in Powell's memo—how to make money disappear from academic discourse, which, in the 1970s, was dominated by what Nancy Fraser calls the *politics of redistribution*, even while marketplace valuations permeate every aspect of Academic life, political discourse filled now with the *politics of recognition*.

[cxvii] Agamben standing in the gap. "Happy life will be such that no separation between *bios* and *zoe* is possible, and life will find its unity in a pure immanence to itself, in 'the perfection of its own power.' In this then, he seeks a politico-philosophical redefinition of life no longer founded upon the bloody separation of the natural life of the species and political life, but which is beyond every form of relation insofar as happy life is life lived in pure immanence, grounded on itself alone" (Mills).

[cxviii] In each of these four plays we locate an alternative to the binary mechanisms of capitalist sorcery in what David Graeber calls "primordial communism." According to Graeber,

ethnographic data suggests this "primordial communism," was at one time the norm rather than an exception. It lives on today in a multitude of interactions escaping the notice of economists precisely because they do not involve exchange (Equity Waiver theater production in L.A. being one of them).

[cxix] Kubiak's analysis in *Agitated States*, that "In America we lack a stage traditions that points to the wavering distance between theater and the real, a theater that consciously takes theater as its object" resonates powerfully with my analysis of situated theater in Los Angeles. The mimetic in such a theater becomes the focus of the theatrical event, as it does in different ways in the plays analyzed here.

[cxx] Russell's paradox involves the set of all sets that are not members of themselves.

[cxxi] This version of dialectic, writes Deleuze, substitutes "for the ideal objecticity of the problematic a simple confrontation between opposing, contrary or contradictory propositions. This long perversion begins with dialectic itself, and attains its extreme form in Hegelianism" (164).

[cxxii] As AEA's Mary McColl said to Open Fist Theater Company's Artistic Director Martha Demson, "I'll teach you to be a better producer: just hire celebrities and charge eighty dollars a ticket."

WORKS CITED

Abdoh, Reza. "The Hip Hop Waltz of Eurydice." *Reza Abdoh.* Ed. Daniel Mufson. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. Print.

Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory*. Trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1998. Print.

Aeschylus. *The Oresteia: Agamemnon; The Libation Bearers; The Eumenides*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Classics, 1975. Print.

Agamben, Giorgio. "Animal, Man and Language." *YouTube*, 2011. Web. 26 Sept. 2015. <https://youtu.be/KNVvvslTO8s >

—. "The Archeology of Commandment." *YouTube*, 2011. Web. 24 Sept 2015. <https://youtu.be/JVV94Fi5ChI>

—. *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*. Trans. by Lorenzo Chiesa. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2011. Print.

—. *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics*. Trans. by Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2000. Print.

—. "The Oath and the Peculiar Force of Language." *YouTube*, 2011. Web. 26 Sept. 2015. <https://youtu.be/KZGWMFapbDk >

—. "The Problem of Subjectivity." *YouTube*, 2009. Web. 26 Sept. 2015. <https://youtu.be/ybkjlMDDmJo>

—. *Remnants of Auschwitz*: *The Witness and the Archive*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Zone Books, New York, 1999. Print.

—. *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Trans. Patricia Dailey. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2005. Print.

—. *The Sacrament of Language: An Archaeology of the Oath*. Trans. Adam Kotsko. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2011. Print.

—. *The State of Exception.* Trans. Kevin Attell. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2005. Print.

Aristophanes. "The Birds." Trans.William Arrowsmith. *Four Plays by Aristophanes.* New York: Penguin, 1961. Print.

Aristotle. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941. Print.

Austin, J. L. *How* to Do *Things with Words.* 2nd ed. Ed. Marina Sbisà and J. O. Urmson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975. Print.

Bailes, Sara Jane. *Performance Theater and the Poetics of Failure*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010. Print.

Balibar, Etienne. *Equaliberty: Political Essays*. Trans. James Ingram. Durham: Duke UP. 2014. Print.

Banham, Reyner. "City as Scrambled Egg." *Cambridge Opinion* 17 (1959): 18–23. Print.

—. *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies.* New York: Harper and Row, 1971. Print.

Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. Print.

Barker, Stephen. "Nietzsche/Derrida, Blanchot/Beckett: Fragmentary Progressions of the Unnamable" *Postmodern Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1 June 1995. Web. 24 Sept 2015.

—. "Transformation as an Ontological Imperative: The [Human] Future According to Bernard Stiegler." *Bernard Stiegler and the Question of Technics.* Spec. issue of *Transformation* 17 (2009). Web. 27 Sept 2015.

Bateson, Gregory. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind.* Chicago: U of Chicago Press. 1972. Print.

Bataille, Georges. *The Accursed Share, an Essay on General Economy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. Vol. 1. Cambride: Zone Books, 1991. Print.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation.* Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1995. Print.

Berressem, Hanjo. "Structural Couplings: Radical Constructivism and a Deleuzian Ecologics." *Deleuze/Guattari and Ecology*. Ed. Bernd Herzogenrath. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.

Beckett, Samuel. *Endgame*. New York: Grove Press, 1958. Print.

—. "Krapp's Last Tape." *The Grove Centenary Edition: Poems, Short Fiction, Criticism.* Vol. IV. Ed. Paul Auster. New York: Grove, 2006. Print.

—. "Lessness." *The Grove Centenary Edition: Poems, Short Fiction, Criticism* Vol. IV. Ed. Paul Auster. New York: Grove, 2006. 375–380. Print.

—. *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit*. London: John Calder, 1989. Print.

—. *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnameable.* New York: Grove, 2009. Print.

—. *Watt*. New York: Grove, 2009. Print.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999. Print.

—. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968. Print.

Billings, Joshua. "Christoph Menke, *Tragic Play: Irony and Theater from Sophocles to Beckett*." *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2009. Web. 24 Sept 2015.

Biskind, Peter. *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs-and-Rock 'N' Roll Generation Saved Hollywood.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999. Print.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Writing of the Disaster.* Trans. Ann Smock. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1995. Print.

Bond, Sophie and Sarah Kindon. "Working with Doreen Downunder: Antipodean Trajectories" *Spatial Politics: Essays for Doreen Massey.* Ed. David Featherstone and Joe Painter. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. Print.

Bottoms, Stephen J. *Playing Underground: A Critical History of the 1960s Off-Off Broadway Movement*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 2004. Print.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1977. Print.

Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*. New York: The Columbia UP, 2012. Print.

Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015. Print.

Braudel, Fernand. *Civilization & Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*. Trans. Sian Reynold. New York: Harper & Row, 1982. Print. Vol. 2 of *The Wheels of Commerce*. 3 vols.

Brecht, Bertolt. "On Rhymeless Verse with Irregular Rhythms." *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Ed. and Trans. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992. 115–120. Print.

Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015. Print.

Butler, Judith P. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham UP. 2005. Print.

Cadwalladr, Carole. “Sam Shepard Opens Up.” *The Guardian* 20 Mar. 2010. Web. 24 Sept. 2015.

Cantor, Paul A. “Film Noir and the Frankfort School.” *The Philosophy of Film Noir.* Ed. Mark Conrad. Lexington: U of Kentucky Press. 2006. Print.

Carlson, Marvin. “Back to the Basics.” *Reza Abdoh*. Ed. Mufson, Daniel. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. Print.

—. *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993. Print.

Casey, Edward S. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. Print.

—. Edward S. Casey. “Boundary, Place, and Event in the Spatiality of History.” *Rethinking History* 11 (2007): 506– 512. Print.

Chaudhuri, Una. *Staging Place: the Geography of Modern Drama*. Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan Press, 1995. Print.

Cheng, Meiling. *In Other Los Angeleses: Multicentric Performance Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. Print.

Coetzee, John Maxwell. “Samuel Beckett's ‘Lessness’: An Exercise in Decomposition.” *Computers and the Humanities* 7.4 (Mar 1973): 195–198. Print.

Colebrook, Claire. *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life*. London: Continuum Books, 2010. Print.

—. *Philosophy and Post-Structuralist Theory: From Kant to Deleuze*, Edinburg, Edinburgh UP, 2005. Print.

Connolly, William E. *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism.* Durham: Duke UP, 2013.

Connor, Steven. "Beckett and Bion," *Journal of Beckett Studies* 17.1–2 (2008): 9–34. Print.

Cook, David A. *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. Print.

Cooper, Dennis. Little Caesar. Dennis Cooper: The Official Online Resource. Web. 25 Sept. 2015.

Coward, Harold and Toby Foshay, eds. *Derrida and Negative Theology*. Albany, New York: State U of New York Press, 1992. Print.

Crary, Jonathan. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. London: Verso, 2013. Print.

Creedon, Emma. *Sam Shepard and the Aesthetics of Performance.* New York: Palgrave, 2015. Print.

Crutzen, Paul J., and Eugene F. Stoermer. "The 'Anthropocene.'" *International Geosphere–Biosphere Programme (IGBP) Newsletter* 41 (2000): 17–18. Print.

Czarnecki, Kristin. "'Signs I Don't Understand': Language and Abjection in *Molloy." Journal of Beckett Studies* 17.1-2 (2008): 52–77. Print.

Cull, Laura. *Theatres of Immanence, Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print.

Daugherty, Leo. "Gravers False and True: Blood Meridian as Gnostic Tragedy." *Perspectives on Cormac McCarthy*. Ed. Edwin T. Arnold and Dianne C. Luce. Jackson, Mississippi: UP of Mississippi, 1999. Print.

Davidson, Arnold. "Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics and Ancient Thought." *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*. Ed. Gary Gutting. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1994. Print.

Davis, Mike. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. Brooklyn: Verso, 1990. Print.

Deacon, Terrence, W. *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter.* New York: Norton, 2012. Print.

—. "Incomplete Nature, How Mind Emerged from Matter." *YouTube*, 12 Sept 2012. Web. 26 Sept 2015. <https://youtu.be/BvFE1Au3S8U>

—. *The Symbolic Species: The Coevolution of Language and the Bran*. New York: Norton, 1998. Print.

Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. 1967. Detroit: Black & Red, 2010. Print.

DeLanda, Manuel. "Assemblage Theory, Society, and Deleuze." *YouTube*, 2011. Web. 26 Sept. 2015. <https://youtu.be/J-I5e7ixw78>

—. "The Biology of Cities 1." Part 5. *YouTube*, 6 Apr. 2011. Web. 26 Sept. 2015. <https://youtu.be/V-zWRBGD7ck>

—. "Deleuze, Morphogenesis, and Population Thinking." *YouTube*, 2011. Web. 24 Sept. 2015. <https://youtu.be/5HSMTUZ64bY>

—. "Deleuzian Ontology: A Sketch." *Ситуация в России (Situation in Russia)* 2.38 (2006). Web. 25 Sept. 2015.

—. *Intensive Science & Virtual Philosophy.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2002. Print.

—. "Metaphysics As Ontology: Aristotle and Deleuze's Realism□." *YouTube*, 2011. Web. 26 Sept. 2015. <https://youtu.be/1ZjMKGTYfK4>□□□

—. *Philosophy and Simulation: the Emergence of Synthetic Reason*. New York: Continuum Books, 2011. Print.

—. *A Thousand Years of Non-Linear History*. Brooklyn: Zone Books, 1997. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Bergsonism*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Zone Books, 1991. Print.

—. *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia UP. 1994. Print.

—. *Desert Islands and Other Texts*. Trans. Mike Teormina. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2002. Print.

—. *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press. 1997. Print.

—. *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Zone Books, 1990. Print.

—. *Foucault*. Trans. Sean Hand. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1988. Print.

—. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 3–7. Print.

—. *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*. Trans. Anne Boyman. New York: Zone Books, 2005. Print.

—. *The Logic of Sense*. Trans. Mark Lester. New York: Columbia UP, 1990. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1983. Print.

—. *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1987. Print.

—. *What Is Philosophy?* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia UP, 1994. Print.

Dellin, Kevin. "The Sounds of Silence." *Stage Raw*. 12 Aug 2015. Web. 25 Sept 2015.

Derrida, Jacques, "The Reason of the Strongest." *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason.* Trans. Brault, Pascale Anne and Michale Naas. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005. Print.

—. *The Beast and The Sovereign, Volume One*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2008. Print.

Descartes, Rene. *Discourse on Methods and Meditations on First Philosophy.* Trans. Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett,1998. Print.

de Zegher, Catherine, ed. *Papers 3, Another City for Another Life: Constant's New Babylon. An Homage to Constant.* New York: The Drawing Center, 1999. Print.

Diamond, Elin. "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism." *TDR* 32.1 (1988): 82–94. Print.

Dick, Phillip K. *Valis*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1981. Print.

Donald, Merlin. "Art and Evolution." *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity*. Ed. Turner, Mark. Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

Doyle, Richard M. *Darwin's Pharmacy: Sex, Plants and the Evolution of the Noosphere*. Seattle: U of Washington Press. 2011. Print.

Elyachar, Julia. "Before (and After) Neoliberalism: Tacit Knowledge, Secrets of the Trade, and the Public Sector in Egypt." *Cultural Anthropology* 27.1 (2012): 76–96.

Ethington, Phillip J. "Placing the Past: 'Groundwork' for a Spatial Theory of History" *Rethinking History* 11 (2007): 465–493. Print.

Facundo, Alvaredo, Anthony B. Atkinson, Thomas Piketty, and Emmanuel Saez. "The Top 1 Percent in International and Historical Perspective" *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* 27.3 (2013): 3–20. Print.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *Dionysus Resurrected: Performances of Euripides' The Bacchae in a Globalizing World*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. Print.

Fornés, Maria Irene. "*Mud.*" *The Norton Anthology of Drama, Volume Two: The Nineteenth Century to the Present*. Ed. Garnor J. Ellen, Stanton B. Garner Jr. and Martin Puchner. New York: Norton, 2009. Print.

—. *The Danube*. *Maria Irene Fornés: Plays*. New York: PAJ, 1986. Print.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1977. Print.

—. *History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasur*e. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Print.

—. *History of Sexuality, Volume 3: The Care of the Self*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books 1988. Print.

—. "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." Trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986): 22–27. Print.

—. "Polemics, Politics and Problematicization: An Interview." *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984*. Vol 1. Ed. Paul Rabinow. London: Penguin, 1997. 111–119. Print.

—. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978-1979*. Ed. Michel Senellart. Trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print.

Fraser, Nancy. "Re-Thinking Recognition." London: New Left Review, 2000. Print.

Gatti, Luciano. "The Choreography of Disobedience: Beckett's *Endgame*." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 23.2 (September 2014): 222–243. Print.

Gilder, George F. *Wealth and Poverty*. New York: Regnery, 1981. Print.

Gillman, Richard. "Introduction." *Seven Plays*. New York: Bantam Books, 1984. Print.

Girard, Rene. “Violence and Religion: Cause or Effect?” *Hedgehog Review* 6.1 (Spring 2004): 8. Print.

—. *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977. Print.

Goodchild, Phillip. *The Theology of Money*. Durham: Duke UP, 2009. Print.

—. *Capitalism and Religion: The Price of Piety.* London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Gottlieb, Paula, “Aristotle on Non-contradiction.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford U, 12 June 2015. Web. 27 Sept 2015.

Gould, Stephen J. *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*, New York: Norton, 1989. Print.

Gourgouris, Stathis. *Democracy is a Tragic Regime.* PMLA. October 2014, Vol 129 Number 4. Ed. Simon Gikandi. Print.

Gould, Stephen J. *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*. New York: Norton, 1989. Print.

Goux, Jean-Joseph. *The Coiners of Language*. Trans. Jennifer Gage. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. Print.

—. “General Economics and Postmodern Capitalism.” *Yale French Studies* 78 (1990): 206–224. Print.

Graeber, David. *Debt: The First 5000 Years*. Brooklyn: Melville House, 2011. Print.

Green, Joshua. “The Rove Presidency,” *The Atlantic* Sept. 2007. Web. 24 Sept 2015.

Grossberg, Lawrence. “Theorizing Context” *Spatial Politics: Essays for Doreen Massey.* David Featherstone and Joe Painter, eds. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. Print.

Hacker, Jacob S and Paul Pierson. *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer--and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012. Print.

Halpern, Richard. “Beckett’s Tragic Pantry: Endgame and the Deflation of the Act.” *PMLA* 129.4 (October 2014). Print.

Haraway, Donna. “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (1988): 575–599. Print.

Harman, Graham. *Prince of Networks*: *Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*. Melbourne: re-press, 2009. Print.

Hart, Keith. “Heads or Tails? Two Sides of the Coin.” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21.4 (1986): 637–656. Print.

Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.

Heckerling, Amy, dir. *Fast Times at Ridgemont High.* Universal Pictures, 1982. Film.

Hise, Greg. *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997. Print.

Horwitz, Morton J. "Santa Clara Revisited: The Development of Corporate Theory.” *West Virginia Law Review* 88 (1985) 173–224. Print.

Irigaray, Luce. “Plato’s Hystera,” *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985. Print.

—. “The Stage Setup,” *Mimesis, Masochism, and Mime, the Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*. Ed. Timothy Murray. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press. 1997. Print.

Johnsen, William. “*Frères Amis, Not Enemies.* Serres Between Prigogine and Girard.” *Mapping Michel Serres.* Ed. Niran Abbas,. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 2005. Print.

Juarrero, Alicia. *Dynamics in Action: Intentional Behavior as a Complex System.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002. Print.

Kantorowicz, Ernst H. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957. Print.

Kerslake, Christian. *Deleuze and the Unconscious*. London: Continuum, 2007. Print.

Kishik, David. *The Power of Life: Agamben and the Coming Politics*. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2012. Print.

Klein, Naomi. "How Science is Telling Us All to Revolt," *New Statesman*, 29 October 2013. Web. 27 Sept 2015.

Knowlson, James. *Damned to Fame: The Life Of Samuel Beckett*. London: Bloomsbury, 1996. Print.

Koehler, Robert. "Ironic Fare Shows Padua Hills Festival Has Finally Arrived." *Los Angeles Times*, 24 July 1990. Web. 27 Sept 2015.

—. "The Thrill of Creation, Out on Theater's Edge : John Steppling is happy producing good, honest theater whether he has a hit or not." *Los Angeles Times*, 21 Jan 1990. Web. 27 Sept 2015.

Kohn, Eduardo. *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 2013. Print.

Krugman, Paul and Robin Wells. *Economics.* New York: Worth, 2012. Print.

Kubiak, Anthony. *Agitated States: Performance in the American Theatre of Cruelty*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 2002. Print.

Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1962. Press.

Latour, Bruno. "From Critique to Composition." *YouTube*, 17 Feb. 2012. Web. 26 Sept. 2012. <https://youtu.be/-02aCvQ-HFs>

—. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1991. Print.

—. *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1987. Print.

Law, John and Annemarie Mol. "Situating Technoscience: an Inquiry into Spatialities." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 19.5 (2001): 609–621. Print.

Lee, Pamela M. "My Enemy, My Friend." *Grey Room* 24 (Summer 2006): 100–109. Print.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1991. Print.

Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. Trans. Karen Jurs-Munby. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Lenzner, Robert. "Greenspan Finally Wakes Up To Fear and Euphoria as Market Forces." *Forbes Magazine*, 24 Oct 2013. Web. 27 Sept 2015.

Leroi-Gourhan, André. *Gesture and Speech*. Trans. Anna Bostock Berger. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993. Print.

Lewis, Gordon R. *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism*. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1995. Print.

Lingis, Alphonso. "The Return of Subjectivity." *Backdoor Broadcasting Company*, 6 Sept 2012. Web. 26 Sept 2015.

Loy, David. "The Deconstruction of Buddhism." *Derrida and Negative Theology*. Ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay. Albany: State U of New York Press, 1992. Print.

Malkin, Jeanette R. *Memory-Theatre and Postmodern Drama*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1999. Print.

Mandell, Alan. Personal interview. 10 March 2014.

Marriott, David. *On Black Men*. New York: Columbia UP. 2000. Print.

Martin, Randy. *The Financialization of Daily Life (Labor in Crisis)*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002. Print.

Martin, Reinhold. "Financial Imaginaries: Toward a Philosophy of the City." *Grey Room* 42 (Winter 2011): 60–79. Print.

Massey, Doreen. *For Space*. London: Sage, 2005. Print.

Massumi, Brian. *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992. Print.

—. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation.* Durham, NC: Duke UP. 2002. Print.

Maurer, Bill. "The Anthropology of Money." *The Annual Review of Anthropology* (2006). Print.

—. "David Graeber's Wunderkammer, Debt: The First 5 000 Years." *Anthropological Forum*: *A Journal of Social Anthropology and Comparative Sociology* 3 (2013) Print.

McEvilley, Thomas. *The Shape of Ancient Thought.* New York: Allworth, 2002. Print.

Menke, Christoph. *Tragic Play: Irony and Theater from Sophocles to Beckett.* Trans. James Phillips. New York: Columbia UP, 2009. Print.

McCarthy, Cormac. *Blood Meridian*. New York: Vintage, 1992. Print.

McWilliams, Carrie. *Southern California: An Island on the Land.* Salt Lake City: Gibbs-Smith, 1946. Print.

Meillassoux, Quentin. *After Finitude: an Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. Trans. Ray Brassier. London: Continuum, 2008. Print.

Miller, J. Hillis. *Topographies.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. Print.

Mills, Catherine. "Giorgio Agamben." *Internet Encylclopedia of Philosophy*, n.d. Web. 27 Sept 2015.

Mitchell, Melanie. *Complexity: A Guided Tour*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print.

Morton, Timothy. *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2007. Print.

—. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. Minneapolis: U Of Minnesota Press, 2013. Print.

—. *Realist Magic*. Open Humanities Press, 2013. Web. 27 Sept 2015.

—. "Weird Essentialism." *Ecology Without Nature*, 5 Oct 2013. Web. 26 Sept 2015.

Moss, Jeremy, Ed. "The Later Foucault." *The Later Foucault: Politics and Philosophy*. London: Sage Publications, 1998. Print.

Mufson, Daniel, ed. *Reza Abdoh*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Murphy, Jay. "Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell (2011) by Philippe Pignarre & Isabelle Stengers." *Culture Machine*, 30 Mar 2012. Web. 26 Sept 2015.

Murray, Stuart J. "Post-textual Ethics: Foucault's Rhetorical Will." *Textual Ethos Studies—Or, Locating Ethics*. Ed. A. Fåhraeus and A. Jonsson. Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 2005. 101–116. Critical Studies: Critical Theory, Literature & Culture 26.

Nail, Thomas "Deleuze, Occupy, and the Actuality of Revolution" *Theory & Event* 16.1 (2013). Print.

Nieuwenhuys, Constant. "New Babylon: the World of Homo Ludens." *Dada and Radical Art: Situationist International.* 2008. Web. 27 Sept 2015.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On The Genealogy of Morals.* Trans. Douglas Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1996. Print.

—. *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*. 2012. Trans. Dragan Nikolic. Aristius Books, 2012. Print.

—. *The Gay Science*. Trans. Thomas Common. Mineola: Dover, 2006. Print.

—. *The Will to Power.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York: Random House, 1967. Print.

Parker-Starbuck, Jennifer. *Cyborg Theatre.* Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan. 2011. Print.

Parker, Andrew and Eve Kosovsky-Sedgewick, Eds. *Performativity and Performance.* London: Routledge. 1993. Print.

Parr, Adrian, ed. *Deleuze Dictionary, Revised Edition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010. Print.

Parry, Richard. "*Episteme* and *Techne*." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford U, 22 June 2014. Web. 26 Sept. 2015.

Patterson, Orlando. *Rituals of Blood*: *The Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries.* New York: Basic Civitas, 1998. Print.

—. *Slavery and Social Death, A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982. Print.

Patton, Paul. "Foucault's Subject of Power." *The Later Foucault: Politics and Philosophy*. Ed. Jeremy Moss. London: Sage Publications, 1998. Print.

Pavis, Patrice. *Contemporary Mise en Scène: Staging Theatre Today.* Abingdon: Routledge, 2012. Print.

—. "Postdramatic Theatre." *Performance Studies: Key Words, Concepts and Theories*. Ed. Bryan Reynolds. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Print.

Peralta, Stacy, dir. *Dog Town and Z-Boys*. Agi Orsi Productions, 2001. Film.

Pignarre, Phillip and Isabelle Stengers. *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell*. Trans. Andrew Goffey. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Print.

Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the 20th Century*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014. Print.

Plato. *The Republic*. Trans. Tom Griffith. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

Powell, Lewis F. Jr. “Powell Memorandum: Attack on American Free Enterprise System.” 1971. The Powell Archives, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA. Web. 26 Sept. 2015.

Priest, Graham. *Non-Contradiction: A Study of the Transconsistent*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

Priest, Graham and Francesco Berto. “Dialetheism.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford U, 28 March 2013, Web. 24 Sept. 2015.

Pyyhtinen, Olli and Sakari Tamminen. “We Have Never Been Only Human: Foucault and Latour on the Question of the Anthropos.” *Anthropological Theory* 11.2 (2011): 135–152. Print.

Pyyhtinen, Olli. *Simmel and ‘The Social’.* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010. Print.

Ranciere, Jacques. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. New York: Continuum, 2010. Print.

Ramey, Joshua. *The Hermetic Deleuze*: *Philosophy and the Spiritual Ordeal*. Durham: Duke UP, 2012. Print.

—. “Deleuze, Guattari, and the ‘Politics of Sorcery.’ *SubStance* 39.1 (2010): 8–23. Print.

Reynolds, Bryan. *Performing Transversally: Reimagining Shakespeare and the Critical Future.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Print.

—. *Transversal Subjects: From Montaigne to Deleuze after Derrida*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Print.

Reynolds, Bryan, ed. *Performance Studies: Key Words, Concepts and Theories*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Print.

Richter, Gerhard. “The Work of Art and Its Formal and Genealogical Determinations: Benjamin’s ‘Cool Place’ between Kant and Nietzsche.” *Grey Room* 39 (Spring 2010): 95–113. Print.

Robinson, Mark, ed. *The Theatre of Maria Irene Fornés*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. Print.

Rotella, Carlo. "Can Jeremy Grantham Profit from Ecological Mayhem?" *New York Times Magazine*, 11 Aug 2011. Web. 24 Sept 2015.

Sadler, Simon. *The Situationist City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999. Print.

Saez, Emmanuel. "Striking it Richer: The Evolution of Top Incomes in the United States." Berkeley: University of California, Department of Economics, 2015. Web. 24 Sept 2015. <http://eml.berkeley.edu/~saez/saez-UStopincomes-2013.pdf>

Santner, Eric L. *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald*. London: The U of Chicago Press, 2006. Print.

Saunders, Paul. "Samuel Beckett's *Trilogy* and the Ecology of Negation." *Journal of Beckett Studies* 20.1 (2011): 54–77. Print.

Schechtner, Richard. *Performance Theory*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1988. Print.

Schechtner, Richard and Lisa Woford. *The Grotowski Sourcebook: Worlds of Performance*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1997. Print.

Schulman, Sarah. *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. Print.

Schumpeter, Joseph A. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York: Harpers, 1942. Print.

Schürmann, Reiner. *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*. Trans. Christine-Marie Gros. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987. Print.

Seaford, Richard. *Dionysus: Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006. Print.

—. *Money and the Early Greek Mind*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP. 2004. Print.

Segall, Mathew David. “Reflections on Deleuze’s Engagement with Natural Science in D&R.” *Footnotes to Plato*, 2013. Web. 26 Sept. 2015.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofksy. *Touching Feeling: Abjection, Pedagogy, Performativity.* Durham: Duke UP, 2003. Print.

Serres, Michel. *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP. 1983. Print.

—. *The Parasite*. Trans. Lawrence R. Schehr. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press. 2007. Print.

—. *Variations on the Body*. Trans. Randolph Burks. Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2011. Print.

Shaviro, Steven “Simondon on Individuation.” *The Pinocchio Theory*, 16 Jan 2006. Web. 26 Sept 2015.

—. *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze and Aesthetics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012. Print.

Shell, Marc. *The Economy of Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993. Print.

Shepard, Sam. *Seven Plays*. New York: Bantam Books, 1984. Print.

Simmel, Georg. “Bridge and Door.” *Simmel On Culture: Selected Writings Theory, Culture & Society*. Ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone. London: Sage Publications, Inc., 1997. Print.

—. “Quantitative Aspects of the Group” *The Sociology of Georg Simmel.* Trans. Kurt H. Wolff. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1950. Print.

—. *The Philosophy of Money*. Ed. David Frisby. Trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby from a first draft by Kaethe Mengelberg. London: Routledge, 1978. Print.

Simon, John. “High and Dry.” *New York Magazine*, 5 Aug 2015. 44–45. Print.

Simondon, Gilbert. “The Mode of Existence of Technical Objects.” Trans. Ninian Mellamphy. Paris: Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1958. Print.

Sloterdijk, Peter. “The Anthropocene: A Process-State at the Edge of Geohistory?.” Trans. Anna-Sophie Springer. *Art in the Anthropocene*. Ed. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin. Open Humanities Press, 2015. Web. 26 Sept 2015. <http://openhumanitiespress.org/Davis-Turpin_2015_Art-in- the-Anthropocene.pdf>

—. *The Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche’s Materialism.* Trans. Jamie Owen Daniel. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1989. Print.

Smith, Anna Deavere. *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992.* New York: First Anchor Books, 1994. Print.

Smith, Daniel W. *Essays on Deleuze*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012. Print.

Smith, Daniel W. and Protevi, John, “Gilles Deleuze.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford U, Spring 2013. Web. 26 Sept 2015.

Soch, Adam, dir. *Reza Abdoh: Theater Visionary*. Cultures on Film, 2015. Film.

Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. Print.

Spencer, Douglas. “Architectural Deleuzism: Neoliberal Space, Control and the University.” *Radical Philosophy* 168 (2011).

Stengers, Isabelle. *Cosmopolitics 2*. Trans. Robert Bonnano. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2011. Print.

Steppling, John. *Sea of Cortez and Other Plays*. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1995. Print.

—. “Storyland.” *The Best of the West: An Anthology of Plays from the 1989 & 1990 Padua Hills Playwrights Festivals.* Ed. Mednick, Murray, Bill Radin, Cheryl Slean. Los Angeles: Padua Hills Press, 1991. Print.

Steppling, John and David Walsh. “The Art And Politics Of Film: A Conversation at the *Swans Café.” Swans Commentary*, 28 Mar 2005. Web. 26 Sept 2015.

Stiegler, Bernard. “A Rational Theory of Miracles: On Pharmacology and Transindividuation” Interview with Ben Roberts, Jeremy Gilbert, and Mark Hayward. Trans. and ed. Ben Roberts, with Stephen Barker, Mark Hayward, and Jeremy Gilbert. *New Formations* 77 (2012): 164–184. Print.

—. *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*. Trans. Stephen Barker. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2010. Print.

—. *The Decadence of Industrial Democracies*. Trans. Suzanne Arnold and Daniel Ross. Malden: Polity Press, 2011. Print.

—. *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus.* Trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.

—. *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*. Trans. Stephen Barker. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2010. Print.

—. “The Theater of Individuation: Phase-Shift and Resolution in Simondon and Heidegger.” Trans. Kristina Lebedeva. *Parrhesia Number* 7 (2009): 46–57.

Taplin, Oliver. *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990. Print.

Terry, Don. “Sam Yorty, Maverick Mayor of Los Angeles, Dies at 88.” *New York Times* 6 June 1998. Web. 26 Sept 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/06/06/us/sam-yorty-maverick-mayor-of-los-angeles-dies-at-88.html>

Trachtenberg, Alan. *The Incorporation of America*: *Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982. Print.

Turner, Victor. *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play*. Cambridge: PAJ, 1982. Print.

Ubersfeld, Anne. *Reading Theatre*. Trans. Frank Collins. Toronto: U of Toronto Press. 1999. Print.

Varela, Francisco, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch. *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991. Print.

Vernant, Jean-Pierre, Pierre Vidal-Naquet. *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*. Trans. Janet Lloyd. New York: Zone Books, 1988. Print.

Waldie, DJ. *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir.* New York: Norton, 2005. Print.

Wasser, Audrey. "A Relentless Spinozism: Deleuze's Encounter with Beckett." *SubStance* 41.1 (2012): 124–136. Print.

Wiles, David. *Tragedy in Athens: Performance Space and Tragic Meaning.* London: Cambridge UP, 1999. Print.

Williams, Raymond. *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*. New York: Oxford UP, 1969. Print.

—. *Culture and Materialism*. Brooklyn: Verso, 2006. Print.

—. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP. 1977.