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CANADIAN THEATRE AND THE TRAGIC EXPERIENCE OF EVIL

This essay examines the relevance of the tragic account of evil for Canadian theatre in the shadow of the contemporary “war on terror.” It concentrates on two important aspects of the ancient Greek depiction of evil in tragedy: (1) that no agent, human or divine, is either absolutely good or absolutely evil; and (2) that evil, understood as the experience of dread, cannot be exterminated but can, at best, be kept within limits. In other words, the tragic account of evil is neither “melodramatic” nor “eschatological.” The essay then discusses three recent Canadian plays that address current moral and geo-political issues: *The Adventures of Ali & Ali and the aXes of Evil* by Marcus Youssef, Guillermo Verdecchia, and Camyar Chai; *Capture Me* by Judith Thompson; and *Insomnia* by Daniel Brooks with Guillermo Verdecchia. Through these works, this essay explores how the experience of evil is currently being depicted and considers the possibilities for a new type of tragic theatre in Canada.

Cet article a pour but d'examiner la pertinence de la représentation tragique du mal dans le théâtre canadien au regard de la guerre contemporaine contre le terrorisme. Il se concentre sur deux aspects importants de la représentation du mal dans le théâtre grec antique, soit : (1) qu'aucun agent, humain ou divin, n'est entièrement bon ou mauvais et (2) que le « mal, » c'est-à-dire l'expérience de la terreur, ne peut pas être détruite mais peut, au mieux, être limitée. En d'autres mots, la représentation tragique du mal n'est ni « mélodramatique, » ni « eschatologique. » L'article, par la suite, examine trois oeuvres canadiennes récentes qui traitent des questions morales et des problèmes géopolitiques contemporains, soit : The Adventures of Ali & Ali and the aXes of Evil de Marcus Youssef, Guillermo Verdecchia et Camyar Chai; Capture Me de Judith Thompson; et Insomnia de Daniel Brooks et Guillermo Verdecchia. À l'aide de ces œuvres, l'article étudie les possibilités d'avoir un nouveau genre de théâtre tragique au Canada, aborde la question de la représentation contemporaine de l'expérience du « mal »?



It is well understood that the question of evil is one of the central concerns of religion. What is less well understood is the relation between the experience of evil and the history of theatre.¹ In the traditions of Christian and post-Christian thought in the West, the word “evil” has tended to be narrowly defined to designate “sin” (disobedience to God) or extreme human immorality (acts of severe cruelty, sadism, and mass murder). In recent years, there has been an effort to broaden the meaning of the term so that it is not tied exclusively to Christian or post-Christian conceptions in the West. For example, C. Fred Alford argues that “evil,” before being a theological or moral category, is primarily a term signifying the “experience of dread”—the experience of wickedness, suffering, disaster, and anxiety in a threatening universe (*What Evil Means* 3). As such, “evil” does not signify malicious human actions alone, but can also refer to natural disasters, accidents, disease, or anything that causes harm. If we understand evil in this general sense of “dread,” then we can say that evil contributed to the birth of theatre in ancient Athens. The annual City Dionysia was both a religious festival in honour of the god Dionysus and a civic occasion in which citizens were required to watch depictions of evil. The tragic plays forced the audience to confront the most repugnant aspects of the human condition. Plague, sickness, murder, incest, cannibalism, parricide, rape, and manifold other atrocities were presented in the tragedies. In this sense, the experience of evil was crucial for the genesis of theatre in the West, particularly tragic theatre.

But what relevance, if any, can the Greek tragic vision of evil have for us today? Is it possible, or even desirable, for a new tragic cult, one founded on the Athenian tragic tradition but with its own insights and rituals, to emerge in contemporary Western democracies? Could such a theatre have a limited, but nevertheless significant, impact on Western culture and consciousness?

A number of prominent theatre scholars debated these questions in the American publication *Theatre Journal* shortly after the September 11 terrorist attacks. The “Forum on Theatre and Tragedy in the Wake of September 11, 2001” contains a range of opinions, and there is some disagreement among the participants over the extent to which tragedy can adequately address the post-9/11 condition. Most agree, however, that aspects of the tragic tradition are still relevant for contemporary theatre. I would like to continue this discussion, but with more hindsight and from a Canadian perspective. In the first part of my paper, I will examine important characteristics of the Greek tragic vision of “evil,” and

consider these characteristics in relation to the post-9/11 experience of evil. I will pay particular attention to Albert Camus's essay "On the Future of Tragedy," and Jean Baudrillard's "Spirit of Terrorism." In the second part of my paper I will examine the extent to which the tragic vision of evil shapes the work of prominent Canadian playwrights today. In particular, I want to consider recent works of Canadian theatre in relation to the popular discourse of evil that emerged after 9/11. This discourse is complicated and multifaceted, but two prominent features stand out. First, it tends to be *melodramatic*, not just because much of the rhetoric is "over-the-top," but also because the war on terror is often described as a binary struggle between absolute good and unconditional evil. Second, the discourse tends to be *eschatological*; that is, there is an inclination to believe the outcome of the war will lead to the final defeat of evil.² As President Bush said three days after 9/11, "Our responsibility to history is clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil."³ Radical Islamists who carry out suicide attacks have a similar eschatological understanding; they are combating a power they perceive as satanic to create a pure Muslim society.⁴ The Dionysian tragic understanding is important for contemporary Canadian theatre, insofar as it offers an alternative to eschatological melodrama and can perhaps serve as an antidote.

The Tragic Account of Evil

After the victories over the Persians in the fifth century BCE, Athens possessed unprecedented control over the Greek world.⁵ The city established the first known democracy in human history; the "people," or, more precisely, the male land-owning citizens of the city, would now be responsible for making political decisions in the Assembly.⁶ The Athenians, in the days before public education, needed public sites to explore the issues related to governing their unstable new democracy. Theatre became one of those places. Remarkably, the Athenians started to mount plays depicting the downfall of the powerful just when they were at the pinnacle of their power. The tragedies performed at the annual City Dionysia warned of the limits of power and the dangers of hubris. Athenians were aware that with their new power and radical democracy they were testing the very limits of what was acceptable to gods and humans, and might unwittingly bring disaster upon themselves. The works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides often depict characters who seem to be the innocent victims of divine malevolence; however, they also reveal how human arro-

gance and foolishness can aggravate suffering. As Zeus says at the start of Homer's *Odyssey*, "Oh for shame, how the mortals put the blame upon us gods, for they say evils [*kakos*] come from us, but it is they, rather, who by their own recklessness win sorrow beyond what is given" (1.32-34). Tragedy warned the Athenians to proceed carefully with their newfound power and democracy; otherwise, they too might fall like a tragic hero.

The City Dionysia, then, was a religious event where the Athenian community as a whole engaged in moral and political philosophy.⁷ But tragic plays were not simple morality tales designed to give spectators an edifying lesson that would help them govern prudently. The tragedies reveal how difficult it can be to make good decisions in a world where good and bad are often not well defined. Indeed, nothing in the tragic universe is presented as absolutely good. One of the finest accounts of this aspect of tragedy is offered by Albert Camus in his 1955 essay "On the Future of Tragedy."⁸ Camus argues that no human or divine force in a Greek tragedy can be described as completely good or absolutely evil; those characters who are relatively just are not completely in the right, and even the most repugnant characters have a certain amount of justice on their side. Camus writes, "each force [in a tragedy] is at the same time both good and bad [...]. Antigone is right, but Creon is not wrong. Similarly, Prometheus is both just and unjust, and Zeus who pitilessly oppresses him also has right on his side." Camus contrasts this tragic vision with what he refers to as "melodrama" where "only one force is legitimate" (301). Melodrama is a black and white struggle between the forces of good and evil, whereas in tragedy no agent, be it a god or a human, is absolutely good.

When a character exaggerates the goodness of his cause and the evil of another—when he becomes "melodramatic"—a limit is crossed and disaster results. "Hubris" is a tragic hero's exaggerated estimation of his own goodness. No hero can set things right alone, and tragedy does not indicate a resolution through a single force. If resolution is even possible, it is depicted as a delicate balance between impure forces, such as the balance that occurs between Orestes and the Furies at the end of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*. Aeschylus points to an uneasy equilibrium between guilty parties, not to a final defeat of evil. The threat of evil can sometimes be contained, but it can never be permanently defeated; any attempt to do so brings disaster.

For Camus, any play that presents a completely justifiable person, god, doctrine, or ideology is a form of melodrama. He

argues that melodrama is found in many of the ideological plays and agitprop spectacles of the twentieth century, as well as in the Christian morality dramas and pageant plays of the medieval period. With regard to Christian melodrama, Camus claims that “religious tragedy” in the Christian sense is impossible (303). The Christian mystery plays cannot be considered tragic because, according to Camus, they present God and His agents as absolutely beneficent and totally legitimate (296-97). Christianity does not accept the notion that evil may stem, in part, from a divinity; instead, it proclaims that there is only one God, and this God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-beneficent. But in Greek tragedy, every agent—even a god—is to some extent evil, and humans are often the victims of divine injustice. As Sophocles’s *Philoctetes* laments, “How can I reckon the score, how can I praise / when praising Heaven I find the Gods are bad?” (lines 451-52). For Camus, the antagonism between tragedy and Christian doctrine is what “explains the silence of tragedy” throughout the Christian medieval period (303).⁹

Camus’s discussion of theatre has broader implications. He is identifying a tension within the soul of Western civilization. On the one hand, there is the Western tragic orientation that achieved its fullest expressions in Greek and Renaissance theatre; on the other, there is the eschatological orientation that superseded the Greek tragic tradition with the rise of Christianity in Europe. Eschatological faith is rooted in the expectation that an absolutely beneficent God will defeat evil, once and for all, at some point in the future. This is the essence of Christian apocalyptic hope as traditionally expressed. As a result, the West has been shaped for the past two millennia by an expectation of a future utopia where all dreadful contaminants are purged. This expectation was later secularized in the utopian aspirations of Nazi and Communist totalitarianism, as well as in certain types of progressive liberalism.¹⁰ Modernity is filled with various kinds of eschatological hopes for a perfect society—a racially pure society, a classless society, a global consumer society, a technological utopia—that can be brought about through human initiative. But in classical tragedy, there is no transcendent or immanent utopia; there are limits to what any endeavour can accomplish; human knowledge is necessarily incomplete; all accomplishments will eventually be destroyed; good is always accompanied by something bad; heroic suffering and death do not indicate eternal salvation. The concern in tragedy is how to live *with* evil and limit its destructiveness. There is no technique, therapy, ideology, political movement,

religion, or god that can guarantee evil will be defeated or remain within prescribed limits forever. But this vision of the world need not lead to despair. On the contrary, as Martha Nussbaum argues in *The Fragility of Goodness*, it can provide us with better awareness of the possibilities and limitations of power, as well as with a greater appreciation for the tenuousness of the good (1-8). The tragic understanding dictates against extremism; instead, it recommends prudence as the best way to protect and sustain the goodness we have been granted in this life.

Given that tragedy depicts good and evil in everything, the implied teaching is that ethical judgments are often difficult to make, particularly when the only choice is between the greater and lesser evil. Under such conditions, relative goods and evils can become so intermingled that they cannot be distinguished. According to Alford in *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Greek Tragedy*, the Athenian fear of confusing good and evil is the real reason why Greek tragedy is associated with the cult of Dionysus. Dionysus is the god of wine, and, as such, Dionysian intoxication causes categories to blur. Dionysus himself has a protean nature that is difficult to define; he is god and beast, male and female, peaceful and violent. Opposites become indistinguishable when celebrants are in the presence of Dionysus. Dionysian intoxication can be good in moderation since it momentarily alleviates our worries; however, it undermines our moral judgment if carried to excess. Alford observes how “good and bad” under the impact of Dionysus can become “so mixed up they cannot be sorted out” (*Psychoanalytic* 47). As the chorus in Sophocles’s *Antigone* states, “evil seems good to one whose mind the god leads to ruin” (lines 675-76). Alford uses the term “Dionysian Crisis” to describe the Greek anxiety of losing moral judgment (*Psychoanalytic* 29).

In the post-9/11 world, we are faced with our own Dionysian Crisis. The current geopolitical moment is, in some respects, similar to fifth-century Greece. Just as Athens had emerged triumphant from the Persian Wars and ruled over the Greek world, so Western capitalist democracies emerged triumphant from the Cold War and asserted global domination. The downfall of Communism unleashed the process that we now call “globalization,” which can loosely be defined as the effort to establish a universal network of commodity and information exchange. Globalization is also linked to the spread of Western values, such as democracy, equality, liberty, and human rights. National and cultural differences may be possible to some extent, but the underlying ecumenical hope of globalization is that all “singularities,” all individuals and

cultures who were once deemed “Other,” can be assimilated within this generalized exchange system and adopt Western values. Through assimilation, all antagonism—all “evil”—is defeated and replaced by a unified state of things. Francis Fukuyama, in his influential article “The End of History?,” refers to this unified condition as the “universal and homogeneous state” —a global network that is economically capitalist and politically democratic (3-18). According to Fukuyama, even if the universal and homogenous state does not yet exist in reality, it nevertheless serves as the final eschatological aspiration of humanity. At the epicentre of globalization is the United States, the world’s only remaining superpower and the guarantor of the New World Order.

But just as Athenian supremacy quickly disintegrated with the start of the Peloponnesian War, so triumphant globalization is already beginning to fall apart. Instead of a unified state of things, the world has become more fractured. The rise of globalization was ironically accompanied by a resurgence of nationalistic, ethnic, and religious “singularities” that were long thought to have died. At the same time, globalization has witnessed the growth of terrorism directed at the heart of Western ecumenism. The September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, two primary symbols of Western economic and military dominance, were the most blatant attacks on globalization that the world has witnessed.

In Jean Baudrillard’s essay “The Spirit of Terrorism,” he argues that the West has not accepted one of the basic lessons of tragedy: the impossibility of exterminating all evil. Evil, for Baudrillard, is an antagonistic principle or unbinding agent that aims to undermine any effort to establish a unified and homogenous totality (*Paroxysm* 25). It may be that some of these disruptive forces, such as radical Islam, also aim at global unification, but their more immediate aspiration is to destabilize the Western hegemon. The more the West endeavours to defeat “evil” through economic, cultural and military means, the more violent reactions it inspires. With these reactions, the West—particularly America—feels it must fight back with greater military violence of its own. This general increase in violence gradually undermines the West’s status as a force of good, and, overall, evil is not truly diminished by Western efforts. According to Baudrillard, neither the forces of “Good,” which aim for a unified state of things, nor the forces of “Evil,” which aim to disrupt unification, will ever be completely victorious. Rather, Good and Evil increase or decrease together. The closer a movement gets to complete unification, the more violent reactions it inspires (*Spirit* 13-14).

What the West has forgotten is the tragic vision of the world, or what Baudrillard calls the “traditional universe.” In the traditional universe, there is no triumph of Good over Evil. There is instead a “balance between Good and Evil” where the forces of unity and antagonism exist in tense equilibrium (*Spirit* 14). The West, however, tried to escape the traditional universe and assert the eschatological dominance of “Good” alone—the triumph of the forces of unification, cooperation, and homogenization. There is now an extreme imbalance of power in the world as a result of these efforts, since no alternative movement can realistically compete with the West militarily, culturally, or economically. The marginalized “Other” cannot defeat the West through open warfare; instead, terrorism becomes the chosen method of confrontation. In Baudrillard’s understanding, the Other is resorting to “viral” methods of attack, using the very means of globalization (technology, science, networks, media, transportation) to undermine globalization itself. Through spectacular acts of violence, the Other asserts its “singularity” or irreducible presence—a presence that was lost within the generalized system of exchange. On 9/11, the global order itself was targeted by radicalized individuals who had dared to assert their singularity. At the same time the 9/11 attackers were themselves motivated by an Islamic apocalyptic vision that desires global domination and purification. But there is, according to Baudrillard, an automatic allergic reaction in the world to any single, hegemonic order. He points out that any order, regardless of ideology or religion, will face terrorist resistance if it attempts to assert itself globally. He writes, “if Islam dominated the world, terrorism would rise against Islam, *for it is the world, the globe itself, which resists globalization*” (*Spirit* 12; italics in original).

Baudrillard’s analysis of our post-9/11 situation resonates with the tragic themes discussed earlier. Contemporary manifestations of evil are the consequence of a Western eschatological agenda to establish a universal order of the “Good.” The West, in tragic fashion, has acted hubristically; Western ideals such as democracy, human rights, gender equality, and liberty—ideals that are always expressed imperfectly—have been compromised and cheapened by the West’s endeavour to assert itself globally. This effort has not only resulted in the abuses of Western hegemony, but it has also spawned terrorist resistance. The contemporary Dionysian Crisis in the West is constituted by this moral confusion. There is increasing awareness that Western ideals and methods which aim to assert the “Good” are, ironically, perpetuating the forces of violence and antagonism.

Consequently, the West is experiencing difficulty distinguishing good from evil.

Canadian Theatre and the Tragic Vision

Given the apocalyptic extremism evident in both Western ecumenism and terrorist resistance, the tragic vision offers an alternative. But is it possible for Western democracies at this time to consider the tragic implications of their unprecedented global supremacy, just as the Athenians did when they were at the height of their power? Can playwrights and performance artists create new and innovative cultural expressions that descend from the ancient cult of tragedy—expressions that are non-melodramatic, critically engaging, and uncompromisingly honest about the ineradicable nature of evil? The stress of our times may spawn a new tragic orientation, one that is acutely aware that there are no apocalyptic solutions to our current dilemmas, just tough choices. The turn toward tragic art that I am suggesting should not be understood as defeatist or despairing. Rather, it should be seen as an effort to gain lucid awareness of our current situation: to understand the frontiers of politics, the indelible nature of violence, our inescapable mortality, and the need for prudence. At the same time, the tragic framework provides a forum in which we can give artistic form to our “dread” and respond to our experience of evil with works of insight and beauty. A revived tragic ethos will mean relinquishing all eschatological illusions, whether they are religious or secular, Western or non-Western. But tragic recognition might bring with it a more realistic assessment of our political and artistic responsibilities.

The most critical place for such a tragic renaissance to occur would be within the United States itself, since it is the epicentre of Western power. A revival of tragic consciousness in certain quarters of the US is certainly not out of the question, particularly as the experiences of 9/11 and the ongoing war in Iraq have made Americans increasingly aware of the limits of their unprecedented power. But a major portion of American discourse, both on the political right and left, continues to be animated by a sense of “exceptionalism.” Americans of different political persuasions believe that their country is the guarantor of a better world and that they have been elected by either God or history to lead the way (Lipset). The prevalence of Protestantism in American life has, in recent years, helped to bolster this feeling of election, particularly within the religious right. At its most extreme, this leads to a melodramatic understanding of the world, in which only America and

whoever is allied with America is “good”; everything else is on the side of evil. As President Bush famously declared two weeks after 9/11: “Either you are with us or with the terrorists.” Such a self-understanding dictates against any wide-spread renaissance of the tragic understanding in America. This militant stance may have softened somewhat in the years after 9/11, especially given the widespread disillusionment with the war in Iraq, but it nevertheless remains.

Canada, however, is uniquely situated. It is geographically and culturally closer to the United States than to Europe, but it is nevertheless distinct. Given Canada’s proximity to and distance from the United States, it provides a space conducive for the creation of tragic art. Since Canada is not as entangled in the melodramatic and evangelical dynamism of contemporary America, there is perhaps more room for the tragic vision to flourish in our culture.

The general strategy of many Canadian playwrights so far has been to critique the Western tendency to designate the Other as evil and, instead, encourage audiences to consider the evil of the West. This approach is especially favoured by those influenced by the political writings of Noam Chomsky. But as Canadian tragedy critically examines the evils of the West, it must not romanticize or whitewash the Other, and thereby simply reverse the melodrama where the Other is all good and the West all evil. Samantha Power, who has written on America and genocide in her book *A Problem From Hell*, observes this reversed melodrama in the work of Chomsky. She writes, “For Chomsky, the world is divided into oppressor and oppressed. America, the prime oppressor, can do no right, while the sins of those categorized as oppressed receive scant mention” (“Everything Explainer” 8). Playwrights who have been inspired by this general understanding may feel inclined to present a similar reversed melodrama on the stage.

Keeping this potential problem in mind, I want to discuss three recent Canadian plays that address the current moral and geo-political situation, particularly as it relates to evil and the war on terror: *The Adventures of Ali & Ali and the aXes of Evil* by Marcus Youssef, Guillermo Verdecchia, and Camyar Chai; *Capture Me* by Judith Thompson; and *Insomnia* by Daniel Brooks with Guillermo Verdecchia. To what degree do these works contain a melodramatic vision of evil? Do they reveal what a Canadian Dionysian theatre might look like in the early twenty-first century? These are questions I will consider through each of these works.

i) The Adventures of Ali and Ali

The Adventures of Ali and Ali is a Chomsky-inspired piece of agit-prop comedy that employs skits, songs and spoofs to deconstruct the war on terror. True to its subtitle “A Divertimento for Warlords,” the play is an amusing, and ostensibly diversionary, examination of contemporary political events, aimed directly at the “warlords” who use the war on terror as an excuse to establish neo-colonial dominance. Notwithstanding the comic nature of the play, *Ali and Ali* has a serious purpose with a semi-tragic edge. The play revolves around the two “Alis” of the title, Ali Hakim and Ali Ababwa, who have sought refuge in Canada from the imaginary country of “Agraba.” Though they try to assimilate within Western society, their efforts are futile. They have trouble finding food, employment, material comfort, and acceptance in their new country. Consequently, they remain not only impoverished but inescapably “Other.”

As we follow their fruitless endeavours, we are treated to a number of satiric assaults against the Bush administration, Western media, and the war on terror. The tendency of Western culture to represent itself as the purveyor of Good is effectively criticized when Ali and Ali try to find careers in the movie industry. They do their best to absorb Western attitudes by composing a script that reaffirms popular American notions about the war on terror, especially in the months following 9/11. With Ali and Ali’s mock script, Youssef, Verdecchia, and Chai enter the very mindset of Western propaganda itself, demonstrating acute awareness of the tactics used to whitewash events in the war on terror; nevertheless, they highlight these tactics for the very purpose of destabilizing such propaganda. Ali and Ali narrate the outlines of their script, loosely based on the events of 9/11 and the American military responses in Afghanistan and especially Iraq. After the sorrow and tears that follow the terrorist attack, Ali and Ali’s script immediately cuts to the military reaction, in which “good boys” are sent off to a far away land:

ALI HAKIM. Good boys.

ALI ABABWA. And some girls too.

ALI HAKIM. In they come.

ALI ABABWA. They do not want revenge.

ALI HAKIM. No. They want justice.

ALI ABABWA. They want to liberate people of small dusty country that had absolutely nothing to do with the unspeakable crime we just saw, a few minutes ago, in the movie.

ALI HAKIM. They have no quarrel with the PEOPLE of
small dust country.
ALI ABABWA. No.
ALI HAKIM. Therefore, they kill by the dozens.
ALI ABABWA. The hundreds.
ALI HAKIM. The thousands. Tanks crush houses. (33-34)

Despite their best efforts to absorb and accept American attitudes, Ali and Ali inadvertently reveal the Dionysian crisis of the war on terror. The “good” boys and girls, and the warlords who send them into battle, supposedly want “justice,” and yet their response looks like violent “revenge.” The result is more violence, death, and moral ambiguity. Good and evil become difficult to distinguish.

The whitewashing effect of popular entertainment and the media, along with its accompanying Dionysian confusion, is effectively captured in “Act 2” of Ali and Ali’s movie script. The “good boys” acquire the shirt of a famous soccer player to offer as a present to a child who has stepped on one of their landmines. The soldier who actually retrieves the shirt in a fire battle is shot, and the child dies before the shirt can be delivered. These events are inspiring for the military units left behind, who mourn the dead child and recognize that their fallen comrade “dared to die for something a little bit more” (46). After their tears, they proceed against the insurgency with unmitigated violence. Ali and Ali’s script contains all of the elements of a sentimental movie or “news” story dealing with the “human dimension” of the war, designed to reaffirm both nationalism and the indubitable goodness of the soldiers. The effect of the script, however, reveals the contradictions and hypocrisies inherent in the war on terror. The hegemony of the “Good” unleashes a multitude of atrocities, both from the soldiers who are fighting the “damned war” and from the insurgency that resists the occupiers. This human interest story from the front is a literal *divertimento* presented as moral edification for Westerners who might doubt the goodness of the war.

The majority of criticism in *Ali and Ali* is directed against America and Western hegemony. The American belief in divine sanction for the war on terror is most vividly lampooned during a puppet show with George “Dubya” Bush and other prominent figures in the first Bush administration. The “Dubya” puppet claims to have had contact with the divine: “[God] told me that Freedom is His gift to every man and woman in this world. And He said that as the greatest power on the face of the earth we have an obligation to help the spread of freedom” (71). To combat Bush’s American evangelicalism, the play self-consciously adopts a

pseudo-terrorist strategy: terrorism grounded in humour and Chomskyan political critique, rather than in violence and religious fundamentalism.

The terrorist-light agenda of *Ali and Ali* is articulated in the play by “Jean Paul Jacques Beauderrière d’ada,” an “embedded critic” steeped in postmodern French thought. Jean Paul Jacques’s one speech in the play is a direct spoof of Baudrillard. In “The Spirit of Terrorism,” Baudrillard writes, “The terrorist hypothesis is that the [Western] system itself will commit suicide in response to the multiple challenges posed by deaths and suicides [...]. It is the tactic of the terrorist model to bring about an excess of reality, and have the system collapse beneath that excess of reality” (17-18). In *Ali and Ali*, Jean Paul Jacques says, “The tactic of *Ali and Ali* is to provoke an excess of reality; their hypothesis is that the system itself will commit suicide in response to multiple deadly farts” (85).

Ali and Ali bombards its audience with comic political flatulence, putting what it considers to be the realities of the war on terror at the forefront. The spectators are thereby given an “excess of reality” in the theatre, which they can subsequently use to deconstruct the daily media bombardment.

A simulated terrorist attack actually occurs near the end of *Ali and Ali*. Osama bin Laden enters the stage to speak with *Ali and Ali* and leaves a ticking bomb, which subsequently goes off. The intended effect of the “lengthy, deafening, and terrifying explosion” is not laughter, but rather shock, evoking within the audience a momentary feeling for the political horrors signified throughout the play. The actor playing “Osama” rips off his beard and says,

[T]his is not a real explosion. Had this been a real explosion from, say, a 5000-pound Laser Guided Penetrator Smart Bomb or a 22-year-old Chechen widow with 6 kilograms of explosives strapped to her body, you would not be hearing this announcement. Your children would have been left father- or motherless, any friends living in the immediate vicinity would have been wiped out. We repeat: this is not real. Look, there you are. There’s your hand, still good for taking your daughter’s hand, writing a poem, scratching your bum. There’s your lover, your friend, your dad, a stranger beside you. You see. It’s only an illusion. (121-22)

An illusion perhaps, but its intended effect is to provide that “excess of reality” which destabilizes our presumptions about the war on terror.

Even though the bomb is set off by “Osama,” this passage

condemns warlords and violence on all sides: Al Qaeda, Chechen suicide bombers, and American Smart Bombs are all listed as instruments of terror. To this extent, the critique is even handed and non-melodramatic. The main object of criticism in this scene, however, is US foreign policy. Shortly before Osama's bomb goes off, a flow chart is projected that lays out the bin Laden family's "numerous connections to American politicians and Industrialists (and Celine Dion)" (119). The chart implicates the United States in the very terrorist attacks directed against it, including the one just simulated on the stage. America, the chart reminds us, has supported Islamic extremism, indirectly through its oil connections with Saudi Arabia and directly in its backing of radicalized Muslims during the Cold War in places like Afghanistan. The nurturing of Islamic radicalism has led to a "blowback"; Islamist anger is now directed against the West and those Muslim governments that support Western interests. *Ali and Ali* suggests that America—the ostensible force of the "Good"—is ultimately responsible for the very evil it is trying to eradicate.

However true this critique may be, it does not take into account whether there is something within the self-understanding of radical Islam, independent of American influence and foreign policy, which encourages terror. Many non-Muslim societies have also suffered the violent effects of American foreign policy, particularly in Latin America and Southeast Asia, and yet the vast majority of terror attacks directed against the West are the result of Islamic extremism. Notwithstanding the occasional mock critique of Islamic radicalism, *Ali and Ali* does not consider how radical Islamist culture, with its own global agenda and fundamentalist orientation, encourages terror. This is in stark contrast to the play's exploration of how American culture nurtures violence. Certainly the intent of Youssef, Verdecchia, and Chai is to redress the imbalance in the war on terror, where the Islamist Other is constantly designated as "evil." But to some extent, tragic balance is lost. By targeting America as the evil behind all evils, even Islamist terror, the play contains vestiges of melodramatic politics.

ii) Capture Me

Something similar can be said about Judith Thompson's *Capture Me*, which premiered in 2004 at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto. Although the primary focus of the play is on male violence and spousal abuse, and hence about troubled interpersonal relationships, it makes a broader political point about Western dominance. Thompson employs different dramaturgical tactics than do the

authors of *Ali and Ali*, but she nevertheless has a similar agenda: to deconstruct the Western binary melodrama that designates the Other as “Evil” and the West as “Good.” *Capture Me* concentrates on what Thompson calls “the monstrous” within each of us, while also examining how Westerners tend to transfer their own evil onto something alien.

Capture Me is the story of a kindergarten teacher named Jerry Joy Lee, who is stalked by her abusive ex-husband Dodge Kingston. Seven years after their divorce, Dodge has returned to pursue Jerry, threatening her with harm or death if she does not surrender to him. The irony is that Dodge is ostensibly a force of goodness and non-violence. A former university professor, he now gives seminars to troubled youth at the local jail, warning them about the dangers of violence and spousal abuse. At one point, Dodge tells his audience that “evil” is not something external to each of us, like a “hurricane” or “poison gas” which overtakes us from without. Instead, he claims, “Radical Evil is within US. It is us. Within you and me and every human being on this earth in fact EVIL is what MAKES us human” (13).¹¹ Despite Dodge’s acute awareness of the “evil within” he cannot control his own violent inclinations, particularly towards Jerry. Though he tells his students that they should never hurt a woman, proclaiming that women are “goddesses” and “angels,” Dodge is unable to follow his own advice. His public proclamations regarding women, though ostensibly respectful, are ultimately dehumanizing: he either “worship[s] the woman in [his] life” or he treats a woman as an object of domination and abuse (33). When Dodge cannot control Jerry, his goddess worship turns into violent misogyny. Consequently, Dodge’s emphasis on the evil *within* becomes all-consuming, to the point where he claims that humans lack the capacity to overcome their inner monstrosity:

When we commit an act of violence, we lose our human shape, don’t we? We TRANSMOGRIFY. Yes, we become monsters. Every person in this world has become a monster at one time or another, you aren’t the only ones [...]. How do you stop this transmogrification? You poor guys, you are nothing but pawns; your violence is so over-determined you didn’t have a chance it’s a goddamned thicket grown over thousands of years of history and it’s almost impossible to clear you have to be SUPERMAN to clear a thicket like that, my friends. (48-49)

Dodge had earlier claimed that evil is what makes us human; now,

in this passage, Dodge argues we “lose our human shape” when we surrender to this evil and bring out the monster. To be human is to contain the inhuman, which, according to Dodge, cannot be controlled.

This concern with interior monsters is the initial topic of conversation between Dodge and Jerry at their first meeting. Jerry, a student of Dodge’s at the university and a young Christian enthusiast, approaches him after a lecture to contest his claim that “the devil” is *inside* of human beings. She tells him: “the devil is OUTSIDE of us [...] and... He...he makes his way in, like a tape worm, gets inside of us and deprives us of our nutrients, our mortality until we are starving, spiritually starving to death” (39). For the young Jerry, evil is like an “invader,” an “illegal alien,” or perhaps even an “immigrant” (40).

The irony is that Jerry, fourteen years after this conversation, falls in love with a Muslim immigrant named Aziz Dawood, the father of one of her kindergarten students. As a Muslim male, Aziz is prone to be stereotyped as a terrorist. He has, in fact, come to Canada to provide a better life for himself and his daughter Sharzia after his family was massacred in his native country. Aziz and Jerry form an odd yet meaningful connection. Aziz offers Jerry intimacy and support, the very things that Dodge was unable to provide as her husband. In this way, Thompson combats the stereotype of the Muslim male as a terrorist and an oppressor of women. Nevertheless, there is a cultural and religious divide between Aziz and Jerry. Aziz refuses ever to cook for a woman, and his relationship with her is not sexual. He explains that his faith forbids him from even kissing Jerry (44). For Jerry, however, this type of connection is liberating; after suffering Dodge’s sexual abuse and stalking, she is ecstatic to be in a relationship that is, in her words, “way, way beyond” sex (48). Aziz similarly speaks of their relationship as a spiritual union in which they find a place “inside” each other:

AZIZ. You are my home, my home is in your soul.

JERRY. Really? Does that mean we are ... living together?

AZIZ. We are living together. In my soul. (43)

In contrast to Dodge, who speaks of interior monsters, Aziz tells Jerry, “You are beautiful inside.” And Aziz, similar to the young Jerry, thinks that evil is primarily exterior, not interior. He says to Jerry, “I don’t care about the outside. That is Western Corruption, Illusion. You have a pure and beautiful soul” (43).

Like Ali and Ali, Aziz becomes disenchanted with Western culture once he is immersed in it. He must hold down three jobs to support himself and Sharzia, and yet he still remains Other. While Aziz might feel at home in Jerry's soul, he cannot feel at home in Canada:

This—is an amphetamine dream, this life of outspoken supermarkets with too much bright coloured food from the dreams of starving children and and tin can movie actors red paint on their lips and sexuality as a serpent and laughing teenager boys who do not have to carry guns and kill people only drink alcohol and vomit in my cab this is a dream, I must leave this dream and I must wake up. (50)

And while Aziz feels alienated from the Western culture that surrounds him, he is fighting his own internal demons. Haunted by the murder of his family, Aziz decides to return to his native country to seek recompense from the killers. "How can I sleep until I have done what I must do" are his last direct words to Jerry in the play (52). Exactly what Aziz plans to do is ambiguous, but the possibility that Aziz might "transmogrify" into something monstrous is suggested. Jerry's friend Minkle fears that Aziz could resort to terrorism in his desire for "revenge." Jerry, however, censures Minkle for her "ridiculous stupid racial stereotype" and claims that Aziz would "never ever hurt an innocent." Instead of "revenge," Jerry claims Aziz wants "justice. [...] REDRESS, redemption NEVER revenge" (52-53). But whether or not Aziz will be able to control his monsters is left in partial uncertainty. Ironically, it is Dodge, the character who continually points to the evil inside, who designates Aziz, the Muslim outsider, as evil. Dodge finds it unacceptable that his ex-wife has fallen in love with a man who he perceives as a foreign invader. When Aziz leaves Canada, Dodge tells Jerry,

What do you want to bet he got the call and he's going to go and blow himself up. You'll see it on the news any day Jerry. You'll see he is NOT the SAINT you think he is. He's a ruthless bastard. Just like me. NO better than me. (55)

In an interview with Dalbir Singh, Thompson claims that Aziz represents the Muslim "Other," whereas Dodge is a "colonizing force" representative of Western patriarchal violence (43). Aziz is not the "monster" of the play; rather, it is Dodge, the white, male university professor. Through these characters, Thompson

encourages her Western audience look inside themselves and the world they have created. Instead of obsessing about the evil of the Other, the audience must focus on what Thompson herself calls “the evil within us” (Singh 44), evil that Thompson claims (contrary to Dodge) can “be uprooted before it has a chance to grow” (Read 99). Before evil can be uprooted, however, Westerners must recognize it within themselves and their culture. Thompson says that the play “is telling us what we think of as ‘other’ (rage, murder, etc) is not only right next to us ... It is our own men who are to be feared. In other words, it is not those faraway places that breed terror. We breed it right here” (Singh 44). This point is emphasized by Singh in his review of *Capture Me* for the *Canadian Theatre Review*:

In this regard, not only does the demonizing of political figures such as Saddam Hussein [...] and Osama Bin Laden obscure the terrorism committed by Western leaders but the act of demonizing also neglects the complexities of networks branded terrorist and the immense suffering and political repression (either US-backed or supported) that the citizenry of oppressive regimes have endured. *Capture Me* questions tropes concerning exclusivity and nation in Canadian society and, in so doing, furthers this interrogation of the us—them and good—evil binary. (44)

And yet, a word of caution is necessary. Once again, we are faced with the danger of making the West the repository of all evil, thereby simply reversing the melodrama. *Capture Me*, like *The Adventures of Ali and Ali*, is not crudely melodramatic: Aziz, for example, may resort to violence in his effort to seek recompense for the murder of his family. Nevertheless, the strategy of *Capture Me* is similar to *Ali and Ali*: to emphasize the evil of the West, while de-emphasizing the evil in the Other. This strategy may have the effect of undermining Western hubris and inflated claims of goodness. But the effect is not completely tragic and does not fully represent the contemporary Dionysian crisis.

Perhaps a more tragic approach could be articulated in the following way. The West, in its effort to globalize, has often harmed non-Western societies, both directly and indirectly, intentionally and unintentionally, through violence, mass murder, oppression, and exploitation; at the same time, many of the values that have been born and nurtured in the West, such as democracy, individual liberty, human rights, and women’s equality, should be defended against those internal and external forces that seek to destroy

them. Many non-Western peoples, including Muslims, have justifiable reasons to be angry with the West; however, when this anger is expressed through oppressive religious fundamentalism, suppression of women, and acts of indiscriminate mass murder, the justice behind the anger is forfeited. Camus points out that each power in a tragedy simultaneously “wears the double mask of good and evil” (302). If we are to deconstruct all binary oppositions of good and evil, particularly as they relate to the post-9/11 world, we must keep Camus’s observation in mind. This tragic situation must be captured theatrically, with all of its ambivalence.

iii) *Insomnia*

In this regard, Daniel Brooks and Guillermo Verdecchia’s *Insomnia* is significant. Though the play was written and performed before 9/11, its themes of terror and paranoia seem more pertinent today than when it premiered in 1997. Ultimately, *Insomnia* is a more accurate reflection of the contemporary Dionysian crisis and offers an excellent presentation of the potential dangers of Chomskyan melodrama. Whereas Brooks and Verdecchia’s earlier play *The Noam Chomsky Lectures* challenged its audience to be thoroughly skeptical of Western political propaganda, *Insomnia* explores what happens when this skepticism becomes overwhelming and the West is deemed categorically evil. On the one hand, such skepticism contributes to personal breakdown and paralysis; on the other hand, it cultivates the desire for nihilistic destruction and terror. *Insomnia* is effective precisely because the playwrights are sympathetic towards Chomsky’s critique of the West and yet are reflecting on the malevolence that can emerge from within the Chomskyan worldview. In accord with Thompson, they are confronting the monsters within their own political orientation.

The play focuses on the character John F., who lives with his common-law wife, Gwen, and their newborn daughter, Lilly. But John’s life is filled with troubles: he is writing a book on democracy and violence that he cannot seem to finish, and he does not make a sufficient living to support his family. He fears that he is failing as a father and a husband. John suffers from insomnia due to his mounting personal troubles and his extreme skepticism about any piece of information he receives from the Western media. This skepticism contributes to his generalized paranoia of living in the contemporary world. John’s first words are “Doubt. Doubt. How can you know? How can you be sure? A person never knows. You don’t know, for example, the poisons you ingest day to day” (13). For John, nothing seems quite right: everything is infected or

poisoned, all power is corrupt, and nothing anyone says is to be trusted.

John's domineering brother William is in many ways his opposite. William is a rich Disney executive, who dominates people through charisma, money, and, curiously, hypnosis. William, as opposed to John, argues that "things are exactly the way they are supposed to be" (35). He claims that John's insomnia stems from his beliefs in "love, truth, equality, freedom and a bunch of other cheesy notions invented by Hebrews, Greeks and Frenchmen" (29). William shares none of these ideals and does not have trouble sleeping: "Me, I have no problem, I'm comfortable in my corruption" (33). His wife, Kate, meanwhile, is narcoleptic and is having an affair with the insomniac John, which William suspects. William, in return, has his eyes on John's wife, Gwen.

The family situation is unsustainable, and the characters gradually crack. As the play progresses, the scenes become less linear and more surreal. The effect on the audience is disorienting and nightmarish, as if we too are suffering from a distorted consciousness brought on by insomnia. William gets his revenge on John by seducing Gwen through hypnosis. Though William claims there are "so-called moral limits" to what people will do under hypnosis, he gets Gwen to participate in a *ménage à trois* with him and Kate in Japan. By the end of the play, Gwen kills her own baby daughter and serves her in a stew. Only when William snaps his fingers to end the hypnosis does Gwen realize what she has done. Like Agave at the end of Euripides's *Bacchae*, who kills her own son while in Dionysian ecstasy, Gwen has been afflicted by a Dionysian-like intoxication that has caused her to murder her child. Contrary to William's claims about the ethical consciousness of the hypnotized, Gwen is unable to distinguish good from evil.

John experiences a similar breakdown, and it is the central focus of the play. His insomnia, he claims, is related to his concerns about violence:

I don't understand why more [violence] doesn't happen. Why more people don't act out. I mean, there are so many people defeated by power, and revenge is really quite easy [...]. The point is, all we get are the bombings of abortion clinics. Why? That's what I find curious. The Japanese subway poisoning—why doesn't that happen more often? (43)

John's anxieties about terrorism, which in 1997 might have seemed

idiosyncratic, now appear prophetic in the post-9/11 world. The Aum Shinrikyo subway poisoning that John mentions can, with hindsight, be seen as a precursor of the present age of terror (Lifton, *Destroying*, and *Superpower* 57-72; Cooper 59-71). The fact that John is mystified as to why more terrorism does not happen means that he sympathizes with the terrorist impulse in “people defeated by power.” But *Insomnia* takes matters a step further by suggesting that the terrorist imagination does not belong exclusively to the alien or impoverished “Other”; on the contrary, it is also found in disgruntled Westerners themselves such as John, and even in those who actually wield power in the West. William, the powerful Disney executive, proclaims that life is not about making money; rather, “the way of the world” is doing “damage,” regardless of whether you are the oppressed or the oppressor. He tells John, “It’s time for you to damage. Vengeance. Grab some power, break some windows. Be a terrorist, hurt someone” (34).

These observations in *Insomnia* are in accord with Baudrillard’s analysis in “The Spirit of Terrorism.” Baudrillard argues that even those who have benefited from globalization have an inexplicable desire to witness the destruction of the global order that they have supported. Western-based globalization creates the illusion of completeness and perfection, and, according to Baudrillard, there is an automatic resistance in the world to any single system that claims to be complete and perfect. A terrorist monster exists within each individual, even if most of us will not become actual terrorists. The countless Hollywood disaster films are, according to Baudrillard, instances of terrorist “pornography,” since they temporarily gratify the unwitting “terroristic imagination which dwells in all of us” (*Spirit* 5). September 11 was not an “unimaginable” event, even though it is often described this way; on the contrary, it had been imagined countless times, for our entertainment, by those who live comfortably in the West. As Baudrillard states regarding the 9/11 attackers: “they *did it*, but we *wished for it*” (*Spirit* 5; italics in original). If the same impulse resides in us as resides in the actual terrorists, and if we unintentionally desire the very destruction which the terrorists actually carry out, then the line dividing good and evil is much harder to discern. This is our Dionysian Crisis. It is not just that the West is morally culpable for the violence and exploitation it employs to sustain its domination; Westerners are also dreaming of the destruction of their own global society.

The idea that the terrorist impulse resides in all of us, even by

the well intentioned, is presented dramatically in John's lengthy soliloquy at the climax of *Insomnia*. It is here that we see the full extent of John's terrorist inclinations. As he speaks, a Dionysian-like distortion of consciousness takes hold of John, and it is clear that he has lost his ability to distinguish between good and evil. John begins the monologue by saying he would "like to summon [...] the Devil" to "demolish the world." As he unleashes his own demons, he asks the audience to help him form a "secret society"—a society that lives by a number of strict "Protocols" and that is determined to "change the world as we know it" (49-50). The parallels with Al-Qaeda are unmistakable, only John is not embracing a particular religious fundamentalism; instead, he expresses an anarchistic nihilism beholden to no particular ideology other than destruction. Nevertheless, John's desires are eschatological: he longs for a cataclysm that will destroy everything and purify the world. He can no longer stand the uncertainty and duplicity of contemporary democracy, or what he calls the "Republic of Doubt." He proclaims that the inability of people like him to accept the imperfections of democracy is what causes extremism—regardless of a person's religious or political persuasion. John lumps various radical movements together: "the radical right paramilitary and the radical anarcho left sleep in the same forests. Ernst Zundel, Ralph Nader, Louis Farrakhan, they all preach to the same hole in the tumorous soul of Democracy" (53). Since the West cannot offer the certainty that John desires, he calls upon the devil to help him destroy the democratic West:

Demon, enter the soul of this room and destroy any goodness we may have left. Make us hate the person we sit beside, hate our lives, our work, our country, our language, hate our beliefs. Demon, enter now and destroy the last vestiges of Democracy, make us see the futility, the duplicitous dissembling, the weakness [...]. (53-54)

John expresses a hatred of the West that is every bit as vehement as Al Qaeda's. Left-wing skepticism is transformed into nihilistic terror. Once John's devil is unleashed, he ends up in jail (56). The play does not specify his crime, but the suggestion is that John is starting to actualize his terrorist imaginings.

In *Insomnia*, Brooks and Verdecchia raise troubling questions for the Chomsky-inspired left. Their play reveals how the Chomskyan critique of Western democracies can easily lead to complete disillusionment with democracy itself. Impatience with the imperfections of the West is transfigured into an apocalyptic

desire for purifying destruction. A thin line is shown to exist between Chomskyan analysis and terror—a line that could easily be crossed by a fragile individual like John who is also facing a personal crisis. The “devil” is not only in the oppressor; it is in the weakened critic of contemporary democracy as well.

Tragic Renaissance?

Of all the Canadian plays I have examined, I would argue that *Insomnia* offers the best tragic account of the contemporary experience of evil. There are no easy orthodoxies, political or religious, that we can cling to in this play; evil, to some extent, is in everything. This awareness, however, should not lead to moral indifference. On the contrary, contemporary tragedy, in the tradition of the ancient City Dionysia, should aim to cultivate our moral sensitivities. The hope is that we can adopt a more nuanced, and less melodramatic, approach to the ethical and political decisions we face, even if these decisions often entail choosing the lesser evil. The purpose of tragic art is not simply to expose the “monsters within”; it must also suggest how we can keep these monsters, both within and without, from destroying the good of Western democratic societies altogether. The values that are dearest to John in *Insomnia*—love, truth, equality, and freedom—are what need protection and cultivation. Suggesting that cataclysmic destruction is the solution is recklessness.

The tragic artist, then, is not beholden to the paradigm of the artist as a type of terrorist—an idea suggested in *The Adventures of Ali and Ali*. For example, the German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen referred to 9/11 as “the greatest work of art that there has ever been”—a show that required years of rehearsal for one earth-shattering performance in which the actors would die and take thousands of people with them to the “resurrection.” All other artists, says Stockhausen, are “nothing” in comparison to the 9/11 attackers (“Forum on Theatre” 115).¹² There is much in Stockhausen’s comments that resonates with Antonin Artaud’s “theatre of cruelty.” Artaud describes theatre as “an avenging scourge, a redeeming epidemic. [...]he theatre is a disease because it is the supreme equilibrium which cannot be achieved without destruction” (31). Like Stockhausen, all the vestiges of the eschatological mindset—the melodramatic binaries, the desire for cataclysm, the dream of purification—are expressed though Artaud’s peculiar theatrical messianism.¹³ The tragic artist, on the other hand, does not share these eschatological ambitions. Dreams of catastrophic purifications do not animate the tragic

mind, even though the tragic artist must reveal the nature of these dreams. The contemporary tragedian is removed from the apocalypticism and melodrama that consumes both Western globalization and terrorist reactionary forces. There is no final solution of any sort to the problem of evil, and theatre must not indicate one. In the tragic universe, evil can, at best, be kept at bay. ❁

NOTES

- 1 A full discussion of the relation between evil and the history of theatre is contained in my book, *Messiahs and Machiavellians: Depicting Evil in Modern Theatre*. Much of my discussion in this essay is based upon my theoretical reflections.
- 2 I use the word “eschatology” to refer to any worldview that lives in expectation of an end of history, an end where the forces of good triumph over evil once and for all. The words “apocalypticism” and “millennialism” are often used synonymously.
- 3 President Bush stated this ambition at the memorial service on 14 September 2001, at the National Cathedral in Washington. This statement was later quoted in the Bush administration’s National Security Strategy statement released in September 2002.
- 4 I use the term “Islamist” to refer to radical groups such as Al Qaeda who commit spectacular violence in the name of Islam. Most Muslims are not Islamists, and the two terms are not equivalent. For an account of Islamist motives, see Stern.
- 5 This section of my paper contains passages from the Introduction and Conclusion of *Messiahs and Machiavellians*.
- 6 Obviously this democracy was imperfect. Women were excluded from politics (though they were allowed to attend City Dionysia) and Athenian citizens also owned slaves who were denied political rights. Nevertheless, Athens was unique insofar as political decision making was left up to a large citizen body, and not just a king or a select group of aristocrats.
- 7 For this account of Greek tragedy, see Euben 56; and Meier 43.
- 8 Martha Nussbaum makes a similar argument. She argues, on the basis of plays by Aeschylus and Sophocles, that a tragic hero is forced into a situation where he must decide between the conflicting demands of particular gods, all of whom have both good and bad on their respective sides. Any choice the hero makes entails committing evil, even though he might delude himself into thinking it is good. Regardless of which course he chooses, it will inevitably offend some divinity. For this he will be made to suffer. See Nussbaum 25-84.
- 9 For a more extensive discussion of Camus’s understanding of tragedy and melodrama, see the Conclusion of *Messiahs and Machiavellians*.

- 10 For accounts of how ancient religious eschatology was secularized by these various movements, see Voegelin 107-89; Rhodes; Wyschogrod 41-52; and Lifton, *Superpower* 13-56.
- 11 Throughout the script, Thompson occasionally forgoes proper punctuation. She also capitalizes several key words. In my quotations of the play, I have retained Thompson's odd grammar and capitalizations.
- 12 Stockhausen delivered these comments on 17 September 2001 on a German radio program. They were later published in the *New York Times* (30 September 2001). I am using the translation provided by Christopher B. Balme in "Forum on Theatre and Tragedy in the Wake of September 11, 2001."
- 13 For further discussion of Stockhausen and Artaud, see the Conclusion of *Messiahs and Machiavellians*.

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