

Suspect Device:

British Subsidised Theatre's Response to the Iraq War, 2003-2011



A thesis submitted to the University of Gloucestershire in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the faculty of Liberal and Performing Arts. (87,951 words)

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Declaration of Authenticity

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the most significant British subsidised theatre that was created in response to the Iraq War. *Suspect Device: British Subsidised Theatre's Response to the Iraq War, 2003-2011* looks to examine how British theatre's contemporary forms became increasingly politicised and adapted to critique the material circumstances of a contentious Middle Eastern war.

This work analyses the theatre of the Iraq war using Cultural Materialism and a range of poststructuralist and postmarxist methodologies. *Suspect Device* investigates the key plays of the period in terms of their presentation of the politics of the initial invasion, as well as the ensuing issues of war trauma and the British soldier's experience as a part of the coalition. The British domestic response to the publicised issues of new forms of prison, war crimes and the presentation of the victim is extrapolated in terms of contemporary plays. This thesis also explores selected plays for domestic youth created in response to the PREVENT strategy and how theatre became a contentious politicised instrument. The work examines how an apparent shortfall in cultural empathy for the victims of the war was understood and explained in terms of a theatre working within a climate of wide-scale commodification.

Suspect Device investigates pivotal plays across a number of British locations and genres with the aim of establishing common trends and styles of form and content. It attempts to determine if the postmodern forms of contemporary theatre responded with a re-emergent sense of the material. There has been much work on theatre around the 'War on Terror' but, as yet, little that considers the Iraq War specifically and in terms of its response, commercialisation and domestic form.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
ACE	Arts Council England
Al-Qaeda	A militant Sunni Islamic group founded by Osama bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam. ISIS rejected the authority of Al-Qaeda.
BAME	Short in British English for black, Asian and minority ethnic
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders. It is the manual published by the American Psychiatric Association, which lists all classifications of mental disorders.
IED	An Improvised Explosive Device is a bomb constructed and deployed using unconventional, non-military and 'home-made', parts and equipment.
ISIS	The largely Sunni Islamic terrorist group has been known by many names including Islamic State. ISIS is short for the 'Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham' or 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria'. The alternative name ISIL is short for the 'Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant' or in Arabic Daesh – roughly translated as 'one who crushes'.
MoD	Ministry of Defence
OPEC	The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. A consortium of oil producing countries. Founded in 1960 in Baghdad.
PFI	Private Finance Initiative(s). A government/political policy of using private investment to fund public resources.
PMSCs	Private Military and Security Companies.
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. A range of mental health conditions, nor limited to the military, as defined in the DSM.
SUV	Sports Utility Vehicle.
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees.
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission. The weapons inspection regime set up by the UN to monitor Iraq's WMD.
WIS	Military term for Wounded, Injured and Sick.
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction, using during the argument for the invasion of Iraq to suggest Iraq's imminent and substantial military threat.

Introduction

Perhaps the most successful British theatrical production concerning war in Iraq is the unsubsidized work by 'the eminent American War Correspondent' Lowell Thomas entitled, *With Allenby In Palestine and Lawrence of Arabia*.¹ It was first presented at the Royal Opera House in 1919 before a long international tour. The show was largely a projected film, but was also accompanied by a spoken prologue and narration commenting on images from the film, by Lowell Thomas. It employed further examples of mixed media by presenting musical interludes played by a band from the Welsh Guards. By 1920 over a million people had seen the show including the Queen, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. By then, the show's advertising called it 'the greatest triumph ever known in England or America on the speaking-stage.'² The show told selected extracts of the story of General Allenby and T.E. Lawrence's successful deployment of native Arab guerrilla fighters to wage war against the Ottoman Empire and win the Middle Eastern front in the First World War. At the time, this film was a recount of a successful British campaign to employ the native population to defeat the Turkish allies of Germany. Yet now, this British campaign and the ensuing Sykes-Picot agreement has become a rallying cry to foment anger across the Middle East at years of apparent Western betrayal.

The more brutal aspects of this early 20th century Middle Eastern war were clearly heavily censored as is evident from the *Strand Magazine's* contemporary review, which stated that the film was perhaps, 'The greatest Romance of real life ever told.'³

It is safe to assume that the show did not discuss the more incendiary facts that the Arab fighters were only engaged in the guerilla war because they had been promised their

¹ Originally called *With Allenby in Palestine* but the name was changed because of the public's response to T.E.Lawrence's visual (but silent due to technology) impact. See short excerpt at Imperial War Museum, 'With Allenby in Palestine: A Lowell Thomas Adventure Film', *Imperial War Museums* < <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060000120> > [accessed 30 November 2017]. Quotation: Jeremy Wilson, 'Lowell Thomas in London 1919-1920', *T.E. Lawrence Studies* < http://www.telstudies.org/discussion/diplomacy_1918-1922/lowell_thomas_in_london_1919-20.shtml > [accessed 27 November 2017]

² Jeremy Wilson, 'Lowell Thomas in London 1919-1920', *T.E. Lawrence Studies*

³ Ibid.

own autonomous state once the Turkish Empire was ousted. In a series of letters between the British High Commissioner, Sir Henry McMahon, and Hussein bin Ali, (Sharif of Mecca) between 1915 and 1916, Britain had seemingly agreed to grant bin Ali an independent Arab state encompassing the Arabian Peninsula, Palestine and what is now Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. Yet despite this promise of independence, the French and British ultimately divided up the Middle East in accordance with 1916's agreement between the British and French diplomats, Mark Sykes and Francois George-Picot. This gave Syria and the Lebanon to the French whilst Baghdad, Palestine, Jordan and the Gulf were to stay under British control.⁴ Thus began many years of anger at British and Western manipulation. In T.E. Lawrence's account of events in the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Lawrence notes that he knew of the Sykes-Picot agreement whilst fighting with the Arab guerillas in 1917. He observed, "I had to join the conspiracy and assure the men of their reward."⁵ It is widely argued that Colonel Lawrence never came to terms with this lie and that his discomfort led him to refuse a knighthood and join the Tank regiment as a Private.⁶

In 2016, an ISIS social media video identified Sykes-Picot's lingering significance to some elements of the Arab world. Giles Fraser analysed the video and observed, writing one hundred years later:

When Islamic State proclaimed the re-establishment of the caliphate, they did so with a video entitled The End of Sykes-Picot. And it's interesting that the state they proclaim is not a million miles away from the one promised by Lawrence.⁷

As such, *With Allenby In Palestine and Lawrence of Arabia* is perhaps the first example of a theatrical work that explores Britain's relationship with conflict in Iraq and the wider Middle East but it avoids exploring the harsh realities of war and politics. By the Iraq invasion of 2003, faith in British military expeditions abroad was significantly less

⁴ For Sykes-Picot discussion see James Barr, *A Line in The Sand: Britain, France and the struggle that shaped the Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011)

⁵ T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London: Black House Publishing, 2013), pp. 31-32.

⁶ This argument is suggested by, amongst others, Rory Stewart in BBC Scotland's, *The Legacy of Lawrence of Arabia* (BBC2, 19/9/2017) [TV]

⁷ Giles Fraser, 'Lawrence of Arabia wouldn't have been surprised by the rise of Isis', *The Guardian*, 8 April 2016 < <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2016/apr/08/lawrence-of-arabia-wouldnt-have-been-surprised-by-the-rise-of-isis> > [accessed 27 November 2017]. For an academic exploration see Pinar Bilgin, 'What is the point about Sykes-Picot?', *Global Affairs*, Vol. 2, Iss. 3, 2016, pp. 355-359.

romanticised and the theatre of the New Labour period was more at liberty to question the role of its government and its military.

In this thesis, I intend to explore British subsidised theatre's contemporary response to the Iraq invasion of 2003-2011. I use Cultural Materialism as my theoretical methodology because of its particular focus on the importance of historical context in understanding any work of art as a reflection of its time and politics. As indicated above, there are few places where historical context is more persistently relevant than in Britain's on-going relationship with the Middle East.

Primarily, I will be looking at the British political theatre that was created and performed across the period of the invasion of Iraq. 'Political theatre' is of course an indefinite expression and has particular resonances with Erwin Piscator and Bertholt Brecht's application of the term from the 1920s.⁸ From a strict Cultural Materialist perspective, professional theatre is always politicised by being a marketized cultural reflection of the economic system.⁹ However, in order to focus this thesis on the theatrical response to the Iraq war, I use the term in a mildly looser definition: one that lets me address only those works which seem to relate directly to the British dramatic response to the military invasion of Iraq and its wider social and cultural implications, such as Guantanamo Bay, Terrorism and the Prevent strategy, amongst others. As such my use of the term more comfortably reflects Amelia Kritzer's definition of political theatre as:

Theatre that presents or constructs a political issue or comments on what is already perceived as a political issue [...] Political theatre initiates a dialogue with the audience about politics within a national or cultural system [...] Political theatre often addresses its audience explicitly but its means of communication extend beyond such obvious tactics and beyond the text.¹⁰

I will also be using the term 'neoliberalism' to refer to the socio-political economic forces that, I will argue, control the means of production, the core institutions and ideological

⁸ For the dominating explanation of political theatre in this encompassing vein see Erwin Piscator, *Political theatre (Diaries, Letters and Essays)* (London: Methuen Drama, 2007)

⁹ As Pierre Macherey adds, literary criticism can itself be considered a means of production. Macherey observes, 'It is no accident that the art of criticism proposes only rules of consumption', Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p.13.

¹⁰ Amelia Howe Kritzer, *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain: New Writing: 1995-2005* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 10.

perspective of the state. I use the term 'neoliberalism' rather than 'neoconservative', not only to avoid the 'conserving' connotations of 'conservative' but also to suggest a continuation of the free-market ideology that has a historical precedent in laissez-faire imperial liberalism. As such, although debatable, I see neoliberalism as not particularly new in its fundamental aims. However, the 'neo' relates to the pervasiveness and intensity of its modern implementation. In 2016's *Handbook of Neoliberalism*, the authors express a general summary of neoliberalism as being:

The new political, economic, and social arrangements within society that emphasize market relations, re-tasking the role of the state, and individual responsibility. [...] neoliberalism is broadly defined as the extension of competitive markets into all areas of life including the economy, politics and society.¹¹

In practice, neoliberalism sees the market and the corporation as significantly more effective than government intervention in creating a 'just' society where individual endeavour is duly rewarded. Yet in the process, public services are seen as an impediment to the individual and social good, while the individual citizen is at their most liberated when acting not as part of a community but as a consumer. In *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* the authors note that neoliberalism can also be understood as a:

Postmodern version of quaint 18th-century '*laissez-faire* talk' glorifying individual self-interest, economic efficiency, and unbridled competition.¹²

In terms of the early twenty first century's unerring movement to introduce the market into the welfare state, social housing, education and even at times military campaigns, this seems to be the most cogent expression of the current ruling socio-economic ideology.¹³

This thesis explores the period's 'subsidised' theatre, that is theatre funded by various departments of central government, usually the Arts Council. *Appendix I: Fund Managing and Subsidised Theatre* explores the history of subsidised theatre, and the significant financial boosts and changes to theatre funding, which took place under New

¹¹ S. Springer, K. Birch & J. MacLeavy, *Handbook of Neoliberalism* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 2.

¹² M.B. Steger & R. K. Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), p. 5.

¹³ For a brief discussion of the privatisation of the military in the Iraq war see Appendix IV – *Analysis of Stovepipe* by Adam Brace.

Labour. Alongside this, I explore the claims that theatre became an instrument for social and political control under New Labour's governance in the context of a British theatre, which seemed under increasing pressure from the values and tenets of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism and political theatre are thus integral to my reading of Cultural Materialism. 'Cultural Materialism' as a term is derived from, and arguably an extension to, Marxist historical materialism: a theory that sees human progress as a response to the material conditions of the relations of production. In Cultural Materialism, aspects of social behaviour in the arts, and elsewhere, are seen as directly structured by the contemporary means of production.

Cultural Materialism is most carefully articulated in the work of Raymond Williams, who argued that new formal structures in art arise in response to changes in politics and society.¹⁴ Williams contended that art should be understood as working and being influenced by material structures. In a review of Georg Lukacs, Williams noted that:

Latent within historical materialism is [...] a way of understanding the diverse social and material production [...] of works to which the connected but also changing categories of art have been historically applied.¹⁵

However, Cultural Materialism is most stridently expressed in Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield's *Political Shakespeare* (1985). Dollimore and Sinfield here argued that theatre is one of a:

Whole system of signification by which a society or a section of it understands itself and its relationship with the world. Materialism insists culture does not (cannot) transcend the material forces and relations of production.

Dollimore and Sinfield contend that art can best be understood as a material construct of a politicised structure by using a four-fold analysis to interrogate any text:

Historical context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis.¹⁶

¹⁴ Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Cardigan: Parthian Books, 2011)

¹⁵ Quoted in Phil Edwards, 'Culture is Ordinary: Raymond Williams and Cultural Materialism', *Red Pepper* (London, Aug 1999)

¹⁶ J. Dollimore & A. Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. vii.

Many facets of the Iraq invasion have been understood as a largely materialist response to a Middle Eastern nation rich in a vital resource but refusing to conform to the West's democratic vision and values. Iraq's refusal, from at least the 1980s, to embrace 'free' markets, Israel, and allow favourable access to its oil, amongst other acts, have all been suggested to be a more significant reason for the 2003 invasion than the ethical revulsion at Iraq's human rights abuses, apparent links to Al-Qaeda and W.M.D. threats, that were used to justify the war.¹⁷ Such materialist arguments, which see the conflict as economically motivated, are so widely contended they are now central to an understanding of the invasion. Thus, Teresa L. Ebert maintains that:

To critique the Iraq War [...] without explaining it in terms of its material causes [...] is simply to produce entertaining but vacuous analyses of culture [...] without any purchase on historical reality.¹⁸

As such, following Williams, Dollimore and Sinfield, the economic, political and social foundations of the Iraq invasion should also be seen as pivotal in the cultural arts of the same period.

Writing towards the middle of the Iraq invasion in 2007, Michael Billington seems informed by Williams as he suggests that a material link between socio-political structures is persistently evident in British theatre. Indeed, Billington contends that of all art forms, theatre is the most sensitive in reflecting and critiquing the social and political forms of the time. He argues that:

Theatre [...] more than any other medium [...] is a vehicle of moral enquiry. It [is] capable of shaping society as well as reflecting it [...] It has questioned structures, scrutinised attitudes [...] record[ed] the anxieties of the time. British theatre [...] has acted as a uniquely informative mirror.¹⁹

In this thesis it is my aim to explore Billington's contention and to investigate to what extent British subsidised theatre at the time of the Iraq war can be understood as an

¹⁷ W.M.D became shorthand for Weapons of Mass Destruction. For materialist readings of the invasion see Noam Chomsky, *Power and Terror*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003),; Christopher Doran, *Making The World Safe for Capitalism: How Iraq Threatened the US Economic Empire and Had to be Destroyed* (London: Pluto Press, 2012); Slavoj Žižek, *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (London: Verso, 2004); Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (London: Penguin, 2008)

¹⁸ Teresa L. Ebert, *The Task of Cultural Critique* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010), p. xiii.

¹⁹ Michael Billington, *State of the Nation: British Theatre since 1945* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p. 401.

incisive political challenge and comprehensive material response, throughout its theme and forms, to one of the most divisive conflicts in recent British history.

Nonetheless, contemporary journalists like Billington rarely view theatre in strict Cultural Materialist terms because theories such as Dollimore and Sinfield's are perhaps themselves laced with dated historical context. Their more strident understanding of Cultural Materialism is symptomatic of the 1970/80s era when *Political Shakespeare* was written; redolent of a time of Unionised conflict, industrial deconstruction and the late cold-war clash of Communist and Capitalist ideologies. Thus left-wing theatre groups that rose to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s, such as *7:84* and *Red Ladder* amongst many other groups, were perhaps significantly more politically demonstrative and materially analytical than those plays I will be analysing from the turn of the twenty first century. This is because many 1970s and 1980s theatre groups saw political theatre in Brechtian terms, as an emancipatory Marxist tool for use in uncovering the hidden mechanics of class oppression and alienation. After the fall of Soviet-styled Communism from 1989 and Francis Fukuyama's 'End of History' arguably apparent in the electoral successes of Thatcherite neoliberalism and its descendants, Marxism and its material foundations seemed unsustainable.²⁰

The ensuing wholesale loss of faith in left-wing ideologies was profound in its impact and seemed to draw the whole notion of political theatre into question. Ultimately, this led to a broad and fundamental reassessment of theatre's role, usually resolving into varieties of postmodern response that eschewed such overarching political narratives as Marxism in favour of a concern over its own authority, as discussed in Chapter 1. Consequently, academics such as Baz Kershaw suggested in 1999 that 'old notions of political theatre were falling into intellectual disrepute' and he suggested that commercialism and the 'radical liberalism of postmodernism' had rendered 'political theatre', in Liz Tomlin's explanation of Kershaw's argument, as 'Untenable'.²¹ Such ideas were influenced by postmodern theorists such as Jean-Francois Lyotard, who in *The Postmodern Condition* argued that such grand/meta narratives as Marxism were unsustainable even before the fall of the Berlin wall. Lyotard defined the postmodern

²⁰ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992)

²¹ Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 5-18. Liz Tomlin, *British Theatre Companies: 1995-2014: Mind The Gap, Kneehigh Theatre, Suspect Culture, Stan's Café, Punchdrunk* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 156.

condition in 1979 as an 'incredulity towards metanarratives'.²² Meanwhile, Poststructuralists such as Jacques Derrida noted '*l n'y a pas de hors-texte* (there is no outside-text)'.²³ Derrida's deconstructionist work, pertaining to society as much as language and theatre, explained that there was and could be no overriding authority, truth or reality; only insecure claims to the same. Liz Tomlin notes the significance of such theories as Derrida's. For Tomlin, Derrida deconstructed the:

Grand narratives of theology, reason, science and law and demonstrated how they were merely contingent upon other narratives that were themselves contingent upon other narratives and so on, and thus could not provide the foundational truths on which further hypotheses or meanings could be securely constructed.²⁴

By the turn of the century, any theatre working towards a grand political narrative was becoming suspect. In 1999, Baz Kershaw suggested this itself was an aspect of a culture in the midst of transition. Because in his view: 'the great paradigms of postmodernism and modernism are intertwined like the lines of an unfinished mandala'.²⁵ Older style political theatre with grand promises and a belief in human progress were fast becoming anachronistic.

Despite this, by 2003, the material facts of the Iraq invasion seemed to require a political response from a theatre that had little faith in materialism or a politicised historical context. As such, the Iraq invasion prompted a range of theatrical responses some of which could be seen as historically grounded, at times materialist, and many were richly political. Moreover, and perhaps ironically, the theatrical response to the invasion took place at a time when New Labour significantly boosted Arts Council funding for theatre, under the banner of 'creative industries'.²⁶ It is therefore a central focus of this thesis to consider what form this political theatre employed, and to establish if it echoed or attempted to challenge Kershaw's contention of there existing a crossover point between a belief in grand narratives and a postmodern doubt of all such claims.

²² Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: M.U.P., 1984), p. xxiv.

²³ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 158.

²⁴ Liz Tomlin, *Acts and Apparitions: Discourses on the Real in Performance Practice and Theory, 1990-2010* (Manchester: M.U.P., 2010), p. 29.

²⁵ Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance*, p.7.

²⁶ See *Appendix I: Fund Managing and Subsidised Theatre* for specific details on the changes to theatre funding under New Labour.

Significantly, Frederic Jameson has argued that postmodernism is itself effectively a materialist response to the relations of production. In *Postmodernism Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson argues that postmodernism is the term for the 'cultural dominant' form created by the political economy: a 'reflex [...] of yet another systematic modification of capitalism itself.'²⁷ As such, postmodern aspects of theatre might be also understood in terms of an underlying Cultural Materialist structure.

Consequently, this thesis' motivating focus is to use historical context, textual analysis and a range of postmarxist and postmodern theoretical methods to establish if theatre's understanding and representation of the conflict can be seen as ultimately inspired by a Cultural Materialist reading; even if the theatrical and cultural language of the 2000s may seem more akin to Jacques Derrida and Jean-Francois Lyotard than to Raymond Williams.

There are shortcomings with using a Cultural Materialist methodology, as noted above and in the literary review, which follows. Firstly, as Terry Eagleton has noted, Cultural Materialism offers no alternatives to materialism.²⁸ Cultural productions that might arise through immaterial inspiration can never be recognised as such. Secondly, Cultural Materialism as expressed by Dollimore and Sinfield and Raymond Williams, is derived from historical materialism and is implicated itself within the grand narrative of Marxism and an overarching belief in political revolution and progress. Such a theory seems antithetical to a postmodern loss of faith in grand narratives of progress. Nonetheless, Cultural Materialism provides a comprehensive framework for understanding culture as politically and socially structured and is not always as implicit to a socialist revolution as Dollimore and Sinfield once suggested. Scott Wilson notes:

Cultural Materialism is important because it has accommodated the move from a New Left British Marxism that concentrated on ideological critiques of superstructural forms to a radical criticism that is 'postmarxist'.²⁹

²⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), xii.

²⁸ See Introduction to Terry Eagleton, *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), pp. 1-11.

²⁹ Scott Wilson, *Cultural Materialism: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. viii.

In Wilson's argument, Cultural Materialism provides a bridge to elements of the postmodern experience and still offers the tools of 'historical context, theoretical method and textual analysis', even if the 'political commitment' and associated ideologies are not a pivotal feature of this work.³⁰

Dollimore and Sinfield note in their introduction to *Political Shakespeare*, that their version of Cultural Materialism is predicated on a belief in the necessity to change society to expand its levels of empathy. Dollimore and Sinfield argue that their theory and text is motivated by a 'Commitment to the transformation of a social order which exploits people on grounds of race, gender and class.'³¹

Empathetic association with theatrical characters and their plight are central to the theatrical experience since, and presumably before, Aristotle first explained the concept of tragic pity. Yet, the word 'empathy' is itself quite contemporary having only been used to mean 'the projection of one's personality into another' (person's) in the English language since after 1908.³² Nevertheless, Manana Macabelli notes that 'empathy's' modern meaning is intertwined with classic ideas of theatrical catharsis and 'identification' with dramatic character and plot. She notes that in 'Aristotle's mimetic principles, a traditional theatrical esthetic recognizes the correlation of catharsis and empathy'.³³ Similarly, Susan Lanzoni observes, whilst exploring Bertolt Brecht's intricate relationship with the term, that 'Empathy has been a central theme in drama theory' and suggests the term is closely related to the experience of war.³⁴ Lanzoni identifies that 'empathy's' broader public usage in English to mean human-to-human identification, was significantly influenced by the experience of World War II. She explains that only after the 'turbulent war years' did 'empathy' have social 'cachet'.³⁵

³⁰ Methods as explained in Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism* (Manchester: MUP, 1985), p. vii.

³¹ Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare*, p. viii.

³² Prior to 1908 'empathy', mean identifying with 'forms and shapes in art or nature,' (p.10) Susan Lanzoni, *Empathy: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 8 & p. 2.

³³ Manana Machabeli, 'The Importance of Empathy in the Actor's Art', *Narration and Spectatorship in Moving Images*, eds. J.D. Anderson & B.F. Anderson (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), p. 180.

³⁴ Lanzoni, *Empathy*, p. 8 and p. 15.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

It is notable that empathy became a key term *after* the war for Lanzoni. For in times of war, empathy is, perhaps necessarily, restricted to those considered worthy of emotional identification. Judith Butler in *Frames of War*, focusing on U.S. involvement in Iraq, explores the fact that 'representational regimes' of the U.S. media and government construct frameworks of 'grievability' for their populace and so define exactly who is worthy of empathy, or mourning, and who is not.³⁶ Butler explains:

We might think of war as dividing populations into those who are grievable and those who are not...[this] returns us to the question of how affect is regulated.³⁷

Butler pinpoints a tightly controlled media as largely implicated in managing 'affect'. But she also observes that such 'frames [...] are part of what makes the materiality of war.' In this sense, conflict representation is a politically constructed but implicit aspect of contemporary war.³⁸

Butler's ideas reflect and build on a number of media-framing theories, such as those by Erving Goffman and Robert M. Entman, which consider the way public opinion can be constructed and managed.³⁹ Yet her theoretical concern focuses on the framing of empathy and is particularly pertinent to the response to the Iraq War in Britain. Many media academics have noted the way in which media coverage was so tightly managed that public opinion was helped to dramatically shift from an anti-war stance, prior to the invasion, to a pro-war stance during the invasion. In a much-referenced analysis of the British media's response to the war, P. Baines and R.M. Worcester express this perhaps surprising point in the title of their speech: 'When the British 'Tommy' went to war, public opinion followed'.⁴⁰ In Justin Lewis's detailed and circumspect research of British public opinion in relation to the Iraq War, he also notes:

While many other factors were involved—for example, the desire to support troops during wartime—it seems likely that, in Britain at least, the coverage of the war itself played a part in persuading a majority to support it. Questions

³⁶ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 29.

³⁷ Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 38.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

³⁹ Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974) and Robert M. Entman, 'Framing: Towards clarification of a fractured paradigm', *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 43, Iss. 4 (New Jersey: Wiley, 1993).

⁴⁰ P. Baines & R.M. Worcester, 'When the British 'Tommy' went to war, public opinion followed', *Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the World Association of Public Opinion Research* (Prague, 2003)

about the motives, efficacy, and legality of the war—questions that might have created doubt in people’s minds—were suspended [...] With the outbreak of war, the media environment shifted from a comparatively open and wide-ranging debate, to one firmly placed on a pro-war terrain.⁴¹

Lewis contends that public opinion is tightly influenced by the media’s perspective. However his research was created at the beginning of the invasion, and as the conflict extended, maintaining these restrictive frameworks was persistently problematic. Butler notes that certain images forced their way through via unofficial social-media sources and unsettled the media-managed frame, most notably the Abu Ghraib photographs of the U.S.A.’s (and U.K.) torture of detainees.⁴² Similarly disturbing of the frame, was the fact that details of the Iraqi dead were never publically released but leaked during the time of the war. Michael Mann notes that in the Iraq War, ‘No one knows how many died. The United States has never released data on Iraqi casualties.’⁴³ With no data and few images of dead Iraqi’s, Wikileaks’ 2010 publication of secret U.S. documents that showed American soldiers had witnessed and recorded ‘109,000 deaths [...] 65 per cent of them citizens’, became pivotal in expanding the frame of who should actually receive empathy.⁴⁴

Whilst the government’s frame is constructed, according to Butler through ‘powerful forms of media’, it is under constant pressure of being torn apart by alternative forms of communication pathways and different forms of representation.⁴⁵ It is my contention in this thesis that British theatre worked to challenge, complicate and expand the British establishment and media’s framework of grievability, by attempting to extend empathy to the grim realities of the serving British soldier, to the Iraqi citizen and at times, the Iraqi combatants.

Tony Blair’s electoral success was itself often attributed to his empathetic skills. Alistair Campbell noted that Tony Blair’s success in the Northern Ireland peace treaty was because of Blair’s:

⁴¹ Justin Lewis, Television, ‘Public Opinion and the War in Iraq: The Case of Britain’, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 16, No.3: (Oxford: OUP, 2003), p. 308.

⁴² Butler, *Frames of War*, p.40.

⁴³ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 4, Globalizations, 1945-2011* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2012), p. 298.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 47.

Genius [...] to be like a Relate counsellor. It was like he was absorbing all this [...] bitterness and hatred and the rest of it.⁴⁶

Such skills helped Blair achieve the Labour leadership in 1994 and were perhaps employed when he fundamentally changed its own framework. Tudor Jones notes how under New Labour, 'old-left' policies such as Clause IV's 'Common ownership of the means of production ...' and traditional socialist Labour approaches were rapidly sidelined under Blair. In 2005, Jones saw Tony Blair's 'revisionist project' as 'problematic' in terms of its essential character as a left-wing party when it aimed to:

Demote public ownership as an idea and a policy and to endorse a market-oriented mixed economy.⁴⁷

New Labour seemed a response to an increasingly 'normalised' political belief in the market, as perhaps inherited from the previous eighteen years of Conservative party dominance.⁴⁸ From 1979, and despite profuse industrial turmoil, riots, high unemployment, and cuts to public funding, the Conservative Party's approach to the market repeatedly won electoral success.⁴⁹

As an artistic form traditionally dependant on public funding from the Arts Council, theatre suffered considerably under the Conservative governments. In *Thatcher's Theatre*, Keith Peacock uses a range of statistics to illustrate how theatre had reached such a crisis point under the Conservative government, that it seemed effectively ideologised and amounted to the 'frightening specter of right-wing censorship through the withdrawal of public funds.'⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Alistair Campbell, *Diaries*, extract from Nicholas Watt and Patrick Wintour article, 'Tony Blair: 'I am good at Absorbing Others' Pain'', *The Guardian*, 24 October 2013.

⁴⁷ Tudor Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party: From Gaitskell to Blair* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. ix.

⁴⁸ For this argument that New Labour was a shift towards Thatcherism, see Alice Harrold, 'Jeremy Corbyn: Labour can't go on being 'Tory-Lite'', *The Independent*, 4 August 2015
<<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/jeremy-corbyn-labour-cannot-go-on-being-tory-lite-10436706.html>>[accessed 16 January 2018]

⁴⁹ For the ascendancy of the free market under the Conservatives see Monica Prasad, *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany and the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006)

⁵⁰ Keith Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre: British Theatre and Drama in the Eighties* (Toronto: Praeger, 1999), p. 69.

Yet within this context and thus perversely, the 1990s period of the Conservative Prime Minister John Major was perhaps one of the most celebrated in recent theatrical history. This was because of the success of the 'In-Yer-Face' movement of British plays that brought a new visceral style and sense of confrontation to the largely metropolitan theatre. Aleks Sierz felt the movement reignited the stage and at the time called In-Yer-Face a 'revolution' not least because it was at a time, he wrote in 1999, when:

Funding has been at a standstill [...] the unexpected eruption of a score of fresh young writers represents a triumph of creativity.⁵¹

Plays such as Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995), Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) and Irvine Welsh's theatrical version of *Trainspotting* (1994) offered a reading of their culture that was provocative and intentionally sensational. These plays also implied a new reading of political theatre that was both personal and informed by a less materialist sensibility; instead, offering postmodern readings of a fractured social and personal landscape where narratives of progress or community seemed long absent.⁵² The pivotal play of the period is the fractured form of *Blasted*, which leapt from urban gender abuse to apparent Balkan war crimes in the same narrative thread.⁵³ Meanwhile, Welsh's *Trainspotting* rejected national politics in favour of informed and politicised hedonism.⁵⁴ Similarly, while Mark Ravenhill summed up the new era's political reappraisal in *Shopping & Fucking*, his character Robbie contended that all the old ideologies were now finally visible as simply 'stories':

Stories so big you could live your whole life in them [...] Gods [...] Enlightenment [...] Socialism. But they all died or the world grew up or grew senile or forgot them, so now we're all making up our own stories. Little stories.⁵⁵

These mid-1990s plays were perhaps to be seen as 'little stories'. Nonetheless, they seemed to mark a new dramatic approach that would frame the theatrical structures

⁵¹ Aleks Sierz, 'Cool Britannia? 'In-Yer-Face' writing in the British Theatre Today', *New Theatre Quarterly* 56, Vol. 14, Part 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 333.

⁵² Many critics see the key works notably of Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Martin Crimp and others of the 'In-Yer-Face' period in postmodern terms. See Jolene Armstrong: *Sarah Kane's Postmodern Traumatics* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015) and Eleftheria Ioannidou, *Greek Fragments in Post Modern Frames: Rewriting Tragedy 1970-2005* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2017). A slightly more challenging even conflicting approach is Aleks Sierz, *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014).

⁵³ Sarah Kane, 'Blasted', *Sarah Kane Complete Plays* (London: Methuen, 2001)

⁵⁴ Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting & Headsate: Playscripts* (Trowbridge: Minerva, 1996)

⁵⁵ Mark Ravenhill, 'Shopping and Fucking', *Plays: 1* (London: Methuen, 2001), p. 66.

and forms immediately prior to the Iraq war. Back then, this new approach represented an iconoclastic sense of creativity that was echoed in fashion, art and pop music in what Aleks Sierz observes was a 'much-hyped revival of cultural confidence known as 'Cool Britannia.'"⁵⁶

Tony Blair's election victory in 1997 seemed somehow attached to this new sense of confidence and was widely hailed in theatrical and many other arts' circles. John Harris in the *New Statesman* recalls the optimistic national mood:

Blair and his people portrayed New Labour as the epitome of everything fresh and new, fully in tune with a popular culture that was suddenly brimming with confidence.⁵⁷

Steve Brown's 1998 musical *Spend, Spend, Spend* about the life of lottery winner Vivien Nicholson, whose willingness to spend her money without significant caution for the future, seemed to express the new Prime Minister's commitment to sweeping increases in public spending.⁵⁸ By 1999, New Labour had created a National Minimum Wage, brought in the Human Rights Act, and enshrined a commitment and money to eradicate pensioner and child poverty, with the latter leading to the creation of Sure Start schemes for young families. Alongside this, was money for developing infrastructure projects in Education and the NHS, alongside other boosts across the welfare state. Zoe Williams notes 'Every hospital A&E was modernised or replaced in the Labour years.'⁵⁹ Away from the British mainland, as perhaps suggested in Martin McDonagh's plays such as *A Skull in Connemara* (1997), it became acceptable to see Ireland not just in terms of sectarian violence but instead as a site of dark comedy.⁶⁰ Following the success of the Blair brokered, and Major instigated, Good Friday Agreement for Northern Ireland in 1999, McDonagh's *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (2001), suggested it was now even safe to find humour in the character of an unhinged Irish National Liberation Army

⁵⁶ Aleks Sierz, 'Still-In-Yer-Face? Towards a Critique and a Summation', *New Theatre Quarterly* 69, Vol. 18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 17.

⁵⁷ John Harris, 'Cool Britannia: where did it all go wrong,' *The New Statesman*, 1 May 2017 < <https://www.newstatesman.com/1997/2017/05/cool-britannia-where-did-it-all-go-wrong> > [accessed 16 January 2018]

⁵⁸ Jez Butterworth, *Mojo and Other Plays* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2012). Steve Brown & Justin Greene, *Spend, Spend, Spend* (London: Samuel French, 2015)

⁵⁹ Zoe Williams, 'Stop Calling Tony Blair A War Criminal. The left should be Proud of His Record', *The Guardian*, 8 April 2014 < <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/08/tony-blair-labour-pride-war-criminal-iraq> > [accessed 21 January 2018]

⁶⁰ Martin McDonagh, 'A Skull in Connemara', *Plays:1* (London: Methuen, 2009)

paramilitary on an English stage.⁶¹ With humanitarian interventions in Kosovo (1999) and Sierra Leone (2000), such internationalist confidence had even begun to extend to the Middle East. David Hare's one-man show *Via Dolorosa* (1998) attempted to highlight the humanitarian concerns and offer ideas for the resolution of the Palestinian struggle for independence.⁶²

More locally, the arts seemed to benefit significantly from New Labour. Blair's pre-election promise to reenergise the arts as 'Creative Industries', was followed by the 2000 Boyden Report, which introduced large and varied subsidies to British theatrical institutions and groups from 2001.⁶³

However there were many New Labour developments that proved much less popular. The involvement of private business into sections of the welfare state, a range of delayed and costly public I.T. projects and problems with Private Finance Initiative (P.F.I.) schemes allowed the encroachment of the market into previously sacrosanct areas of the public sector.⁶⁴ Along with the market, there were concerns about the slickness of New Labour and the alleged slipperiness of its tightly-controlled public message.⁶⁵ Even in 1997 some seemingly apolitical plays such as Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* and Caryl Churchill's *Blue Heart* portrayed a world of overwhelming commodification and manipulation.⁶⁶ Martin Crimp's fractured play spoke of an unstable world in a work where all reality, even identity, seems splintered and unstable: one absent character Ann, is reframed and redefined 17 times, moving from a pornographic model to an artist, to a terrorist and also a family car, amongst other incarnations. Academic Mary Luckhurst saw this play as the 'most radically interrogative play [...] since Beckett.'⁶⁷ Perhaps more ominously, in the second part of Caryl Churchill's *Blue Heart*, the

⁶¹ Martin McDonagh, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (London: Methuen, 2001)

⁶² David Hare, *Via Dolorosa & When Shall We Live* (London: Faber, 1999)

⁶³ See *Appendix I: Fund Managing and Subsidised Theatre* for details on the Boyden Report and discussion of funding changes. For a summary of Tony Blair's term see Polly Toynbee and David Walker's *The Verdict: Did Labour Change Britain* (Cambridge: Granta, 2011). For the early years of Labour see Andrew Rawnsley, *Servants of The People: The Inside Story of New Labour* (London: Penguin, 2001)

⁶⁴ For a then contemporary understanding of P.F.I.s and public service privatization see Dexter Whitfield, *Public Services or Corporate Welfare: Rethinking the Nation State in the Global Economy* (London: Pluto publishing, 2001)

⁶⁵ For a discussion of this media management, see John Golding, *Hammer of the Left: The Battle for the Soul of the Labour Party* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2016)

⁶⁶ Martin Crimp, 'Attempts On Her Life', *Martin Crimp: Plays 2* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005) & Caryl Churchill, *Blue Heart* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2016)

⁶⁷ Quoted in Aleks Sierz, *The Theatre of Martin Crimp*, (London: A&C Black 2013), p.54

playwright portrays a smooth-talking young man conning a range of elderly ladies by pretending to be their long-lost son. Before he is revealed as a charlatan, the play collapses with an obfuscating virus until all the dialogue is replaced by two repeated and apparently meaningless words: 'Blue' and 'Kettle'. Whilst not expressly political, these plays suggest a concern with the dominating narratives in British culture and it is significant that here the theatrical form itself is shown as unstable: first fractured by indistinct meaning in Crimp and then wholly subsumed and broken in Churchill's work. In the late 1990s, as Gerard Raymond noted of *Blue Heart*, it was perhaps feared that 'Creative Industries' in the form of commodified theatre might, as in *Blue Heart*, engender 'the seed of its own destruction.'⁶⁸

In a more troubled and fragile context Iraq, the fifth largest oil producer, had long been extremely difficult for the West to commodify. After the First World War, Britain had once controlled Iraq (then Mesopotamia) under 'mandate' and had policed it using only the R.A.F.⁶⁹ By the 1990's Gulf War, an independent Iraq under the belligerent and despotic leadership of Saddam Hussain had invaded another neighbour, Kuwait. The R.A.F. were once again employed but this time to force the Iraq invaders back to their border. In interrogation, Saddam Hussain later claimed that he had invaded Kuwait in 1990 because Kuwait (via OPEC and it is implied with U.S. instigation) was unfairly fixing the price of oil too low and dampening the market.⁷⁰ The international response to the Kuwait invasion was a comprehensive variety of trade and financial sanctions on Iraq, starting from 1990 and ending after the 2003 invasion. The sanctions were instigated by the United Nations and were put in place to force Iraq to leave Kuwait, but also to persuade Iraq to hand over its Weapons of Mass Destruction (W.M.D.) that had been visibly used against Iranian and Kurdish civilians before and after the Iran-Iraq war. By 1998, despite untold damage to his nation due to sanctions, UNSCOM weapons inspector Scott Ritter was noted as saying 'Iraq has not nearly disarmed'.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Quoted in R. Darren Gobert, *The Theatre of Caryl Churchill* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 178.

⁶⁹ Britain retained an influential stake in the Iraq Petroleum Company up to the early 1970s. For an excellent history of Britain's early Twentieth Century involvement in Iraq, see Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007)

⁷⁰ OPEC is the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. Saddam Husaain explained this when captured by the U.S.A. in 2003, see Agencies, 'Saddam States Reason for Kuwait Invasion', *Gulf News*, 21 July 2009 < <http://gulfnews.com/opinion/thinkers/saddam-states-reasons-for-kuwait-invasion-1.502105> > [accessed 21 January 2018]

⁷¹ UNSCOM is United Nations Special Commission. Statement re-expressed in an interview with Time Magazine, Massimo Calabresi, 'Exclusive: Scott Ritter in His Own Words', *Time*, Sep 14 2002

The problems of Iraq seemed sidelined when other areas of the Middle East became a focal point for war after two planes crashed into the Twin Towers on 9th September 2001, a seismic event that shattered optimism in politics and culture across the West. Although 15 of the 19 terrorists involved in the 9/11 attacks were from Saudi-Arabia, the response from the American and British coalition was to attempt to dismantle the architect of the attack, Osama Bin-Laden and his base for Al-Qaeda operations and invade Afghanistan.⁷² This invasion, named 'Operation Enduring Freedom', itself gave rise to a number of political theatrical responses and a summary of significant plays concerning this invasion is detailed in Appendix VI below.

It is alleged that invading Iraq was mentioned by Donald Rumsfeld immediately after the 9/11 attack and by September 2002, was being publically mentioned by George W. Bush.⁷³ Although America had support from Tony Blair, they both attempted to gain U.N. approval to invade Iraq because, it was argued, they had information to suppose that Iraq had connections to Al-Qaeda. Later this contention was added to by the suggestion that Iraq was also a significant threat because it held, as yet to be found, numerous W.M.D. A third reason was later included that Saddam Hussain was a clear threat to his neighbours and his own people because of his despotic tendencies. As Slavoj Zizek argues the theoretical flaw in the argument for the invasion is that there were '*too many* reasons for the war', and the only, 'consistency [...] was, of course, ideology.'⁷⁴ With these and other concerns about government mendacity and the absence of UN approval for the invasion, widespread popular dissent leapt across Britain. Nonetheless, despite mass marches and fierce protestations, the Iraq invasion began with the U.S.A. supported by a small coalition including Britain, Australia, Spain and Poland, on 19 March 2003.

< <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,351165,00.html> > [accessed 18 January 2018]

⁷² Because of the background of the 9/11 attackers, some U.S. families who lost loved ones are suing Saudi Arabia directly. See Will Worley, 'Saudi Arabia faces largest ever 9/11 lawsuit – accused of prior knowledge over terror attack', *The Independent*, 22 March 2017 < <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/saudi-arabia-911-victims-lawsuit-prior-knowledge-world-trade-center-terror-attack-twin-towers-a7644016.html> > [accessed 21 January 2018]

⁷³ See Joel Roberts, 'Plans for Iraq Attack Began on 9/11', *CBS News*, September 4 2002 < <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/plans-for-iraq-attack-began-on-9-11/> > [accessed 22 January 2018]

⁷⁴ Slavoj Zizek, *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (London: Verso, 2004), p. 2.

Zizek argues that the real reasons for the invasion are more economically materialistic but also threefold:

(1) A sincere ideological belief that the USA was bringing democracy and prosperity to another nation; (2) the urge brutally to assert and demonstrate unconditional US hegemony; (3) Control of Iraq's oil reserves.⁷⁵

Numerous other critics agreed that the Iraq campaign was an invasion with clear material foundations. Naomi Klein felt it was an aspect of capitalism's approach to growing its power through invasion and chaos, which she termed 'Disaster Capitalism'.⁷⁶ In 'Axis of Evil or Access to Diesel?', Andreas Bieler and Adam Morton saw the war similarly in terms of the approach of 'bomb and build', and thus quite clearly about 'global capitalist dynamics'.⁷⁷ In the context of an invasion with such a wealth of seeming materialist causes and motivations, where ideologies of Islamic fundamentalism and neoliberal Imperialism seemed hard to refute, British theatre was perhaps under pressure to recognise and respond to this political materialism. However, its theatrical forms, as Kershaw and Ravenhill note above, no longer seemed comfortable with grand ideologies and Marxist approaches. An exploration of the tensions and products of this seeming contradiction is at the core of this thesis.

My aim in this thesis is to concentrate on British subsidised theatre that relates to Britain's military/political involvement and social response to the Iraq invasion. As such, I have not included plays such as Judith Thompson's *Palace of the End* (2007) and George Packer's *Betrayed* (2008) that consider the wider coalition's experience, nor Jonathan Holmes' *Fallujah*, which discusses the U.S. bombing of the Iraqi city. For similar reasons, I have not discussed Justin Butcher's excellent satire, *The Madness of George Dubya* (2003) because of its focus on U.S. policy, personnel and its close reliance on another text, the film *Dr Strangelove*. My aim is to focus on new drama or at least work with a significant distance from any adapted source. As such, I have not explored reworkings of Shakespearean and classical theatre such as Nicholas Hytner's *Henry V* (2003), David Greig's *Dunsinane* (2010), Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* (2004) and

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁶ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2008)

⁷⁷ Andreas Bieler & Adam Morton, 'Axis of Evil or Access to Diesel? Spaces of New Imperialism and the Iraq War', *Historical Materialism*, Vol. 23, Iss. 2 (2015), pp. 94-130.

Sulayman Al-Bassam's *Richard III: An Arab Tragedy* (2007). These are all incisive works, but are predominantly canonical plays adapted to comment on the Iraq invasion.

I have concentrated thematically on the British soldiers' experience, torture, the imprisonment of British civilians in Guantanamo Bay, the impact of the Iraq invasion on mainland Britain, and aspects of the theatre surrounding the Prevent strategy. By engaging with these areas I hope to establish a clear understanding of the trends and idiosyncrasies of the way in which British theatre adapted to this new environment of the Iraq war, the resultant attacks, and domestic anxiety. However, there are some relevant plays that are not included, notably Steve Gilroy's *Motherland* (2007) and Esther Wilson's *Ten Tiny Toes* (2008). These plays have not been explored largely due to the fact that both plays focus on the personal experience of British mothers of serving personnel, which seems partly removed from the direct experience of the war. Moreover, similar but more direct involvement with the war is covered in my analysis of Owen Sheers' *Two Worlds of Charlie F.* (2012) and Jonathan Lichtenstein's *The Pull of Negative Gravity* (2004). Given space, I would have liked to explore other Prevent strategy plays in more detail such as Mike Harris's *One Extreme to the Other* (2007) and *Undercover* (2007), devised by a group of young Muslim women. However, *One Extreme to the Other* is an accomplished piece whose content seems concerned with wider issues of racism rather than establishment attitudes to the British Muslim population. *Undercover*, though excellent, is focused on images of Muslim women, which is at once removed from the specifics of the Iraq war.

As such, the plays I have chosen to analyse are those that relate to Britain's involvement in the Iraq War and those that are most critically discussed, the most mainstream and usually the most challenging or pioneering theatrical works in theme, location or form. The focus of the analysis is predominantly based on the published text of each theatrical work as I was unable to see all the plays and differing productions in person. However, those that I was able to see include discussions of relevant performance strategies and my research on the theatrical works includes references to key performance features derived from other research, and where possible, photographs of key dramatic features. Consequently, I believe that the most incisive and innovative British subsidised theatre of this turbulent period is comprehensively discussed throughout this work.

The thesis is structured in a largely thematic form that groups the theatrical works of the period into key subject areas that frame the theatrical response to the Iraq War:

Chapter 1. *The Invasion of Iraq*. This sets the political context for the military invasion and analyses three of the early Verbatim plays about the Iraq invasion: David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (2004), Richard Norton-Taylor's *Justifying War* (2003) and Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* (2006). This section explores the different approaches to the use of the Verbatim form in these key works: its strengths in widening the dramatic frame to present the 'realistic' voice of the marginalised, and exposing the political classes to account; alongside the associated problems of a style that aims for tight authenticity whilst employing the structural and narrative constraints necessitated by the theatrical form.

Chapter 2. *The Trauma of Soldiers*. This chapter analyses a number of plays that explore the experiences and suffering of the wounded soldier and its impact on the domestic environment. This section offers an overview of Mark Ravenhill's *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* (2007) series of short plays that brings the Middle-Eastern war into the British home. It particularly focuses on Ravenhill's *War and Peace* (2007) in its representation of a mutilated soldier disturbing the domestic setting, before discussing the plays intimations of P.T.S.D.. Following this, Owen Sheers' *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* (2012), Jonathan Lichtenstein's *The Pull of Negative Gravity* (2004) and Simon Stephens' *Motortown* (2006) are discussed for the way in which they expand the dramatic frame to offer differing representations of the injured soldier, at times using the physical injury to reflect a wider social trauma.

Chapter 3. *War Crimes and Punishment*. This chapter explores the theme of torture through Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo's *Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* (2004), Mark Ravenhill's *Crime and Punishment* (2007), Colin Teevan's *How Many Miles to Basra?* (2006), Richard Norton-Taylor's *Tactical Questioning* (2011) and Roy Williams' *Days of Significance*. This section discusses the British (and American) use of undue force and torture as an allegedly politically-supported means of war; one that is practised by and on British subjects abroad. Theatre in these works begins to present the image of the Islamic suspect and citizen in limited terms whilst implicating the British establishment as the persistent source of war crimes.

Chapter 4. *Neoliberal Theatre*. This chapter discusses the theatrical establishment's significant and direct involvement in politics through the Prevent Strategy and the international use of British theatre in the Middle East. The analysis of two widely used and youth-focused Prevent strategy plays, Alice Bartlett's *Not in My Name* (2008) and Khayaal Theatre Company's *Hearts and Minds* (2007), provides a contrasting image of the state-sponsored approach to prevent the Islamic youth of Britain from becoming radicalised. Art and theatre's commodification and establishment use as a possible form of colonialism is also explored via Mark Ravenhill's *Birth of a Nation* (2007) and Tim Crouch's *ENGLAND* (2007). These two plays perhaps suggest theatrical culture is itself a means of production in which the influence of the capitalist economy works to restrict empathy to the war torn Middle East.

Conclusion. The conclusion explores the relevance of Cultural Materialism to the plays of the Iraq war and the way in which frames of empathy have been expanded, before discussing the emerging theoretical paradigm of New Materialism.

Literature Review

My overriding concept for the research was to consider whether British subsidised theatre's response to the Iraq war could be effectively analysed in Cultural Materialist terms. The challenge being that Cultural Materialism seems a rather dated concept when considered in the context of a contemporary theatre that is (in 2014) embracing immersive and postmodern/postdramatic concepts. These seem temporally and ideologically removed from a Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield's version of Cultural Materialism, as expressed in *Political Shakespeare*. In modern performance works, historical context and evidence for an innate class struggle seem largely opaque.

I was emboldened in continuing my approach by Amelia Howe Kritzer's *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain: New Writing: 1995-2005* (2008), which focuses on how contemporary theatre, alongside the 'In Yer Face' plays, might be seen as political texts reassessing the role of the individual and their relation and often rejection of political ideals. A political statement in itself. This text seemed more like a general survey of plays and suggested how such an approach could be kept within a number of key and controlling themes. Moreover, it touched on the concept of how theatre pushed ideas of empathy much wider than class concerns and thus initiated my thoughts about theatre's role in establishing and widening who is deserving of empathy.

One of the central problems in finding texts concerning the plays of this period was that they were being released as I was writing. Thus often the most useful texts (Sarah Grochala's is an example) were read very late in the research.

What was clear (in 2014) through my analysis of the published texts looking at performance and the War on Terror was that there was a significant gap in the research that looked particularly at the connection between British performance practices and the Iraq War. Often texts considered the overall influence of the 'War on Terror', the Post 9/11 environment, or the 'Middle-Eastern wars' more broadly, but none seemed to directly address the relationship between British Theatre and the Iraq war directly. This seemed an omission because of this specific invasions huge and divisive impact on British culture, society and the government of the time. Moreover, the key boosts in funding accelerated by the Boyden Report and Tony Blair's focus on 'Creative Industries'

took place at the same time as the contentions around the Iraq invasion.⁷⁸ Thus, the same government who valued theatre for its role in encouraging diversity and social empathy financed a military invasion, alongside a domestic Prevent strategy, which seemed to undermine any claim to global diversity and cultural empathy. The contradiction and consequences seemed culturally fascinating and important to explore and extrapolate.

With such a concept in mind, from 2014, I interrogated a number of key texts that centred on the plays of the Blair and Iraq war years from 2003-2011:

Theatre and the Iraq War

Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror: Critical Mimesis and the Age of Uncertainty* (Manchester: M.U.P., 2011)

Dr Jenny Hughes is an academic who has written extensively about the relationship between theatre and the marginal in firm left-wing terms.

This was a core text as it analyses the theatrical response to the War on Terror from 2003-2011. It explores the resurgence of political and anti-war theatre on the British and international stage and suggests the number of ways in which subsidised, local and community theatrical events were employed to comment on the Iraq War. Moreover, the perspective on the theatrical works is from a largely Cultural Materialist point of view that seemed to suggest the conflict was simply a new iteration of an older form of imperialism. Whilst the text discusses some mainstream British and Prevent strategy plays, the scope of the work is very wide. It considers: the historic Northern Ireland 'troubles', American activist theatre and events such as the ISIS beheadings for their performative impact. The benefit of this is that 'performance' becomes central to all aspects of the conflict but, for my purpose, it does seem to lose some local and British context. Moreover, the political comment is quite narrow and there are few postmarxist (or other) readings of the conflict to provide a wider theoretical perspective.

Rustom Bharucha, *Terror and Performance* (London: Routledge, 2014)

⁷⁸ See discussion of Funding in Appendix I

Professor Rustom Bharucha is Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies in Delhi. He is also a dramaturg and cultural critic who has developed theatre across a range of conflict zones.

Whilst this text contained minimal analysis of plays that related directly to my research, there is an interesting exploration of performance theory in terms of war, terrorism and ongoing conflicts (the initial focus of the book is on Artaud and Genet's suitability for conflict zones). The text has a more sensitive geographical approach (i.e. not just Western/British) to conflicts and expresses some versions of an Islamic perspective alongside other views of ongoing conflicts in Palestine, and elsewhere. It tends to see terrorism as an 'event' with a social and political perspective rather than a pre-meditated strategy. As such, the context suggests a social and historical context is central to terrorism and conflict.

Sarah Grochala, *The Contemporary Political Play: Rethinking Dramaturgical Structure* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017)

Sarah Grochala is a playwright and academic at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London who researches contemporary theatre and politics.

This text appeared quite late in my research and is particularly useful in suggesting the political/theoretical tone that I wanted to adopt, which was largely a discussion of the way in which the theatrical form employed in works discussing the Iraq war, was evolving to become as politicised as the subject matter. The text's theme is the way in which traditional political drama often used an allegedly reactionary form: mimetic naturalism, that seemed unable to address the contradictory meanings, issues of authenticity and the need to involve the spectator in constructing meanings that became significant factors in a contemporary drama influenced by Jacques Derrida and Hans Thies Lehmann. Grochala explores Mark Ravenhill, Tim Crouch and Caryl Churchill to consider how their form is politically progressive. This text framed the later parts of my research when discussing more progressive forms of theatre.

Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing: Articulating the Demos 1997-2007* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

Dr Maggie Inchley is an academic at Queen Mary University who writes about the significance of the marginal voice and its representation in theatre.

This was a key text in managing my approach to the overall theme of the research and with particular reference to Gregory Burke and Mark Ravenhill's work. Inchley suggests that the New Labour period's values influenced theatre's desire to begin to express some of the less visible/audible voices in British society, particularly those usually ignored through reasons of class, gender and ethnicity. However, the later tone of the text is how these New Labour promises of egalitarianism and empathy became compromised by 'falsely empathetic values and [...] climate of betrayal.'⁷⁹ Her tight analysis of *Black Watch* and the discussion of how New Labour values became compromised provided a balanced but often sharp critique of the wider period and its hopes and failures. However, the text only focused on a limited number of plays appropriate to the Iraq conflict but suggested the significance of theatrical representation as a signifier of cultural empathy.

Suman Gupta, *Imagining Iraq* (London: Palgrave MacMillan 2011)

Suman Gupta is professor of literature and cultural history at the Open University and has written extensively around literature and globalisation.

Imagining Iraq was one of the earliest texts I read that discussed the key plays I had in mind (*Black Watch, Justifying War.*) in some depth and connected them directly to the invasion in Iraq. Its content is focused on the breadth of literature surrounding the Iraq War and so discusses poetry, fiction and blogging alongside drama in its aim to consider how the West has constructed a malleable image of Iraq. The main point being that the Iraq invasion and the ongoing terrorist incidents in Britain seemed to create a lasting paranoia: a bubbling anxiety about local safety and government/military abuses abroad that seemed to exist as a repressed neurosis and was expressed in the drama and literary works of the period. However, theatre receives only a brief chapter in a useful text.

Dan Rebellato (ed.), *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009: Voices, Documents, New Interpretations* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

⁷⁹ Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing: Articulating the Demos 1997-2007*, p. 129.

Dan Rebellato is a playwright and professor of contemporary drama at the University of London.

This text works as a 'primer' for the culture and significant events of the period. It discusses the politics, society and culture of the decade and focuses on less-explored areas such as theatre funding, with some excellent examples of how individual theatres became embroiled in accusations of commodification at an unprecedented level. The most beneficial section is the analysis of individual plays by Simon Stephens, David Greig, Roy Williams and Tim Crouch. Tim Crouch was particularly useful as during the initial period of my research there were few academic texts exploring his innovative work. Ultimately, the text is broad-brush and not always academic but is broad.

Michael Billington, *State of the Nation: British Theatre since 1945* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009)

Michael Billington is a drama critic who has worked at *The Guardian* since 1971. He is a journalist who has written a number of biographies of playwrights and actors.

Whilst Billington's text is very wide-ranging and clearly not an academic analysis of theatre, the work covers a large number of plays and dramatic works over the New Labour period. The text also has a wide-pan view of theatre that set some basic contexts for the research. It has a number of broader political and dramatic insights such as localised assessments of how New Labour changed the funding and ultimately the theme (anti-war) of much of British subsidised theatre, along with directorial approaches to some texts under discussion. There is quite an interesting overview of the Iraq war period, from a politically 'liberal-left' perspective. However, most of the significant plays of the Iraq War period receive little penetrating academic analysis.

Jenny Spencer (ed.), *Political and Protest Theatre after 9/11: Patriotic Dissent* (New York: Routledge, 2012)

Jenny Spencer is Associate Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts. She has published texts with a focus on political dissent in theatre.

Generally, the texts looking at performance with a post 9/11 slant were often the source of my early research as they usually overlapped with the invasion of Iraq. However, they tended to focus only on the early plays. This text edited by Spencer had a short

analysis of *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* as a response to an 'amoral, fragmented and narcissistic culture'.⁸⁰ The text has an excellent chapter by Marcia Blumberg on the way *Black Watch* uses historical context and empathy to deliver its meaning. Similarly, the chapter by Ryan Claycomb (*Voices of the Other ...*) on how the terrorist or Iraqi/Afghani citizen seemed continually unperformable on the British/American stage was extremely useful, as was the discussion of how this inability to recognise the Other seemed to echo the coalition media's approach to the invaded Middle Eastern nations. As such, Claycomb's analysis seemed somewhat more critical of contemporary drama than many other texts, which often used the theatrical work to critique state policy rather than question the work's own theatrical and political validity. As the focus remains on the impact of 9/11, the text was limited in its utility for my research.

Alison Forsyth & Chris Megson (eds.) *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past & Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

Dr Alison Forsyth researches theatre at Aberystwyth University and focuses on trauma and testimony in theatrical works. Dr Chris Megson is a reader in theatre and politics at The University of London.

This collection of academic essays was one of the core texts when looking to analyse and critique forms of Verbatim theatre. The text discusses the relatively recent history of Verbatim theatre and its employment throughout the contemporary world. The key chapters are perhaps Janelle Reinelt's Introduction that examines the effective promises of the Verbatim style: authenticity to the 'real' for spectators, and a functional role as a political and cultural check and balance. Reinelt's conclusion is that in all forms of documentary theatre the 'mediation is always suspect.'⁸¹ The other pivotal chapter is Derek Paget's exploration of the history of documentary theatre, its many breaks in popularity and its 'continued powers of endurance'. This includes some perceptive analysis of documentary theatre's weaknesses and potential for exploiting the source/victim, and its role during the New Labour period in publicly 'bearing witness' to governmental failings/crimes.⁸² This is a diverse series of essays, with some

⁸⁰ Jenny Spencer ed., *Political and Protest Theatre after 9/11: Patriotic Dissent* (New York: Routledge, 2012)

⁸¹ Janelle Reinelt, 'The Promise of Documentary', Alison Forsyth & Chris Megson (eds.) *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past & Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 23.

⁸² Derek Paget, 'The "Broken Tradition" of Documentary Theatre and its Continued Powers of Endurance', Alison Forsyth & Chris Megson (eds.) *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past & Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 234.

considerable focus on world-wide uses of documentary theatre but its tone is innovative and academic.

Will Hammond & Dan Stewart (eds.) *Verbatim Verbatim* (London: Oberon Books, 2008)

This text offers direct comments from some of the key practitioners in contemporary Verbatim theatre. This text includes chapters and opinions by some notable Verbatim playwrights/directors of the early 2000s: Nicholas Kent, David Hare, Robin Soans, Alecky Blythe and Richard Norton-Taylor. What is most striking is the way in which David Hare's part-verbatim format and Richard Norton-Taylor's Tribunal theatre become merged in the context of the text so that drastically different forms of Verbatim theatre are suggested to have a communal focus on authenticity, which is perhaps debatable. However, the book was useful for Nicholas Kent's argument and discussions on verisimilitude when working with Richard Norton-Taylor.

David Lane, *Contemporary British Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010)

David Lane is a playwright and dramaturg who also lectures in theatre at a number of universities in Britain.

The text is a guide on theatre from 'In Yer Face' styles, through Verbatim drama, and up to contemporary theatre as of 2010. Some of the focus of the text is on the different genres and directions of new drama, such as the focus on adaptation and the inclusion of diverse voices in contemporary drama. In this way, it works as a sort of audit of contemporary trends and the way in which Lane feels theatre is brimming with new concepts and incorporating ideas from dance and multi-media technology. The section on Verbatim is most useful in its analysis of the form as a political tool that involves the audience in 'bearing witness'. This is a more approachable/digestible text than, for example, certain chapters in *Get Real*, but is less detailed on theoretical analysis. Nonetheless, Lane tends to come to the same conclusion as Janelle Reinelt in seeing Verbatim as a flawed form with many possibilities.

Politics and the Iraq War

Patrick Cockburn, *The Occupation: War and Resistance in Iraq* (London: Verso, 2006)

Patrick Cockburn is the Middle Eastern correspondent for *The Independent*.

This was perhaps the core text for looking at the way in which Iraq descended into chaos following the coalition invasion. Being a journalistic, the perspective is often local and anecdotal but it provides a clear view of how major tactical errors by the coalition: such as not fixing the water/electricity supply and banning all Ba'th party members (the whole Iraq civil service) from working, drove the nation into chaos and rebellion. In its way, it is a materialist explanation of the failure of the occupation to win any hearts and minds.

Ian Cobain, *Cruel Britannia: A Secret History of Torture* (London: Portobello Books, 2013)

Ian Cobain is a journalist who works for *The Guardian* and writes about secrecy within the British state.

This text is a detailed look at Britain's quite pervasive involvement in torture during key conflicts throughout history since the Second World War. It is particularly useful in examining the way in which the alleged torture of suspects by British forces in Northern Ireland appears to overlap with similar practices in Iraq. The specifics of the torture and how it manages to evade political censure are especially enlightening. Most significant is the exploration of the practices of the British forces during the Iraq occupation and, in particular, the events surrounding the murder of Baha Mousa.

Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008)

Naomi Klein is a journalist who has written about the excesses of corporate globalization and neoliberalism.

This is the most clearly argued of a number of texts (*Web of Deceit* by Mark Curtis and *War on Terror, Inc.* by Solomon Hughes follow a similar line) in arguing that the invasion of Iraq was a blatant plan to use the chaos ensuing in Iraq from the political turmoil of

invasion, to enforce corporate capitalism onto an emerging state. It is well argued, with some clear evidence. However, much of these corporate incursions into Iraq have never taken (or been able to take) place.

Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009)

Judith Butler is an American academic whose work often focuses on issues of gender, and feminism.

This is a collection of essays and talks since 2004. Butler's text explores the way in which the mediatisation of war means that our knowledge of what is going on during a conflict is so tightly controlled that we are effectively instructed as to who is 'grievable' and who is not. This in turn means that our sympathy and empathy are manipulated to ensure that a usually patriotic agenda is fulfilled. Despite slips in these frames, such as the Abu Ghraib photographs, Butler explains that the 'affect' of war is controlled to serve a pro-patriarchal and nationalist agenda.

Cultural Materialism

John Higgins, *The Raymond Williams Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). Includes: *Culture Is Ordinary* (1958) *Culture and Society* (1958), *The Long Revolution* (1961), *Marxism and Literature* (1977) and other texts.

Raymond Williams was a Marxist academic who developed approaches to Cultural Theory in-part derived from the study of his then-contemporary theatre.

Raymond Williams' Cultural Materialism is an adaptation/extension to the Marxist theory of historical materialism.⁸³ In his 1958 essay *Culture is Ordinary*, Williams argued that 'a culture must finally be interpreted in relation to its underlying system of production,' and further defined culture as 'a whole way of life', and in particular the arts as 'part of a social organisation which economic change clearly radically affects.'⁸⁴

In Williams' argument, culture and art are political because the social and economic processes that exist within society define the type, moral norms, values and judgements that define the culture and the art. This seems clearly valid but it is also quite a bold

⁸³ Phil Edwards, 'Culture is Ordinary: Raymond Williams and Cultural Materialism', *Red Pepper* (London, Aug 1999)

⁸⁴ John Higgins, *The Raymond Williams Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p.14.

statement that is slowly developed over a number of Williams' writings. Yet this form of Cultural Materialism perhaps extends historical materialism into some both broad and also everyday areas (Terry Eagleton notably criticises this in the Introduction to *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives* 1989).

One of the significant problems with the argument (as Eagleton also notes) is that if culture and behaviour is material, what areas of life might be able to be non-material? Presumably none. Similarly, according to some critics, in Williams' definition, economy seems uncomfortably elided into culture, and their differing aims and ownership sidelined (Nicholas Garnham, *Capitalism and Communication*, 1990).

Williams' work is sometimes muddy and hard to unpick; so that exactly how cultural products and behaviours express a firm material connection from the means of production to a cultural response is not always transparent. Nonetheless, in the position of a twenty first century theatre that is directly interrogating the war in Iraq, it is interesting to see how, as Williams suggests, our theatrical culture appears to richly echo contemporary society, economy and ideology.

Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism* (Manchester: MUP, 1985)

Jonathan Dollimore was Professor of English at the University of York and researches cultural theory. Alan Sinfield was Professor of English and Cultural Studies at the University of Sussex and has researched issues around culture and sexuality.

Political Shakespeare of 1985 is a strident re-expression of Raymond Williams' Cultural Materialism in more pronounced and politicised terms. The text includes a number of essays concerning re-readings of Shakespeare and the Renaissance with a marked socialist and historical emphasis. It is most significant in its articulation of Cultural Materialism through the definition that, 'culture does not (cannot) transcend the material forces and relations of production.'⁸⁵ It then defines four areas of cultural materialist enquiry: 'historical context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis', although historical context is the most significant factor.⁸⁶ In many ways, this text follows on from Raymond Williams' belief that culture is wholly tied to

⁸⁵ Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare*, p. viii.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. vii

the means of production with a clearer definition. However, *Political Shakespeare* is more militant in its language than Williams' work and also extends Cultural Materialism into a more 'disruptive' theory that looks to uncover the hidden transgressive and challenging textual features that underline Shakespeare's plays and the wider Renaissance culture. In *Political Shakespeare's* definition, culture is a materially created outcome of any era's social and political economy that reflects its dominant and underlying structures. The concept of looking at underlying structures of form and content to explore political/social ideology and subtext allows this method to be particularly adaptable to the dramatic text and theatrical production.

Performance Theory and Theory

Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 1999) & 'Pathologies of Hope: Interview with Performance Paradigm', *Performance Paradigm*, No. 3 (2007)

Baz Kershaw was a researcher into performance and theatre at the University of Warwick.

The Radical in Performance was a key initial text for research ideas. The text explores the tensions between politics, theatre and performance then examines what radical theatre might mean in an emerging postmodern context. Kershaw suggests in this text that (in 1999) performance is reflecting a larger political context where modernism meets and challenges postmodernism. This seemed to me a possible approach to consider as modernism suggests a Cultural Materialist approach, with its underpinning of a Marxism predicated on a belief in human progress, might still have some traction. Whereas plays of the period, such as those by Martin Crimp and Tim Crouch amongst others, offer the influence of postmodern and postdramatic decentring of character and plot. However, Kershaw does not really define modernism as such. In an earlier interview called 'Pathologies of Hope', Kershaw seems to see modernism in turns of the grand narratives of religion and neoliberalism as well as a context for an absence of ethics:

Politically and ethically the signs of the modernist disease are everywhere [...]

post-modern relativism (situational ethics) post-9/11, fundamentalism (positional ethics) or post-globalised capitalism.⁸⁷

Modernism is an often ill-defined term. Traditionally, it has meant beliefs and paradigmatic periods where ideas of human progress seem possible. The academic F.G. Oosterhoff notes:

Central to modernism was the belief that the proper use of human reason would guarantee progress.⁸⁸

My references to modernism have such ideas as the foregrounded meaning. Yet, *theatrical* modernism is even more ill-defined and generally means the period from Ibsen and Strindberg through to Brecht, Artaud and sometimes up to Samuel Beckett; effectively moving from symbolism and naturalism through to the avant-garde and absurdist. The British academic Graham Ley notes the absence of a working definition of theatrical modernism in many academic texts and suggests theatrical modernism has more to do with the role of the director and rise in significance of the director/dramaturg.⁸⁹ If this is a good description of modernism, then Kershaw as his title suggests, sees Brecht as a pivotal end-point of modernism.

Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991)

Frederic Jameson is an American cultural critic who is often understood as writing from a Marxist perspective.

In *The Radical in Performance*, Kershaw defines postmodernism as a 'celebration of human difference', and a, 'Reconstitution of the individual as a series of subject positions, [...and an] expansive embrace of pluralism'. Although Kershaw notes, it also includes:

⁸⁷ Kershaw, Baz, 'Pathologies of Hope: Interview with Performance Paradigm', *Performance Paradigm*, No. 3 (2007), p. 113.

⁸⁸ F.G. Oosterhoff, *Ideas have a History: Perspectives on the Western search for Truth*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 2001), p.194.

⁸⁹ Graham Ley, 'Theatrical Modernism: A Problematic', *Modernism*, A. Eysteinsson & v. Liska (eds.), (Amsterdam: John Betjemans, 2007)

The death of community, the loss of agency, the end of history, even the demise of meaning in the wholesale rejection of anything that smacks of ontological or epistemological certainty.⁹⁰

Jameson's work looks to define what created this supposed postmodern world, mostly by an analysis of architecture and art. His reading is effectively Cultural Materialist in formation as it suggests postmodernism is the 'cultural dominant' form created by the political economy: a 'reflex [...] of yet another systematic modification of capitalism itself.'⁹¹ For Jameson, a globalized, decentred market place and corporate establishment encouraged by technology, have developed a new:

Depthlessness [...] a culture of the image or the simulacrum [...] a consequent weakening of historicity [...] transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself [...] while] the alienation of the subject is displaced by [...] fragmentation.⁹²

As such, this text sees postmodernism in politicised terms as simply a modern paradigm reflecting a new political and economic process. This is particularly useful in my research as it contends that postmodernism is innately political and perhaps more closely entwined with modernism than others might suggest.

Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernity*, (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2013)

Terry Eagleton is a Marxist literary theorist at the University of Lancaster who has written widely on literary and cultural theory.

This is a work written from a firm Marxist perspective that analyses postmodernism as a culturally dominant theory that is effectively sanitizing and depoliticising neoliberalism. Eagleton's main argument being that postmodernism's loss of faith in grand narratives is occurring at the same time as the grand narrative of neoliberalism is becoming so pervasive and normalised that it is almost unquestioned. Eagleton observes:

The power of capital is now so dreadfully familiar, so sublimely omnipresent [...] that even large sectors of the left have succeeded in naturalising it.⁹³

⁹⁰ Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance*, p. 19.

⁹¹ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*, xii.

⁹² Ibid., p 4, p. 8 & p. 14.

⁹³ Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernity*, (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2013), p. 23.

This is a polemic that is particularly useful in seeing postmodernism as both political and working to disguise the political.

Liz Tomlin, *Acts and Apparitions: Discourses on the Real in Performance Practice and Theory, 1990-2010* (Manchester: MUP, 2013)

Liz Tomlin is professor of Theatre and Performance at the University of Glasgow

Liz Tomlin's work is an exploration of key contemporary theories that relate to theatre and performance. Her overriding theme is that political (and broader) theatre since Brecht has been an ongoing attempt to respond to a crisis of 'reality'. Whereas Brecht felt reality might be uncovered via the forms and techniques of epic theatre, postmodernism and postdramatic approaches to theatre are themselves a response to the fact that any form of socialist or similar 'reality' now seems as contingent a power structure as neoliberalism.

This text was particularly useful for defining the terms and the problems of theatre in a postmodern and postdramatic context.

Liz Tomlin summarizes the work of Frederic Jameson, Paul Mann, Hal Foster Philip Auslander and a number of theorists who have attempted to define the future for a postmodern theatre following the destabilizing theories of Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida. According to Tomlin, the postmodern period, as it relates to theatre and performance, is one which:

Became obsessed with the failure of 'reality' to provide any stable counterpoint to the 'simulated' where the self's identity might be found.⁹⁴

Seen through the lens of theorists such as Baudrillard, Derrida and Lyotard, everything in this historical period becomes an equivalent fictional text, a representation without referent [...] all postmodern deconstruction can do, it seems, is to expose and self-reference the strategies of containment, commodification and recuperation.⁹⁵

Tomlin suggests that postmodern drama is an ongoing and widely diverse attempt to express these issues within a dramatic form and content that is itself implicated in the

⁹⁴ Liz Tomlin, *Acts and Apparitions*, p. 29.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 30-32.

same discourse it is often critiquing. The above is the working definition for postmodern drama that I aim to employ within my research.

These postmodern concerns, as expressed by Tomlin, are particularly significant in the plays by Mark Ravenhill and Tim Crouch who seem to foreground their concerns over legitimization and fragmentation.

Tomlin also provides a useful summary of theories concerning postdramatic theatre, which are identified as another more radical approach to access the underlying reality of a decentred, contingent postmodern context. Exploring the arguments and conclusions expressed by the key postdramatic theorist Hans-Thies Lehmann, Tomlin notes Lehmann's argument that postdramatic theatre is ultimately an attempt to 'conceptualize art in the sense that it offers not a representation but an intentionally unmediated experience of the real'.⁹⁶ Tomlin references Lehmann's wider aim to deconstruct/discard the traditions of Western theatre:

The postdramatic, which interrogates, critiques or deconstructs the dramatic form, simultaneously acts ideologically in its implicit subversion of the logocentric Western history to which drama is bound.⁹⁷

Lehmann's point being that the Western mimetic tradition of theatre is suspect as it is innately removed from an external reality, which (as in political theatre) it is usually attempting to uncover. Without removing this mimetic veil, the Western dramatic form is implicated in a neoliberal economy of surfaces and spectacle, which it is attempting to uncover. In practice, as in Sarah Kane's *4:48 Psychosis* (1999) and Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* (1997), reputed postdramatic works, this often means that the plot, characters and other typical dramatic representational features such as temporality and setting are foregone in favour of accentuating the contingent uncertainty of what, how and who is represented. This sense of a contingent work removed from a tradition of Western representation is the understanding of 'postdramatic' that I employ throughout the research.

Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, Vol. 59 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010) & Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

⁹⁶ Liz Tomlin, *Acts and Apparitions*, p. 47.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Gilles Deleuze was a French poststructural, at times postmarxist, philosopher whose work is both political and metaphysical. Felix Guattari was a French psychotherapist and philosopher.

Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* understands and explains western capitalism in terms of Freudian (and other) psychoanalytic theories, suggesting that culture has become so unmoored from an authentic signifier that it works as a schizophrenic personality unable to establish a stable and 'real' identity and so culture can no longer develop into a stable 'Oedipal' stage of maturity. The work explores the implications of this reading. The most useful areas of this work are those concerning the way in which neoliberalism works to commodify every part of human experience; alongside the extension of Michel Foucault's *Structures of Control: Societies of Control*. In *Postscript on Societies of Control*, Deleuze explains that there are no-longer panopticon structures in modern capitalism because the role of the self-disciplining structure has become dispersed and inbuilt to modern culture in, for example, short employment contracts and high personal debt. These effectively work to regulate conformity to social behaviour and neoliberal values. This is an incisive guide to neoliberalism's subconscious.

Slavoj Zizek, *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (London: Verso, 2004)

Slavoj Zizek is a contemporary philosopher and sociologist who critiques neoliberalist economy and culture. He writes from a largely postmarxist perspective in that his arguments are often framed from Marxist fundamental points, but Zizek overlays a range of other theorists such as Hegel and Lacan, amongst others. However, there is at times an absence of a consistent theoretical narrative in his wide-ranging discussions.

This text is a broad critique of the coalition's aims and attempts to conquer, democratize and stabilize Iraq. It also includes discussions on the modern role of religion/Islam as a point of cultural resistance, alongside teachings from Jean Racine, Frederic Jameson and Brecht as well as discussions of whether the Iraq invasion itself hints at a large decline of the neoliberal ideology. Zizek's repeated point being that if the coalition has judged

the failure of Saddam Hussein and Iraq, 'who will judge the warriors on terror?'⁹⁸ This text argues that this invasion was entirely predictable, pursued for economic ends and that there has been no suitable or weighty opposition in the west. His conclusion is that Europe must urgently 'rethink the leftist project'.⁹⁹

John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (London: Methuen, 1959)

John Willett was a British theatrical designer and scholar who translated a number of Bertolt Brecht's plays and writings.

This was effectively the primer text for understanding Brecht's ideas and work as it situates Brecht in a historical and political context. Moreover, it discusses how his ideas were constantly evolving into new territory and previous ideas discarded. It has some good information on the context and aims for various features of epic theatre, including the development of the V-effect and Brecht's aim to distance his work from the tight emotional identification of 'bourgeois theatre'. By using strategies of breaking the emotional connection through manipulating actor's dialogue/vocal expression, undermining the mimetic implications of setting and scene (as for example the placards and 'distanced' monologues in *Mother Courage*) Brecht aimed to engage the audience's rationality in place of blind identification and so encourage political change through reason and social empathy. 'Gestus' (a mix of gesture and attitude) is an associated feature that uses character expressions and gestures within scenes to provide a visual explanation and critique of the social (and politicised) relations existing between characters. Ideally, the historically and materially constructed nature of any evident injustice/oppression will be made plain through plot but emphasised and underlined through character gestus.

As such, many of Brecht's most pervasive ideas attempted to critique capitalism through his developing panoply of theatrical tools. This text is written in quite straightforward language, which allows some of the more arcane concepts to be made clear - if not often discussed in larger academic detail.

Adam Alston, *Beyond Immersive Theatre: Aesthetics, Politics and Productive Participation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

⁹⁸ Slavoj Zizek, *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*, p.66.

⁹⁹ Slavoj Zizek, *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*, p.73.

Adam Alston is a lecturer in theatre and performance at the University of Surrey who researches contemporary theatre.

Adam Alston's text explores a number of theatre groups who use immersive approaches in their performance, such as Punchdrunk, Shunt and Pitch-Black Theatre, amongst others. From this, Alston argues that in a successful immersive production:

The audience enters both an immersive world and allows the world to pervade their thoughts and feelings and to motivate action. Such audiences enter experience machines.¹⁰⁰

Using these performance companies as a foundation, Alston discusses in some theoretical detail (using Kant, Ranciere, Baudrillard...) how and why immersive theatre functions. Alston's argument is that immersive theatre has the seeds of a progressive theatrical form, but also echoes and 'reflects neoliberal values and neoliberal modes of production', which in its current mode places economic value on experience and intertwines the consumer (as with social media) within the economy as an implicated producer.¹⁰¹ Yet at the same time, immersive aesthetics are connected to more radical ideas such as furthering discussions around personal liberty, equality and the connection with community. Alston concludes that 'Immersive theatre [...] risks complicity with productivism [but also] inspires its reformulation.'¹⁰²

Gareth White, *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Gareth White is a reader in Theatre and Performance at the Central School of Speech and Drama.

Gareth White's text works to examine the essential features of immersive performance. White analyses how the immersive approach actually works theoretically and practically within and prior to the performance environment. White considers a range of practitioners and theorists such as Erving Goffman and Pierre Bourdieu to consider the use of similar styles historically and, notably, within Theatre In Education. Much of the focus is on the social and psychological processes involved in the invitation to an

¹⁰⁰ Adam Alston, *Beyond Immersive Theatre: Aesthetics, Politics and Productive Participation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 218.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 221.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 226.

audience to immerse themselves, which might be 'overt, implicit, covert and accidental'.¹⁰³ For White, the invitation is an aestheticized moment that is pivotal to the shared process of artistic construction.

The text is most useful in its examination of the ways practitioners use differing strategies to both encourage and foreground the process of audience immersion.

Interviews – See Appendix II: 'Transcript of Telephone Conversation with Richard Norton-Taylor on 29/03/17', and Appendix III: 'Transcript of Interview with Khayaal Theatre Company's Luqman Ali and Director Eleanor Martin about the Prevent strategy recommended play *Hearts & Minds* – 20th September 2017'.

I have included two interviews in the appendices: a telephone interview with Richard Norton-Taylor and a face-face interview with a Prevent policy playwright, Luqman Ali. I had hoped also to speak to both Roy Williams and Mark Ravenhill but was unable to arrange an interview in time. The interviews are particularly useful in articulating both writers' positioning about the Iraq war as both had inside knowledge about the conflict alongside skills in creating theatre: Richard Norton-Taylor was for some years the defence correspondent for *The Guardian* and Luqman Ali is a British-based Imam who has worked to de-radicalise British doctors who went abroad to support ISIS. Whilst this does not make their information in any way objective, it is noticeable how few plays have insider knowledge of the British government nor the concerns of the British Muslim population. What is clear from both writers is their belief in political theatre, and particularly the power of theatre to help young people reflect on their material and politicised world.

¹⁰³ Gareth White, *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 40.

1. The Invasion of Iraq

1.1 Introduction

In March 2003, the United Kingdom in support of the United States began a military invasion to topple Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. The invasion was preceded by extensive critical debate within the United Nations, across Tony Blair's government and the country. In the U.K., key Members of Parliament such as Robin Cook and Clare Short felt forced to resign their positions while the nation became increasingly partisan and riven into opposing camps. The legal justification for the invasion was a focal point of contention, prompting international demonstrations, and became the subject of a long running judicial enquiry. In 2003, this questionable justification for war caused a standoff between the B.B.C. and the government concerning an allegation, leaked to the BBC, that the primary document motivating military action, which suggested Iraq could launch Weapons of Mass Destruction within 45 minutes, was 'sexed up'.¹ The apparent source for the leak, Dr David Kelly, was later found dead on an Oxfordshire hilltop amidst the vitriol of accusations. He was the first civilian casualty in an eight-year conflict where many thousands lost their lives.

The Iraq nation seems still devoid of stability and the bitterness held against the Blair government for the invasion, the loss of troops and the associated issues of Guantanamo Bay and illegal interrogation techniques, persists. In 2003, this bitterness swiftly inflamed the theatrical establishment, as expressed in Harold Pinter's notably materialist assessment of the conflict, where he argued:

The invasion of Iraq was a bandit act [...] an arbitrary military action inspired by a series of lies and gross manipulation of the media [...] intended to consolidate American military and economic control of the Middle East.²

Not all agreed. The dramatist Arnold Wesker countered Pinter's fury, stating:

¹ BBC News Channel, 'Timeline: The 45-minute claim', *BBC*, 26 February 2003
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3466005.stm> [Accessed 29 June 2016]

² Harold Pinter, *Nobel Lecture: Art, Truth & Politics*. Available at
<http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2005/pinter-lecture-e.html>
[Accessed 29 June 2016]

If I were Saddam Hussein [...] with Harold Pinter writing verses against my enemies [...] oppressors have never had it so good.³

The broad public hostility to the invasion culminated in England with the 2003 Anti-War March in London. With its massed cross-section of community bearing collective signs, often exclaiming their own material readings of the war such as 'No Blood for Oil', the protest seemed part of a long history of communal left-wing radicalism that had protested against coal-mine closures, apartheid and the poll tax.⁴ Yet contemporary observers noted that on the march were not just leftist radicals but 'Nuns.[...] Women barristers. The Eton George Orwell Society.'⁵ With young Etonians rubbing shoulders with Socialist Workers, the march perhaps suggested a new political paradigm, one that was beginning to move beyond historically bonding issues of social class and workers' rights, was emerging. As a marcher myself on the day, I observed the bizarre sight of boxer Chris Eubank driving a neon blue lorry onto Trafalgar Square next to an Imperial lion, an event that suggested the performative and media-aware nature of the event.⁶ As such, the march perhaps supported theatre academic Baz Kershaw's contention in 1999 that his contemporary world was at an overlapping transition point where,

The great paradigms of postmodernism and modernism are intertwined like the lines of an unfinished mandala.⁷

Kershaw is here referring to what he sees as an overlap between the two larger philosophical paradigms of modernism and postmodernism. In general terms, this is perhaps most easily expressed as a clash between a modernist belief in a larger narrative of human progress through rational knowledge, against a postmodern questioning of all forms of progress and authority.⁸ Kershaw argued that, in 1999,

³ BBC News Channel, 'War on Iraq: Pinter v Wesker', *BBC*, 26 February 2003 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2800063.stm> [Accessed 29 June 2016]

⁴ Carmen Fishwick, 'We were Ignored': anti-war protestors remember the Iraq war marches', *The Guardian*, 8 July, 2016 < <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jul/08/we-were-ignored-anti-war-protestors-remember-the-iraq-war-marches> >[accessed 8 August 2016]

⁵ Patrick Barkham, 'Iraq War 10 Years On: mass protest that defined a generation'. *The Guardian*, 15 February 2013 < <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/15/iraq-war-mass-protest> > [accessed 15 June 2019]

⁶ Chris Eubank's neon blue lorry was emblazoned with an anti-war slogan but was moved out of the way by police before I could read it.

⁷ Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.7.

⁸ Andreas Huyssen's, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986) and Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, The*

society, culture and theatre, was straddling the margins across these two positions. Terry Eagleton, a committed supporter of the grand narrative of socialism, offers a summary of postmodernity as problematizing modernism's reimagining of the Enlightenment principles of science, rationality and progress. He observes that:

Postmodernity is a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds for explanation [...] it sees the world as contingent, ungrounded, diverse, unstable, indeterminate, a set of disunified cultures or interpretations which breed a degree of scepticism about the objectivity of truth.⁹

Eagleton, as does the cultural critic Frederic Jameson, sees Postmodernism as the current material form of neoliberalism and therefore a cultural extension to modernist capitalism.¹⁰ Slavoj Zizek often articulates a similar, seemingly post-Marxist, view of postmodernism. Zizek notes that postmodernism is simply a new formation of capitalism, for:

Even Marx understood that the 'normal' state of capitalism is the permanent revolutionizing of its own conditions of existence.¹¹

Modernism and Postmodernism are in practice similar and overlapping terms. In theatrical, and many other genres, modernism was itself marked by its discomfort with ideas of progress or reason. Frederick J. Marker and Christopher Innes in a discussion of the (defined as) modernist playwrights: Ibsen, Strindberg, Pirandello and Beckett, explains that many of these playwrights are connected by an innovative focus on distinct modernist features such as human realism and the influence of 'naturalism'. Yet Marker and Innes argue that these writers' 'modernism' was:

Born of a perceived loss of such values and beliefs as the rationality purposefulness and dignity of the human condition.¹²

Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (London: Verso, 1991) are a detailed examination of the shift from modernism to postmodernism in literary, art and wider cultural terms.

⁹ Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernity* (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2013), p. vii.

¹⁰ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991)

¹¹ Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 52-53.

¹² A. Ackerman and M. Puchner define Naturalism as, 'Focusing on material detail ... to expose hypocrisy and idealism for what they were and, within the drama, to reject metaphor', A. Ackerman and M. Puchner, eds., *Against Theatre: Creative Destructions on the Modernist Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), p. 5.

Bertolt Brecht was also similarly concerned about his society's particular form of progress and is a central figure in later modernist drama. As Olga Taxidou points out, his work was derived from Alfred Jarry and other:

Experiments in modernist performance, including the historical avant-garde [...] that rewrites the past (in terms of form and content) for the purposes of the future.¹³

For Brecht, human progress within a grand narrative is pivotal, if requiring a form of revolution to achieve the right type of narrative. Brecht felt that his capitalist society obscured the 'real' material relations of production and worked to develop a new form of theatre, using the estranging V-effect and other re-enlightening tools of Epic theatre, which would help uncover the mystifying veil of capitalism.¹⁴

Liz Tomlin argues that what Brecht was aiming to uncover was an underlying 'reality' of political structure. Tomlin argues that dominant trends in recent theatre can be seen in similar terms as responses to the problems created by theatre's own relationship to the 'real'. Particularly, as Western theatre's historic practices are largely built around mimesis: forms of representation of the real.¹⁵ Tomlin opens her work, *Acts and Apparitions* by noting that the postmodern theorists Jean Francois Lyotard, and, particularly Jacques Derrida's works of radical poststructural deconstruction, fragmented perceptions of the 'real', by contending that all ideology is effectively constructed. Therefore all forms of meaning are manufactured structures without foundational source. Tomlin comments that after Derrida:¹⁶

¹³ Olga Taxidou, *Modernism and Performance: Jarry to Brecht* (London: Macmillan, 2007), p. xv.

¹⁴ In this sense 'material' means that cultural and social relationships are a product constructed from the substance of their political and economic environment. Dollimore & Sinfield expand this by explaining culture cannot 'transcend the material forces and relations of production. Culture is not simply a reflection of the economic and political system, but nor can it be independent of it.' J. Dollimore & A. Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. vii.

¹⁵ Liz Tomlin, *Acts and Apparitions: Discourse on the Real in Performance Practice and Theory, 1990-2010* (Manchester: MUP, 2013), pp. 1-18.

¹⁶ See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) and for an overview of Derrida's work see Peggy Kamuf, *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991)

No longer could meaning, truth or morality be assured by any reference to an authority that had itself, Derrida argued, been constructed by the very same discourse for precisely that purpose. [...] The notion of originary truth or meaning had been exposed as a strategic myth.¹⁷

As such, modernism's belief in human progress and Brecht's view of a reality to be unveiled, both seemed unsustainable grand narratives. Consequently, the theatrical paradigm began to accentuate a postmodern loss of reality and meaning. In 1988 Dick Hebdige argued that this new world without clear underpinning truths could be seen in many cultural forms, which seemed to concentrate on:

A proliferation of surfaces, a new phase in commodity fetishism, a fascination for images, codes and styles a process of cultural, political or existential fragmentation, and/or crises, the 'decentring of the subject', an incredulity towards meta narratives [...] the "implosion of meaning" [...] broad societal and economic shifts into a "media" [...] phase.¹⁸

Such a reading of contemporary culture seemed to be pre-empted by Guy Debord's 1960's contention that society was becoming overwhelmed by disconnected images of consumption and that western society functioned as a vast mediatised spectacle obscuring the underlying mechanics of capitalism.¹⁹ In Debord's reading, like Brecht's, there seemed to remain an underlying reality of capitalist exploitation. However, as Baudrillard countered, by the 1990s the spectacle of contemporary culture, particularly with the advance of the burgeoning Internet and its wider mediatized world, seemed to have no discernable underlying substance at all: there were only images, or simulacra of other simulacras, and the underlying reality was no longer an available referent. For Baudrillard, the simulacra is not 'imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real.'²⁰

In theatrical terms, Derrida and Baudrillard's questioning of a stable underlying reality seemed to place theatrical mimesis as a key point of concern, for there seemed no foundational forms of the 'real' to be uncovered or reproduced on the stage. This

¹⁷ Liz Tomlin, *Acts and Apparitions*, p.4.

¹⁸ Dick Hebdige, *Hiding In The Light: On Images and Things* (Hove: Psychology Press, 1988), p. 182.

¹⁹ As notably expressed in Guy Debord's, *The Society of the Spectacle*, (Detroit: Black & Red, 1967). For example, paragraph 6: 'The spectacle grasped in its totality is both the result and the project of the existing mode of production. It is not a supplement to the real world, an additional decoration. It is the heart of the unrealism of the real society.'

²⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 2.

recalled and gave new currency to the concerns suggested by Antonin Artaud in the early twentieth century: that Western theatre needed a different form other than the available versions of mimesis if it was to be able to fully uncover the inner functioning of the human condition.²¹ According to Ros Murray, Artaud's work demanded an 'insistence on bodily presence, immediacy and corporeal language'.²² Ideas that perhaps influenced the 'In-Yer-Face' and later theatrical developments.

Liz Tomlin suggests that one of the significant contemporary responses in British theatre to this comprehensive poststructural destabilisation in the mid-1990s, was a foregrounded interrogation of the real in dramatic terms. Tomlin notes Mark Ravenhill's *Faust: Faust is Dead* (1997), which interrogates the line between simulation and reality, and Blast Theory's *Something American* (1996), which deconstructs character and the U.S nation into splinters. Tomlin notes both plays work by 'repositioning the real as subjective'.²³ Ravenhill's *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* (2008), discussed below, similarly expresses a range of subjective responses to the Iraq War in 16-18 play fragments, while Tim Crouch's *ENGLAND* (2007), discussed below, divides the reality of the originary protagonist of his work across two actors. Many of the plays of the early twenty-first century seem formally and thematically concerned to contend with a culture that has seemingly lost sense of the 'real', the subject and of an unfragmented meaning.

Baz Kershaw notes, from a postmodern perspective, that one of the further consequences of this dominating 'scepticism of the real' concerns the integrity of performance itself.²⁴ He explains that if the contingent authority of government and the establishment is largely expressed through performative practices, then performance itself seems compromised as an authentic expressive form. Kershaw notes:

In the capitalist cultural market-place, performance has emerged as central to the production of the new world disorder.²⁵

²¹ See Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and its Double*, transl. M.C Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958)

²² Ros Murray, 'Theatre, Magic and Mimesis', *Antonin Artaud: Palgrave Studies in Modern European Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2014), p.58.

²³ *Acts and Apparitions*, p. 29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*.

²⁵ Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 1999), p .5.

Often this meant works of political, and other, theatre might have to foreground the constructed nature of their own performance to remain credible, as we perhaps see in the fluid and imprecise setting and characters of Simon Stephen's *Motortown*, (discussed below) amongst other works. Moreover, as Liz Tomlin observes:

The ongoing suspicion of dramatic representation [...] might explain the shift away from the 'state of the nation' dramatic texts of the 1970s and 1980's and the rising popularities of verbatim strategies.²⁶

Verbatim theatre's proximity to authentic voice and document potentially seemed to offer more veracity than other fictive forms. In the heavily mediatized and contentious period of the Iraq war, numerous plays followed a Verbatim or Tribunal form, particularly Richard Norton-Taylor's plays (discussed below). Yet echoing Kershaw's point, many of these plays also ensure that the government agents represented are visible employing unsuccessful performative strategies.²⁷

This concern over the veracity and utility of dramatic representation in a political context and its own reflection of political strategy, is a central feature of Hans Thies-Lehmann's writings on postdramatic theatre from the late 1990s. Lehmann argued that,

A theatrical representation of problems that are 'defined' as political will do nothing to disrupt [...] and] will inevitably mirror the daily (de)formation of the political into drama.²⁸

As such, Lehmann's ideas for postdramatic theatre looked to reject or reimagine the received dramatic form and structure of established Western theatre: to question (or subsume) the role of fictional time, location, plot and character; and instead, foreground the contingent process of construction. Glen D'cruz explains that postdramatic theatre works to:

²⁶ *Acts and Apparitions*, p. 117.

²⁷ Notably Alistair Campbell in Richard Norton-Taylor's *Justifying War* and Donald Rumsfeld in Gillian Slovo and Victoria Brittain's, *Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'*.

²⁸ Hans Thies Lehmann, 'Wie Politisch ist Postdramatisches Theater' in *Das Politische Schreiben: Essays zu Theater texten* (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2002), p. 11-21. Quoted in *Acts and Apparitions*, p. 57.

Employ new forms of “sign” usage that privilege presence over representation and process over product and unsettle the status of hermetically sealed fictional worlds situated in a particular time and place.²⁹

David Barnett argues that Martin Crimp’s *Attempts on her Life* (1997) is a British example of a work that uses postdramatic techniques including ‘17 representational scenes’ about a ‘character’ named Anne, who is in separate scenes: an artist, an urban terrorist and a new model of car. Barnett points out that:

Each scene carries no character attribution, just a dash to indicate a different speaker [...] and so the very question of what or who is being represented is left radically open.³⁰

Similarly, Sarah Kane’s *4:48 Psychosis* (1999) works through 24 different scenes with no defined stage directions, setting or speakers, to create a shattered narrative of mental illness. Such postdramatic-derived forms seem to influence a number of Mark Ravenhill’s *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* series. As one example, ‘War and Peace’, discussed below, uses only two characters who at times speak of themselves in the third person and the main character, a dead Soldier, is eternally splintered and missing large parts of his head. Likewise, in Martin Crimp’s *Advice to Iraqi Women* (2003), discussed below, speaker, location and subject seem intentionally veiled and lost within an arcane, coded language. Arguably, the Iraq War with its unstable justification and overlapping narratives seemed to underline, even accentuate, the relevance of destabilised and insecure performance in both politics and theatre.

To help question the nature of ‘performance’ and to accentuate the concern for ‘presence’ over ‘representation’, postdramatic theatre often unsettles the audience’s traditional role as passive observer in favour of involving them directly in the artistic construct. David Barnett observes that one ‘implication of the postdramatic paradigm shift is a greater integration of the audience into the meaning making process’. Whilst elements of audience involvement exist in Gregory Burke’s *Black Watch* and a number of Mark Ravenhill’s *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* series amongst others, Tim Crouch’s *The*

²⁹ Glen D’Cruz, *Teaching Postdramatic Theatre: Anxieties, Aporias and Disclosures* (New York: Springer, 2018), p. 3.

³⁰ Dr David Barnett, ‘Post-dramatic Theatre’, *Drama Online* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019) < <https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/genres/post-dramatic-theatre-iid-2516> > [accessed 15 May 2019]

Author and ENGLAND, both discussed below, are significant in foregrounding the positionality of the audience within their work and immersing them in different ways within the theatrical process.

Echoing such concerns over mimesis, Jean Baudrillard had contended that modern war was itself an artistic construct but one that encouraged passive observers. Referring to the first Gulf War of 1991, Baudrillard argued that: 'The war is [...] speculative, to the extent that we do not see the real event that it could be or that it would signify.'³¹ Baudrillard argued in 'The Gulf War did Not Happen' that the war was fundamentally conducted and presented as a performed media spectacle. As Steven Poole summarises:

Rehearsed as a war game or simulation, it was then enacted for the viewing public as a simulation, as a news event: the real violence was thoroughly overwritten by electronic narrative: by simulation.³²

In 2003, and echoing Kershaw's point about cultural transition, critics often saw the coalition invasion in Baudrillard's postmodern terms but the 'enemy' seemed associated with the modernist. Keith Dickson, writing in *The Journal of Conflict Studies* in 2004, explained that the Iraq war is 'a bewildering crosscurrent of modernism and postmodernism', where the modernist 'ultimate truths' of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime were forcefully opposed by postmodern 'chaos and disruption' via aeroplane and drone. But for the Western civilian, he suggests, the reality of the conflict is obscured far behind the layers of 'images and simulations' for 'At its heart, postmodern war [...] is spectacle.'³³

1.2 *The Author* by Tim Crouch (2009) and *This is Camp X-Ray* by Jai Redman (2003)

³¹ Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 29.

³² Steven Poole, 'Obituary: Jean Baudrillard', *The Guardian*, 8 March 2007 <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2007/mar/08/guardianobituaries.booksobituaries>> [accessed 3 May 2019]

³³ Keith D. Dickson, 'War in (Another) New Context: Postmodernism', *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 24, No.2 (Fredericton: University of New Brunswick, 2004) <<https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/203/360>> [accessed 21 June 2016]

Such contemporary ideas about representation both politically and performatively informed Tim Crouch's *The Author*, first performed at the Royal Court in 2009. This play echoes many concerns about representational meaning and considers how social responses to extreme graphic images have and continue to become corrupted. Crouch explains, the play is about 'our responsibilities as spectators [...] we have lost a thread of responsibility for what we look at.'³⁴

In a stage set where all the characters exist, as Tim Crouch explains, 'within its audience' and with the Royal Court seats arranged in two opposed ranks 'with no gap in between', linearity, performance role and subject were deliberately confused.³⁵ In this way, as Vicky Angelaki discusses about the performance she saw in Birmingham:

Theatergoers had become the stage itself. As spectators we [were given] the impression that the audience can actively influence the course of the text.³⁶

With the audience seeming to have narrative agency and their relationship with the fictionality unsettled, the actors then manipulate the relationship by introducing what Aleks Sierz notes are:

Some extremely disturbing material, from images of beheadings to a story about child abuse, Crouch demonstrates how theatre happens more in our heads than on stage.³⁷

The audience is placed under increasing pressure as passive observers. At one point, the complicated responsibility of spectating violent images is expressed, if in disassociated manner, in terms of the Iraq war. An actor called Esther, who plays a character called Esther, speaks out to a pitch-darkened theatre about how she attended the anti-war March in London:

ESTHER We ... were able to pick up ready made [banners] with a picture of a dead girl. ... We dropped them outside the underground ...

³⁴ Tim Crouch, 'Look out for The Author', *tim crouch Theatre* <www.timcrouchtheatre.co.uk/shows-2/The-Author> [accessed 12 May 2019]

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Vicky Angelaki, 'Whose Voice? Tim Crouch's *The Author* and Active Listening on the Contemporary Stage', *Sillages critiques*, 10 July 2013 <<https://journals.openedition.org/sillagescritiques/2989#quotation>> [accessed 15 May 2019]

³⁷ Aleks Sierz, 'The Author, Royal Court', *Aleks Sierz: New Writing for the British Stage*, 28 September 2009 <<http://www.sierz.co.uk/reviews/author-royal-court/>> [accessed 10 May 2019]

there were piles ... It was weird walking over the photograph ...
Her dead eyes staring at us. Would you like me to sing?³⁸

Esther's disorientated response suggests a material human tragedy of a dead girl whose meaning has become dissolved into a fragmented image, one that disjoints and corrupts the human response. Here, Crouch questions our understanding of the material war and our ability to take responsibility and establish empathy from the spectacle. Arguably, much of the theatre surrounding the Iraq invasion similarly works from within the destabilising narratives of postmodernism to interrogate the grander narratives apparent in the invasion.

This is Camp X-Ray (2003) by Jai Redman, is a similar text to *The Author* in its concerns about empathy but it is one where the overlap of postmodernism seems only to highlight the modernist concern for the economic and socially excluded. For nine days in 2003, the artist/director Jai Redman created a full-size, functional simulation of Guantanamo Bay and installed it on a piece of wasteland in the Manchester district of Hulme. Part-funded by the Arts Council, it was installed for free public access. Lucy Nevitt points out that Jai Redman had never been able to visit the original Camp X-Ray and so, 'every detail of [Redman's] replica was drawn from media images'.³⁹ *This is Camp X-Ray* was a football-pitch sized camp with watchtowers, razor-wire, mock interrogations and volunteers who took the parts of armed guards or caged prisoners in orange jumpsuits. The BBC reported that visitors were usually horrified by the stark reality of the installation and expressed empathy for those detained in Cuba without legal representation or family contact.⁴⁰ Tannoy announcements for calls to prayer and the U.S. National Anthem underlined the work's attempts at authenticity and its multi-mediated reality.

This Guantanamo camp seemed a dramatic text created in the language of the postmodern where the ultimate reality of the camp could never quite be established. As an echo of Jean Baudrillard's theory, the work was a media-derived simulacrum of a Camp X-Ray the artist had never seen first-hand.⁴¹ Moreover, there were many hints of

³⁸ Tim Crouch, *The Author*, (London: Oberon Books, 2009), p. 29.

³⁹ Lucy Nevitt, *Theatre & Violence* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 66.

⁴⁰ David Schaffer, 'Eerie Reality of X-Ray's Cousin', *BBC News Channel*, 12 October 2003
<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/manchester/3183850.stm>>[accessed 15 June 2016]

⁴¹ See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994)

Michel Foucault's poststructural ideas, as the Camp resembled one of the panopticons described by Foucault as part of a culture of power expressed in architectural design.⁴² Similarly, according to visiting BBC journalists, performing prison guards seemed unsure of the work's meaning while the artist responsible, Jai Redman, privileged each visitor's subjective interpretation while avoiding expressing any grand narrative himself. Redman explained, 'it was difficult to define exactly what he wanted to achieve'.⁴³ The artwork seemed to echo Eagleton's view of a sceptical postmodernity that eschewed 'ultimate grounds for explanation [that] sees the world [...] as a set of disunified [...] interpretations.'⁴⁴ Although there was a real Camp X-Ray of likely horrors in Cuba/America, this artwork suggested its true identity and cultural meaning was unstable and contingent.

Yet at the same time a larger, even grand, narrative seemed also implied. This piece of drama was situated in Manchester, the manufacturing source of the Industrial Revolution, whose capitalist excesses influenced Friedrich Engel's understanding of the proletariat. This particular spot of wasteland faced what was once a Victorian workhouse where those rejected by capitalism's hegemony were housed. As such, the material Camp X-Ray seemed implicated as a simulacrum of the Victorian workhouse. Jenny Hughes contends that the parallels between the two were surprising:

The simulation of bodies stripped of rights in Guantanamo Bay echoed the nineteenth century workhouse [...] situated on a wasteland historically associated with the segregation of human life according to its use value within a capitalist economy.⁴⁵

This is Camp X-Ray quietly functions to document, and by so doing criticise, the cruelties of current political acts while placing them in geographic communication with a linear history of oppression. Hughes notes *This is Camp X-Ray* 'exposes democratic order's complicity with acts of violence.'⁴⁶ The work is ultimately a material comment on those excluded from justice by the owners of the means of production but its materiality is negotiated through a text seemingly rich in the theatrical language of the postmodern.

⁴² See discussion of panopticons and the larger issue of state power structures in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991)

⁴³ David Schaffer, 'Eerie Reality of X-Ray's Cousin', *BBC News Channel*, 12 October 2003
<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/manchester/3183850.stm>>[accessed 15 June 2016]

⁴⁴ Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernity*, (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2013), p. vii.

⁴⁵ Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror: Critical Mimesis and the Age of Uncertainty* (Manchester: M.U.P., 2011), p.150.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.151.

1.3 *Advice to Iraqi Women* by Martin Crimp (2003) and *Far Away* by Caryl Churchill (2000)

Fredric Jameson has argued that the postmodern condition can be seen as the current dominant 'structure of feeling' and that this is a material response to the 'great global multinational and decentred communicational network.'⁴⁷ For Jameson, this current mode of globalised production is all consuming. He argues that it absorbs the capitalist subject within it, as both image consumer and image producer, while obscuring the Western worker from any hope of understanding where the means of production is located, who actually owns it and who may also be exploited by these factors of production.

For Jameson, this creates a '*derealisation* of the whole surrounding world of everyday reality', until it has 'succeeded in transcending the capacities of the human body to locate itself.'⁴⁸ As such, the Western worker experiences a new form of alienation caused by, and echoing, the uncentred and globalised economic market. These ideas of the desensitised and dislocated subject, seem to underpin the form and the text of Martin Crimp's *Advice to Iraqi Women* and Caryl Churchill's *Far Away*.

Crimp's play was one of the very first responses to the Iraq invasion. It was presented at the Royal Court in April 2003, as part of the *War Correspondence* series. Solemnly read on a sparse set by Sophie Okonedo and Stephen Dillane, it was performed in a week where, according to Michael Billington, the media had shown pictures of 'maimed mothers and children'.⁴⁹ The performance powerfully echoes Jameson's ideas of dislocation in the way it works with narrative fragments and an absence of empathy. The play is a short selection of paragraphs or sentences without a named speaker or

⁴⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 34 & p. 44.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 34 & p. 44.

⁴⁹ Michael Billington, 'Drama Out of a Crisis', *The Guardian*, 10 April 2003 <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2003/apr/10/theatre.artsfeatures>> [accessed 28 June 2016]

defined location and its script was split between two actors. Despite its title, the speaker seems to be talking to a middle-class British mother; not one terrified by a probable bombing raid but by the everyday and household:

Your house is a potential war zone for a child: the corners of tables, chip pans, and the stairs - particularly the stairs - are all potential sources of harm.

Your house is a minefield.

don't let it burn... Don't let your child burn.

Your child will not burn if you are liberal with a reliable cream.⁵⁰

The text has a mundane selection of products, which are innately threatening. More so, when they are undermined with the lexis of military destruction: 'war zone, minefield and burn'. Archetypal images of conflicts like Vietnam seem interwoven in the refrains about children and burns, hinting at a historic context of suffering. Vicky Angelaki sees Crimp's theatrical style as a consistent focus on:

Subtext [...] theatrical defamiliarization, or 'making strange' [...] unifying the aesthetic with the political.⁵¹

In *Advice to Iraqi Women*, this defamiliarization works through rival narratives, which compete for attention and imply that the controlling speaker is bereft in a lexical chaos of products and violence. Dislocated and confused by media images, the speaker is unable to conceive of the reality of an actual mother in Iraq.

The play presents a dislocating gap in empathy and understanding; the amassed selection of consumer goods seem as implicated as the liberal, who applies cream presumably far too late in the performance. Clara Agusti highlights how Crimp's play 'draws the audience's attention to itself'. The play is 'cognitively dissonant' and Crimp is using 'defamiliarization in a political manner' because the 'dissonance, of lyric produces a break and a transvaluation of previous categories.'⁵²

⁵⁰ Martin Crimp, 'Advice to Iraqi Women', *The Guardian*, 10 April 2003
<<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2003/apr/10/theatre.artsfeatures1> >[accessed 28 June 2016]

⁵¹ Vicky Angelaki, *The Plays of Martin Crimp: Making Theatre Strange* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 1.

⁵² Clara Escoda Agusti, *Martin Crimp's Theatre: Collapse as Resistance to Late Capitalist Society* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), p.35.

This is a powerful play about a distant and divisive conflict that seems suggestive of Jameson's vision of the postmodern as we glimpse, through the fractures, a potential connection between economic production and the Iraq war. However, because of Crimp's innate dissonance we cannot confidently reassemble the material connections and thus the play's political critique is perhaps partially disarmed. Terry Eagleton argues that to represent a political world as fragmented, as Crimp does in not making an explicit link between production and war as elements of a unified economic system, is to ignore the modern capitalist economy's need for war to support growth in production. Eagleton summarises that, 'Not looking for totality is just code for not looking at capitalism'.⁵³

Despite this, the speaker's inability to make the connection between the 'chip-pans' and the 'minefield', and thus form genuine human compassion, is perhaps the unifying theme that Crimp wants the audience to assemble alone. Agusti notes Crimp's dissonance is ultimately a theatrical 'strategy' functioning to 'divest [...] "false consciousness and alienation."' ⁵⁴

Caryl Churchill's *Far Away* uses a similar form to Crimp but is more expressly sinister than fearful. *Far Away* was produced at the Royal Court in 2000, prior to the September 11th attack on New York and it is striking to note how the tensions unleashed by the attack seemed already starkly present. Unlike Crimp's work, in Stephen Daldry's 2000 production, this play is set in an almost fairy-tale version of the English rural idyll suggested by the pastoral backcloth and sounds of birds and water.⁵⁵ At no point is any political or temporal context expressed to justify the actions within the play. Yet, in an apparently realistic opening, a named young girl called Joan finds that her authority figures, her aunt and uncle, are politicised sadists. Joan observes her aunt and uncle torturing foreign immigrants in the shed. Aunt Harper tells her: 'It's not so bad. You're part of a big movement to make things better.' Joan's response is to ask 'Can't I help?'⁵⁶

⁵³ By 'totality', Eagleton here means an overarching grand narrative. Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p.11.

⁵⁴ Clara Escoda Agusti, *Martin Crimp's Theatre*, p.35.

⁵⁵ Stephen Daldry's staging is detailed in Christine Dymowski, 'Caryl Churchill: Far Away ... but Close to Home', *European Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 55-68.

⁵⁶ Caryl Churchill, 'Far Away', *Churchill Plays: 4* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2008), p. 141

The stark absence of an appropriate emotional response suggests a dissonance that anticipates Crimp.

In the next act, Joan is older and more sympathetic as we find that she has a creative job making 'abstract hats' for parades, and her colleague Todd complains about the poor management and the low pay.⁵⁷ A sense of eccentric affability is suggested by Daldry's use of brightly coloured hats with ostrich plumes and Edwardian shapes, while Joan and Todd use broad physical gestures to suggest their emotional articulacy.⁵⁸ But in the next scene the stage is darkened as the audience witness for whom they are making these hats:

*A procession of ragged, beaten, chained prisoners, each wearing a hat on their way to execution. The finished hats are even more preposterous than in the previous scene.*⁵⁹

As such, the classic industrial issues of pay and conditions seem simply an aspect of the alienation that obscures a significantly larger international horror. Notably, there seems only an oblique connection here between the cultural artefact and the means of production. As with Crimp, the products are implicated in the violence but here they work to both cover up and garishly adorn the oppression. The political realities of this theatrical image of abuse gained extra weight after Guantanamo Bay, when in the 2004 production in Dublin (directed by Jimmy Fay and stage design by Seamus O'Fiaich) Churchill's garish hats were added to by orange jumpsuits. As Michael Billington notes of the play, 'only later with the imprisonment of suspected terrorists without trial, did it gain political resonance'.⁶⁰

Despite this, one of the key themes in Churchill's play is the indistinctness that suggests the pervasive and unfixed nature of international torture and war crimes. Orange jumpsuits, which locate the work at Guantanamo was perhaps both contemporary and narrowing. As Helen Meany argues of Fay's Dublin production:

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 146.

⁵⁸ Stephen Daldry's staging is detailed in Christine Dymowski, 'Caryl Churchill: Far Away ... but Close to Home', *European Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 55-68.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 149.

⁶⁰ Michael Billington, *State of the Nation: British Theatre Since 1945* (London: Faber, 2007), p. 375.

Fay's images of destruction and catastrophe become overwhelming and reductive. The strength of Churchill's language is its ambiguity.⁶¹

Notably in contrast to Crimp's play, Joan and Todd's reaction to the execution directly confronts yet remains oblivious to the suffering. Joan bemoans the fact that the hats get destroyed: 'It seems so sad to burn them with the bodies.'⁶²

Repeated plot structures of extreme oppression without an appropriate emotional response escalate, until the play enters into a surreal world; one of myth and allegory where animals and nature are culpable and riven into warring tribes. As Joan's Aunt, Harper, notes:

Harper: Mallards are not a good waterbird. They commit rape, and they are on the side of the elephants and the Koreans.⁶³

In this profoundly bleak version of the world, propaganda has spiralled beyond rational logic and the earth schisms into fragments of conflict that extends Jameson's derealization into absurdity. Recalling Crimp's play, Julia Boll sees the characters as politically dislocated and:

Caught helplessly within a despotic system, the ideology, power centre and international relations of which remain ambiguous and unstructured.⁶⁴

The similarities to Crimp's *Advice to Iraqi Women* are profuse. Both concern a world made strange by political actions; where Crimp uses products and threatening nouns, Churchill employs nature and animals as enemies underlining her world's comprehensive alienation. Similarly, the characters' inability to respond rationally and emotionally connects the two plays as explorations of profound dislocation. As Fatima Vieira notes of *Far Away*, the horrors of this play are 'expressed through a strong sense of social and political disconnection'.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, unlike Crimp, in *Far Away* the authority figures in the beguiling guise of Aunt Harper are identified and are clearly

⁶¹ Helen Meany, 'Far Away', *The Guardian*, 6 July 2004 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2004/jul/06/theatre1> > [accessed 13 May 2019]

⁶² 'Far Away', p. 150.

⁶³ 'Far Away', p. 155.

⁶⁴ Julia Boll, 'The Unlisted Character: Representing War on Stage', *The New Order of War*, ed. Bob Brechner (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), p. 169.

⁶⁵ Sian Adiseshiah, 'The Dramatisation of Futureless Worlds', *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, On Screen, On Stage*, ed. Fatima Vieira (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), p. 301.

responsible for deception and violence. In *Far Away*, Western industrial production is sinisterly connected to the exploitation but here the products are not central to the violence, only a pointless embellishment. Churchill's perspective suggests a world collapsed into shards, where the only unifying narrative lies in the pervasiveness of conflict and alienation. An alienation that extends to leave the audience uncentred, as Christine Dymowski observes:

The narrative's denial of contextual detail [...] and [...] our ignorance of the nature of the conflict. Political? [...] Economic? [...] leaves the audience in a no-man's land of belief.⁶⁶

1.4 *Stuff Happens* by David Hare (2004) and *Justifying War* by Richard Norton-Taylor (2003)



Figure 1. David Michaels as Alastair Campbell in *Justifying War* at the Tricycle in 2003. Director: Nicholas Kent. Set Designer: Claire Spooner.⁶⁷

Stuff Happens (2004) and *Justifying War* (2003) were perhaps the two most high-profile plays that attempted to interrogate the ruling-classes' activities leading up to the Iraq war. Both used different forms of documentary theatre: *Stuff Happens* used a Verbatim form, which mixed documented interviews and texts alongside fiction. *Justifying War* is a Tribunal play, which used the government document of the inquiry as the prime source.

⁶⁶ Christine Dymowski, 'Caryl Churchill: *Far Away ... but Close to Home*', *European Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (London: Routledge, 2003), p.58.

⁶⁷ Used within copyright exception. Copyright owned by Tristram Kenton: see <
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/oct/22/richard-norton-taylor-verbatim-tribunal-plays-stephen-lawrence>> [accessed 12 March 2019]

However, both aimed to re-present the source with some verisimilitude and both were edited to an appropriate length within a logical narrative arc. A notable early example of the Tribunal form was Richard Norton-Taylor's play *Half The Picture* (1994) that replayed the Scott Enquiry concerning Matrix Churchill's sale of machines for weapons' manufacture to Iraq. However like Verbatim theatre, they tend to work from a largely materialist perspective where they see the political events of the day as rational responses to a set of particular historical and political conditions.

Tribunal and Verbatim's popularity in this period perhaps suggests a broadening fissure in the political process. Chris Megson sees such plays as cultural acts working to 'expose the democratic deficit in the wider political culture.'⁶⁸ Unlike the more experimental dramatic forms of Churchill and Crimp, Verbatim and Tribunal are concerned to present the 'real' voice or document, often in a political sphere, and so allow the audience to judge for itself the veracity of the characters and situations. As Baudrillard and Derrida (discussed above) observe, such concern to establish the underlying 'real', especially in a mimetic form, is laced with inbuilt problems about the legitimacy of that underlying truth itself. Related to this, Verbatim and Tribunal's apparent realism can, arguably, work to obscure the elements of artifice in its production and tacitly endorse those institutions under scrutiny.

In an *Author's Note to Stuff Happens*, first performed at the National Theatre in 2004, David Hare comments that it is a 'history play' and where possible he quotes 'people verbatim' but elsewhere has 'used my imagination'.⁶⁹ To underline the artifice, Nicholas Hytner's production used an almost bare set with the entire cast placed on chairs around the stage. A narrator entitled 'An Actor' introduced each character and stated time and location of speech. Suman Gupta sees these as 'alienation effects' creating a 'reflexive distance for the audience' and ensuring that focus is placed on the situation as much as the character.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Chris Megson, 'The State We're in: Tribunal Theatre and British Politics in the 1990s', *Theatre of Thought: Theatre, Performance and Philosophy*, eds. D. Watt & D. Meyer-Dinkgrafe (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), p. 113.

⁶⁹ David Hare, *Stuff Happens* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), p.1.

⁷⁰ Suman Gupta, *Imagining Iraq* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.110.

Unlike Hare's family drama about the invasion, *Vertical Hour*, this play is history on an epic scale. It explores the processes followed by the leaders of America, Britain and the United Nations prior to the Iraq invasion, including comments from dissenting and affected parties such as journalists and Iraqi exiles. Dan Rebellato sees it as:

While not quite Shakespearean [...] a timely, speculative account of one of the decade's defining stories.⁷¹

One of the strengths of the play is how both sides of the argument receive an uncompromised voice. At one point in Hytner's sparse production, an *Angry Journalist* stands up and moves into the light to state in impassioned terms 'How obscene it is' not to be discussing:

The splendid thing done [...] freedom given to people who were not free [...] this thing is ignored, preferring as we do to fight amongst ourselves.⁷²

Saddam Hussein gassed and tortured his own people and had invaded every neighbour nation apart from Jordan. These ongoing abuses and potential threats appear, in the play, to be Tony Blair's motivation for invasion. Blair states: 'It's a moral duty to intervene against regimes which are committing atrocities.'⁷³ Such crusading is satirised by U.S. advisor Dick Cheney as Blair being like a 'preacher sitting on top of a tank.'⁷⁴ In this context, the legal justification for war is seen as a technicality for Blair that allows the completion of a higher moral purpose.

Blair is portrayed as a moral guardian whose military support for the Iraq invasion is part of a bartering strategy so that America will then provide backing for international peace in Palestine and Africa. Yet the play details how George W. Bush was not open to such deals; motivated by the Iago-like advisors Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, Bush was determined to invade Iraq and manipulated Colin Powell, the UN and Tony Blair with aplomb to ensure they supported his views. The U.K. Ambassador to the U.S., David Manning, expresses the play's conclusions to Tony Blair:

Power doesn't make deals Prime Minister. Power does what it wants.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Dan Rebellato, *Modern British Playwriting 2000-2009: Voices, Documents, New Interpretations* (London: Methuen, 2013), p.43.

⁷² *Stuff Happens*, p.15.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.41.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.103.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.111.

In this play, the actual details of bombing campaigns, the personal tragedies and grim realities of the invasion are mentioned occasionally and with some passion at the close but seem to bear little weight on the narrative or any character's decision-making. Similarly obscured are Bush's reasons for invading Iraq, which seem to exist long before the play begins. Many are suggested. Bush and his colleagues mention a clear link between Iraq and Al-Qaeda, which is never pursued. A soliloquizing Palestinian Academic suggests the invasion might be to protect Israel. Then he goes on to suggest the invasion was to avenge George Bush Senior's 1990 battle for Kuwait, and then proposes it was because 'Cheney worked for Halliburton' and 'an Arab democracy would serve as a model'.⁷⁶ Weapons of Mass Destruction seem to be a key issue only for public consumption and concrete reasons for the invasion are never presented. This is perhaps the central point of democratic failure but Hare never clearly addresses it within the narrative only suggesting a range of undeveloped possibilities. These reasons for the invasion are given equal prominence, neither justified nor questioned. In so doing, the play echoes the U.S. And U.K. governments' list of tenuous truths used to justify the invasion.

However, Naomi Klein argues that the reasons for invading Iraq are significantly more materially motivated and that it was primarily about creating a 'model Arab democracy' as an example of 'Shock Doctrine:' bringing capitalism, 'via the most baldly coercive means possible: under military occupation after an invasion.'⁷⁷ Klein lists a range of UK companies that, unreferenced by Hare, moved in soon after the occupation, such as HSBC, De La Rue, BP and KPMG. The latter being 'paid \$240 million dollars to build a market-driven system in Iraq.'⁷⁸ Such activities perhaps compromise Hare's theatrical presentation of Tony Blair as a crusader for peace. Klein also mentions the profitable activities of the American firms Halliburton and Bechtel, whose employees she observes far outnumber the troops.⁷⁹ Noam Chomsky sees these firms as key in interpreting the invasion as both Empire building and economic exploitation. He notes that:

⁷⁶ *Stuff Happens*, p.57.

⁷⁷ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), p.9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.346-348.

⁷⁹ Appendix IV looks at the British mercenaries/security guards used in Iraq as presented in Adam Brace's *Stovepipe*.

The US taxpayer' pays for the invasion and Halliburton and Bechtel rebuild Iraq. Thus it's a transfer of wealth [...] to narrow sectors of the population.⁸⁰

Such ideas of Empire building are, of course, strongly denied by the White House, often in the credible terms Rumsfeld uses in the play: 'Who ever heard of an Empire [...] discussing exit strategies?'⁸¹ Yet towards the end of the play Hare notes that Cheney, as legally required, had never sold his own shares in Halliburton who now have 'over ten billion dollars worth of no-bid contracts in Iraq.'⁸² As such, Hare seems keen to acknowledge the problems of American private interest but avoids characterising the whole invasion in these terms and implicates individual character weakness rather than systemic economic exploitation. Such is one of the key criticisms of Hare's play that, as Gupta notes, sees recent history in Romantic terms as, 'by and about the clash of personalities represented by powerful men' who largely 'act in good faith'.⁸³ Of course, the historical record represented by the Chilcot Inquiry suggests that the reality is considerably more questionable. Despite this, perhaps what Hare achieves through his pared-down stage-design and edited sound-bite viewpoints is to underline Baz Kershaw's point about politics as essentially a performed spectacle. Kershaw notes that 'performance' is 'central to the production of the new world disorder'. In Hare's play, the briefing room, the despatch box and the United Nations assembly are innately theatrical. As Gupta argues, these are all 'spaces of social reality [...] used to manage belief and disbelief in the public.'⁸⁴ A space massaged by politician and dramatist alike.

By contrast, *The Guardian* journalist Richard Norton-Taylor, was keen to avoid the problems of fiction in his creation of the play *Justifying War*, first performed at the Tricycle theatre in Kilburn on 30 October 2003. Norton-Taylor and his Director Nicholas Kent aimed to bring an exacting sense of non-fiction to their Tribunal play. Unlike Hare's interjection of fictional dialogue, *Justifying War* is an apparent facsimile of the first part of the Hutton Inquiry that used the precise form of the written testimony, for example:

⁸⁰ Noam Chomsky, 'Telling the Truth About Imperialism', *International Socialist Review*, November-December 2003 (Chicago: Center for Economic Research, 2003)
<<https://chomsky.info/200311/>> [accessed 29 June 2016]

⁸¹ *Stuff Happens*, p.101. A summary of White House responses to Iraq is shown in Glenn Greenwald's article, 'David Frum, the Iraq War and Oil', *The Guardian*, 18 March 2013
<<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/mar/18/david-frum-iraq-war-oil>> [accessed 28 June 2016]

⁸² Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, p. 117.

⁸³ *Stuff Happens*, p.115.

⁸⁴ Suman Gupta, *Imagining Iraq*, p. 112.

James Dingemans QC: [Can I Just] ... take you to an email at CAB/3/21 specific about Dr Kelly? This is 10th September [at] 11:41.

Alistair Campbell: Hmmm, hmmm.⁸⁵

Although edited to an appropriate length, the play replicated the trial with such accuracy that the play includes copious reference to document numbers and a range of performed 'hmmms' from the participants. These together, work like a Greek chorus, emphasising a judicial and authorial attention to detail. Consequently, the set design was as close to the original courtroom as possible. Kent noted that his plays were:

Portraying the establishment searching for truth, and so it seemed important to me that you didn't play around with the environment.⁸⁶

The original production was performed just one month after the last evidence had been heard. The writing was therefore extremely close to the temporality and the emotions inspired by the inquiry. However, the play was performed before the final report was published in January 2004. The play reproduces only the Hutton Inquiry of August/September 2003, whose brief was to 'Conduct an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr Kelly'.⁸⁷

Dr Kelly was found dead on an Oxfordshire hilltop with a slashed wrist and a stomach apparently containing 29 painkillers on 17 July 2003.⁸⁸ Many, including Members of Parliament and the medical profession, thought the timing (Dr Kelly had just booked a flight to Iraq); the absence of blood near Dr Kelly's body and the unusually terminal nature of such a wrist wound, were all markedly suspicious. However, the Hutton Inquiry's eventual verdict of suicide has never been overturned.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Justifying War', *The Tricycle: Collected Tribunal Plays 1994-2012* (London: Oberon Books, 2014), p.453.

⁸⁶ Nicholas Kent, 'VERBATIM THEATRE (VERBATIM)', *The Tricycle: Collected Tribunal Plays 1994-2012* (London: Oberon Books, 2014), p.22.

⁸⁷ Terms stated in BBC News, 'Dr David Kelly: Controversial death Examined', *BBC* < <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-13716127> > [accessed 10 June 2018]

⁸⁸ As detailed in Andrew Gilligan, 'The Betrayal of Dr David Kelly, 10 Years on', *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 July 2013 < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10192271/The-betrayal-of-Dr-David-Kelly-10-years-on.html> > [accessed 18 September 2016]

⁸⁹ Norman Baker (*The Strange Death of David Kelly*, pp. 85 to 101) notes that the Hutton Inquiry took place at the same time as the Oxfordshire coroner's enquiry. The coroner's enquiry finished first and ruled David Kelly's death as suicide. A coroner's enquiry seems unnecessary given the terms of the Hutton Enquiry and the coroner's verdict must surely have had the potential to cause some influence on Hutton's findings. For the ongoing debate on Dr David Kelly's death see Norman Baker M.P., *The Strange Death of David Kelly* (London: Methuen, 2007), pp. 1-36; and Robert Lewis, *Dark Actors* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2014)

In the play, Dr David Kelly becomes a sort of tragic Pericles in a very public maelstrom. The work details the points where Dr Kelly was seemingly implicated, placed under extreme pressure and then found dead. Dr Kelly was the British Weapons Inspector who specialized in biological and chemical weapons and had first-hand knowledge of Iraq's actual threat. When the government published a document claiming that 'Saddam's military planning allows for some weapons of mass destruction to be ready within 45 minutes,' Dr Kelly was apparently the source who publicly undermined this claim. Dr Kelly allegedly provided the BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan with information for his inflammatory BBC report that the 45-minute claim had been 'cobbled together at the last minute with some unconfirmed material.'⁹⁰ Raising the stakes, Gilligan, in a comment that Dr Kelly denied providing, also suggested that the 'Government knew that the claim was questionable even before they wrote it in the dossier'.⁹¹

As presented in the play, this set the government, mostly via the Press Secretary Alistair Campbell, at loggerheads with the BBC, prompting vitriolic claim, public counter-claim and a scramble to identify the expert source. Via contradicting testimony, the play points out the lack of clarity surrounding the details or manner of Dr Kelly's actual leaked information. Dr Kelly may well have been an unwitting source. Another BBC journalist Susan Watts, who met Dr Kelly believed these 'leaks' could be characterised as 'gossipy aside[s]'.⁹² Yet, under massive political pressure and given promises of anonymity, Dr Kelly appears to have admitted to being the BBC's source to his Ministry of Defence (MoD) bosses. The MoD then effectively revealed Dr Kelly by providing heavy-handed clues and proceeding to confirm his name to whichever journalist rang to offer the right prospective identity. As the government's justification for war seemed increasingly compromised, Dr Kelly was forced to appear in front of a televised Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) to admit to being the source of Gilligan's claim. He was also instructed to protect the government's position by denying Gilligan's expression of the facts, and to discuss nothing else. Andrew Mackinlay M.P., an irascible questioner of Dr Kelly at the real FAC, noted the 'significance' that during the meeting 'two people accompanied and sat immediately behind' Dr Kelly.⁹³ This managed scapegoating seemed designed to

⁹⁰ *Justifying War*, p.432.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.432.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.439.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.450.

break Dr Kelly. In a memo the day before the televised FAC, Michael Howard the Deputy Chief of Intelligence at the MoD, was told:

To brief David Kelly [...] for his appearances tomorrow before the FAC [...] strongly recommend that Kelly is not drawn on his assessment of the dossier and stick to what he told Gilligan. Kelly is apparently feeling the pressure.⁹⁴

In an article for *The Daily Telegraph*, Andrew Gilligan writes of Dr Kelly:

The FAC didn't want to question him [...] but Downing Street forced it [...] he was intensively coached in the need to f--- me.⁹⁵

Soon after this televised confrontation, Dr Kelly's body is found dead and the play closes with the distressed Mrs Kelly struggling to appear through a grainy video-link and, played to an emotive peak by Sally Giles, in a crumbling voice reminding the audience that Dr Kelly was:

A modest, shy, retiring guy ... he was very factual and that is what he felt his job was.⁹⁶

Although its aim was to explore the death of David Kelly, the Hutton Inquiry became a touchstone for those who felt the Iraq invasion was illegal because the inquiry's focus was around the apparent threat from Weapons of Mass Destruction posed by Iraq. In 2016, the Chilcot report seemed to prove that Dr David Kelly was right and that the BBC's challenge was justified and democratically vital, if now forgotten:

"Mr Blair presented Iraq's past, current and future capabilities as evidence of the severity of the potential threat from Iraq's WMD [...]. The judgments about Iraq's capabilities [...], were presented with a certainty that was not justified [...] It is now clear that policy on Iraq was made on the basis of flawed intelligence and assessments."⁹⁷

In contrast to *Stuff Happens'* broad and international approach, *Justifying War* works as a concentrated comment on a turbulent time in British politics that weaves the personal and political together to implicate the failings of New Labour's political processes, and

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.451.

⁹⁵ Andrew Gilligan, 'The Betrayal of Dr Kelly, 10 years on', *The Telegraph*, 21 July 2013, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10192271/The-betrayal-of-Dr-David-Kelly-10-years-on.html>>[accessed 18 September 2016]

⁹⁶ *Justifying War*, p.509.

⁹⁷ As reported by Kim Sengupta, 'Chilcot Report: intelligence on WMDs exaggerated to justify going to war, inquiry finds', *The Independent*, 6 July 2016 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/chilcot-report-intelligence-was-exaggerated-and-omitted-to-justify-iraq-war-inquiry-finds-a7122481.html>> [accessed 13 September 2016]

its key characters, using their own words. In a play that begins with a minute's silence, is replete in official apologies and ends with a devastated widow, Alistair's Campbell's 'I just find it very, very, sad', seems coldly inadequate.⁹⁸

This Tribunal play was much lauded by critics for its work to highlight the government's questionable behaviour. Michael Billington noted that,

What the Tricycle tribunal plays showed was that political theatre could relay facts, break news, stir consciences.⁹⁹

Gillian Slovo argued that such Verbatim plays filled a contemporary space where investigative journalism used to be. She contended that they were a vital counter to the period's decline in traditional political reporting, and a response to:

What's happened to television, that there are no documentaries anymore [...] I also think that the nature of newspapers has changed so that people can't get the whole story.¹⁰⁰

As such, *Justifying War* seemed to offer a new approach to the publically accessible documentary or news article.

Despite this, documentary theatre in the form of Tribunal plays that use only actual testimony, perhaps owe much of their approach to a distant modernist age; one where the Tribunal itself appears to work as a legitimate political check and balance that offers the assurance of maintaining a narrative of human progress. Meanwhile, the play's content is presented in sustained mimesis and offered as unmediated access to 'reality' because it is derived from the seemingly 'objective' source of a parliamentary document.

Whereas *Stuff Happens* is more circumspect and underlines its fictionality with a sparse set and non-linear character/narrator interventions, *Justifying War* is liable to postmodern criticisms, as expressed by Derrida and others, concerning the subjectivity of its reality. Because as Tomlin summarises above, Derrida argues that in the poststructuralist world, 'meaning, truth or morality' cannot 'be assured by any reference

⁹⁸ *Justifying War*, p.462.

⁹⁹ Michael Billington, *State of The Nation*, p. 387.

¹⁰⁰ Gillian Slovo, 'VERBATIM THEATRE (VERBATIM)', *The Tricycle: Collected Tribunal Plays 1994-2012* (London: Oberon Books, 2014), p.39.

to an authority that had itself [...] been constructed.’¹⁰¹ In this contention, *Justifying War* is then effectively a mimetic presentation of a manufactured performance.

Related to this, as Stephen Bottoms has pointed out, such Tribunal plays are often tightly edited with a ‘dual and thus ambiguous status as both “document” and “play”’. This constructed nature, Bottoms argues, is obscured in performance by an absence of ‘self-referentiality’, because such plays do not consider their own constructed nature and internal bias within the theatrical narrative.¹⁰²

Although no text was changed, Norton-Taylor’s play was tightly trimmed to fit the time limits of a performance and much of the lengthy witness statements were edited out. Moreover, Mrs Kelly’s testimony was chronologically altered so that it could become the finale of the play and constitute narrative closure. These changes may seem of tangential relevance, yet in the production Janice Kelly’s highly-charged testimony of her husband’s last days follows directly on from a statement by the chemical weapons expert Dr Brian Jones, who lambasts the New Labour penchant for ‘spin merchants’.¹⁰³ The juxtaposition of a scientific witness claiming the Labour government were routinely manipulating facts, followed by a widow’s profound grief at her husband’s apparently dubious death, seems loaded with implications of political conspiracy. In reality, Mrs Kelly’s evidence took place two days before Dr Jones gave his evidence, so her testimony would not have had the same level of proximal significance. Although Norton-Taylor ensures the actual dates are expressed within the production, such alterations suggest the play is more than simply Billington’s ‘relay’ of facts.

As noted above, there are numerous critics concerned by Tribunal and documentary plays’ claims to authenticity as verbatim presentations of the ‘real’. The playwright Dennis Kelly directly addressed this issue of authenticity but in a fictive theatrical form, in his 2007 play about infanticide, *Taking Care of Baby*.¹⁰⁴ Kelly’s play echoes Verbatim in form by repeatedly expressing in his work that, ‘The following has been taken word

¹⁰¹ Liz Tomlin, *Acts and Apparitions*, p.4.

¹⁰² Stephen J. Bottoms, ‘Putting the Document into Documentary An Unwelcome Corrective’, *The Drama Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (T 191) (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), p. 57. < http://www.academia.edu/8429204/Putting_the_Document_into_Documentary_An_Unwelcom_e_Corrective > [accessed 6 April 2017]

¹⁰³ *Justifying War*, p. 496.

¹⁰⁴ Dennis Kelly, ‘Taking Care of Baby’, *Plays Two* (London: Oberon Books, 2013)

for word from interviews...' ¹⁰⁵ As such, *Taking Care of Baby* purports to be a Verbatim play and Kelly further suggests this by dramatizing scientific/medical voices and seemingly objective and factual references throughout his work. However, the whole play is entirely fabricated with no underlying source and thus all the dramatised claims to verbatim truth are manufactured. Dan Rebellato believes:

Kelly drew attention to the much-debated issue of how much editorializing went on in the creation of Verbatim theatre [and how] it could be seen to have provided a convenient way for dramatists to author their views [...] under the guise of reportage.¹⁰⁶

Nonetheless, such problems are perhaps innate to Tribunal and Verbatim theatre. If the textual content is to be meticulously factual then the form must be constructed to produce a narrative arc. David Lane observes, 'For 'living journalism' to succeed as theatre it has to have the shape and rhythm of art.'¹⁰⁷ However objective the writer and director's aim, it can only present another 'version of the truth: the one they want us to hear'.¹⁰⁸

Allied to such issues of authenticity is the way in which Norton-Taylor's play might be argued tacitly to endorse the authority and values of the institution it is portraying. As noted above, Nicholas Kent felt the Hutton Inquiry was evidence of 'The establishment searching for truth', yet the conclusion of the Hutton report was that the BBC were culpable in their activities around David Kelly's death. The report stated that the BBC's 'Editorial system failed' but as there was 'no underhand government strategy to name Dr Kelly', the government had not.¹⁰⁹ The following day, *The Independent* ran a largely white front page with the small-font text 'Whitewash? The Hutton report'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Dennis Kelly, 'Taking Care of Baby', *Plays Two* (London: Oberon Books, 2013), p.5.

¹⁰⁶ Dan Rebellato, *Modern British Playwriting 2000-2009: Voices, Documents, New Interpretations* (London: Methuen, 2013), p.46.

¹⁰⁷ David Lane, *Contemporary British Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 66.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ BBC News Channel, 'Key Points The Hutton Report', *BBC*, 28 January 2004 < http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3437315.stm > [accessed 13 September 2016]

¹¹⁰ ITV News, 'Ten Front Pages From The Independent Over the Last 30 years', *ITV*, 12 February 2016 < <http://www.itv.com/news/2016-02-12/ten-front-pages-from-the-independent-over-the-last-30-years/> > [accessed 14 September 2016]



WHITEWASH?
THE HUTTON
REPORT
A SPECIAL ISSUE

Figure 2. The *Independent* newspaper front page 28/1/2004 after the Hutton Enquiry report.¹¹¹

Even though some media commentators wanted to interpret the Hutton Report as being about Iraq rather than David Kelly, there was a sense that the ruling classes had closed ranks to protect their interests rather than those of the truth. It could be argued this was innate to the Inquiry. The Hutton, like the Butler and Chilcot inquiries that followed had a judge, witnesses and tiered seating, it looked and sounded very much like a trial in a court of justice, but it was not.

Norton-Taylor's play highlights this in its opening scene as Lord Hutton points out that:

This is an inquiry [...] not a trial conducted between interested parties who have conflicting cases to advance.¹¹²

Although there was clear conflict between the BBC, the government, opposition MPs and the family of Dr Kelly, a trial was never seen as warranted and perhaps this inquiry represents, as mentioned above, only a Baudrillardian simulacrum of justice. This is Jenny Hughes' argument. She contends that *Justifying War* works to sustain the credibility of the Hutton Inquiry and this can be best seen by its presentation of the dramatic voice. Hughes believes that Mrs Kelly's voice is presented as 'diminished' and 'faltering' and that in the context of the confident legal and scientific voices, the play is

¹¹¹ Used within copyright exception. Copyright owned by *The Independent* news: see <
<https://www.independent.co.uk/>> [accessed 19 March 2019]

¹¹² *Justifying War*, p. 423.

guilty of 'generating a political fiction of inclusivity and concern'.¹¹³ Because the legal voices of Lord Hutton and the lawyer James Dingemans QC are presented as 'forensic' and 'reassuringly secure', this for Hughes means:

The terms of reference of the original inquiry are also left secure [...] these terms excluded attention to the government's case for war. This results in the urgent *political* [sic] questions relating to the responsibility for war being left unaddressed by the play as they were by the original enquiry.¹¹⁴

Hughes' wholehearted critique suggests the play and the inquiry work to obscure the material failings behind the decision to invade. This seems compelling but its underlying concern that such plays tacitly support those political structures being portrayed is perhaps as much a criticism of the form of Tribunal plays as about *Justifying War* itself. The same argument could perhaps be levelled at the international institutions portrayed in *Stuff Happens*. Hughes' point also arguably underplays the fact that *Justifying War* as a Verbatim play is meant to be an implicitly discursive form. As is the case with *Stuff Happens*, contrasting voices and truths are placed in opposition, leaving the audience largely free to make up its own mind about the content and the institutions. Andy Lavendar notes:

Verbatim theatre is [...] a performance mode that encourages you to bear witness (and thereby take your own view of) context and perspective.¹¹⁵

Nonetheless, critiquing the play after the many government issues highlighted in the Chilcot Report's findings, it is hard not to see, as Hughes notes, the Hutton Inquiry and to some extent *Justifying War* as working to encourage 'a *sensation* [sic] of justice being done rather than a sense of justice being critically interrogated.'¹¹⁶

1.5 *Black Watch* by Gregory Burke (2006)

Despite the apparent limitations of Verbatim theatre, when used as a narrative base on which to build a multi-form superstructure, it could be extremely effective. *Black Watch* uses verbatim testimony but is at pains to question its own claims to 'reality' and to the

¹¹³ Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror*, p.98.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.104.

¹¹⁵ Andy Lavender, *Performance in the Twenty-First Century: Theatres of Engagement* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.38.

¹¹⁶ Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror*, p. 98.

truth of the characters represented. From the start the play foregrounds its subjectivity and the constructed nature of this 'hermetically sealed fictional world', which Glen D'Cruz suggests is symptomatic of the postmodern, even postdramatic, theatrical form.¹¹⁷

Gregory Burke and John Tiffany's *Black Watch* was one of the most celebrated theatrical works of the era. The play was created by Burke as writer and Tiffany as director and was first performed at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2006. It was much acclaimed and even in 2016, Glasgow's *The Herald* ranked it alongside *Richard III* and *Mother Courage* as one of the great 'political plays of all time'.¹¹⁸ Likewise, the academic Sheila McCormick saw the play as 'an example of verbatim theatre that succeeds both politically and aesthetically.'¹¹⁹ *Black Watch* presents a mimetic version of the writer, Gregory Burke, interviewing ex-soldiers in a public house and uses this as a controlling narrative from which to perform their experience and to express the complex and problematized perspective of working-class British soldiers serving in Iraq.

Black Watch soldiers were some of the first British troops deployed in Iraq and placed in a demanding, perhaps unprecedented, environment.¹²⁰ At a time of sharp reductions in the defence budget, soldiers were asked to risk their lives for a war with wavering support at home and to isolate hostile forces in an alien culture. To add to the difficulty, British troops worked at the behest of an American commanding force that had superior numbers and overriding tactical authority.¹²¹ According to Alex Salmond, whose face is projected in Big Brother fashion at the play's opening, the Black Watch are 'eight hundred Scottish soldiers [...] replacing four thousand American marines'.¹²² A similarly televised Geoff Hoon counters the criticism but it is left to the regimental Sergeant to

¹¹⁷ Glen D'Cruz, *Teaching Postdramatic Theatre: Anxieties, Aporias and Disclosures* (New York: Springer, 2018), p. 3.

¹¹⁸ Russell Leadbetter, 'The 12 Greatest Political Plays of All Time', *The Herald*, 21 August 2016 <http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14695519.The_12_greatest_political_plays_of_all_time> [accessed 8 November 2016]

¹¹⁹ Sheila McCormick, "And you Dinnay Wann Tay Join The Army?" Friendship, Conflict and Kinship in Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*", *Friends and Foes Volume 1: Friendship and Conflict in Philosophy and the Arts*, eds. G. Watson, B.G. Renzi, E. Viggiani (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), p. 74.

¹²⁰ BBC News Channel, 'UK troops redeployed in Iraq: Your reaction', *BBC*, 23 October 2004 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/3749006.stm> [accessed 15 November 2016]

¹²¹ For a history of the Black Watch regiment and its Iraq campaign, see Trevor Royle, *The Black Watch: A Concise History* (London: Random House, 2011)

¹²² Gregory Burke, *Black Watch* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p.9.

point out the soldiers' disregard for both politicians.¹²³ The Sergeant explains to the main protagonist, Lance Corporal Cammy, that Iraq is not exceptional but part of a consistent linear history of a regiment formed to quell the Jacobite rebels in 1715:

Cammy: So what are we doing here?
Sergeant: You're here [...] because our allies are getting ten types ay shite knocked out ay them [...] We've had Three Hundred Years ay Being in the Shite. If you dinnay like shite then you shouldnay have bothered fucking joining.¹²⁴

A linear history is deliberately used to frame the audience's understanding of the regiment and the characters of *Black Watch*. The play follows the real narrative of a group of young soldiers: from arriving as insurgents mortar their base, to exploring the daily camp routine and going out on patrol. The story builds to the conclusion where three of the regiment's soldiers are killed in a suicide bombing near Fallujah. Events that all occurred in 2004.¹²⁵ In some ways, this is a Culturally Materialist expression of the soldiers' role. Historical context is foregrounded and politicised so that the soldiers' stories often conform to a version of history, expressed by Terry Eagleton as one of 'scarcity, hard labour, violence and exploitation.'¹²⁶ Burke's history is class-focused and continually adjusted through dialogue, form and scene-change to historicize and support the working-class soldiers.

The distinct social and economic background of the soldiers is pervasive and at times echoes the unfettered masculinity and vocal dexterity of an Irvine Welsh novel. To pass the long periods of time between active duty, the soldiers play a game of 'Toby tig', a version of 'It' using only their phalluses. The sense of gritty maleness is echoed in the engagingly profane Fife dialect the soldiers use. A dialect that audibly clashes with the more polished tones of the embedded journalists who follow the soldiers and with the play's dramatised Writer. This clash is often on the verge of seeming class hostility, as here between the ex-soldiers and the liberal artist in the pub:

¹²³ Alex Salmond was a voluble Scottish M.P. who became the First Minister of Scotland in 2007. Geoff Hoon was New Labour's Secretary of State for Defence from 1999-2005.

¹²⁴ *Black Watch*, p. 17.

¹²⁵ Sergeant Stewart Gray, Private Paul Lowe and Private Scott McArdle were killed on 4/11/2004. Official notification: MOD Notification, '3 British Soldiers killed in Iraq', *Ministry of Defence*, 6/12/2004. <<https://www.gov.uk/government/fatalities/sergeant-stuart-gray>> [accessed 12 November 2016]

¹²⁶ Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right*, (New Haven: Yale, 2011) p. 111-112.

Cammy: What day you want to know?
Writer: What it was like in Iraq.
Stewarty: Go tay fucking Baghdad if you want tay ken what it's like.¹²⁷

Burke himself conducted many of the actual interviews and in a barbed comment that suggests he wanted to accentuate the class friction, Burke explained that 'he wanted the writer's character to be "like David Hare" ... soldiers aren't Hampstead liberals.'¹²⁸ The ex-soldiers are suspicious of the Writer and the 'fucking theatre'. For Maggie Inchley such scenes function as a:

Knowingly provocative class statement of the soldiers' resistance to the values they assumed to inhabit theatre's space.¹²⁹

In older plays on a similar theme, such as Joan Littlewood's *Oh! What a Lovely War* or Bertolt Brecht's *Trumpets and Drums*, generals and politicians are visibly culpable for sacrificing the working-class men. Here the class oppressors are represented by the various branches of the media working to sanitize and justify the conflict who also seem to have a level of knowledge denied to the soldiers. On entering their new and squalid base, Private Fraz asks if his room has Sky News so he 'Can find out why the fuck we're here.'¹³⁰ Similarly, the media works to censor Fraz. At one point, his Sergeant orders him to remove his posters of fast cars and pornography so as not to upset the incoming journalists and their audience. However, Fraz's Officer counters this, in an accent rich with Received Pronunciation, and suggests keeping them up as he observes:

Officer: It's important that we have a reminder of what we're here fighting for. Porn and petrol.¹³¹

Despite the efforts at censoring the troops, the play's tone and dialogue repeatedly mocks and undermines the government's reasoning for the conflict. Part of this is caused by the soldiers' awareness that this conflict is one of the last campaigns for the regiment, which was amalgamated and disappeared in March 2006. However, the play's focus is on the soldiers and not their contemporary political context because, as Burke argues:

¹²⁷ *Black Watch*, p.7.

¹²⁸ Mark Brown, 'Tales From the Front Line', *New Statesman*, 26 March 2007, <<http://www.newstatesman.com/arts-and-culture/2007/03/black-watch-iraq-burke>> [accessed 8 November 2016]

¹²⁹ Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing*, p.71 & p.72.

¹³⁰ *Black Watch*, p.9.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.35.

His work is driven by an interest in [...] the last days of what he calls "working-class institutions", rather than a concern for partisan politics.¹³²

Indeed, a broader materialist and social understanding of the soldiers' class underpins the play. *Black Watch* is peppered with talk of leaving the army but they continually comment that alternative work in the shipyards and the mines is no longer available. Private Rosco notes on considering leaving the army, 'What else are we gonna do anyway? [...] The pits are fucked.'¹³³ When Cammy tells his Officer he is leaving the regiment, the 'deli-counter in Tesco' seems his only career option.¹³⁴

It seems that the army is one of a limited number of careers available in their region of Scotland and it has always been so. Rosco's speech is immediately followed by a folk song, performed by the actor playing the Officer, doubling as the infamous 18th Century imperialist Lord Elgin. He is a fluid character who, in appropriate accent, sings a song about a 'Weaver poor' who leaves his loom to join the regiment for glory and become the 'brawest cheil/In a' the Heilan clans.'¹³⁵ In the context of the play, the folk song is presented as an early version of an army recruitment advert.

These recruits' close connection to the military is presented as a continuing line of history, named 'The Golden Thread'. This symbolises the social cache of military service passed down through families.¹³⁶ As Ian Jack summarises, the Golden Thread is effectively a:

Kind of ancestor worship inculcated into teenage recruits [...] attracted by mystical totems such as regimental hackles and regimental pipe tunes.¹³⁷

The history of this thread and its totems is visually represented by a fashion show of regimental costumes through the ages. Alongside the uniforms, accompanying dialogue lists the striking number of conflicts in which the Black Watch has served around the

¹³² Mark Brown, 'Tales From the Front Line'.

¹³³ *Black Watch*, p.29.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.70.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.30.

¹³⁶ Burke notes that even in Iraq 'there were lads serving alongside their fathers', *Black Watch*, p. viii.

¹³⁷ Ian Jack, 'It's in the blood', *The Guardian*, 14 June 2008 <
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jun/14/saturdayreviewsfeatures.guardianreview18>
>[accessed 14 November 2016]

world, which culminates with a memory of the regiment's last time in Iraq, then Mesopotamia:

Cammy: Egypt [...] Palestine [...] Syria tay drive out the Ottoman Turks. Which we did in 1919, in Mesopotamia. - Mesopotamia - Where the fuck have I heard that one before?¹³⁸

It seems that the Iraq war is, for Burke, another in a long-line of conflicts where soldiers are forced to fight against 'the tyranny of a foreign power', because of economic necessity and the vague promise of glory.¹³⁹ To highlight the linear history, the economic necessity and the class exploitation, Lord Elgin appears from the annals of the regiment to sell the military's benefits to young Cammy:

Lord Elgin: Three Square meals a day...

Cammy: What about Glory?

Lord Elgin: Glory?...O Aye...the glory.¹⁴⁰

Lord Elgin's stance and expression are significantly politicised in this scene. In Brechtian epic theatre 'gestus' is a piece of physical action employed by an actor that works as a focal point of a scene and functions to communicate social meaning. Brecht defined gestus as:

The realm of attitudes adopted by the characters towards one another is what we call the realm of gest. Physical attitude, tone of voice and facial expression are all determined by a social gest.¹⁴¹

Gestus is meant to be deployed in the form of the V-effect, distancing the narrative, and allowing the social relations inherent between the characters to be isolated and visible.

Meg Mumford explains this aspect of gestus is:

The aesthetic gestural presentation of the socio-economic and ideological construction of human identity and interaction.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ *Black Watch*, p.33

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.28.

¹⁴¹ Bertolt Brecht, (1949) 'A Short Organum for the Theatre', *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. ed. and transl. John Willett (London: Methuen, 1964), Para. 61.

¹⁴² Meg Mumford, 'Gestic Masks and Brecht's Theater: A Testimony to the Contradictions and Parameters of a Realistic Aesthetic', *Brecht Yearbook*, Vol. 26 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), pp. 144-145.

In the 2007 National Theatre of Scotland performance, directed by John Tiffany, in Pitlochry, Lord Elgin (played by actor Peter Forbes) appears by bursting into the soldier's modern-day pub wearing a First World-War officer's uniform (with full kilt and hat) and brandishing a huge claymore (traditional sword) that he announces to the audience was once owned by Robert the Bruce to free Scotland.¹⁴³ Lord Elgin starts the above speech using formal English as if in the voice of a recruiting officer promising, 'Three Square meals...' . Yet following Cammy's question about 'glory?', Lord Elgin's voice suddenly changes again to mirror the accent of the soldiers with his 'Glory ... O Aye...' and he stares upwards wielding his sword as if to recall and relive the battles of the great heroes of Scottish history.

The slipperiness and dissimulation of the establishment recruiter is embedded within Lord Elgin's accent. Moreover, the social relations are here made visually evident from the threat of the huge sword loaded with history. Whilst the military is shown as ideologically crafted for establishment ends, the alternative is the domestic class brutality represented by the sword. Lord Elgin, as Maggie Inchley notes, embodies the, 'history of the exploitation of Scottish working-class men by the British ruling classes.'¹⁴⁴

As with Lord Elgin's accent, the form of the play itself is also persistently shifting. The soldiers' Iraq experience is represented using widely diverse theatrical forms: dance, music, mime and multi-media together with narratised and recounted historical interventions that include forms of direct address from the characters. In the 2007 National Theatre of Scotland production, directed by John Tiffany, this diversity of forms included: music; radio; CCTV footage of a military base; video/TV footage of actual news casts, Scottish football, Iraq bombings and patrols; TVs playing static interference; video pornography and the shooting of a journalist's news report; folk, interpretative and military dancing; a fashion show of historical uniforms (including physical stunts), mime (for the letters home scene) alongside a range of visual and audible effects, such as for explosions and tank lights/engine.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ BBC Scotland films, *Black Watch*, National Theatre of Scotland (London: BBC Worldwide, 2008) [DVD] [29:14]

¹⁴⁴ Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing*, p. 71.

¹⁴⁵ BBC Scotland films, *Black Watch*.

This 'polyphony' is all just about contained within the overarching story of Gregory Burke's interviews with the soldiers in the pub. The play weaves in and out of different representations of the soldiers' 'reality'; its focus on linear history and folk experience tends towards a materialist naturalism that recalls the work of the 7:84 Theatre Company. Yet *Black Watch* also extends the representational style, sometimes breaking towards Epic theatre in the scene where the audience are directly addressed and Cammy dresses up in the regimental kilts and hackles of history. The play even moves towards contemporary dance in its use of mime and balletic movement to attempt to articulate the heightened emotions of letters from home, inter-troop fist-fights and the outcome of a suicide bomb.

Sheila McCormick argues that this mix of forms gives the play an,

Exhilarating mix of naturalism and postdramatic elements [...] a versatility that contradicts the controlled reputation of verbatim theatre.¹⁴⁶

In contrast, Johann Hari sees Burke's narrative style as 'chaotic, without a clear narrative thrust - a perfect reflection of how the war seems to Our Boys.'¹⁴⁷ In a play focused on a materialist history of the military, the fluid expressive style perhaps compromises the linearity of its argument and moves us away from a confident narrative of history. Nonetheless, the multi-layered plot and representational style also works to underpin the main narrative: the soldiers' recollected but often tersely articulated experiences from the pub.

At times, the episodic and multi-form style also expands and problematizes the military narrative. Burke repeatedly moves towards a partial postmodern conception of history as defined by Linda Hutcheon, where history and politics are not denied but 'problematized through ironic intertextuality, recycling and parody.'¹⁴⁸ Such a reading

¹⁴⁶ Sheila McCormick, "'And you Dinnay Wann Tay Join The Army?'" Friendship, Conflict and Kinship in Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*", *Friends and Foes Volume 1: Friendship and Conflict in Philosophy and the Arts*, eds. G. Watson, B.G. Renzi, E. Viggiani (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), p. 68.

¹⁴⁷ Johann Hari, 'Iraq and a Hard Place', *The Independent*, 9 August 2006
<<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/iraq-and-a-hard-place-5330108.html>> [accessed 12 November 2016]

¹⁴⁸ Clare Wallace, *Suspect Cultures: Narrative Identity and Citation in 1990s New Drama* (Prague: PB Tisk, 2006), p.37.

might explain the recurring and clown-like appearance of Lord Elgin and the undertones of John Arden's *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance* and John McGrath's multi-form *Cheviot, The Stag and the Black Black Oil*, which permeate through *Black Watch*. Connected to such postmodern concerns is Burke's highlighting of the problem of legitimising the soldier's narrative. Burke repeatedly infers the difficulty of representing their experience with authenticity when journalists, history, politics, and even folk songs have acquired and propagandized the soldiers' narrative. Burke perhaps parodies this point using Lord Elgin, who in the guise of a recruiting officer for WWI, speaks with a lexical intimation of the modern 'bantering' advert:

Lord Elgin: The Somme region's beautiful this time of year [...] Guns and football and drink and exotic poontang.¹⁴⁹

Lord Elgin's dissimulation highlights *Black Watch's* concern to represent and critique an authentic version of cyclical history. Such is the motivation for Burke's use of symbolic characters like Lord Elgin and the show of prized regimental outfits from history. Similarly, the play's use of a variety of representational styles, notably in the dance/mime of reading letters from home, functions to ensure that the soldiers' un-vocalised experiences of emotional intensity are able to be communicated to the audience. In the original production, the airmailed letters from home or 'Blueys' scene was interpreted with actors performing vivid personal mimes, harshly stage-lit by spotlights with blue tones to infer the timelessness of this absence and loss.

In this diverse approach, the play clearly constitutes a significant and effective break-away from the dialogue-focused Verbatim plays of Hare and Norton-Taylor. Arguably, this is a conscious response by Burke and Tiffany to the problems of Verbatim theatre and its dependency on the authentic *voice* in this context. Unlike the politicians and media-skilled figures of Hare and Norton-Taylor's plays, these soldiers are limited in their ability to express the full impact of their experience. In the emotive letters from home scene, Tiffany uses mime because the full meaning and impact of a letter from a loved one in a life-threatening war zone is both beyond verbal expression and perhaps these soldiers desire (perhaps even ability) to articulate. In many parts of this narrative of men at war, dialogue is insufficient.

¹⁴⁹ *Black Watch*, p.27.

In 2016, John Tiffany in interview with research student Sarah Beck explained his problems with regards to interviewing the soldiers for *Black Watch*:

John Tiffany:

If you ask them what it was like. 'It was. It's all right.' Anything to do with how did it feel, anything that started with that it was like, 'It's a job. It's all right' [...] Greg [Burke] rightly said, 'I can't put politics and emotions into their mouths.'

Sarah Beck:

Because they don't say things like that...

John Tiffany:

And it sounds ridiculous when they do. So we had to find other ways to get them in particularly with the movement...¹⁵⁰

Thus a shift away from verbatim dialogue was here pivotal to maintain meaning and authenticity. Moreover, *Black Watch*'s use of multi-layered narratives, diverse forms and a harsh regional accent persistently suggest a working-class experience and voice that is struggling to be articulated. Maggie Inchley notes such authentic Scottish dialects are 'rarely heard directly in mainstream cultural space.'¹⁵¹ For her, these voices are often silenced by the 'pipes and drums' of the established structures of theatre and society.

Black Watch negotiates its documentary account with a self-reflexive awareness that the subjects of the play seem to exist in a linear context at a pivotal point in history. Burke presents the Iraq invasion as marking a threshold for the soldiers as their job becomes complicated and increasingly insecure. The play notes how the regiment faces dismembering from history due to government defence cuts, while in Iraq the soldiers confront new threats from I.E.D.s and suicide bombers in a country so chaotic that at the time of the play, in 2004, there were almost no native allies.¹⁵² The Iraq conflict

¹⁵⁰ Sarah Beck, 'Interview with Director John Tiffany', February 15, 2012, Telephone via Skype, in *Appropriating Narratives of Conflict in Contemporary Verbatim Theatre: A Practice – as-Research-led Investigation Into The Role of the Playwright* (London: University of London, 2016), pp., 344- 345.

¹⁵¹ Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing*, p.70.

¹⁵² I.E.D.s are Improvised Explosive Devices. The American commander of Northern Iraq, General Petraeus was so nervous of the native support that he advised his successor, 'not to align too closely with one ethnic group, political party, tribe, religious group, or social element.' Patrick Cockburn, *The Occupation: War and Resistance in Iraq* (Edinburgh: Verso, 2006), p. 134.

appeared to have changed the nature of war. The *Black Watch* soldiers can only watch as American technology in the form of jets, 'helicopters and artillery' lays waste to the town of Fallujah in a 'huge bombardment'.¹⁵³ As Cammy watches the bombings, he expresses this change to technological warfare as being alien; he notes it 'isn't fucking fighting'.¹⁵⁴ Iraq marks a point of atrophy in the three hundred year role of the Black Watch infantry. Suman Gupta notes 'Given these circumstances, the invasion of Iraq is naturally portrayed with a sense of doom.'¹⁵⁵

The nature of the changes referenced in the play: new technology, the decline of working-class industries and confused perspectives, means the play seems to exist at a transitional point where traditional modernism bumps up against the postmodern.¹⁵⁶ Baz Kershaw's vision of late twentieth century plays as combining 'the great paradigms of postmodernism and modernism' remains unresolved and is perhaps foregrounded in Burke's dramatization.¹⁵⁷ The partial loss of a grand modernist and secure narrative for the regiment and its combat role is symbolically expressed by Burke early in the play when Cammy produces a battered half-copy of T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* from his pack. It is only half because the narrative is too big and grand for modern 'expeditionary soldiering'.

It seems that modernist texts like T.E. Lawrence's about progress for the Arab nations can no longer be sustained in this new world because, as Liz Tomlin has argued, the Middle Eastern wars placed western culture 'between the rock of pre-modern fundamentalism and the hard place of advanced neo-liberalism'.¹⁵⁸ There is thus perhaps no modernist ground for development. Islamic fundamentalism in its seeming aim to negate ideas of human progress for a religious purity, seems anti-modern.

¹⁵³ The coalition (largely U.S.) attack on Fallujah in 2004, with allegations of chemical weapons' use, targeting hospitals/civilians and 'over-responsive' violence by American soldiers, is detailed in another Verbatim play, Jonathan Holmes' *Fallujah*, first performed in a bespoke space at the Truman Brewery, East London. See Jonathan Holmes, *Fallujah* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2007), p. 167.

¹⁵⁴ *Black Watch*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁵⁵ Suman Gupta, *Imagining Iraq*, p. 100.

¹⁵⁶ Iraq insurgents against American forces is perhaps itself a modern v post-modern conflict.

¹⁵⁷ Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance*, p.7.

¹⁵⁸ Keith D. Dickson, 'War in (Another) New Context: Postmodernism', *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol, 24, No.2 (Fredericton: University of New Brunswick, 2004) <<https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/203/360>> [accessed 21 June 2016] & Liz Tomlin, *Acts and Apparitions*, p.5.

While despite the claims for a materialist and imperial narrative to explain the invasion, Phillip Hammond quoting Baudrillard, suggests that the Iraq War is ultimately postmodern because the authorities cannot sustain any consistent narrative. He notes:

The Western elite has no metanarrative to allow the projection of power. Baudrillard [...] wrote [...]: 'Unlike earlier wars, in which there were political aims either of conquest or domination, what is at stake in this one is war itself: its status, its meaning.' [...] It is this lack of political purpose and vision that gives rise to the features of what has been called 'postmodern war'.¹⁵⁹

Hammond's reading of a war without 'political purpose and vision' suggests that, like Cammy's partial text, the modernist narrative of colonialism may well be an underlying and unstated aim, but it is unstable and can no longer hold together.

In the absence of a clear and authentic narrative to explain this war, *Black Watch* soldiers expresses a continual concern for an authentic narrative for themselves and their role. As Inchley notes, the play and the soldiers show an 'acute awareness of the potentially exploitative practices of artistic representation.'¹⁶⁰ From the soldiers' perspective, narratives other than their own seem insecure and unreliable and the play embraces this concept as a theme. This reverberates throughout, from unconvincing political soundbites at the start, through concerns about who is going to play the soldiers in the 'inevitable' Hollywood film, to the pub scenes where soldiers express their fear about how their own history might be distorted in Burke's play. During the interview session, Private Stewarty doubts the Writer's ability to be impartial; he notes that this writer just:

Stewarty: Wants to make a name for himself by telling every cunt we're all a fucking shower of cunts.¹⁶¹

The differing viewpoints and degree of self-reflexivity in *Black Watch* are a method to counter this narrative insecurity and it is visibly incorporated into the set design from the play's start. At the first Edinburgh Drill Hall performance, the play used two opposing flanks of seating with the stage in a central rectangle. As the play opens with

¹⁵⁹ Phillip Hammond, 'Postmodernity Goes to War', *Spiked*, 1 June 2004 (London: Spiked magazine, 2004)

¹⁶⁰ Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing*, p.70.

¹⁶¹ *Black Watch*, p.60.

blaring 'Bagpipe and drum Tattoo' the audience is primed for some form of military and musical march-past. Instead, a lone soldier (Cammy) appears and talks directly to the audience turning 180° towards both seat banks to aid the audience's perspective:

Cammy: A'right. Welcome ... At first.. I didnay want tay have to explain myself tay people ay/ See I think people's minds are usually made up about you if you were in the army/They poor fucking boys...Thay cannay get a job. They get exploited by the army/I wanted to be in the army. [...] I'm not a fucking knuckle dragger.¹⁶²

From the start, Burke manages to question his own dominating theme of the Black Watch being part of the exploitation of the vulnerable working-class. As Janine Hauthal observes, this shift between apparent patriotic glamour and glory to 'confrontation' and 'correction' is a:

Specific dramaturgical strategy characterising the play as a whole that shows the work is concerned with 'truth claims.'¹⁶³

As such, Burke complicates the viewpoint from the start with the play offering two visions of a soldier's life: one bound in the (absent) military pomp of music and symbol, the other contained in the soldier's direct dialogue. The play's self-awareness of the soldiers' contested narrative leads Burke to use multiple forms of expression to offer the officially approved view and then to counter it. This style gives the play multiple voices but in an episodic, even fragmented manner redolent of postdramatic theatre. Such plural yet episodic techniques seem to also work as a dramatic corollary to Fredric Jameson's understanding of post-modern 'reflexivity' as uneasy self-consciousness.¹⁶⁴ Here the play's form constitutes a 'reflex' to the media acquisition of their narrative and thus a 'reflex' to the regiment's experience of the 'systematic modification of capitalism.'¹⁶⁵

Despite this, the play is more concerned with problematizing received notions of soldiering rather than undermining it with postmodern techniques and theatrical language. It is apparent that the soldiers' blunt and profane speeches, as with the

¹⁶² *Black Watch*, p.4.

¹⁶³ Janine Hauthal, *Realisms in Contemporary Culture: Theories, Politics, and Medial Configurations*, eds. D. Birke & S. Butter (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2013), p.166.

¹⁶⁴ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 193 & p. 275.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

awkward scenes with the Writer and Journalist, contrast markedly with the formality of the Officer's regularly intercut letters to his wife. The Officer uses an uncomfortable paternalistic tone. He praises his troops to his wife, saying 'the jocks are doing well'.¹⁶⁶ The actor playing the Officer also noticeably doubles as Lord Elgin and thus the shifty recruiter shadows the Officer's authority. Yet, for all his differences in cultural tone, the Officer seems firmly removed from the play's class friction and is presented as just as misused as the soldiers of lower rank. The Officer notes he has the Golden Thread 'in his blood' and it is the Officer who damns the Iraq conflict, seemingly in the author's voice, as 'the biggest western foreign policy disaster ever'.¹⁶⁷ As with history, class-conflict becomes problematized and the soldiers' authentic lived experience is privileged above the political or class comment. Such multiple perspectives even extend to the props. At one notable point, a pool table used for the pub scenes drops its baize and transforms itself into an Armoured Warrior for the Iraq operations. As such, even a pool game becomes dramaturgically transformed into a tool of war. As Maria Blumberg appropriately argues, contradictions drive the play, and allow it to function both as 'patriotic vehicle and as a counter-play that performs patriotic dissent'.¹⁶⁸

Black Watch's theatrical and subjective diversity goes some way to counter the absence of diversity in the soldier's dialogue. Towards the end of the play, the troops are stuck in their armoured wagon on a dangerous road outside of Fallujah. In the heat of the wagon, the soldiers have a verbal argument about foreign food and their favourite 'chinky'. These arguments escalate and lead to a range of paired ten-second fights presented in the form of interpretative dance. Afterwards, the soldiers hold a post-fight review where one fighter's ability is referred to as that of 'a pre-op transexual' and the Sergeant argues the fights where so 'shite' he had to stop them 'before one of them came'.¹⁶⁹ Such dubious language is persistent throughout the play and at times alienating. As a consequence, a number of critics have seen the soldiers as offensive and boorish. Yet, as Marcia Blumberg notes, this is just another of the play's contradictions:

¹⁶⁶ *Black Watch*, p. 12 & p. 57.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70 & p. 71.

¹⁶⁸ Marcia Blumberg, 'Unravelling the Golden Thread', ed. Jenny Spencer, *Political and protest Theatre after 9/11: Patriotic Dissent* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 79.

¹⁶⁹ *Black Watch*, p.54.

The men are foul-mouthed, sexist and initially unlikeable, yet spectators gradually empathize with them as the play progresses.¹⁷⁰

This growing empathy is partly due to Burke's judicious use of structure and form. The above aggression is softened by the dance sequence, and is largely forgotten in the imminent scene of the suicide bombing. Moreover, the impolitic language about foreign food and masculinity perhaps also expresses a sublimated terror at their life-threatening situation.

Such a context of sublimation extends to the interpretative form, as the soldiers' emotions are only plainly visible when dialogue is removed. Peter Marks notes 'The play makes clear that the war is a deeply isolating experience' and here language is one of the first casualties.¹⁷¹ However, the wordless scenes of mime and dance transform this silence into emotional movement. In this way, the dramatic style itself becomes problematized, to avoid doing so to the soldier's dialogue. Consequently, the soldiers' speeches are never romanticised at any level but their emotions are. Indeed, Burke's balancing of aggressive dialogue and empathetic mime is so well-judged that critics like John Halpern feel:

This is as close to the *experience* of war any of us is ever likely to get [...] *Black Watch* is [...] *emotionally convincing*.¹⁷²

Nonetheless, the play's limited focus on the Black Watch soldiers' experience and its attempt to accommodate different viewpoints on the regimental history and role in Iraq has been criticised for ignoring the wider issues of the Iraq war and the darker past of the regiment. Trish Reid sees the play as failing to interrogate the regiment's role and thus it constitutes only an 'essential and exclusive conception of history'.¹⁷³ Similarly, for David Archibald, the play's 'politics are deeply problematic'.¹⁷⁴ He argues that the

¹⁷⁰ Marcia Blumberg, 'Unravelling the Golden Thread', p. 88.

¹⁷¹ Peter Marks, 'National Theatre of Scotland casts 'Black' Magic', *The Washington Post*, 31 January 2011 < <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-yn/content/article/2011/01/30/AR2011013004652.html> > [accessed 20 November 2016]

¹⁷² Quoted in Janine Hauthal, *Realisms in Contemporary Culture*, pp. 164-165.

¹⁷³ Trish Reid, 'Post-Devolutionary Drama', *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama (Edinburgh Companions to Scottish Literature)*, ed. Ian Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 88-99.

¹⁷⁴ David Archibald, 'We're just big bullies ...' Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*', *The Drouth*, Issue 26 (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2007) < http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/3896/1/The_Drouth3896.pdf? > [accessed 15 November 2016]

play's history of the regiment ignores its role in Northern Ireland and the 'concentration camps' in 1950s Kenya. When interviewed, Burke commented that:

There was a line I was going to put in about the Mau Mau in Kenya [...] where the soldier says: 'We cut the balls off the black bastards' - which they did.¹⁷⁵

Clearly, the more brutal elements of the regiment's history have been purged in order for Burke to focus audience empathy on the soldiers in the Iraq campaign. However, that empathy is largely limited to the British troops. The voices of the Iraqi voice, be they insurgent or liberated citizen, are only seen through the recollected dialogue of the *Black Watch* and any discussion of the native people pointedly dismissed. When asked by the writer about the Iraqis, Stewarty observes, 'What the fuck have the Iraqis got tay fucking day way anything?'¹⁷⁶

Yet in the climactic and seemingly Verbatim scene where the soldiers are marooned in their armoured wagon, three soldiers and a previously mentioned (though unperformed) Iraqi 'translator' go to protect their area by stopping and searching oncoming cars.¹⁷⁷ In reality, a car-driving suicide bomber killed all four. However, the vivid dramatization and stage directions show only three:

The Sergeant, Fraz and Kenzie are propelled into the air by the blast wave. They fall to the ground one by one.¹⁷⁸

The translator previously referred to is lost in the dramatic representation of a vicious death. For Archibald, this absence of the Iraqi ally and the larger editing of the regimental history means historical fact is 'rubbed out' and the play becomes,

Burdened with a limited politics of narrative identification, a politics which refuses to grapple with [...] those on the receiving end of imperial adventure.¹⁷⁹

Yet Burke's response to this point is convincing and suggests his desire to stay within his research and culture in order to remain legitimate:

"People complain that there are no Iraqi voices in the play," Burke admits. "That was absolutely down to me. I can't tell an Iraqi person's version of the war, and to

¹⁷⁵ Mark Brown, 'Tales From the Front Line'.

¹⁷⁶ *Black Watch*, p.46.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.67.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.68.

¹⁷⁹ David Archibald, *The Drouth Magazine*.

think that I could would be to adopt the same attitude that made us invade their country in the first place.”¹⁸⁰

Gregory Burke here justifies not using Iraqi characters and voices in terms of a sensitivity to cultural appropriation and ensuring he only dramatizes voices from his own Scottish culture. Burke is effectively taking an ethical standpoint to ensure his play does not reiterate, through its form, the acquisitive and colonialist approach to foreign cultures, which precipitated the Iraq invasion and its many previous colonial iterations.

However, it might be argued that part of the ultimate failure of the Iraq coalition was its persistent inability to provide the Iraq population with an authoritative voice in their own country.¹⁸¹ As such, the play might be seen to work as an aesthetic echo of the same form of vocal distancing. Despite this, such a reading suggests the play is meant to work in the form of a pure verbatim drama, focused on testimonial accuracy, and rigid concern with authenticity. Yet, in interview with Sarah Beck, the director John Tiffany points out that *Black Watch* shouldn't and couldn't be comprehensively Verbatim. When asked about the liveliness of the dialogue and its connection to the interviews, Tiffany responded saying:

I had never really based things on interviews but we really quickly realised how limiting it was, so it's not verbatim *Black Watch* [...] they refused to be recorded, erm, the guys. So we didn't have verbatim what they said anyway. They only had Greg's memory.¹⁸²

The *Black Watch* soldier's narrative is based on Gregory Burke's memory. As such, the play is not a representation of a verbatim document. Instead it offers a wider and culturally sensitive critique of the regiment. In interview, Gregory Burke was asked by Sarah Beck what the play was about. Burke comments:

For me it was about [...] It's the same lie again and again over history. You're going to have a great time and the army's going to be great [...] this same lie is

¹⁸⁰ Mark Brown, 'Tales From the Front Line'.

¹⁸¹ See Patrick Cockburn, *The Occupation: War and Resistance in Iraq* (Edinburgh: Verso, 2006), p. 68 & 110.

¹⁸² Sarah Beck, 'Interview with Director John Tiffany', February 15, 2012, Telephone via Skype, in *Appropriating Narratives of Conflict in Contemporary Verbatim Theatre: A Practice –as– Research-led Investigation Into The Role of the Playwright* (London: University of London, 2016), pp., 344- 345.

told to the same people, and it's always the same people who do it. It's people at the bottom of the pile, because they have to, and there's nothing else. It's their job.¹⁸³

Fundamentally, Burke's play presents a Cultural Materialist reading of the Black Watch's role, rich in historical context and class experience.

1.6 Conclusion

Apart from Caryl Churchill's *Far Away* written in 2000, all of the plays under discussion in this chapter provide different forms of material response to the Iraq war through thematic content and, at times, form.

The Verbatim and Tribunal plays of Hare and Norton-Taylor, by virtue of a form that is expressly concerned with authenticity, implies that there is an absence of 'authentic' truth in the government's build up to the Iraq War. Derek Paget observes that Verbatim and documentary forms in this period can be seen as a direct cultural response to a widespread distrust in the integrity of political and government agencies:

Documentary forms [have] been ratcheted up by growing dissatisfaction with political process and an associated lack of trust in agencies formerly supposed to honour social duties of care [...] and be trusted accordingly.¹⁸⁴

Nevertheless, *Stuff Happens* is restrained in its political critique. Although, Hare suggests a number of reasons for the Iraq War, he seems to settle on the fact that Tony Blair's crusading character allowed him to be readily influenced by George W. Bush. However, *Justifying War* seems much more influenced by Paget's noted issues of 'trust in agencies'. In this tightly edited play, Norton-Taylor aims to concentrate on and expose the government manipulation that led to an apparently honourable man (Dr Kelly) being punished for revealing the truth and, under this duress, apparently taking his own life.

Significantly, although both plays seem acutely aware of the failings in government procedure and personality, neither directly contends that the Iraq invasion was

¹⁸³ Sarah Beck, 'Interview with Director John Tiffany', p. 318.

¹⁸⁴ Derek Paget, 'The 'Broken Tradition' of Documentary Theatre and its Continued Powers of Endurance', *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 235.

expressly neoliberal in design nor an attempt to force capitalism on an emerging nation as Klein or Chomsky suggest is the underlying 'reality' of the Iraq war. As such, both plays see the invasion as not systemic but stemming from the acts of individual government members flouting justice and international procedure.

Hare and Norton-Taylor's plays are necessarily intricate in drawing the fine detail of judicial procedure but their choice of form means that a broad historical context and a larger political critique cannot be addressed. In contrast, Crimp's *Advice to Iraqi Women*, intimates a foggy connection between the products and consumables of a neoliberal economy, and the grim facts of the Iraq war:

A home, just like an orchard, just like a zip, is a minefield.
Your house is a minefield.
don't let it burn... Don't let your child burn.¹⁸⁵

Vicky Angelaki notes that in Crimp's play such connections emerge 'unexpectedly through antithesis between content and context.'¹⁸⁶ Yet, in Crimp's decentred world of confused and overlapping speakers, the material connection between production and invasion is left for the audience to establish. Crimp here seems to build on Churchill's *Far Away* in offering us a defamiliarized world where Western culture and products seem somehow implicated in military invasion, but any concrete association is only elusively glimpsed.

Nevertheless, such ideas seem to follow Jameson's explanation of a postmodern society that expresses a new phase of capitalism, bringing with it a '*derealisation*' of 'everyday reality [...] transcending the capacities of the human body to locate itself.'¹⁸⁷ In this world the location of the means of production are confused so, like the visitors to the empty prison in *This is Camp X-Ray*, Crimp's subject is disoriented in a neoliberal structure that is both sinister and also happening elsewhere. Tim Crouch's *The Author* connects such ideas of dislocation with a form of Baudrillardian spectacle, of images

¹⁸⁵ Martin Crimp, 'Advice to Iraqi Women', *The Guardian*, 10 April 2003, <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2003/apr/10/theatre.artsfeatures1>> [accessed 28 June 2016]

¹⁸⁶ Vicky Angelaki, *The Plays of Martin Crimp: Making Theatre Strange* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 123.

¹⁸⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 34 & p. 44

unmoored from any purchase on reality, in a play where the 'real' stage is empty and the characters are relocated within the audience. Here, the characters speak in disconnected language about pictures of violence and abuse, unable to join up the images with an appropriate emotional response, as Esther expresses of the anti-war poster:

ESTHER We ... were able to pick up ready made [banners] with a picture of a dead girl. [...] Her dead eyes staring at us. Would you like me to sing?¹⁸⁸

In some ways *Black Watch*, with its self-reflexive, episodic style and combination of forms manages to adopt and extend some of the focus of these Verbatim and fictional works. *Black Watch's* concern is about the long history of working-class soldiers who, unable to find economic stability in a nation shorn of shipyards and mines, are manipulated by economic necessity and government authorities to be the shock troops of once liberal and now neoliberal colonialism. This is a clearly material reading but their current experience seems less concrete. With the regiment soon to be disbanded, these soldiers suffer a different form of derealisation and dislocation to that witnessed in Crimp and Crouch's plays. The Black Watch are marooned in Iraq in a war that seems to have an undefined justification and make little sense. Private Fraz asks if his room has Sky News so he 'Can find out why the fuck we're here.'¹⁸⁹ Similarly, when Cammy watches the Americans bomb Fallujah, he argues that this 'isn't fucking fighting'.¹⁹⁰ Like *Advice to Iraqi Women* and *Far Away*, there seems to be a material historical context for their experience of the Iraq War but the apparent meaning and reality is now obscured.

What is particularly noticeable about many of these plays is how the absence of empathy for the victims of war becomes a thematic concern. As Churchill's *Far Away* performs a scene of international murder amongst indifferent British subjects, *Advice to Iraqi Women* and *The Author* foregrounds the absence of an appropriate emotional response to the victims of war and torture. These plays seemingly critique the British populace as largely unable to form a suitable response to those 'Others' suffering war and other

¹⁸⁸ Tim Crouch, *The Author* (London: Oberon Books, 2009), p. 29.

¹⁸⁹ *Black Watch*, p.9.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

forms of abuse. In her analysis of *Advice to Iraqi Women*, Vicky Angelaki argues that Crimp is exploring how in Britain and the West, 'War is difficult to conceptualize' particularly when 'its horrific images are confined to the mass media.'¹⁹¹

Tim Crouch's *The Author* similarly suggests that the problem lies in the mediated nature of war and culture. His work explores violent images bereft of context and the immediate/first-hand facts of war and suffering. Crouch's ideas seem a theatrical expression of the absence of emotional consistency discussed by E. Ann Kaplan who, in her analysis of the Iraq War's media coverage, notes that often harrowing images shown through:

The media coverage aroused only "empty empathy", closely allied to sentimentality, through its practice of providing fragmented images of individual pain [...] coverage of the Iraq War seemed 'unreal'.¹⁹²

Judith Butler's critique of the way in which conflict precipitates the establishment's creation of 'representational regimes' that limit the frameworks of who is to be grieved for, and who is not, is especially relevant in this context. *Far Away, Advice to Iraqi Women* and *The Author* all suggest that the British media consumer is unable to get beyond and behind these frameworks and experience a wider emotional response or understanding of what might be occurring to the Iraqi people.¹⁹³ Such apprehension about the insidious power of media representation is also echoed in *Black Watch*, where the soldiers are uncomfortable with how they will be portrayed by a theatrical culture that seems itself part of a suspect 'representational regime'.

As such, the theatre at the start of the Iraq War often worked to identify, question and undermine the media-derived empathy deficit surrounding the invasion. These works were incisive and progressive in questioning the representational frameworks of established media and, as Angelaki argues of Crimp's play, helped to 'bridge the gap between Western audiences and Iraq'.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Vicky Angelaki, *The Plays of Martin Crimp*, p. 124.

¹⁹² E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), p.93.

¹⁹³ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 29.

¹⁹⁴ Vicky Angelaki, *The Plays of Martin Crimp*, p. 123.

Black Watch's achievement was similarly to allow empathy for a more domestic set of cultural voices: the British soldiers, the other victims of the Iraq conflict. Those whose unsullied voice is often acquired and controlled by institutional structures and whose voices are absent from many other plays of present and past conflicts. Burke's soldiers are materially unreconstructed, historically contextualised, politically loaded but they are nevertheless found to be legitimate working-class soldiers worthy of an empathetic voice. As the novelist Alice Miller notes:

Black Watch is political theatre – and art – at its best: energetic, powerful, questioning, moving, complex, subtle, truthful, with no easy answers to offer. It portrays people who live political decisions in their flesh.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in David Archibald, *The Drouth Magazine*.

2. The Trauma of Soldiers

2.1 Introduction

The theatrical image of the physically and mentally scarred soldier is at least as old as *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*. Both are 2,500-year-old plays by Sophocles concerning troubled warriors. In *Ajax*, following the Trojan War the titular warrior is furious at not receiving dead Achilles' armour. Diverted by the Gods from murdering his generals, he instead destroys all the Greek spoils of war and then commits suicide. *Philoctetes* concerns a Greek warrior who lives on an isolated island at odds with Gods and men after suffering a snakebite in the Trojan War; a wound that whilst it does not kill him, will not heal. Both plays were presented by a New York company to American troops in 2008 at the 'Marine Corps Combat Operational Stress Conference' and received much acclaim. The implication is that the mental and physical damage caused by war is a perennial concern, quite as ancient as theatre itself. At the conference, Retired Sergeant Major Leardo who had fought in Iraq, observed:

The parallels between the Trojan War and the current wars were striking [...] The combat stress, the inner conflicts, the loss of your self, all are the same.¹

Similar plays concerning the way in which the experience of war violence causes immense personal and social problems inform numerous plays up to the present time, notably Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*, amongst others; and, more recently, Sean O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie*, Bertholt Brecht's *Schweik in the Second World War* and John Arden's *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance*. Nonetheless, an exclusive dramatic focus on the mental damage of war is perhaps most significantly considered in the much-revived *Woyzeck*, written in 1873 by Georg Buchner.² This play concerns the way in which a working-class soldier is treated as a laboratory specimen by doctors and the military and, in consequence, suffers a mental breakdown that leads to visions of the apocalypse and the brutal murder of his unfaithful partner. *Woyzeck* is commonly seen as an exploited man without social agency, the theatrical symbol of proletariat oppression and class-struggle. Although other interpretations are available, J.P. Stern writing in 1981

¹ Tony Perry, 'Through Drama, toll of war resonates across the ages', *Los Angeles Times*, 15 August 2008 < <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/aug/15/local/me-combat15> > [accessed 1 February 2017]

² Jack Thorne's 2017 version of *Woyzeck* at the Old Vic, updated to a divided 1980's Berlin, is a good recent example. Jack Thorne, *Woyzeck* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2017)

argues that 'Determinism, social indictment and class-struggle – all these are implicit in the play.'³

Buchner's *Woyzeck*, and to some extent Arden and O'Casey's plays, focus their work on the subject of the working-class soldier who is portrayed as the central locus of war-based trauma. If only by choice of subject, these dramatic works suggest that mental damage through war is most significant in those front-line troops who are from a working-class background. Such issues of class and trauma have, following the Iraq War, become a contentious issue. Although charities such as Combat Stress disagree, the pressure group ForcesWatch have argued that war trauma (particularly PTSD) and social class/deprivation are inextricably linked. In March 2018, *Forces Watch* submitted evidence to the government's 'Defence Committee's Armed Forces and Veterans Mental Health Inquiry' urging that new recruits must be assessed so as to establish:

Pre-enlistment risk factors for psychological ill-health such as socio-economic disadvantage.⁴

This submission was ultimately rejected by the government inquiry but it seems that, as in *Woyzeck*, social class is a significant, if contentious, context when exploring war and its impact on mental health.

Despite the government's rejection of such ideas as a link between class and PTSD, the *Woyzeck*-styled image of the suffering working-class soldier has persisted into the 'In-Yer-Face' generation of writers and is a central context of many plays that respond to the Iraq War. In this way, theatre has consistently worked as an art form that challenges our cultural understanding about what combat experience might mean alongside how and who it damages.

Perhaps the most acclaimed of the 1990s 'In-Yer-Face' plays is Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, a play that presents combat violence and mental damage in graphic terms. Written in 1995 towards the end of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the play concerns an

³ J.P. Stern, *Re-interpretations: Seven Studies in Nineteenth Century German Literature* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1981), p. 118.

⁴ ForcesWatch, 'Evidence submitted to the Armed Forces and Veterans Mental Health Inquiry', *ForcesWatch*, March 2018 < <https://www.forceswatch.net/resources/evidence-submitted-armed-forces-and-veterans-mental-health-inquiry> > [accessed 9 February 2017]

abusive relationship between an older military man and a younger woman in a Leeds hotel room. Halfway through the play an armed soldier bursts into the hotel room and the play is flung unprompted into a Balkan war-zone where the soldier recounts the horrors he has practised and witnessed. He recalls how his girlfriend was killed:

Soldier They buggered her. Cut her throat. Hacked her ears and nose off, nailed them to the front door.⁵

Without clearly established motivation or location, the soldier then tortures and ultimately rapes the male protagonist Ian, while the abused young woman, Cate, narrowly escapes. The play becomes increasingly brutal whilst increasingly abstracted into the symbolic, as Ian is blinded and forced by hunger to eat a dead baby.⁶ This takes place in a theatrical tone of figurative Artaudian cruelty. As well as making a range of social and political comments, Kane's play places a brutal, far-away conflict in Britain to suggest that the underlying motivations for these dramatised acts of violence might also underpin the structures of our society. As Helen Iball notes, Kane was influenced by the Serbian attacks on Srebrenica in 1993 and used material about 'war rape and acts of torture' with 'equivalents in British culture' that 'brought the apparently [...] distant violence very close to British experience'.⁷ Elements of Sarah Kane's *Blasted* and Georg Buchner's *Woyzeck* can be glimpsed in many of the soldier-focused plays concerning the Iraq war.

2.2 Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat by Mark Ravenhill (2007)

Mark Ravenhill's *Shoot Get/Treasure/Repeat* is a series of 16-18 short plays first presented in 2007 at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. It is effectively a serially fragmented response to the attacks on 9/11 and particularly the war in Iraq.⁸ Connecting the plays are repeated scenes of terrified and outraged middle classes, wounded soldiers, numerous iterations of torture, government abuse and media manipulation. Such

⁵ Sarah Kane, *Sarah Kane: Complete Plays* (London: Methuen, 2001), p.46.

⁶ The blinding is caused by gouging, the same method as violates the loyal subject Gloucester in *King Lear*. The dead baby recalls and extends the dramatic shock of Edward Bond's *Saved*.

⁷ Helen Iball, *Sarah Kane's Blasted* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), p.10.

⁸ In Mark Ravenhill, *Plays: 3* (London Bloomsbury, 2013) 16 short plays are published with one (Yesterday an Incident Occurred) as an appendix. In the original Fringe shows 18 were presented over a number of days. See Jenny Spencer 'Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat By Mark Ravenhill', Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. 7-26 August 2007', in *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Baltimore: John Hopkins, May 2008)

themes and motifs suggest Ravenhill's understanding of the contemporary issues surrounding the 'War on Terror'.

One of the key features of the plays is how they often echo and narratively illustrate Baudrillard's earlier critique of the reaction to the 9/11 attacks, as working primarily at the subconscious level. Baudrillard contended that the 9/11 attacks manifested:

A gigantic post-traumatic abreaction both to the event itself and to the fascination that it exerts.⁹

Baudrillard's analysis of 9/11 in his 2001 article, *The Spirit of Terrorism*, focused particularly on the constructed nature of the media coverage and expanded his discussion of simulacrum and the loss of cultural reality. In the article he argues that the 9/11 media coverage edited and compressed the political complexity of the event so as to create a commodified package of reality through simplistic news or 'infotainment'. This worked, as Clare Finburgh summarises, to deliver:

A neat package of digestible, bite-size images, signs and messages that provide the right quotient of 'facts' [...] this then became the full, uncompromised, uncontested reality of the event.¹⁰

Recalling Baudrillard, Ravenhill's approach in *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* is to consider and question how British, and notably middle-class, culture and society has been psychologically traumatised from violent attacks by terrorism, but moreover by the West's constructed response to a vaguely conceived, yet exaggerated, form of terrorism. The Iraq war and its associated cultural distress are in these plays characterised as born from a neoliberalism obsessed with consumption and marketed through a state-run media that has crudely manipulated the facts of the conflict to manifest a dubious war constructed from sound-bites. In Ravenhill's plays, simplistic sloganeering about 'good' and 'evil', 'freedom and democracy' are repeated so frequently that they become stripped of connotational content.¹¹ Thus it becomes clear that the Middle Eastern wars,

⁹ Jean Baudrillard, '[L'Esprit Du Terrorisme](#)', *Le Monde*, 11 February 2001. transl. Donovan Hohn, *Harper's*, 2nd February 2001 (New York: Harper's Magazine, 2001)

¹⁰ Clare Finburgh Delijani, *Watching War in the Twenty-First Century Stage: Spectacles of Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 33.

¹¹ As an example of repetition, the phrase 'Freedom and Democracy' usually in whole (rarely in part) is in the Bloomsbury 2013 published edition of the 245 page script, mentioned on pages 8,9, 14, 17, 61, 69, 70, 74, 80, 84, 87, 89, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 101, 124, 130, 132, 135, 142, 145,

as manifested in these plays, are merely an updated form of imperialism (as clearly suggested in the title) delivered through gun, blindfold and cultural export.

That such readings are intended is clear from the introduction to the published edition, where Ravenhill writes to his intended audience that:

We are the children of the sound-bite age, able to absorb information in a few quick seconds from the various screens that surround us [...] So, in exploring our contemporary urge to bring our own values and definitions of freedom and democracy to the whole planet, I've chosen to suggest a big picture through little fragments.¹²

Fragmentation is integral to the form and content of the *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* series, which is peppered with socially dislocated and fearfully anxious characters. The series opens with *Women of Troy*, where unnamed female characters are being attacked by terrorists. The women are confused as to why they are being targeted when they are obviously the 'good people' who eat ethical food.¹³ Similarly isolated and petrified, is the young child Alex alone in bed having nightmares about a headless soldier in *War and Peace*. Alex's martial dream is echoed in *Intolerance* where a mother, Helen, is trying to build a 'perfect' safe home for her child by avoiding 'immigrants' and the news of 'bombs and wars'.¹⁴ Yet, Helen's safety is repeatedly compromised by crippling abdominal pain, which she gets as her child obsessively draws pictures of headless soldiers. Like Helen, many of these isolated characters are obsessional about security. Most notably, the couple in *Fear and Misery* who are worried by 'The addicts, The Madwoman, The bombers,' and whose psychological response is to wash their genitalia compulsively for fear of infection.¹⁵ Satire towards the instinctual responses of the indulged classes is at the driving heart of many of these works.

Yet satire can jostle with the more shocking, in terms of torture and horror, when the narrative threat is not continually presented as purely a Western and psychological burden. In *Crime and Punishment*, an Iraqi woman is methodically tortured by a

159, 169, 173, 174, 175, 186, 190, 192, 193, 196, 197, 198, 207, 209, 216, 219, 222, 224, 227, 228, 230, 232, 235, 241, 242, 243, 248, 249, 250, 252, 253 (it is often repeated on the same page). 'Good and evil' receive similar coverage.

¹² Mark Ravenhill, *Plays: 3* (London Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 5.

¹³ Quotation from Mark Ravenhill, 'Women of Troy', *Plays: 3* (London Bloomsbury, 2013), p.10.

¹⁴ Quotations from Mark Ravenhill, 'Intolerance', *Plays: 3* (London Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 24. & p.19.

¹⁵ Quotations from Mark Ravenhill, 'Fear and Misery', *Plays: 3* (London Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 45. & p.46.

Western soldier because she won't show her 'love' for his freedom and democracy.¹⁶ In *Birth of a Nation*, a profoundly injured Iraqi woman is physically forced to consume art therapy by a team of British creatives until she collapses. This theme of empathy as a thin veneer hiding furious aggression, meets its thematic climax in *War of the Worlds*. Here, a chorus of unnamed Western speakers offer deep felt condolences for a devastated Middle-Eastern city:

-YOUR SUFFERING IS OUR SUFFERING. WE NEVER FORGET.¹⁷

This swiftly turns to disinterest and then illogical abuse:

- You run towards me. In your arms you hold your dead child.
- And I say [...] 'You had this coming. Can't you see you had this coming.'¹⁸

These are sharp but usually only partially formed, criticisms of how the Middle Eastern wars have corrupted, or perhaps uncovered, our culture's absence of human compassion. Enric Monforte argues that Ravenhill's:

Plays underline the intrinsic precariousness of Western citizens of all classes and bleakly show their total lack of empathy with the plight of the dispossessed, their absolute lack of concern about the (racial, class) Other.¹⁹

In these plays of isolated and furious Western citizens, the only empathy available lies far repressed in the subconscious: visible in recurrent images of nightmares, headless soldiers and bodily discomfort. In combination, these all suggest a humanity, culture and society fighting a war with itself that is much more pressing than any foreign antagonist.

Throughout the plays, Ravenhill echoes Baudrillard's critique of a war whose reality is twisted and commodified by news coverage. To represent the media Ravenhill uses voiceovers, tannoy announcements and particularly the chorus, as a means to suggest how the media has manipulated the citizenry into this state of confused panic. Several plays use a chorus who speak directly to the audience but in the voices of the outraged

¹⁶ Quotation from Mark Ravenhill, 'Crime and Punishment', *Plays: 3* (London Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 90.

¹⁷ Mark Ravenhill, *Plays 3* (London Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 128.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁹ Enric Monforte, 'Staging Terror and Precariousness in Simon Stephens's Pornography and Mark Ravenhill's Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat', in *Of Precariousness: Vulnerabilities, Responsibilities, Communities in 21st Century British Drama*, eds. M. Aragay & M. Middeke (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017), p. 48.

but bemused citizens of the West. These members of the chorus are the only community, though unnamed, evident throughout the series and, as in *The Women of Troy*, *The Odyssey*, *Birth of a Nation* and *War of the Worlds*, it is usually these choric members who define themselves as 'the good people' beset by a vaporous enemy who prevents them from buying ethical food and shopping with abandon. In this way, the chorus becomes the voice of neoliberal and mediated consensus: a chorus of consumption. This is a common contemporary theatrical theme, as Erika Fischer-Lichte has noted in her analysis of recent choric theatre. She observes that any sense of community in such plays is often formed by a group of 'self-alienated conformists' where concepts of community are really only methods of selling a product:

Nothing but a clever marketing strategy promising the consumer that the market will fulfil his desire for solidarity, his yearning for a community.²⁰

In this serial approach of considering how community and everyday life has been corrupted by a government-manipulated climate of fear, Ravenhill seems to draw on Brecht's *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich* (1938): a series of 24-plus short plays/scenes exploring the impact of fascism on everyday life in 1930's National Socialist Germany. Jenny Spencer observes how *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat's* 'parallels with Brecht's depiction of the rise of fascism were unmistakable'.²¹ Similarly, she notes Ravenhill's associated use of:

Critical distancing devices. Humor, stylized speech patterns, abrupt turns in the narrative [...] all aim to produce an attentive audience that is invited in a Brechtian way to think as well as feel.²²

Yet there are a wide range of other influences alongside Brecht, including Antonin Artaud, Sarah Kane and Martin Crimp. Ravenhill often experiments with form using unnamed speakers, characters who seem unclear of their identity, evident when characters speak of themselves in the third person, (*War and Peace*, *Women of Troy*). Alongside this are almost overbearingly repeated key/choric words ('good and evil', 'Freedom and democracy') and characters who appear considerably more symbolic than mimetic versions of the human (The Angel in *Women of Troy*, the soldier in *War and*

²⁰ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p 239 & p. 41.

²¹ Jenny Spencer, 'Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat By Mark Ravenhill', *Traverse Theatre*, Edinburgh. 7-26 August 2007', in *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Baltimore: John Hopkins, May 2008)

²² Ibid.

Peace/Crime and Punishment...). Enric Monforte argues that Ravenhill's stylistic and language choices often suggest a debt to Martin Crimp in terms of 'form,' and 'non-naturalistic characters'.²³

Jenny Spencer sees such stylistic devices and use of 'non-naturalistic' characters as a pivotal structural feature that helps develop Ravenhill's critique of the state-sponsored public consensus towards the Middle-Eastern wars. She notes:

The power of Ravenhill's cycle depends on the creation of recognizable characters whose stereotypical aspects and exaggerated responses constitute the plays critique [...] At stake is an undertaking that makes visible, and increasingly untenable, the cognitive and affective frames through which an ongoing war on terror continues to justify itself.²⁴

The full series of 16-18 plays have rarely been performed as one set because they would take over six hours to complete. As such in performance, they were read as pairs but mostly as single entities, as with the original Edinburgh Festival production where they:

Read one play a day over the course of the [Edinburgh] festival [...using] a rotating lineup of volunteer Directors and actors.²⁵

This structure and delivery perhaps also works to accentuate the disintegrated but inter-connected nature of the theatrical work and its themes. In keeping with this form of presentation, I will analyse a selection of the most significant short plays as individual entities, focusing on those which seem most pertinent to the Iraq war through their comments on military trauma, torture, state manipulation and the role of theatre as an arm of inter-cultural exploitation.

²³ Enric Monforte, 'Staging Terror and Precariousness', p. 36.

²⁴ Jenny Spencer, 'Terrorized by the War on Terror: Mark Ravenhill's Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat', ed. Jenny Spencer, *Political and protest Theatre after 9/11: Patriotic Dissent* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 65 & p. 67.

²⁵ Jenny Spencer, 'Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat by Mark Ravenhill', Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. 7-26 August 2007', in *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Baltimore: John Hopkins, May 2008)

2.3 *War and Peace* by Mark Ravenhill (2007)



Figure. 3: *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat: 'War and Peace'*, 2008, at the Royal Court Theatre, Alex (Lewis Lempereur-Palmer) is visited in his bedroom every night by a headless Soldier (Burn Gorman).²⁶

Following the initial Edinburgh premier, the second production of the *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* series took place in London, in 2007. It was structured in the form of a treasure hunt with plays dotted around different theatrical locations so that finding each performance, as Ravenhill observed, made the audience 'Go on a quest across the city [to] piece together the different fragments.'²⁷

The fragmentation in these plays is thematic and combined with other seemingly postmodern approaches to form and structure: situation is often emphasised over plot and Ravenhill writes in the published text that the 16-18 plays are so malleable they don't have to be performed 'in the order they are published here.'²⁸ Fragmentation and fracture take character form in *War and Peace* where a dead soldier missing much of his head comes to life in a child's bedroom. The soldier is both an emblematic spirit of the age and a suffering ex-warrior who at times seems uncannily similar to the torturing foreign soldier who bursts into Sarah Kane's *Blasted*.

²⁶ Used within copyright exception. Copyright owned by Robert Workman [accessed 21 February 2019]

²⁷ Mark Ravenhill, 'My Near Death Period', *The Guardian*, 26 March 2008 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/mar/26/theatre> > [accessed 1 February 2017]

²⁸ Mark Ravenhill, 'War and Peace', *Mark Ravenhill: Plays: 3* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. x.

In *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), literary critic Harold Bloom argued that poets and dramatic writers frequently feel the angst of dominant previous creative works. Because of this, their own creations are often reinterpretations (Bloom calls them 'misreadings') of the dominating prior text.²⁹ Bloom notes that in poetry,

Every poem is a misinterpretation of a previous poem [...] A poem is not an overcoming of anxiety, it is that anxiety.

Ravenhill's *Play Five: War and Peace* perhaps itself works like a Bloomian 'misreading' of Kane's *Blasted*.

In the four previous plays in the series, we have learnt that a young middle-class boy has been beset by bad dreams about a headless soldier. In *War and Peace*, the headless soldier becomes embodied, angry and wields a gun. Echoing Kane, Ravenhill's Soldier invades the domestic bedroom of seven-year old Alex.³⁰ Unlike *Blasted*, there is little performed violence, only the threat, which is ever-present from the start through the mutilated form of the Soldier's missing skull. In 2007, the Royal Court production used a low-slung, camouflaged and bloody helmet together with thick makeup to suggest the Soldier's absent head. These props emphasised the malformed terror of the Soldier, which seems to grow via the dialogue's undertone of sexual abuse. Ravenhill's Soldier warns Alex not to mention his presence, 'We agreed this was a secret.'³¹ Such dialogue is contextually sinister as is the pivotal motivation for the plot, the soldier's desire to possess Alex's head, which is uncomfortably expressed in Alex's line:

Alex: I want to do it now. I play with your gun while you touch my head.³²

This image of a blood-splattered soldier stroking a child's head in a domestic bedroom whilst the child plays with a rifle is loaded with social taboo. The paired characters as McGinn notes, constitute a 'shocking juxtaposition' whose visual impact functions as a

²⁹ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence; A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd Edition (New York: OUP, 1997), p. 94.

³⁰ Ravenhill's play also echoes the romantic version of a soldier caught in a domestic bedroom in George Bernard Shaw's 'Arms and The Man' in *Plays Pleasant* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1977)

³¹ 'War and Peace', p.53.

³² Ibid, p. 53.

form of tableau vivant, or 'gestus'; one that telescopes the play into a single image and perhaps recalls the play's 'shades of Kane'.³³

In *Blasted*, the figure of the soldier works in the form of a wider malevolent force. However, in Ravenhill's work the soldier is developed into a form of Jungian Shadow of atavistic threat. While Kane's soldier can be dramatically killed, Ravenhill's Soldier is persistently present far beyond the grave and able to occupy the most intimate of locations. *War and Peace's* dramatic hints of Carl Jung seem to be derived from Antonin Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty'.³⁴ Jung and Artaud's ideas are perhaps analogous in this play. In *Theatre and Its Double*, Artaud argues that in his 'true theatre a play disturbs the senses' repose' and 'frees the repressed unconscious.'³⁵ Gene A. Plunka explains further that by design, Artaud's theatre would 'expose[d] spectators to the evils of their archetypal natures and purge[d] their latent drives.'³⁶

For Jung, the shadow archetype in humans is barely evident: a 'positively demonic [...] monster' dimly glimpsed in ancient myth. Thus in Ravenhill's theatrical myth, the Soldier recalls Jung's dark archetype by being both present and absent. Ravenhill's writing expresses this paradox by using the syntax of reported speech within spoken dialogue:³⁷

Soldier: And the Soldier said: Fear's OK.³⁸

Alex: But Alex said: My life is good.³⁹

This attribution of speech works as an estranging technique that might suggest the play is intended to work in the manner of a recounted bed-time fable expressing primeval

³³ Caroline McGinn, 'Mark Ravenhill's Iraq Plays Blog,' *Time Out: London*, 7 April 2008 <
<http://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/mark-ravenhills-iraq-plays-blog-1>> [1 February 2017]

³⁴ Artaud is also a noted influence on Kane, see Graham Saunders, *About Kane: the playwright & the work* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), pp. 87-88

³⁵ Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and its Double*, transl. M.C Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p.28.

³⁶ Gene A. Plunka, *The Rites of Passage of Jean Genet: The Art and Aesthetics of Risk Taking* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992), p.132.

³⁷ Carl Jung, 'Volume 7: Two Essays on Analytical Psychology', *Collected Works* (London: Routledge, 1967), p. 35.

³⁸ 'War and Peace', p.54.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.55.

fears told by a cautioning parent.⁴⁰ Alex makes plain the dark fairy-tale status of the Soldier:

Alex: [...] You are like a [...] you are a deformed monster. Monster/monster
Monster monster monster MONSTER.⁴¹

Nonetheless, the play appears to contain a firm materialist undercurrent. In *War and Peace*, as replicated in the *Mikado* and other plays within the series, Ravenhill explores how the fear created by a distant war often only glimpsed through tightly-controlled media outlets, is still able to become a pervasive and insidious anxiety. Here, able to undermine the places deemed most sacred in British domestic life. As such, perhaps Ravenhill's Soldier is embodying the visceral and pervasive horror created by the barbaric beheadings suffered by Kenneth Bigley and others, which were visible through private media from 2004. Despite this, the headless Soldier's desire for a child's head has the indistinct form and logic of a dream narrative. This seems to deny a clear materialist reading. For Suman Gupta, Ravenhill is combining the mythic and the materialist by foregrounding the essential formlessness of the anxiety about the Iraq war and its impact:

A fear that is unspecified and yet very real, which invades the most intimate moments [...] expressed in the anxiety generated by images of war on the news, worry about possible acts of terrorism [...] fear of violation and rape - but it is at bottom simply the fear that simmers without clear definition in [...] society.⁴²

However, *War and Peace* perhaps offers a more distinct historical context than the interlacing of Jung and Artaud suggests. By 2007, following four years of occupation, the Iraq War had turned from a successful overthrow of a brutal dictator to a country antagonistic to its occupiers and on the verge of civil war. Just before Ravenhill's play was performed, the Head of the British Army, General Sir Richard Dannat, summarised these concerns when speaking to journalists:

⁴⁰ In rehearsals, Brecht made his actors speak their character's lines as 'indirect speech'. A technique used to 'estrangle' the actors from their characters and so create a tone of 'an eyewitness report'. See John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (London: Methuen, 1959), p. 155. By using it in performance, Ravenhill allows the estrangement to influence the character, narrative and audience.

⁴¹ This quote contains incongruous (and perhaps accidental) connotations in its choral refrain with the catchphrase of the 1980s Football Agent, Eric Hall.

⁴² Suman Gupta, *Contemporary Literature: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 52.

“Whatever consent we may have had in the first place, [...] has largely turned to intolerance. [...] The aim of imposing a liberal democracy in Iraq had been over-ambitious.”⁴³

The coalition forces had little success in building an effective democracy or in restoring a peaceful alliance of the native groups. As a consequence, there were increasing concerns about the lack of an end to the conflict. According to David Keen in a 2006 text, Iraq was now revealed to be one aspect of an ‘Endless War’.⁴⁴ As such, there were growing calls to give up on Iraq and bring the troops home. In the same article, General Dannat demanded that:

Britain must withdraw from Iraq "soon" or risk serious consequences for Iraqi and British society.⁴⁵

This material fear of uncontrollable conflict seems to inform Ravenhill’s presentation of dark anxiety and of the eternal soldier unable to return home. This fear is explicit and evident when the Soldier tells Alex:

Soldier: You know what was wrong with wars before? They ended [...] This one goes on and on. There’s no God see? [...] on and on and on [...] Oh good lad. That’s it. You shat yourself.⁴⁶

Aiding such a material perspective is the fact that after the pivotal scene where the Soldier hugs Alex’s head, Ravenhill’s dialogue begins to ‘ground’ the two characters with historical context. Slowly, the audience learn something of the Soldier’s history: that it was in the Middle East conflicts where his ‘brains were blown across the desert’, that his girlfriend has left and he is forced to sleep in an alleyway.⁴⁷ The soldier seems markedly less primeval and symbolic as he recalls his early life on a council estate that was gentrified to become the ‘gated’ community where Alex now lives. The Soldier recalls how half of his estate friends are now ‘freeing the world from towelheads’.⁴⁸ This

⁴³ Richard Norton-Taylor and Tania Branigan, ‘Army Chief: British Troops Must Pull Out Of Iraq Soon’, *The Guardian*, 13 October 2006 <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/oct/13/iraq.iraq>> [accessed 31 January 2017]

⁴⁴ David Keen, *Endless War?: Hidden Functions of The War in Terror* (London: Pluto Press, 2006)

⁴⁵ Richard Norton-Taylor and Tania Branigan, ‘Army Chief: British Troops Must Pull Out Of Iraq Soon’, *The Guardian*, 13 October 2006 <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/oct/13/iraq.iraq>> [accessed 31 January 2017]

⁴⁶ ‘War and Peace’, p. 63.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 63 & p.52.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.60.

racism works to temper our sympathy, but it also adds to the sense of a man located in space and time who has a tangible context of historic struggle and mental damage. He notes he 'lost' himself 'a long time ago', suggesting a mental trauma manifestly evident in his fractured head.⁴⁹ The play's structure as a troubled dream with fragmented images of war incongruously manifested in a domestic bedroom, provide clear hints that Ravenhill is alluding to a Post Traumatic illness in his Soldier and consequently a 'real' material context. Yet it is only a limited allusion and Ravenhill is keen to avoid the specifics of actual historical situations, names or nations. As Fatima Vieira explains:

Although the ongoing war is a dominant point of criticism, Ravenhill aims to project an all-encompassing more scopic view of the problems we are faced with.⁵⁰

Nonetheless, these brushes with reality significantly undermine the Soldier as constituting a form of unconscious shadow, and are further eroded by the continued way in which the discussions between Alex and the Soldier become polarised in class terms. The Soldier envies Alex's wellbeing and comfortable life, which appears to have been denied to him and his class context.⁵¹ The Soldier blames Alex personally for stealing his old home and community: 'see my estate? [...] wiped out'. This occurs seemingly in return for a vaguely understood future that only belongs to Alex: '**You** took my estate. I'm fighting for **your** freedom and democracy.'⁵² Conversely, now Alex becomes a form of middle-class stereotype informing the Soldier that when he grows up he wants to work 'in the City' and become a 'hedge fund' manager.⁵³ As the Soldier becomes dramatically human and reveals himself to be damaged by experience and class, Alex now turns into an unlikely capitalist archetype. Alex tells the Soldier in a distanced fit of rage:

Alex: And Alex was, angry: You keep away... I do well in my SATs [...] We drive An SUV [...] I am so powerful ... and you are scum... [sic] you eat bad food, you have numeracy and literacy issues, you will never be on the property ladder, you smoke and play the lottery [...] you don't belong in a gated community [...] You are a monster.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ 'War and Peace', p.55.

⁵⁰ Fatima Vieira, *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the page, on Screen, on Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), p. 307.

⁵¹ 'War and Peace', p.58.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 60 & 61. The use of bold font is mine.

⁵³ Ibid., p.59.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.61.

McGinn sees this childish rant as weak writing on Ravenhill's part: 'parochial' and an 'easy lampoon'.⁵⁵ However, this is to underplay Ravenhill's use of satiric humour in this nightmare clash of generation and class. Moreover, it ignores the dramatic transition. The play's archetypal monster is now the small child, who evolves into the twisted capitalist of liberal nightmares, with an idiolect tailored to suit an infant archetype.

Connected to this evolution of class conflict, is the way in which Ravenhill codes the class difference in terms of food and the body. This is clearly not explored in Bakhtinian terms because there is no sense of cyclical fertility to be derived from the Soldier's missing head. Here the body works from a social and cultural angle that connects cultural tastes with class, as in Pierre Bourdieu's work.⁵⁶ For, despite his wounds, the Soldier's low status is expressed in terms of his alleged desire for 'smoking' and 'bad food', whilst Alex's good diet and class superiority are embodied in 'fine teeth', 'beautiful hair' and 'skin'.⁵⁷ Such a focus on the 'Beautiful' flesh has the effect of again suggesting an underlying subtext of myth or a fairy-tale, perhaps 'Beauty and the Beast' with its focus on physical attributes and monsters. Such possible allusions recall Angela Carter's work in reclaiming fairy-tales from a patriarchal past. As Carter once observed, the body is politically loaded: 'Our flesh arrives to us out of history'.⁵⁸ Yet Ravenhill's focus is on the unbalanced politics of class. And as Julia Twigg, paraphrasing Bourdieu, notes, 'The links between class and the body are complex [...] a mix of the material and symbolic'.⁵⁹ For Ravenhill, class seems so lopsided that his 'Beast' is decapitated and his desirable 'Beauty' is also the character armed with the threatening teeth, evident when angry Alex '*bites the Soldier's hand*'.⁶⁰ We might tenuously argue that the play's class relations here portray the indulged middle-class feeding off the Soldier's corporality and community.

⁵⁵ Caroline McGinn, 'Mark Ravenhill's Iraq Plays Blog,' *Time Out: London*, 7 April 2008 < <http://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/mark-ravenhills-iraq-plays-blog-1> > [1 February 2017]

⁵⁶ See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of The Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984)

⁵⁷ 'War and Peace', p.57.

⁵⁸ Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman And The Ideology of Pornography* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), pp. 37-39.

⁵⁹ Julia Twigg, *The Body in Health and Social Care* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), p. 32.

⁶⁰ 'War and Peace', p.59.

Such a reading, perhaps suggests that Ravenhill sees the war in Iraq in terms that recall Noam Chomsky's understanding. When asked by a journalist in 2003, whether the Iraq war was about 'control over oil', he answered 'Of course it was Iraq's energy resources. It's not even a question.'⁶¹ For Chomsky, Iraq was an Imperialist war for oil, markets and economic power and the coalition Soldiers were simply the working-class means to enable access to that oil. A class reading of the Iraq war seems central to *War and Peace*: in the past the Soldier's home and community have been razed then gentrified to provide an affluent home for Alex's family and class. Now later stage neoliberalism requires that the working-class soldier must fight a Middle Eastern war to keep cheap petrol in Alex's 'SUV' and to assure economic success for Alex's future 'hedge-fund'.⁶²

Despite such an interpretation, Ravenhill ensures that both characters have a reasonable share of the social blame. The Soldier makes this basic point: 'you're a wanker and I'm a cunt.'⁶³ Although Alex is acquiring, pompous and violent, the Soldier is racist, aggressive and unduly entitled, as evident when the soldier argues that he has constructed Britain single-handedly, in a part-justified and part-nationalist rant:

Soldier: Everything exists because of me, because I go out there [...] I am this country. I love this country [...] there's no little cuntin'g kid and his fucking hedge-fund going to stop me [...] all this is worth nothing if we're not out there beating the towelheads.⁶⁴

Following this, in a repeat of the earlier 'tableau' image, the soldier again tries to pull off Alex's head but now the middle-class child aims the gun at the Soldier. As is visually enacted, the two characters are fundamentally antagonistic but inextricably tied to each other by class dependency as well as social and political security. With the characters' social relations made clear, this image of the two characters becomes a notably more politically-enriched moment of 'gestus'. Yet, it is an uneasy dependency. Thus in conclusion, Alex shoots the Soldier in the arm but as he needs him to carry on fighting, he shows his manners:

Alex: Go away. Now, or I'll shoot you in the chest. Thank you for coming.

⁶¹ Noam Chomsky interviewed by Simon Mars, 'Of course it's all about oil', *Gulf News*, 2 December 2003 < <https://chomsky.info/20031202/> > [accessed 29 March 2019]

⁶² 'SUV' stands for Sports Utility Vehicle.

⁶³ 'War and Peace', p.63.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 59 & 62.

The class context and this new iteration of 'gestus', brings the play in resolution towards a more clearly defined Brechtian form; one that has been consistently inferred in the alienating attributed dialogue, the politicised rhetoric and the final visual tableau. For, in Ravenhill's concluding scene, the ultimate agency, the gun, rests in the hands of a cosseted hedge-fund manager.⁶⁵

'*War and Peace*' seems to work as an inverse form of Sarah Kane's celebrated play. In *Blasted*, a realistic domestic scene becomes increasingly symbolic and transposed across Europe. In Ravenhill's play the symbolic Soldier, and to some extent the child Alex, become rounded and 'real' throughout the play. Nonetheless, at least in the first half of the play, *War and Peace* shows the stylistic influence of Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty'. This is apparent in Ravenhill's privileging of the symbolic nature of the characters and foregrounding the sensory impact of a headless soldier and child above plot development. As Vieira argues:

As in Artaud the subordination of the narrative [...] to the actual performance is an important part of Ravenhill's understanding of theatre, in which the potential of the stage is given utmost importance.⁶⁶

Although this appears a persuasive analysis, *War and Peace* expresses a clear political and social purpose that underpins and develops throughout the play. This political evolution of the play together with the estranging techniques and still-life 'gestus', suggests the dominant influence of Brecht. In some ways, Ravenhill's use of sensational character images and hints of the fairy-tale archetype can themselves function as distancing strategies, by ensuring the audience do not empathise with either character to the detriment of the play's message. Vieira makes the same point in discussing Ravenhill's plays, by noting that Brechtian dramatic techniques are themselves markedly similar to 'Artaud's various alienation techniques'.⁶⁷ Arguably, Ravenhill is using Artaud for Brechtian ends, as Laeara implies:

An overall purpose can be detected in this epic, which is perhaps closer to a Brechtian epic play than might immediately be recognised. The structure and the

⁶⁵ For an exploration of Brecht's gestus, see Joy H. Calico, *Brecht at the Opera* (Berkeley: University of California, 2008), p. 50.

⁶⁶ Fatima Vieira, *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the page, on Screen, on Stage*, p. 309.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

characters are symbolically charged but carefully individualized.⁶⁸

Despite this, Jenny Spencer sees Ravenhill's play series as almost exclusively indebted to Brecht's own series of political plays about the rise of Nazi Germany. As such, she argues that Ravenhill's series is avowedly political and highly charged:

With its combination of emotionally involving scenarios, barely suppressed anger, and cool political critique, Ravenhill's *Shoot / Get Treasure / Repeat* bears striking resemblance in structure and theme to Brecht's *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich* [...] updated to address the current war on terror [...] the underlying questions are: how do rape, torture, [...], trauma, evil, and war's collateral damage become a normalized part of our everyday lives? [...] how are the lives we lead already implicated in the war on terror?⁶⁹

In *War and Peace*, the apparently dream-like and subconscious fears of a distant war are slowly brought home to the conscious surface of the drama by a process of inserting both characters' historic context and class. As Ravenhill has explained in interview, however sensational, his plays are 'above all, political plays.'⁷⁰

This dramatic process seems to suggest that, for Ravenhill, the root cause of our nagging contemporary fears and our international conflicts may seem innate and primeval, but they are in fact material and structural. However, this clash between symbol and reality is never quite resolved in a play that is short on the class empathy and social catharsis that is recognisable in a Brecht text. Significantly, the same binary conflict is apparent in many of the plays in the *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* series and the combination of symbol and social seems fundamental to Ravenhill's political understanding. This is a factor innate to this play's characters, the wealthy one has the given material name of Alex but the abject Soldier is provided only with a common noun.

2.4 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (P.T.S.D.)

The working-class Soldier in *War and Peace* has disturbed sleep, mental wounds and an inability to make a relationship work or find a place to sleep. All these clues seem to

⁶⁸ Margherita Laera, 'Mark Ravenhill's *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*: A Treasure Hunt In London', *Theatre Forum*, No. 35 (San Diego: University of California, 2009), p.5. < <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/57302/1/RavenhillFINAL.pdf> > [accessed 31 January 2017]

⁶⁹ Jenny Spencer, 'Shoot / Get Treasure/Repeat', *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 60, No.2 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 285-288.

⁷⁰ Mark Ravenhill, 'You Can't Ban Violence From The Stage', *The Guardian*, 28 April 2008, < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2008/apr/28/youcantbanviolencefromthe> > [accessed 2 February 2017]

allude to a supporting context for this combat veteran of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This is a notable theme that runs through the combat plays concerning the Iraq war. P.T.S.D. is perhaps simply a supporting context in Ravenhill's work but in other plays, such as Simon Stephens' *Motortown*, Owen Sheers' *The Two Worlds of Charlie F* and Jonathan Lichtenstein's *The Pull of Negative Gravity*, it is presented in detail as a dominating illness that destroys the personal and social lives of the traumatised combat soldier.

In Britain, mental illnesses are those officially classified by the International Classification of Diseases and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, (D.S.M.). Both see Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (P.T.S.D.), as characterised by the following symptoms:

- Intrusive thoughts or memories.
- Feeling isolated or disconnected from oneself and other people.
- Difficulty concentrating/ Increased temper or anger.
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep/ Hypervigilance.⁷¹

As noted above, P.T.S.D connected to combat experience has been long known through culture. The National Center for P.T.S.D. in the U.S.A., comments:

Shakespeare's Henry IV appears to meet many, if not all, of the diagnostic criteria for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as have other heroes and heroines throughout the world's literature.⁷²

Drama and literature seem to have been some of the earliest cultural forms to mark the experience of war as causing a profound mental and social disturbance. Despite the high-cultural references above, in 1972 the Motown popular music label released a spoken word album about the black experience called *Guess Who's Coming Home: Black Fighting Men Recorded Live in Vietnam*. This is a spoken-word recording by Wallace Terry of the horrors that young black men suffered and still experience today. The opening soldier provides first-hand observation of the problem:

We've seen things that really make you wanna freak, I mean blow your mind.

⁷¹ Sarah Staggs, 'Symptoms & Diagnosis of PTSD', *PsychCentral* < <https://psychcentral.com/lib/symptoms-and-diagnosis-of-ptsd/> > [accessed 9 February 2017]

⁷² Matthew J. Friedman, 'PTSD: History and Overview', *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs* < <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/ptsd-overview.asp> > [accessed 9 February 2017]

What they been through in the bush plus what they have to go to back to in the world... they just can't face it.⁷³

Yet it was only in the 2013 D.S.M. update, that P.T.S.D. was considered an illness with its own distinct criteria of causes and symptoms. P.T.S.D. is not, of course, the only form of mental illness experienced by, nor is it limited to, combat soldiers. Nevertheless, it is a profound risk ensuing from combat trauma. *Combat Stress*, the British charity for veterans with Mental Health issues, notes its prevalence:

The majority of Armed Forces personnel deployed do not experience lasting mental wounds [...] However, around 1 in 25 Regulars and 1 in 20 Reservists will report symptoms of PTSD following deployment in Iraq or Afghanistan. [...] 1 in 5 Veterans are likely to suffer from a common mental illness - such as depression, anxiety or substance misuse.⁷⁴

Despite these figures, the charity notes:

Combat Stress has experienced an increase in the number of referrals year on year. However, recent studies suggest this is due to an increased awareness of the symptoms.⁷⁵

Recent American research suggests P.T.S.D. has associations with class and also ethnicity. Charles R. Marmar's long-term study of Black Vietnam veterans produced at New York University in 2016, found that Vietnam-serving soldiers who were:

High school dropouts had 5 times the risk of developing P.T.S.D. compared to being a college graduate.⁷⁶

In a BBC interview, he notes that youth, class and education levels were a key indicator, because the 'less well educated' the soldier, the 'less prepared' he or she is for the 'realities of war.'⁷⁷

⁷³ No Artist, 'Guess Who's Coming Home: Black Fighting Men Recorded Live in Vietnam', *Motown Record Corporation*, Discogs, 1972 <<https://www.discogs.com/No-Artist-Guess-Whos-Coming-Home-Black-Fighting-Men-Recorded-Live-In-Vietnam/release/817904>> [accessed 9 February 2017]

⁷⁴ Combat Stress, 'Myth Busters', *Combat Stress (Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society)*, <<http://www.combatstress.org.uk/veterans/myth-busters/>> [accessed 9 February 2017]

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Quoted by Charles Marmar in Alvin Hall, 'The Double War', Iplayer Radio: *Radio 4*, 22 September 2016 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07w5b5j/episodes/guide>> [accessed 9 February 2017]; Report is C. R. Marmar, (multiple eds), 'Course of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder 40 Years After the Vietnam War', *Jama Psychiatry*, Vol. 9, Iss. 72 (New York: Jama, 2015)

⁷⁷ Ibid.

A similar 2013 study undertaken by the non-profit group *ForcesWatch* in the U.K. found, according to Harvey Thompson, the,

Fact that young soldiers from disadvantaged backgrounds are most exposed to battlefield risk and are more vulnerable to post-conflict mental health problems.⁷⁸

Combat Stress refutes the claim that P.T.S.D affects just the young and usually low-ranking disproportionately, by arguing that P.T.S.D.:

Can affect any member of the Armed Forces regardless of rank [...] We have treated veterans of various ranks [...] from Privates up to Brigadiers.⁷⁹

Combat Stress receives some funding from the Ministry of Defence.⁸⁰ According to the *ForcesWatch* findings, other available British research on P.T.S.D. is limited, even distorted, by the fact that 'most of the quantitative research in the UK is directly funded by the Ministry of Defence.'⁸¹

Such research suggests that disadvantaged social groups in Britain who make a large percentage of the lower ranks in the British Army, may be more susceptible to P.T.S.D. or similar illness. Although this is clearly a contentious argument, it perhaps gives documentary plays like Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* a more pronounced class emphasis combined with a concern for how soldiers are cared for on their return. Burke's play explores the experiences of young soldiers from a disadvantaged community in Scotland. As the play moves towards recounting the killing of the Black Watch soldiers' colleagues at a roadblock in Fallujah, a journalist asks the ex-combatants what it is like shooting at the enemy? The least talkative ex-soldier Stewarty becomes increasingly aggressive and suggests the journalist experiences it himself by finding a pedestrian and

⁷⁸ Harvey Thompson, 'Young Working Class Soldiers Most Exposed to War Trauma, UK Report Finds', *World Socialist Web Site*, 27 January 2014 < <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2014/01/27/wary-j27.html> > [accessed 9 February 2017]

⁷⁹ Combat Stress, 'Myth Busters'.

⁸⁰ For *Combat Stress* funding See M.P. Mark Lancaster's answer in Parliament: 'Veterans: Mental Health Services: Written Question – 12333', *www.Parliament.UK: Parliament Business: Written Questions and Answers*, Parliament, 9 October 2015 < <http://www.parliament.uk/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/commons/2015-10-19/12333> > [accessed 8 February 2017]

⁸¹ ForcesWatch, 'The Last Ambush?: Aspects of Mental Health in the British Armed Forces', *ForcesWatch*, October 2013 < http://www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/The_Last_Ambush_web.pdf > [accessed 9 February 2017]

then 'kick[ing] them tay death'. Whilst some of Stewarty's friends usher him out, the others comment:

Granty: He's got depression.

Cammy: He had to get bugged out ay.

Granty: After a couple ay boys we kent got killed.

Cammy: Some boys didnay take it too good ay.

Writer: I understand.

Cammy: You dinnay.⁸²

2.5 *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* by Owen Sheers (2012)



Figure. 4: *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* Theatre Royal Haymarket 2014. Directed by Stephen Rayne. The picture shows the early cast.⁸³

The Two Worlds of Charlie F. provides perhaps the most highly charged and empathetic exploration of the soldiers' experience in the Middle East wars of Iraq and Afghanistan. Devised in the latter stages of the New Labour period, it is a personal exploration of war injury that seems to refute any class-based interpretation of soldier's trauma by employing a diverse range of ranks and regiments to perform their own lived experience

⁸² Gregory Burke, *Black Watch* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p.61.

⁸³ Used within copyright exception. Copyright owned by Cylla von Tiedeman: see <
<http://www.womanthology.co.uk/two-worlds-charlie-f-giving-injured-service-personnel-voices-theatre-theatre-producer-alice-driver/>> [accessed 19 March 2019]

of combat and severe impairment. In marked contrast to the other plays of the era, this performance was almost exclusively non-professional.

Alice Driver, who instigated the project and the play, was working as a theatre producer at the Theatre Royal Haymarket when she met a surgeon helping injured soldiers recover from the Middle Eastern wars.⁸⁴ Having experience in drama therapy, she offered to use theatre to help the soldiers recover and readjust. She notes:

The project is about [...] using the processes of theatre to boost their confidence and self esteem.⁸⁵

With the support of Trevor Nunn, the MoD, The Theatre Royal and the British Legion, Driver set up the *Bravo 22* theatre company in 2011.⁸⁶ Initially, the idea was to get injured soldiers to attend a series of workshops alongside professional actors and build towards a devised end production. The workshops were so successful and autobiographical that Driver employed writer Owen Sheers alongside Director Stephen Rayne, and deployed them to dramatise the soldiers' stories. The consequent play: *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* was funded by the Service charities The British Legion and Help for Heroes, alongside the arm of the MoD that supports injured troops. As such, this play's funding is a combination of subsidies from the Arts Council (through the Theatre Royal) and central government, via the MoD, together with public charity support.⁸⁷

In its form and content, *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* foreshadows later documentary productions, such as Lola Arias' 2016 work *Minefield*, which explores the Falklands War from the perspective of now-aged veterans from England and Argentina. *Minefield* presents the individual lives of actual veterans, whose reminiscences seem to be a central focus of the titular *Minefield*. Lyn Gardner notes the sometimes insecure and

⁸⁴ Jo Roberts, 'Sevenoaks theatre producer Alice Driver is behind The Two Worlds of Charlie F, a play about war which is helping heroes', *Kent Online* < <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/whats-on/news/welcome-to-our-war-16040/> > [accessed 15 March 2019]

⁸⁵ Callum, 'Culture Desk: The Two Worlds of Charlie F', *Access: Disability Without Limits*, 22 April 2014 < <http://www.accessmagazine.co.uk/culture-desk-two-worlds-charlie-f/> > [accessed 15 April 2019]

⁸⁶ British Legion, 'Bravo 22 Company: Recovery and wellbeing through the arts', *British Legion* < <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/recovery/bravo-22-company-recovery-and-wellbeing-through-the-arts/> > [accessed 15 March 2019]

⁸⁷ Ministry of Defence, 'The Two Worlds of Charlie F Begins National Tour', *Gov.uk*, 18 July 2012, < <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-two-worlds-of-charlie-f-begins-national-tour> ?> [accessed 13 March 2019]

troubling nature of these memories, and how the Falklands' veterans reconsider 'recollections which have either become burnished through frequent retelling or have remained buried.'⁸⁸

Such concern over the veracity of memory and narrative is notably absent in *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, where Alice Driver argues that her ultimate aim was purely to use theatre 'to give a voice to this group of individuals'.⁸⁹ This was a potentially risky (for the soldiers) project, as the MoD cautiously observed, this was the 'first time' they 'Had allowed a theatre company access to their wounded soldiers'.⁹⁰

Owen Sheers and Stephen Rayne closely interviewed the wounded soldiers, and turned their harrowing stories into the form of a play. Largely the same soldiers then presented the final production, re-enacting their own experiences of combat trauma but employing adopted names for their stage personas. Although the play is therapeutic, according to the press release, it has a wider concern to explore a:

Soldier's view of service, injury and recovery. Moving from the war [...] through the dream world of morphine-induced hallucinations to the physio, [...], the play explores the consequences of injury, both physical and psychological.⁹¹

The rehearsal and production process for *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* became a form of continuing recovery for the soldiers. By building towards a final performance, they repeatedly revisited and unpicked their own locus of trauma. Such an approach is effectively Verbatim theatre as therapy and suggests using theatre in an adapted form of Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Boal explored the concept of utilising the structures of theatrical narrative to allow participants to establish a different perspective on their own lives.⁹² This could be achieved by constructing and working through a personal but distanced narrative in a communal setting. Boal suggested this

⁸⁸ Lyn Gardner, 'Minefield: The Falklands' drama taking veterans back to the battle', *The Guardian*, 26 May 2016 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/may/26/minefield-falklands-theatre-veterans-battle> > [accessed 15 March 2019]

⁸⁹ Amanda Malpas, 'P.R., Press Release' on *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, < <http://www.charlie-f.com/userfiles/press-release-3.pdf> > [accessed 17 February 2017]

⁹⁰ Ministry of Defence, 'The Two Worlds of Charlie F.' UK Tour.'

⁹¹ Amanda Malpas, 'P.R., Press Release' on *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*

⁹² A concept, reputedly, first suggested in Joan Littlewood's designs for a 'theatre of everyday life', to take place in her 1960s version of the Millennium Dome: the *Fun Palace*. See Nadine Holdsworth, *Joan Littlewood: Routledge Performance Practitioners* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 34.

process of exploring personal perspectives is innate to theatre:

In its most essential sense, theatre is the capacity possessed by human beings to observe [...] themselves in the act of seeing, of thinking their emotions [...] they can see themselves today and imagine themselves tomorrow.⁹³

The character Charlie F. echoes Boal in discussing how traumatised soldiers must establish a new perspective when back in civilian life. They must 'Adapt and overcome.'⁹⁴ Charlie F. is Corporal Charlie Fowler played by Lance Corporal Cassidy Little, a former Royal Marine who lost his leg while serving in Afghanistan. Little plays the lead role of a renamed character with the same experience. When asked about the potential further trauma of reliving the memory of losing a limb repeatedly on a public stage, he felt the process was beneficial:

I am experiencing it so frequently on stage so it feels like there are no demons any more. It becomes educational.⁹⁵

Because of its unusual nature, *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* received a great deal of media attention that included a BBC-commissioned documentary called *Theatre of War*.⁹⁶ This explored the lives of the soldiers together with the challenges and successes of the rehearsals and final production. Consequently, this Verbatim documentary play was also accompanied by its own documentary, a multi-layering of experience that seems to echo the soldiers' own performed experience of combat trauma flashbacks and overlapping realities.

The final outcome constituted two performances at the Theatre Royal Haymarket in London, in January 2012, followed by a broader release in 2014. The performances were widely and heartily acclaimed with one reviewer, Anne Cox, noting of a later production:

I have seen thousands of plays in the 38 years I've been reviewing but none have been as honest and inspirational as the astonishing factual-based drama *The Two Worlds Of Charlie F* [sic].⁹⁷

⁹³ Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 11.

⁹⁴ Owen Sheers, *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014), p. 71.

⁹⁵ Anon., 'The MoD Was Concerned it Would look like a Freak-Show' – *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, *Nottingham Post*, 10 April 2014 < <http://www.nottinghampost.com/mod-concerned-look-like-freak-worlds-charlie-f/story-20943138-detail/whatson/story.html> > [accessed 18 February 2017]

⁹⁶ Chris Terrill (dir.), 'Theatre of War', *BBC*, 26 June 2012 (London: Uppercut Films, 2012)

⁹⁷ Anne Cox, 'The Two Worlds of Charlie F (Review). Bravo Charlie for Inspirational Drama.', *Buckingham Today*, 16 March 2014 < <http://www.buckinghamtoday.co.uk/whats-on/theatre->

Perhaps because the play is not professional, nor is its meaning solely located within its performance, *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* has received scant academic scrutiny. Yet it is a successful and popular form of Verbatim play that explores the first-hand experience of war and involves overlapping layers of 'real' testimony, as the soldiers re-enact dramatized versions of their lived experience under assumed names. As lived and performed experience, it contrasts and perhaps develops the documentary form of Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*.

The Two Worlds of Charlie F. begins with a searing representation of combat trauma as the young soldier Corporal Charlie Fowler hidden behind a screen, screams and gesticulates in shadow at a nurse in the bed of a recovery hospital. He is hallucinating and convinced he has been taken hostage by insurgents:

Nurse: You're in Birmingham, in hospital –

Charlie: / Fuck you, you Taliban bitch!⁹⁸

Notably, the play posits mental trauma as the dominating experience from the outset, as the point where Charlie's 'world' of war and 'world' of home merge. Yet, once recovered, Charlie seems firmly located in the world of home as, on crutches, he speaks and reaffirms the persistence of mental trauma while linking it to the physical:

Charlie: The only problem when you come back [...] not all of you comes back at once.

*He lifts up his stump*⁹⁹

As is maintained across the play, the scene jumps ahead in time and Charlie is joined on stage by a host of other soldiers whose only commonality is that they have been severely injured in military service. Their diversity of experience seems underlined as the twelve soldiers appear onstage as male and female, Privates, Sergeants, Captains and Majors. They emerge across the stage introducing themselves and their experience so that their stories of combat overlap and coalesce out of audibility. It is a strategy repeated later in the play when the soldiers provide more detailed stories of their experience. As Janina

[and-comedy/the-two-worlds-of-charlie-f-review-bravo-charlie-for-inspirational-drama-1-5940274](http://www.bbc.com/culture/2017/02/170218_the_two_worlds_of_charlie_f_review_bravo_charlie_for_inspirational_drama_1-5940274) > [accessed 18 February 2017]

⁹⁸ *Charlie F.*, p. 9.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Wierzoch describes, the soldiers:

Stand to attention on stage and give accounts of their military careers [...] As one after the other tells their story, the others keep reciting in a low tone until the histories resound in a polyphony of voices.¹⁰⁰

The point, as replicated in the skipping narrative time and intercut scenes, is to replicate the soldiers' P.T.S.D in terms of non-linear time. Thus Sheers introduces into the play's structural form a series of individual war experiences that continually merge and interrupt a flowing narrative or scenic action. At one point, the soldiers' historic narrative assumes they are young, eager soldiers in training. However, the stage presence of the severely wounded veterans alongside the intercutting of explosions and screaming, privileges the time to post-trauma. In a similar example, during Charlie's later therapy session, Rayne uses a back-dropped projection to show a soldier on full-alert scanning for I.E.D.s. to signify the soldiers' unrelenting anxiety. In this way we are made to understand that mental trauma is, in Cathy Caruth's noted description, a 'wound that cries out' constantly badgering the victim's mind in search of a 'reality or truth' that is lost in 'time and context.'¹⁰¹ Janina Wierzoch sees the play's form as symbolising the wounded soldier's 'circular' temporality where the:

Soldiers *past* experience of war overwrites their *present* reality; war is ever 'still there' in lived temporality.¹⁰²

Despite this central theme, it is the stark visual impact of the physical wounds that dominates. Many of the actors drastically signify their experience by performing with missing and fragmented limbs. Wierzoch notes the impact of the soldiers who have:

Lost legs, walk on crutches, roll onto the stage in a wheelchair or show other signs of permanent injury.¹⁰³

These visual images overpower the audience's senses and suggest a narrative of mutilation and loss barely addressed by the play. Rifleman Daniel Shaw's recount, via his character Rifleman Leroy Jenkins, is a stark example. Leroy describes losing his legs

¹⁰⁰ Janina Wierzoch, 'Time and Temporalities in Contemporary British War Plays –Roy Williams's *Days of Significance* and Owen Sheers' *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*' *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English*, Vol. 3, Iss. 1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 119.

¹⁰¹ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 4.

¹⁰² Janina Wierzoch, 'Time and Temporalities in Contemporary British War Plays', p. 121.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

to an I.E.D. in Afghanistan, in dialogue that recounts memories so grim they can only bear the weight of bleak humour:

Leroy: My right leg was still hanging by a thread but as they carried me away it fell off and rolled into a ditch... They couldn't reach it, so the lads gave me a stick and said 'Here's your fucking leg.'¹⁰⁴

This, it seems, is an experience that happened apparently verbatim to Rifleman Daniel Shaw. In the *Telegraph*, he recalls the difficulty of performing his own story:

"It was incredibly tough doing that for the first time - I was in tears on stage [...] But doing it over and over again has helped."¹⁰⁵

Despite the jolting force of the many visual wounds, it is mental trauma that seems to connect the soldiers in a communal experience as Charlie F. terms it, 'the oldest regiment there is. The regiment of the wounded.'¹⁰⁶ Amongst performed monologues are tales of individual tragedies about the inability to connect emotionally with families and the lure of self-medication via drugs, alcohol and self-harm. This is combined with other symptomatic portraits of a combat trauma that make soldiers terrified of fireworks and balloons but, most commonly, the night-time.¹⁰⁷ To suggest the unity of this experience, it is expressed in a choral refrain:

It's not reliving it. It's living it [...] Worse at night, it's always worse at night.¹⁰⁸

The religious intonation of the chant hints at the medieval horrors of rack and fire. Rifleman Leroy recalls how he cannot sleep in the broad expanse of a double-bed because he dreams about being on desert patrol but, as he observes, still in a 'fucking wheelchair' and so:

Leroy: If I sleep in a corner up against a wall, holding my stumps that makes it go away.¹⁰⁹

As Matt Trueman summarises, although:

¹⁰⁴ *Charlie F.*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁵ Dominic Cavendish, 'The Two Worlds of Charlie F, Richmond Theatre, Review', *The Telegraph*, 21 March 2014 < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/10714446/The-Two-Worlds-of-Charlie-F-Richmond-Theatre-review.html> > [accessed 18 February 2017]

¹⁰⁶ *Charlie F.*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-57.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

You can clearly see their physical injuries [...] there is the other damage: the nightmares, the depression, the relationships that have crumbled.¹¹⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Hill's portrayal of Major Daniel Thomas adds a sense of timelessness to this 'other damage'. He recounts the historic and current ways of classifying combat trauma in an exhaustive list, from 'Melancholia' through 'Shellshock', 'Lack of Moral Fibre' to 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder'.¹¹¹ This list details the perennial nature of combat trauma but also suggests how classifications work to constrict and even stigmatise these multi-faceted conditions.

Equally timeless is the impact on the family. Earlier Iraq and Afghanistan plays such as Steve Gilroy's *Motherland* (2009) and Esther Wilson's *Ten Tiny Toes* (2008), focused on the domestic perspective of wives and mothers who have partners and sons serving as soldiers in the Middle East. Gilroy's play offers a series of often rhetorical questions about the war and its consequences for their loved ones. Wilson's furious and Verbatim play portrays grieving mothers whose anger leads them to join the real-life 'Military Families Against the War' campaign group. Sheers' play also portrays (using female actors) worried and alienated mothers and wives but these seem deprived of much dialogue and without agency: at once peripheral to the play's focus on the male and female soldiers. Mothers and wives are mostly seen through mimed responses to their loved ones returning, and are rarely given dialogue.

Nonetheless, the *Two Worlds of Charlie F* includes numerous images of injured ex-soldiers whose war trauma is presented ripping families apart; thus impairing even those areas of life where the most support could be obtained.¹¹² Although the perspective is on the soldiers, Sheers felt this is a fundamental point because, as he observes in *Theatre of War*, families bear the brunt and he wanted the play to explain exactly 'What those three letters mean, this is what war is'.¹¹³ Ariane de Waal suggests that Sheers 'ostensibly' achieves this as 'the emphasis on injuries points to a thorough engagement with the costs of war', if only in terms of the coalition soldier. As such, this

¹¹⁰ Matt Trueman, 'The Two Worlds of Charlie F review – An unflinching look at life after war', *The Guardian*, 24 March 2014 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/mar/24/two-worlds-charlie-f-review> > [accessed 17 February 2017]

¹¹¹ *Charlie F.*, p. 58.

¹¹² Steve Gilroy, *Motherland* (London: Oberon Books, 2009) & Esther Wilson, *Ten Tiny Toes* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2008)

¹¹³ Chris Terrill (dir.), *Theatre of War* (London: Uppercut Films, 2012), BBC 1, 26 June 2012 46:37–46:40.

is not a pacifist or critical play, but this is a partial view of war. As the suffering of wives and families are largely only suggested, while as de Waal also notes there is a further, 'crucial elision, for the injuries and deaths inflicted on the Other are rendered invisible.'¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, any political or social criticism is clearly antithetical to the style of this production. As the play is closely associated with the MoD and funded by the Royal British Legion, it might be expected to foster a patriotic agenda.¹¹⁵ Yet Sheers and director Stephen Rayne go to some length to ensure this is not a readily available interpretation. In a play that recounts the youthful bravado of joining and training for the army, there are no flags, regimental colours or military/folk music that might suggest any larger context. Matt Trueman suggests that throughout its many performances,

The show retains its sincerity, presenting the facts and feelings of military life without flinching and never forgetting that it's putting humans on stage, not heroics.¹¹⁶

Stage sets are largely absent, with props such as beds, hospital screens and therapy mats used against a blank wall. Diversity of the soldiers in country, ethnic group and rank is foregrounded, and the political tone remains benignly neutral. Any hint of nationalism is quickly dampened as with the version of post-colonialism expressed by the lead character Charlie, who explains he is a Royal Marine but also a:

Charlie: Canadian ... and don't you fucking forget it. Or the Fijians, the Trinidadians, the Gambians, the Gurkhas. Oh yeah thanks to your over-industrious forbears, we're all in this ... shit together, all us citizens of the Commonwealth.¹¹⁷

This use of colonial soldiers is a judicious way of ensuring that flag-waving patriotism is side-stepped. However, this is perhaps slightly misleading, as the performance I saw seemed dominated by regional British voices.¹¹⁸ Similarly, although there are two

¹¹⁴ Ariane de Waal, 'Staging Wounded Soldiers: The Affects and Effects of Post-Traumatic Theatre', *Performance Paradigm*, Iss. 11, eds. M. Mumford & U. Garde (New South Wales: Open Journal, 2015), p.23.

¹¹⁵ Ariane de Waal, 'Staging Wounded Soldiers', p.11.

¹¹⁶ Matt Trueman, 'The Two Worlds of Charlie F'.

¹¹⁷ *Charlie F.*, p. 14.

¹¹⁸ Stephen Rayne, *The Two Worlds of Charlie F* (London: Uppercut Films, 2012), DVD.

commissioned officers in the production, the vast majority of the characters are non-commissioned officers or Privates. This arguably impairs Sheers' foregrounding of diversity.

This is nonetheless in marked contrast to *Black Watch*, which privileges Scottish and working-class soldiers. Similarly, in *Black Watch* class, history and even military or folk music are introduced and then its connotations roundly scrutinized. In *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, questions of class and military ritual are persistently avoided. Songs are mostly created for the scenic theme and the only folk songs used are the music-hall song 'Henry the Eighth', heard when Charlie F is disorientated from waking up wounded, as well as the nursery rhyme 'The Grand Old Duke of York', sung by the soldiers as part of their recovery process. Both songs here seem to suggest a sense of confusion as to identity and, potentially, the pointless waste of military power. Yet, seeing any minor political critique is a stretch in theatres where Royal British Legion buckets line the exit corridors. The folk tunes as with the use of pop-music: *Anthony and the Johnson's* 'Hope There's Someone'; and *Snow Patrol's* 'Chasing Cars', firmly suggest the overriding concerns are about the soldiers being abandoned by the state, the public and their own families. A point the MoD underlines, since for them the play is about the 'integration of service personnel into the community.'¹¹⁹ Whilst such political care is perhaps necessary in maintaining the focus on the soldiers, this absence of historical context perhaps works to isolate the soldiers from their own understanding of society and culture.

The play ends with the *Snow Patrol* lyrics 'Would you lie with me and just forget the world?' playing as all the soldiers come on stage. Emotions are heightened, as de Waal explains:

As the song increases in volume, the stage fills with wounded soldiers, [...] looking into the auditorium. This confrontation turns the spectatorial act of looking into a reciprocal gaze.¹²⁰

All this occurs over and behind a speech by Charlie that expresses a hope to unify the two worlds of the soldier at war and at home, as well as the soldiers and the British

¹¹⁹ Ministry of Defence, 'The Two Worlds of Charlie F.' UK Tour.', *Gov.UK*, 19 March 2014 < <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-two-worlds-of-charlie-f-uk-tour> > [accessed 17 February 2017]

¹²⁰ Ariane de Waal, 'Staging Wounded Soldiers', p.27.

public. Charlie's final message is: 'We don't live in two worlds, do we? We live in one.'¹²¹ Whilst the audience have seen vicious physical wounds, the play's conclusion returns us to the soldiers' mental concerns, their fears of personal rejection and of social isolation. As Wierzoch notes, the end of the play expresses a hope for 'the possibility of reconciliation' with the soldier's own past and with a community of active support.¹²²

Perhaps because this play seems loaded with authentic voices in continuing pain, the final scene usually prompted an overpowering cathartic reaction. De Waal notes:

While I seemed to share a tear-filled sympathy for the performers who held our gaze with many of my fellow audience members, I found myself bound to the soldiers on the terms of an emotional contract.¹²³

This play is a relatively contemporary form of documentary theatre functioning as personal and social therapy but it is also aided by a markedly traditional, even Aristotelian, emotional purgation from the audience.

Most newspaper reviewers commented on the visibility of the audience's emotional response. Dominic Cavendish in *The Telegraph* observed that even in later performances of the play that:

To judge by the sobs and wild applause witnessed this week at Richmond Theatre, audiences are still feeling the full force of a show that deploys music, movement and song in its stirring arsenal.¹²⁴

In Augusto Boal's approach to socially therapeutic theatre he notably distrusted Aristotelian catharsis. Boal believed catharsis was 'inherently bourgeois' because it functions to justify social failures by reinstating the dramatized (but essentially political) events into an acceptable form of stasis, restoring 'psychosocial equilibrium'.¹²⁵ As such, it is possible to critique Sheers' play for functioning to obscure the political connotations. Yet, in *The Rainbow of Desire* Boal drew a distinction between Aristotelian and Morenian catharsis, amongst other cathartic forms of theatre. Morenian catharsis refers to the work of the founder of psychodrama, and forerunner of Drama

¹²¹ *Charlie F.*, p. 79.

¹²² Janina Weirzoch, 'Time and Temporalities in Contemporary British War Plays', p. 121.

¹²³ Ariane de Waal, 'Staging Wounded Soldiers', p.27.

¹²⁴ Dominic Cavendish, 'The Two Worlds of Charlie F, Richmond Theatre, Review', *The Telegraph*, 21 March 2014 < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/10714446/The-Two-Worlds-of-Charlie-F-Richmond-Theatre-review.html> > [accessed 18 February 2017]

¹²⁵ Jean Fernandez, *Victorian Servants Class and the politics of Literacy* (London: Routledge, 2009), p.74.

Therapy, Jacob Levy Moreno. In the *Case of Barbara*, Moreno discusses how he made a patient Barbara, suffering from unresolved anger issues, play the role of an irascible and violent character in his 'troupe'.¹²⁶ In so doing, in Boal's summation, she was 'purified' of the 'violence and hatred that were causing her suffering' and this allowed her to overcome barriers and so 'adapt to her social life'.¹²⁷ Morenian catharsis is perhaps more allied to the soldier's individual battles with their outer disabilities and inner demons, than the Aristotelian version. However, for the audience the play stages the social cost of war as witnessed through each soldier's personal suffering. Consequently, the play becomes a cathartic event working to expunge social guilt and return the community to a psycho-social equilibrium. Aided by the absence of military and political discussion, the war remains ultimately 'normalised'.¹²⁸

The overwhelming cathartic approach means the play is an emotionally wrought experience that immerses the audience into the apparently real lives and real pains of these inspirational soldiers. Yet, despite the monologues of Charlie and later the Psychologist, there are no characters or scenes who help the audience to detach themselves from the sentiment or to provide a self-reflexive comment on the authenticity of proceedings. As such, the audience's interpretation is unmediated and this is at the cost of an intellectual negotiation with the play. Ariane De Waal argues that Sheers' play gives the audience access not only to the soldiers':

Lived experiences but to the originary speakers themselves. As the productive tension between absence and presence disappears [...] the spectators' distance to the theatrical representation seems to become diminished.¹²⁹

Because of the play's emotional immediacy and pervasiveness, the audience become psychologically entrenched in the character's experience. This is an evident source of the play's success but makes it unlikely that, for example, the spectator might consider these struggling young men in terms of being armed combat soldiers, each as a 'steely

¹²⁶ See John Nolte, *The Philosophy, Theory and Methods of J. L. Moreno: The Man Who Tried to Become God* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 32.

¹²⁷ Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 71.

¹²⁸ Eva Raines book: *Psychodrama: Group Psychotherapy as Experimental Theatre: playing the lead role in your own life* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1997), explores a modern use of psychodrama that has many echoes of *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*

¹²⁹ Ariane de Waal, 'Staging Wounded Soldiers', p.25.

eyed dealer of death' as Charlie notes he was once proud to be.¹³⁰

As such the *Two Worlds of Charlie F*, by not considering its own claims to authenticity, is in marked contrast to plays such as Lola Arias' *Minefield*, which also uses real combat veterans recounting their past experience from the Falkland's war. In Arias' work, the subjectivity of the reminiscences is foregrounded, as Clare Finburgh Delijani notes of one production, 'The six ex-soldiers' means for recounting' include:

Wigs displayed on stands, [...] children's toy models, photographs [...] so that the theatrical experience [...] expose[s] the constructedness both of all theatrical narrative, and of all historical narrative.¹³¹

The Two Worlds of Charlie F. is perhaps ground breaking in providing real wounded soldiers with a format to tell their own stories. Consequently, this is a pioneering form of Verbatim drama. In some ways it is more successful as Verbatim theatre than *Justifying War* or arguably even *Black Watch*, because it has an inbuilt and uncontrived narrative arc where the play addresses meaningful human problems and closes with some human resolution and significant inspiration. Despite this, the soldiers play fictional characters with different names whose lives seem to replicate their own; the emotively charged acting continues to suggest a high level of proximity. However, despite the programme's short biographies, the audience cannot be sure as to what level the original 'document' of the soldiers' experience has been kept authentic. As the characters' names are different to the actors', whilst the characters recounted stories seem identical to the actors', it is unclear quite which aspect of the play is verbatim and which constructed.

Connected to this, one of the defining and debilitating characteristics of P.T.S.D. is the victim's difficulty with being able to purge their horrific experience and cognitively 'file' it safely away. The N.H.S. explains that victims' flashbacks and hallucinations are caused because the memories are effectively stuck in the present and can't be 'properly processed.'¹³² As such, one of the current recommended therapies is Cognitive *Processing* Therapy. Yet Sheers' play is one where the soldiers seem to have already processed their memory, they are fully able to articulate their experience in a language

¹³⁰ *Charlie F.*, p. 52.

¹³¹ Clare Finburgh Delijani, *Watching War on the Twenty-First Century Stage: Spectacles of Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p.282.

¹³² NHS, 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – Causes', *NHS Choices Information*, 6 September 2015 < <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Post-traumatic-stress-disorder/Pages/Causes.aspx> > [accessed 17 February 2017]

vibrant and clear enough to arouse a whole audience. We might argue that communication skills are not always impaired by such trauma, but it is evident that in *Black Watch* Stewarty, (who also apparently experienced combat trauma), is asked sensitive information about who he killed. He replies with aggression, suggesting the interviewer 'find some cunt and kick them tae death.'¹³³ In *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, the Psychologist asks Charlie about the same experience, his response is more measured:

Psychologist: And what about your first contact?

Charlie: Well it kinda found us really. They attacked our compound [...] It was simple you know? They brought the fight to us we won, they lost.¹³⁴

Because Charlie is talking to a Psychologist here we assume he is still in need of support. Yet Charlie's answer does not sound like a verbal response in keeping with someone emotionally trapped by their memories. This seems unexpected in a play that foregrounds combat injury. Ariane De Waal notes the same point with reference to the BBC TV documentary *Theatre of War*. In the play, the character Corporal Roger Smith (played by Corporal Stephen Shaw) appears as a strapping ex-soldier and goes out with his visually more disabled veterans for a night out in a club. Two Businessmen approach and ask a series of crass questions, and one ends up asking Roger: 'what's wrong with you?' Roger fluently puts the Businessman in his place:

Roger: I don't know I broke my back in two places, had discs at C4 and C5 replaced. I'm addicted to meds and sometimes the pain is so bad I collapse and piss myself in public. What's wrong with you?¹³⁵

In the *Theatre of War* documentary, the actor who plays Roger, Stephen Shaw movingly discusses the same experience:

Stephen: I don't really have a social life anymore ... Because basically ... the risk of falling over, because occasionally I've actually pissed myself – with the pain, when you go down, your bladder just lets go ... There's always that ... worry.¹³⁶

The emotional pauses, language selection, the verbal hedging and rephrasing, highlight

¹³³ Gregory Burke, *Black Watch* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p.61.

¹³⁴ *Charlie F.*, p.41 & 42.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.75.

¹³⁶ Chris Terrill (dir.), *Theatre of War* (London: Uppercut Films, 2012). BBC 1, 26 June 2012 45:30–45:57.

the level of trauma that Corporal Shaw's experience has caused. This is markedly different to the play's dialogue. Although the play narrates a different and more masculine social context, there is a clear argument that the full debilitating impact of this soldiers' experience is edited away in the final production. As De Waal notes:

The hesitant articulation of a voice that speaks from a place of damage and embarrassment, is, in the play, converted into a more stabilised speaking position within a coherent self-narrative.¹³⁷

And for her, this is symptomatic of a performance that is not quite verbatim and thus misses a fundamental,

Opportunity to make spectators bear witness to the real person's anxieties and vulnerabilities or motivate a reconsideration of military masculinities in the face of trauma.¹³⁸

These seem compelling points that might undermine the play's veracity as an authentic representation of the soldier's lived experience. However, in this particular play, any criticism has to reflect the fact that these soldiers have experienced horrors so debilitating that the verbatim and authentic truth itself are subjects to be approached with extreme caution. As de Waal also notes, Sheers' editing is justified because, 'This might be seen as [...] the theatrical frame providing protection.'¹³⁹

Undoubtedly Sheers' theatrical strategy is a reflection of his concern to ensure the wellbeing and confidence of his cast. His work may have some problems as verbatim testimony, but it works successfully to enable an unacknowledged cultural voice to be heard and validated in public. The wounded soldier's voice, which Ravenhill seems to imply in *War and Peace*, is often socially muted. Moreover, Sheers' dramatic context allows for personal rehabilitation alongside social recognition. The play's success perhaps itself underlines the flexibility of Verbatim and the continuing popular power of the cathartic theatrical form; one usually now only evident in less visceral dramatic genres, perhaps like musicals. Cassidy Little, makes this point:

This isn't like Miss Saigon. It wasn't created for success, [...] It's not about being a soldier. It's about people recovering – people getting up on their own two feet

¹³⁷ Ariane de Waal, 'Staging Wounded Soldiers', p. 24.

¹³⁸ Ariane de Waal, 'Staging Wounded Soldiers', p.24.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

after they've had their own two feet taken away from them.¹⁴⁰

2.6 *The Pull of Negative Gravity* by Jonathan Lichtenstein (2004) and *Motortown* by Simon Stephens (2006)

I was not an unapologetic advocate of the war in any way and was sensitive to many arguments made against it. But it struck me as simplistic and somehow childlike not to see the war as symptomatic rather than causal. It wasn't that the war was a monstrosity born out of a salvageable world. The world felt malign to me. The war seemed symptomatic of that.¹⁴¹

In the above observation, Simon Stephens argues that the Iraq invasion was borne out of a larger social dis-ease and as such seems to suggest that we should interpret the impact on the soldiers and their suffering in terms of a pervasive cultural and material tension. This seems a relatively radical view but is perhaps replicated in a number of plays of the period, especially Ravenhill's *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* series. In *Play Six: Yesterday An Incident Occurred*, a British media commentator forces the state to approve the hot-iron branding of dissidents and to allow it to take place as reality TV. This, it is argued, will be done in the name of 'democracy and truth'.¹⁴² However, Ravenhill's more abstracted style of performance perhaps compromises the poignancy of his social critique in comparison with the more naturalistic plays by Jonathan Lichtenstein and Simon Stephens.

Both Lichtenstein's *The Pull of Negative Gravity* and Stephens' *Motortown* dramatise a damaged British soldier returning home to an apparently soiled culture, one rural and one urban; local cultures whose problems are so entrenched that the returning soldier, scarred by violence, can only aggravate them. As such, both plays are in marked contrast to the inspiration and optimism of *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*

The Pull of Negative Gravity is a story about a poverty-stricken farming family in rural Wales. The play was first shown at the Traverse theatre Edinburgh, in 2004. It focuses on two military age brothers: Dai and Rhys who at the start toss coins to see who is

¹⁴⁰ Matt Trueman, 'Charlie F and the real theatre of war: 'this isn't like Miss Saigon'', *The Guardian*, 18 March 2014 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/mar/18/two-worlds-of-charlie-f-uk-tour> > [accessed 13 February 2017]

¹⁴¹ Simon Stephens, *Plays 2* (London: Methuen, 2009), p. xvii.

¹⁴² Mark Ravenhill, 'Yesterday An Incident Occurred', *Plays: 3* (London: Methuen, 2013), p.80.

going to go and earn money from soldiering to help save the ailing business of the farm. Dai loses and so he is forced to leave his family and intended wife to go to war in Iraq. Numerous mid-scene flashbacks, suggesting the later combat trauma, present images of a young and healthy Dai, to counter the fact that his absence narratively covers half the play. The gravity of his loss to the family is one of the psychological weights that inform the play's title.

Brother Rhys manages the farm after his father's suicide and falls in love with Dai's fiancée, Bethan. What might seem an illicit love story is impaired by the sense that all around them has become tainted. As if in Iraq, Chinook helicopters vibrate the ground and pepper the Welsh sky carrying battle-burnt British soldiers to hospital. Bethan is an idealistic nurse who cares for these burn victims but is disillusioned because she feels that 'all they want to do is die'.¹⁴³ This portrayal of the impact of war is often politicised as mother Vi stuffs envelopes with sales flyers for Private Health Care, while Bethan provides state care for the army. The war bisects the family and Vi seems to despise philandering son Rhys for not being Dai:

Vi: It should have been Rhys who went. The army might have knocked some sense into him. Then this farm might not be in such a predicament.¹⁴⁴

More emblematically and laced with political comment, the social landscape is soiled. Wealthy speculators from London are badgering Vi to sell her bankrupt farm so they can build holiday homes. Yet for Vi to sell would be to betray generations of her family and be illegal as Vi's farm is effectively contaminated. The poverty-stricken neighbouring farm have fabricated a Foot-and-Mouth outbreak for the insurance money. This has meant that Vi's farm has been classified as infected through geographical proximity and she is unable to sell animals or run a business. This is the financial context for the father who has committed suicide before the play begins, drowning himself and taking the farming skills with him. However, it is also a material tragedy that echoes the rural politics of the time. In 2001, Foot-and-Mouth disease devastated the farming communities of Britain with over 2000 cases being reported. Each case:

¹⁴³ Jonathan Lichtenstein, *The Pull of Negative Gravity* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2004), p.13.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Meant a farm having all of its livestock killed and burned [...] The culling policy saw not just the animals on the affected farm killed, but also all the animals in the surrounding area. [...] Despite these measures the epidemic continued.¹⁴⁵

Long after, this remained a sensitive issue and the government's response was still criticised as ill-judged and economically devastating. In considering the play in 2004, the *Theatre in Wales* reviewer notes:

For there are two kinds of war in this tragedy. The first is the passionless war on the hillfarmers who have just managed to survive, one wreaked by a distant government whose mismanagement of the Foot and Mouth crisis triggers the whole tragedy.¹⁴⁶

This political context for the play overlaps with the Iraq war through the dramatic form of the audible Chinooks as the remnants of another social disaster flies over the already infected landscape. The two political comments seem connected, for the burns victims dominating the sky as they fly to Bethan's hospital are surely, in some manner, meant to recall the blazing cattle fires of 2001. Although Lichtenstein's play never refers to burning livestock, there still remains a connotational parallel as the play seemingly concatenates burnt soldiers into a dramatic metaphor for burning cattle. A sense of unnecessary and negligent state sacrifice seems the context for the farmers and for the soldiers. This is of course added to by the fact that the narrated Foot-and-Mouth outbreak is a con and thus perhaps the Iraq war is to be considered in the same terms. Regardless, Lichtenstein's play connects the Iraq war with the exploited means of production of the Welsh hill farmers. As such, Lichtenstein's naturalistic text is unusual in dramatising the rural society and Iraq war both in the context of state exploitation. Yet, although Lichtenstein's play appears to be a provocative material critique of government policies, the connections between the war and the farm's economy are never transparently expressed.

It is in this context of economic and personal loss that the family hear that Dai has been wounded in Iraq. He returns home in a wheelchair, paralyzed, choking and barely able to communicate. Lynne Walker summarises that:

¹⁴⁵ Claire Bates, 'When Foot-and-Mouth stopped the UK in its Tracks', *BBC News*, 17 February 2016 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-35581830> > [accessed 18 February 2017]

¹⁴⁶ Jeni Williams, 'The Pull of Negative Gravity', *Theatre in Wales: Theatre dance and performance reviews*, 18 August 2004 < http://www.theatrewales.co.uk/reviews/reviews_details.asp?offset=2675&reviewID=793 > [accessed 21 February 2017]

Dai [...] has been spat back home by the system, physically and mentally ravaged by what he has done and what has been done to him.¹⁴⁷

Dai's absence is maintained by his inarticulacy and as a consequence it is unclear how he has and continues to suffer. Although he marries Bethan, she is unable to cope with loving Dai and aims to continue her affair with Rhys. Vi and Rhys do their best to help but Dai is a different man: profane, sexually aggressive and consumed by destructive memories. There is a hint of historic war crimes in Vi's seemingly factual expression of Dai's unarticulated words:

Vi: Women, Children. It was the only thing that you could do [...] You've seen things no one should see; done things no one should do?¹⁴⁸

Dai begs to be killed and, in a clear act of mercy, Vi smothers him with a pillow. The play ends with a further suicide as the guilt-ridden Bethan pretends to try a form of extreme sports by being tied to a Chinook. The idea is to find the point without weight, of negative gravity, behind the cockpit and it becomes clear this was a euphemism for death all along as she undoes her 'harness' and says 'I'm coming' and is killed.¹⁴⁹ Personal loss and political failure are condensed as the machine of war now kills a bereft wife above the Welsh hills.

As perhaps implied in this discussion, one of the difficulties with Lichtenstein's play is its litany of personal tragedy and repeated iterations of suicide. A reviewer of an American production critically comments it is, 'Though not a play to like, *The Pull of Negative Gravity* is one that's hard to ignore.'¹⁵⁰ At times, the play might be argued to approach the realms of farce. This is apparent when Bethan finds she is caring for a badly burned veteran who turns out to be a misidentified Iraqi soldier in one of the few staged presentations of an Iraqi soldier at this time. Yet farce is not quite the sense of the play in performance. As Lyn Gardner observes, the play is:

¹⁴⁷ Lynne Walker, 'The Pull of Negative Gravity, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh', 21 February 2017, *The Independent*, < <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/the-pull-of-negative-gravity-traverse-theatre-edinburgh-50772.html> > [accessed 21 February 2017]

¹⁴⁸ *Pull of Negative Gravity*, p. 63.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁵⁰ Jack Zink, 'Mosaic's Unblinking Look at Gravity of War', *Sun Sentinel*, 25 May 2005 <http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2005-05-25/lifestyle/0505230185_1_war-issues-jonathan-lichtenstein-rich-simone> [accessed 21 February 2017]

Like *The Archers* but with an elemental undertow and a fierce tug of emotion, Lichtenstein's play piles on the tragedy so much it would be faintly comic if it wasn't so carefully judged.¹⁵¹

The management of scenes and delays in revelation ensure that the impact of each new tragic situation is presented with its own narrative space. This is also helped by the malleable approach to the stage set that allows a sense of geographical freedom. At the start, the set seems claustrophobic, primarily made up of a sofa and kitchen sink but there are rocks and boulders slotted in between. In relevant scenes, lighting foregrounds the rocks or the house, as required. Jeni Williams notes the stage set works to merge the personal and the perennial so that:

The boundaries between them and us, nature and culture, the Iraqis and the Welsh are slipping before the show even starts.¹⁵²

What also lightens the tragic litany is the dialogue, which is interspersed with dancing and music, as well as humour. Moreover, the suicides are not simply a continual shudder to the fabric of the dramatic narrative but part of an overall plan by Lichtenstein to concentrate on his chief dramatic focus, P.T.S.D.. The P.T.S.D. statistics do not often discuss the stark facts that, as the playwright comments in the 2005 programme notes:

More soldiers commit suicide during and after a conflict than are killed by enemy actions [...] Already 10% of coalition troop casualties in Iraq are suicides [...] The receiver of these traumatised young men is the family. It is women who bear the brunt.¹⁵³

These figures highlight the danger of untreated combat trauma and this clearly explains not only Dai's death but also the many wounded soldiers unwilling to survive in Bethan's hospital.¹⁵⁴ Consequently, *The Pull of Negative Gravity* takes the exploration of combat trauma and follows it to its mortal conclusion. Because of its naturalistic setting showing Dai's evolution over time, the play makes for a bleak cautionary war tale.

¹⁵¹ Lyn Gardner, 'The Pull of Negative Gravity', *The Guardian*, 2 August 2004, < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2004/aug/07/theatre.edinburghfestival2004> > [accessed 23 February 2017]

¹⁵² Jeni Williams, 'The Pull of Negative Gravity'.

¹⁵³ Jonathan Lichtenstein, 'Writers Note', in Programme for *Mercury Theatre Colchester Presents: The Pull of Negative Gravity* <<http://www.59e59.org/archive/PullOfNegativeGravity.pdf>> [accessed 17 February 2018]

¹⁵⁴ Heather Saul, 'MoD Confirms More British soldiers commit suicide than are killed in battle', *The Independent*, 21 February 2013 < <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/mod-confirms-more-british-soldiers-commit-suicide-than-are-killed-in-battle-8707958.html> > [accessed 17 February 2018]

Despite this, the suicide of the father because of the failure caused by Foot-and-Mouth, works to give a political dimension to the play but in so doing perhaps compromises the dominant focus on the war and its consequences. Lynne Walker seems measured in arguing that:

For all his compassion, Lichtenstein tackles too many issues - lust, duty, brotherly rivalry, foot-and-mouth, suicide, murder.¹⁵⁵

However, Lichtenstein is perhaps using a more classic dramatic model. As a relatively naturalistic expression of a healthy young man's return from war in a wheelchair, the play seems to recall Sean O'Casey's, *The Silver Tassie*. Here, a young athlete, Harry, returns from the first World War in a wheelchair and loses his girlfriend and the full extent of his life's hopes. O'Casey saw his anti-war play as constituting simply, 'A generous handful of stones, [...] with the aim of breaking a few windows.'¹⁵⁶ Perhaps unintentionally, Lichtenstein's Celtic play recalls O'Casey by opening with mother Vi taking a stone out of a cake tin and as the stage directions show:

*She puts it into her mouth and holds it there for a moment.*¹⁵⁷

Sucking stones for sustenance seems a clear metaphor for the experience of being a mother in a Welsh farming community ravaged by politics and war. Yet it is also a symbol of the weight that destroys her family but that Vi is able to ingest and manage. Thus, Vi is perhaps a point of optimism in an austere play and masculine environment: the powerful matriarch left standing alone at the end. In a war genre where the maternal is usually absent or only implied through letter and phone call, Vi is foregrounded and embodies a powerful image of strength and continuity even when forced to make a friend of grief:

Vi: Grief holds me, bathes me, pulls me close. Makes me whole [...] It is my friend, my dark companion, my stone.¹⁵⁸

Ultimately, the work's success is in the figure of Vi who perhaps wins out over the play itself. Walker contends that within Vi we are shown that:

¹⁵⁵ Lynne Walker, 'The Pull of Negative Gravity, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh'.

¹⁵⁶ Suzi Feay, 'New London Theatre about the First World War', *The Financial Times*, 7 February 2014 < <https://www.ft.com/content/3b5ba07e-8e8b-11e3-98c6-00144feab7de> > [accessed 21 February 2017]

¹⁵⁷ *Pull of Negative Gravity*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

There's no room for sentimentality or self-pity when you're grinding a living [...] shouldering her burdens with apparent ease until [...] the final blow breaks her heart. It turns to stone.¹⁵⁹

Simon Stephens' *Motortown*, of 2006, shares some contextual and narrative similarities with *The Pull of Negative Gravity*. However, *Motortown*'s view of the Iraq invasion is arguably more nuanced, and possibly even supportive of the war. Simon Stephens' later 2009 play at the Tricycle theatre, *A Canopy of Stars*, was relatively unusual in using one of his characters to express the argument for the Middle East invasions. The play's Sergeant Jay Watkins is a soldier who, according to Karen Malpede, is 'gritty' and 'on the edge of *berserking* at every moment'.¹⁶⁰ He returns home on leave apparently uninjured from Afghanistan but his wife Cheryl notices Jay's inability to connect with her and his child and tries to persuade Jay to leave the Army and return to his family. Jay responds by telling her about a 10 year-old Afghan girl who was going to school when an older man jumped out and sprayed acid in her eyes. Jay argues:

Jay: He burnt her eyes out because she was ten and she was going to school. [...] There are people in that country [...] and they need to be stopped.¹⁶¹

Although Cheryl counters his argument by underlining the cost to their family, the play ends with Jay's emotive comments resounding beyond the stage. As such, Stephens' play is one of the very few works to articulate the compelling reasons for sending British soldiers to the Middle East.

Such a position is in keeping with Stephens' 2006 comments about the Iraq war and its organised opposition:

I was confused by why I felt nervous about the anti-war campaign [...] I felt angry about the moral didacticism of that campaign's spokespeople. I was confused by why I felt more sympathy towards Fusilier Gary Bartlam, convicted in Osnabruck of several unspecified crimes in his dealings with Iraqi prisoners, than I felt for Harold Pinter or Damon Albarn.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Lynne Walker, 'The Pull of Negative Gravity, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh'

¹⁶⁰ Karen Malpede, 'Foreword', *Acts of War: Iraq and Afghanistan in Seven Plays*, eds. K. Malpede, M Messina & R. Shuman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011), p. xxiv.

¹⁶¹ Simon Stephens, 'A Canopy of Stars', p. 365.

¹⁶² Quoted in Suman Gupta, *Imagining Iraq: Literature in English and the Iraq Invasion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p.100. Original reference is a Royal Court web page no longer available.

Such bold statements from Stephens surrounded the 2006 production of the Iraq-focused play *Motortown* at the Royal Court. Stephens explained that he wrote *Motortown* in four days and started it on the day London won the Olympics and continued through to the London bombings. With such a context, Charles Spencer of the *Daily Telegraph*, had hopes of the play being a genre-challenging production about Iraq:

Simon Stephens's new drama might turn out to be something rarer than the fabled unicorn - a genuinely Right-wing play.¹⁶³

However, the outcome was significantly more problematic and 'In-Yer-Face' than some might have hoped.



Figure. 5: Royal Court production in 2006 of *Motortown*. Directed by Ramin Gray. Picture shows Ony Uhiara as Jade and Daniel Mays as Danny.¹⁶⁴

Motortown explores ex-soldier Danny's return from Basra after leaving the army under dubious circumstances, in one of the early roles for actor Daniel Mays. Danny arrives at his hometown to stay with his brother Lee who is characterized as having learning difficulties, possibly autism:

¹⁶³ Charles Spencer, 'The Horror of War Comes Home', *The Telegraph*, 26 April 2006 < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3651866/The-horror-of-war-comes-home.html> > [accessed 19 February 2017]

¹⁶⁴ Used within copyright exception. Copyright owned by Robert Workman: see < <https://www.flickr.com/photos/royalcourt/523074342/in/photostream/> > [accessed 19 March 2019]

Danny: London?

Lee: (*immediately*) 7, 465, 209

Danny gives him a big smile. **Lee** smiles back, proud and shy.¹⁶⁵

Their relationship is comical and mutually affectionate. At the start, Stephens felt the audience should be able to 'fall in love' with Danny.¹⁶⁶ Danny's relationship with Lee is in stark contrast to Danny's avoidance of his parents, whom Danny says 'do my fucking head in', and the problems with his ex-girlfriend.¹⁶⁷ Although unclear as to the extent of their relationship, Danny's girlfriend, Marley has finished with him and when he meets her in Scene Two, she complains about his 'weird' letters home and he attempts to literally twist her arm in frustration.¹⁶⁸ Away from Lee, Danny is presented as socially isolated, angry and frustrated. As we also learn that Danny has vivid dreams and hands that constantly shake, there are clear suggestions that Danny is suffering from a form of combat trauma.¹⁶⁹

After Scene Two, the play moves markedly away from such a reading and Danny's sympathetic character unravels. Danny has, according to others, appeared on television in front of Jeremy Paxman and Danny seems to have left the army for some involvement in torturing Iraqi prisoners. However later, he notes he 'didn't do any of it [...] I wish I'd joined in'.¹⁷⁰ After leaving Marley, he acquires a non-firing gun from an old friend and gets a small-time arms dealer to make the gun 'live'. Danny then kidnaps a fourteen-year-old girl and whilst chatting amiably about anti-war marches, tortures her with a cigarette before shooting her dead.¹⁷¹ It seems evident that Danny's mental illness is something more than combat trauma.

However, Stephens' earlier dramatic implication is that war experience has brutalized Danny. Danny recalls seeing a new recruit sodomized with a broom handle in training and when he threatens to shoot Marley's boyfriend, he notes it's 'what I'm trained to

¹⁶⁵ This is (presumably) London's population at the time. Simon Stephens, *Motortown* (London: Methuen, 2006), p. 9.

¹⁶⁶ Simon Stephens, 'Introduction', *Plays 2* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen, 2009) p. xvii.

¹⁶⁷ Simon Stephens, *Motortown* (London: Methuen, 2006), p. 23.

¹⁶⁸ *Motortown*, p. 19.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5 & p. 11.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 50 & p. 53.

do'.¹⁷² Similarly using the same lexis, Lee and Marley both tell Danny that when he was interviewed about allegations of torture on television, 'it didn't look anything like you'.¹⁷³ All this information suggests that war has radically altered Danny. Suman Gupta sees this transformation as being the point of *Motortown*. He argues Danny's:

Time in Iraq has evidently transformed him into a deeply troubled and at times psychotic personality.¹⁷⁴

In this reading, we can almost see Danny as a version of Buchner's *Woyzeck*, where a working-class soldier loses his girlfriend and family to become socially isolated and, being schooled in violence, evolves into an alienated killer. Such a form of class-based reading might also explain the apparent Brechtian estrangement techniques employed by director Ramin Gray. *Motortown* utilised an extremely spare stage set and props that seem to undermine the illusion of Danny's Essex location and perhaps ensure that the audience do not identify too closely with Danny's character or context. The stage directions note the play should be performed 'as far as possible without décor'.¹⁷⁵ In the first Royal Court production, as Jacqueline Bolton notes, 'a square of white tape on a grey dance floor demarcated 'onstage' and 'offstage'. Similarly, the set consisted largely of 'a dozen plastic chairs' with actors and stagehands 'visible throughout the play' (see photo above) and where scene changes were managed by dancing the plastic chairs across the stage.¹⁷⁶ Bolton suggests these are the 'techniques of Brechtian epic theatre'. If so, they are perhaps not employed to help the audience consider Danny's position in a context of social class. Danny is quite likely a psychopath caught in a valueless nation that seems lost far beyond issues around class. As Gupta argues, this play seems purely to express a 'scepticism' about the 'possibility of moral certainty' in any politics around this time.¹⁷⁷ The staging seems to work to underline the confusion of a British nation fighting a Middle-Eastern war for Western values when those values are portrayed by Stephens as fundamentally barren in everyday British life. It is perhaps this confusion that informs Danny's instability. As Bolton argues, the anti-illusory stage set helps highlight the 'discrepancy' at the heart of the play:

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 65 & p. 42.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 8 & p. 41.

¹⁷⁴ Suman Gupta, *Imagining Iraq*, p.100.

¹⁷⁵ *Motortown*, p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ Jacqueline Bolton, 'Simon Stephens', *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009*, ed. Dan Rebellato (London: Methuen, 2013), p. 114.

¹⁷⁷ Suman Gupta, *Imagining Iraq*, p. 100.

Unable to recognize the country he fought for, Danny fatally misrecognizes the lines between military activity and civilian life.¹⁷⁸

In this interpretation, it is not just the Iraq war that has confused Danny but the values innate to his own society.

Stephens' makes this reading available through Danny's penultimate dialogue, where he observes:

I don't blame the war./The war was alright. I miss it./It's just you come back to this.¹⁷⁹

In a clear shift away from a *Woyzeck* style understanding, Stephens seems concerned to show that Danny's home and culture is the source of the problem and this goes beyond simple class designations. Danny's return is to a corrupted Motortown where the title refers to Dagenham in Essex, whose existence was historically dominated by the thriving Ford Car Factory. But now Danny notes, Dagenham's 'got worse' and his friend Tom says it's because 'the factory's almost completely closed up now'.¹⁸⁰ In reality, Dagenham had suffered significant social deprivation due to the slow decline of the Ford Car plant since the 1970s. Now this decline is to immorality and seems expressed through the gangsta-rap and sexualised music of 50 Cent and Britney Spears that Stephens details, alongside the petty criminals Danny knows as friends.¹⁸¹

Danny's friend Tom is a small-time arms dealer. Tom helps Danny meet Paul, another successful arms-dealer, conspiracy theorist and child-abuser whose victim is a black fourteen-year-old girl called Jade. It is the innocent Jade who Danny tortures and kills at the end of the play. Yet, arguably, the strongest hint of innate social decay seems when Danny meets a pair of middle-class and middle-aged swingers in Southend. Husband Justin is a 'schoolteacher' while Helen works in television media.¹⁸² Helen sexually propositions Danny who responds by asking them if they were on the anti-war march.

¹⁷⁸ Jacqueline Bolton, 'Simon Stephens', pp. 116-117.

¹⁷⁹ *Motortown*, p. 74.

¹⁸⁰ *Motortown*, p.26.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, '50 Cent, Snoop Dog, Jay-Z' on p. 27 – p. 28 & Britney Spears in context of 'school uniform', p.47

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

When they affirm this, Danny is at his most politicized when he notes he wished he had shot them 'With my SA80. Sprayed the lot of yer'.¹⁸³ It is clear that for Danny, and presumably Stephens, the preaching middle-classes are just as implicated in Britain's moral failure as the working-class. Lyn Gardner summarises that for Stephens' Britain is,

A place of dubious moralities, small-time arms dealers and middle class swingers and anti-war protesters. Nobody is coming up smelling of roses, and this England has all the stinking attractions of a dog turd.¹⁸⁴

The persistent suggestion within the play is that Danny's violence was not learned in the military but seemed to exist a long time before, nurtured in the fabric of Britain itself. It is a remarkably similar context to that suggested by the corruption of rural Wales in *The Pull of Negative Gravity*. Yet *Motortown's* narrative conclusion seems part of an intended delayed revelation by Stephens. It is only at the end of the play that Lee comments how grateful he was for Danny's protection from being bullied at school. Lee notes to Danny how this was 'On account of you being a psychopath'.¹⁸⁵ Danny has thus been traumatised since his schooldays and the war is perhaps only a symbol of the corruption. Stephens made this point in an interview with *Time Out*:

If those boys are violent, chaotic or morally insecure, it's because they are a product of a violent, chaotic and morally insecure culture.¹⁸⁶

In this exploration of a 'morally insecure culture', *Motortown* works to, in Linda Hutcheon's terms, partially problematize the cultural stereotype of the violent soldier scarred by combat as well as the worthy liberal middle-classes who vehemently oppose the Iraq war.¹⁸⁷ Yet in some ways, this might be argued to move towards a right-wing position after all, as it works to undermine the moral foundations of the anti-war stance and implicate working-class culture as apparently deviant. Nonetheless, as both the soldier and the middle-class protester are seen as innately tainted, the war becomes

¹⁸³ Ibid., p.65.

¹⁸⁴ Lyn Gardner, 'Motortown', *The Guardian*, 25 April 2006 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2006/apr/25/theatre> > [accessed 28 February 2017]

¹⁸⁵ *Motortown*, p.71.

¹⁸⁶ Nadia Abrahams, 'Simon Stephens: Interview', *Time Out*, 19 April 2006 < <https://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/simon-stephens-interview> > [accessed 28 February 2017]

¹⁸⁷ Linda Hutcheon, 'The Politics of Postmodernism: Parody and History', *Cultural Critique*, No. 5, *Modernity and Modernism, Postmodernity and Postmodernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Winter 1986/1987), pp. 179-207.

incidental and the play perhaps moves away from a re-interpretation of *Woyzeck* and perhaps beyond any exploration of the Iraq war or issues of social class.

The stage setting that seems to confuse the division between stage and audience also perhaps helps undermine any clear association between the play and a contemporary political reality, even while it references recent culture and war. Reviewer Matt Wolff argues this contradiction is at the real heart of the play:

Gray blurred the boundaries between art and life to such a disturbing extent that audiences at the end had to pause a moment before applauding.¹⁸⁸

Bolton notes that at times in the performance 'Motortown pressurized perceptual distances between actor and character, actuality and fantasy', but notes these differences became 'difficult to sustain'.¹⁸⁹ Ultimately, the effect is visceral: unnerving and perhaps only tangentially political, for as the character Paul hints:

Paul: You see, when you can't tell the difference any more between what is real and what is a fantasy. That's frightening, I think.¹⁹⁰

This is then ultimately a play about the boundaries between actor and character, art and life, culture/society and the individual, and the points where these divisions seem to collapse.

As such, the confusion and ambiguity of Danny and his Essex context perhaps more comfortably recalls the violent scenes of Edward Bond who argued in *Lear* that 'violence shapes and obsesses our society'.¹⁹¹ Danny's mixture of warmth with Lee and unbalanced, extreme violence also recalls Dennis Kelly's torturer Liam in *Orphans* and notably the character Ian from *Blasted*. Both characters suggest a deeper social malaise exists than the one created purely by contemporary politics.¹⁹² These are all plays where, as Bolton notes,

¹⁸⁸ Matt Wolff, 'Rainbow Kiss/Motortown', *International Herald Tribune*, 24 May 2006.

¹⁸⁹ Jacqueline Bolton, 'Simon Stephens', p. 116.

¹⁹⁰ *Motortown*, p.33.

¹⁹¹ Edward Bond, 'Commentary', *Lear* (London: A&C Black, 2013), p.ii

¹⁹² Dennis Kelly, 'Orphans', *Plays Two* (London: Oberon, 2013) & Sarah Kane, 'Blasted', *Sarah Kane: Complete Plays* (London: Methuen, 2001)

Devastating acts of violence are understood as the symptom not the causes of a society in moral chaos.¹⁹³

A similar link to Kane's *Blasted* and also *Cleansed* is in the ritualistic expression of the violence onstage, which works to maximise the sensual shock. In *Motortown*, after the torture and murder of Jade, blood is puddled across the floor and a stagehand appears so that, as Gardner notes, the:

Blood is mopped from the stage in a ritual that feels both like absolution and a terrible punishment.¹⁹⁴

These are pervading images that seem to visually underline the innate violence of Western culture in the same way as Graham Saunders suggested Sarah Kane's work functions:

To condense great themes such as war and human salvation down to a series of stark memorable images [...] the ritual dismemberment in *Cleansed*.¹⁹⁵

As in Ravenhill's *War and Peace*, Brechtian estrangement and symbols of extreme violence seem employed to question the illusion of the performance whilst also suggesting there exists a darker shadow of violence and immorality that pervades the collective unconsciousness of contemporary Britain. As Varvara Stepanova argues, plays such as *Motortown*, 'Capture, through increasingly complex forms, the mind-set of a society blighted.'¹⁹⁶

2.7 Conclusion

The majority of these plays, which discuss the wounded British soldier suggest an understanding of the martial world as pervasively materialist in nature. Lichtenstein details a Welsh nation that echoes the Scotland of *Black Watch*, one that is ravaged by systematic economic poverty and where the military is one of the few ways to gain

¹⁹³ Jacqueline Bolton, 'Simon Stephens', p. 111.

¹⁹⁴ Lyn Gardner, 'Motortown'.

¹⁹⁵ Graham Saunders, 'Love Me or Kill Me': *Sarah Kane and the Theatre of Extremes* (Manchester: MUP, 2002), p. 20.

¹⁹⁶ Varvara Stepanova, 'Simon Stephens', *The Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance*, ed. Dennis Kennedy (Oxford: OUP, 2010), p. 574.

financial stability. A markedly similar context exists in Ravenhill's *War and Peace*, where the unnamed, dead soldier details a history of social deprivation. As his home and region have become gentrified, so his military role as a soldier seems another sacrifice on behalf of the wealthier classes. The soldier bluntly states to the young hedge-fund manager Alex: 'You took my estate. I'm fighting for your freedom and democracy.'¹⁹⁷

Motortown's Essex location of small-time criminals, removes the critique one-step further to seemingly place the responsibility for Danny's unbalanced character relatively firmly on the soiled landscape of a post-industrial Britain. Here the old Ford 'factory has completely closed up', which is part of a larger structural decline, according to criminal fantasist Paul, because 'God. Law. Money. The left. The right [...] All of them lie in tatters.'¹⁹⁸ The absence of a thriving economy and an ethical establishment seems implicated in the growth of shady characters and the disfigured culture of *Motortown*. Set against these stark portraits of a corrupt Britain where war and the risk of permanent mutilation to the working-classes are presented as the continuing relations of production that keep the middle-class wealthy, *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* is unusually optimistic. The play arouses deep emotional identification with actual soldiers who have been scarred by the Middle Eastern wars. Yet this play can only establish its rich depth of unquestioned empathy by extremely close concentration on the individual soldiers, and so avoiding any exploration of the wider historical, social or political context of their battles.

Nonetheless, what Sheers' play achieves is a significantly broader articulation of the meaning and impact of war that is richly visceral and overwhelming cathartic. Judith Butler explains that in war those lives that are seen as 'ungrievable' are due to the state apparatuses of media and government establishing a cultural group to be "forfeited" and for Butler this is a material and:

Specific exploitation of targeted populations, of lives that are not quite lives, cast as "destructible"[...] "lose-able".¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Mark Ravenhill, 'War and Peace', *Mark Ravenhill: Plays: 3* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 61.

¹⁹⁸ Simon Stephens, *Motortown* (London: Methuen, 2006), p. 26 & p. 35.

¹⁹⁹ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 31.

Whilst Butler's work is concerned with the enemies in the Iraq and other wars, her explanation is as equally valid for those British soldiers who are seen by the state as ultimately "lose-able" and available to be sacrificed for the benefit of a greater political or social good. As such, these British soldiers and the ugly details of their experience and trauma are also often obscured from the media representation of war to maintain public consensus to continue a campaign. Sheers' play is thus subtly radical, stretching the frame of representation in ways that are both challenging and yet funded by the Ministry of Defence. Unlike most other plays of the period, the lived experience of physical and mental damage caused by war dominates the frame of the stage and the audiences' sensory response.

The other plays in this chapter have a more challenging focus on the image of the heroic soldier. In Ravenhill's *War and Peace*, whilst the physical and mental sacrifice is readily apparent as in Sheers' play, the soldier is portrayed as entitled, racist, invasive and almost as implicated in the nation's problems as the young hedge-fund manager, Alex. Echoing this contradictory understanding of the soldier, Lichtenstein's work details a young man corrupted and damaged by war, seemingly traumatised by his own involvement in war abuse. A similar contradiction is at the heart of *Motortown*. Although clearly psychologically impaired, Danny is perhaps both the manifestation of a veteran badly scarred by his war experience, as well as a violent psychopath born of a corrupt domestic landscape.

In these four plays, the image of the British soldier physically and mentally mutilated seems a highly contentious cultural site. On the one hand it is worthy of a new broadening of empathy for those international and diverse members of Sheers' play; but also problematic in Ravenhill, Lichtenstein and Stephens' work in terms of their fictional soldiers' own direct involvement in dubious wars and the associated context of torture and war crimes. Although these portrayals of the British soldier suggest a level of uncertainty, it is perhaps significant that this subject is a key point of challenge on the British stage. Moreover, here the theatre seems to work to problematize the empathetic image of the heroic British soldier, which has been received through film, media and history. Bran Nicol, expanding on Linda Hutcheon, argues that such contemporary dramatic fictions:

Remind us that history is a construction, [...] not the past, but a narrative [...] created in the past.²⁰⁰

The Iraq War seems a key point where the traditional narrative of the brave British soldier can no longer be maintained.

However, these repeated images of damaged soldiers in domestic settings also highlight how an overpowering degree of insecurity surrounds all of the above plays that focus on soldiers and the Iraq War. Stephens', Lichtenstein's and Ravenhill's works seem ultimately united in arguing that even if only the working-class receive the brunt of the loss, all classes are implicated as responsible for their involvement in a doubtful war that seems born out of a soiled British landscape. Whilst a moral argument for the war does exist in Stephens' *A Canopy of Stars* and to some extent in *Motortown*, the latter's protagonist is apparently a psychopath, while the former's beliefs are considered destructive to family and relationships. Indeed, confident expressions either for or against the Iraq war are largely absent in these plays and at times any clear discussion of the war seems at best implied, but more usually subservient to a larger discussion of brutality, as in *Motortown*. Yet, mostly the subject matter is the pervasiveness of the damage done by these wars to the British (and coalition) soldier and to the family, as evident in Ravenhill's, Lichtenstein's, Stephens' and Sheers' work.

These are all domestic plays and thus the Iraqi or Middle-Eastern voice is mostly absent. The foreign enemies in this war are usually only indirectly referenced. In *The Pull of Negative Gravity*, the single Iraqi character is an accidental patient, a badly scarred victim only apparent through bandages and second-hand dialogue. Similarly, the Iraqi torture victims in *Motortown* are only referred to as existing in the past and the key protagonist, Danny was only tangentially involved. The actual and portrayed torture victim is British, female and black. As such, these plays show the developing of an empathetic understanding of the suffering of British soldiers but these plays remain tightly focused on the local combatants.

Insecurity seems so dominating that in *The Two Worlds of Charlie F*, a play that celebrates the heroism of recovering soldiers, that bravery is presented without the

²⁰⁰ Bran Nicol, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 99.

patriotism that might be expected in another age and the heroism is seen post hoc: as a response after the war rather than an act within it.

This scepticism seems to have extended even to the forms employed in these plays. A diversity of styles is apparent: Brechtian epic, Verbatim, Theatre of the Oppressed, Artaudian cruelty, classical catharsis, naturalism and elements of the postdramatic. All are used in part or in combination. This plethora of styles might perhaps argue for an inbuilt tension about the established forms available in theatre; they might suggest that established styles individually seem inadequate in understanding today's neoliberalism and its culture of technology, consumerism and small wars. Despite this, an alternative view is possible. Kerstin Schmidt argues these are innovations characteristic of postmodern drama, for:

Postmodern drama swings back and forth [...] while postmodern drama constantly searches for new forms to present the unrepresentable.²⁰¹

Perhaps playwrights and directors are confidently utilising and adapting forms of historic theatre to ensure they can effectively express the multi-layered and unstable image of the British soldier serving in the Iraq war. As *War and Peace* and *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* show, soldiers can work as both symbol of primeval aggression and class victim. Thus Artaud and Brecht combined, perhaps help to present a more rounded and authentic understanding. Likewise, the variety of forms expresses the panoply of perspectives: in these plays soldiers are warriors, torturers, class victims and multiply wounded; the middle-classes are threatened in their bedrooms but also exploitative, morally corrupt and retreating into gated communities. In these theatrical texts, the contrasting forms themselves constitute a stylistic bricolage that echoes the confusion surrounding the front-line soldiers, the anti-war protestors and the wider populous growing increasingly sceptical of political narratives, be they state or partisan, grand or otherwise. In such a context, these plays suggest there is a clear material reason for why the working-class are required to risk their bodies and minds to permanent injury, but the question of whether they deserve unmitigated empathy from Britain and its theatre remains questionable.

²⁰¹ Kerstin Schmidt, *The Theater of Transformation: Postmodernism in American Drama* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), p. 40.

3. War Crimes and Punishment

3.1 Introduction

Performed scenes of torture became a notable thematic subject of 1990's 'In-Yer-Face' drama, which in turn seemed to owe some of its inspiration to more visceral Jacobean and earlier classical texts.¹ Aleks Sierz notes that the term 'neo-jacobean' was in 'common usage' during the 1990s to describe the new theatrical mood.² Plays such as Antony Neilson's *Penetrator* and Sarah Kane's *Cleansed*, alongside *Blasted*, spoke this 'language of violence', according to Gabriel Rippl, who argued such works' extreme content:

Connects them with their forerunners, the revenge and blood tragedies. Kane's [...] distressing images of outrageous acts of violence are mute emblematic tableaux of human brutality.³

Plays such as *Blasted* were not only influenced by a violent classical canon but also by then contemporary conflicts such as the Balkans' wars, the Rwandan genocide and other seemingly distant horrors.⁴ Yet by the mid-2000s and the revelations of the Abu Ghraib photographs, together with a number of similar incidents of torture practised by British and American soldiers, it became clear that Kane's 'tableaux of human brutality', perhaps as she and her peers had dramatically suggested, was evident in non-fictional form much closer to home.⁵

¹ Key Jacobean texts are perhaps John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Earlier works such as Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and the canonical sources: Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Seneca's *Medea* and *Hercules Furens*

² Aleks Sierz, 'A Brief History of In-Yer-Face theatre', *Aleks Sierz: New Writing For the British Stage*, 1 July 2016 < <http://www.sierz.co.uk/writings/a-brief-history-of-in-ye-face-theatre/> > [accessed 23 February 2019]

³ Gabriele Rippl, 'Culture and Transgression: Phaedra's Illicit Love and its Cultural Transformations', *Metamorphosis Structures of Cultural Transformations* (REAL: Yearbook of research in English and American literature), ed. Jurgen Schlaeger, Vol. 20 (Tubingen: Gunter Narr, 2004), p.178.

⁴ See Graham Saunders, *'Love Me or Kill Me': Sarah Kane and The Theatre of Extremes* (Manchester: MUP, 2002), p. 38.

⁵ Sarah Kane noted of *Blasted* 'that the seeds of full-scale war can always be found in peace-time civilization.' Sarah Kane, 'Brief Encounter', *Platform*, Royal Holloway College, London, 3 November 1998 (referenced in Graham Saunders, *Love Me or Kill me*, p.39). For an overview of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse, see the timeline at CNN Library, 'Iraq Prison Abuse Scandal Fast Facts', *CNN*, 10 April 2017 < <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/30/world/meast/iraq-prison-abuse-scandal-fast-facts/> > [accessed 24 April 2017]

As Ian Cobain explores in *Cruel Britannia*, Britain has never seen itself as a nation practising international torture. He discusses how traditionally Britain prides itself on its love of 'fair play and the rule of law'.⁶ This country helped found the Human Rights Commission after the Second World War and took an apparent moral stance in support of the Iraq invasion. After unearthing and discussing numerous types of torture knowingly practised by British authorities for some years worldwide, Cobain resignedly notes:

I hadn't wanted to accept that figures of authority in British public life would arrange for their fellow citizens to be tortured [...] I had underestimated the capacity of the British government [...] to exercise power with unrelenting ruthlessness.⁷

Cobain's work discusses the treatment of Guantanamo Bay prisoners, Baha Mousa's death as well as the Abu Ghraib abuses of Iraqi detainees. When images of the latter were released to the worldwide press in 2004, Tony Blair was 'appalled' and George W. Bush immediately expressed his 'disgust'.⁸ Even so, *Amnesty International* went on to claim that:

Our extensive research in Iraq suggests that this is not an isolated incident. It is not enough for the USA to react only once images have hit the television screens.⁹

The human rights abuses practised by all parties in the Iraq war may have been only the latest iteration in a long history of combat torture. Yet the general public and British cultural establishment seemed repelled by British involvement. British theatre attempted to express the national concern by trying to define what had actually happened in Verbatim form, before broadening its scope to consider what cultural failings might be implicated in these human rights abuses. It was a point where the role of theatre came to the fore and was broadly celebrated for its provocative role. In *The Telegraph*, Jasper Rees reviewing *Guantanamo*, exclaimed:

⁶ Ian Cobain, *Cruel Britannia: A Secret History of Torture* (London: Portobello Books, 2013), p. 4. For a complementary analysis, also see Mark Curtis, *Unpeople: Britain's Secret Human Rights Abuses* (London: Vintage, 2004). For a discussion of the way similar acts have been sanitised in recent British history see Ian Cobain, *The History Thieves: Secrets, Lies and the Shaping of a Modern Nation* (London: Portobello Books, 2016)

⁷ Ibid., p. 307.

⁸ See the timeline at CNN Library, 'Iraq Prison Abuse Scandal Fast Facts'.

⁹ Matthew Tempest and agencies, 'Bush 'disgusted' at Torture of Iraqi Prisoners', *The Guardian*, 30 April 2004, < <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2004/apr/30/usa.iraq> > [accessed 3 March 2017]

Theatre has put the war on terror on stage not only because it can but because it must. It is the closest we have to a moral medium. That is powerfully evident in the words of John Donne ("Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee") as they ring out more resonantly than ever at the end of Guantanamo.¹⁰

The concept of theatre as a moral medium is as old as Aristotle who contended that 'serious' drama and 'poetry is a more philosophical and serious thing than history.'¹¹ Despite this, his peer Plato disagreed. Nicholas Ridout in *Theatre and Ethics* comments that Plato seemed to 'insist' there was something threatening and 'unethical' about theatre, largely because of its role in disrupting the balance of the polis.¹²

The concept of theatre as a socially ethical art form has influenced British theatre since before the Renaissance but came under increasing scrutiny in the twentieth century due to scepticism about the 'biased' or 'constructed' nature of modern ethics.¹³ The problem, according to Brecht was one of inherent capitalist values in traditional theatre, but for poststructuralists like Jacques Derrida and others, the problem was that all morals appeared to be constructed for ideological ends by those authorities expressing them.¹⁴

As beliefs in a higher moral/religious authority or other ethical foundation became fractured in the latter part of the twentieth century, so the nature of British theatre seemed more liberated to explore contemporary and historic issues of violence and torture. In the 1980s and 1990s, plays like Howard Brenton's *Romans In Britain* (1980), with an extended scene of homosexual rape, and Philip Ridley's more recent *Ghost from a Perfect Place* (1994), where an ageing gangster is tortured by teenage girls, suggested a concern about a persistent, perhaps innate, undercurrent of ethical dis-ease in Britain. The more visceral 'In Yer Face' theatre of the 1990s seemed to respond to this repressed social subtext. As Nicholas Ridout argued on behalf of such theatre, to fully explore

¹⁰ Jasper Rees, 'Theatre Leads the Way in the War on Terror', *The Telegraph*, 22 June 2004 < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3619413/Theatre-leads-the-way-on-the-war-on-terror.html> > [accessed 4 March 2017]

¹¹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, Ch. 9, transl. Joe Sachs (Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 2006), p. 32.

¹² Nicholas Ridout, *Theatre & Ethics* (London: MacMillan, 2009), p.7.

¹³ Michel Foucault discusses the provisional nature of ethical structures in much of his work. In 'On The Genealogy of Ethics', Foucault notes 'Recent liberation movements [...] cannot find any principle on which to base the elaboration of new ethics', pp. 255-256. Michel Foucault, ed. Paul Rabinow, 'Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth', *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault*, Vol 1. (New York: The New Press, 1994)

¹⁴ Derrida summarized in Liz Tomlin, *Acts and Apparitions: Discourse on the Real in Performance Practice and Theory, 1990-2010* (Manchester: MUP, 2013), p. 4.

social violence and identify its foundations, an 'anti-ethical theatre might be something we both desire and need'.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the dominant, and left-wing, twentieth century dramatists from Brecht to Caryl Churchill, and late-era Harold Pinter, continued to see theatre as having a pivotal role in providing an ethical comment on government and society's moral failures.¹⁶ Arguably, the early twenty first century horror at the Iraq War tortures gave some fresh impetus to theatre's social and ethical role, so that left-wing playwrights and right-wing theatre commentators were joined in a communal revulsion. Notably, it was a revulsion that, as expressed in theatre, seemed to search backwards for a form of moral foundation from which to base its own dramatic critique.

Thus many of the plays in this chapter that consider torture include a speaker, character or context that might offer some cultural foundation for ethical authority. Thus, *Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* ends on a John Donne poem, Roy Williams' *Days of Significance* reworks Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, Mark Ravenhill's *Crime and Punishment* ends with a scene of cutting out a young woman's tongue as in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. Conversely, Richard Norton-Taylor's Tribunal play *Tactical Questioning* ends on a contemporary ethical authority, with a government minister being asked why he did not openly publicise or discuss the torture in Iraq he seemed to know was occurring. Adam Ingram, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, responds, 'Why impart information that is not being sought would be the approach.'¹⁷ Clearly, the need for a moral medium was still pressing.

¹⁵ Nicholas Ridout, *Theatre & Ethics*, p.7.

¹⁶ In his Nobel Prize speech, Harold Pinter became expressly concerned with ethics and the arts noting, 'I believe that ... unflinching, unswerving, fierce intellectual determination, ..., to define the *real* truth of our lives and our societies is a crucial obligation It is in fact mandatory.' Harold Pinter – Nobel Lecture 2005. *NobelPrize.org*. Nobel Media, <
<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2005/pinter/25621-harold-pinter-nobel-lecture-2005/>>[accessed 13 March 2019]

¹⁷ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', *The Tricycle Collected Tribunal Plays: 1994: 2012* (London: Oberon Books, 2014), p. 854.

3.2 *Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* by Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo (2004)

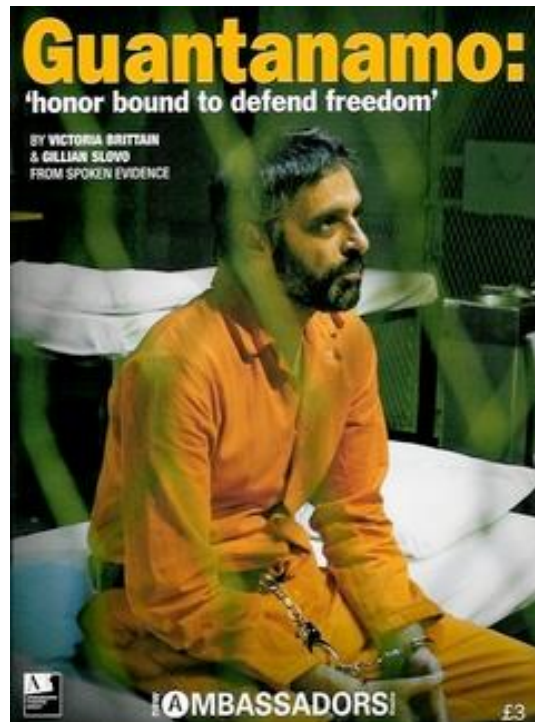


Figure. 6: Poster for 2004 Ambassadors Theatre production of *Guantanamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom*¹⁸

Guantanamo Bay Detention Centre is located on the site of a legal no-man's-land. It was first acquired by the United States in 1903 by a form of lease that gave Cuba 'total sovereignty' but the U.S. 'complete jurisdiction and control', which it remains.¹⁹ In this way, the area manages to avoid the accountable laws of both Cuba and the U.S. It was once used as a safe transit point for refugees from Cuba and Haiti then closed. Following the 9/11 attacks on New York, in 2002, George Bush requisitioned the refugee camp for housing 'enemy combatants'.²⁰ As Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo's Verbatim play makes plain from the start, the detention centre was swiftly and internationally criticised. A judge, Lord Justice Steyn's character opens the play by railing against the prison whose purpose:

¹⁸ Used within copyright exception. Copyright owned by *London Theatre Guide*: see < <https://www.londontheatre.co.uk/reviews/guantanamo-honor-bound-to-defend-freedom> > [accessed 11 March 2019]

¹⁹ Liz Sevchenko, 'Guantanamo Bay's Other Anniversary: 110 years of a legal black hole', *The Guardian*, 28 December 2012 < <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/28/guantanamo-bay-usa> > [accessed 15 March 2017]

²⁰ Ibid.

Was and is to put [prisoners] beyond the rule of law, beyond the protection of any courts, and at the mercy of the victors.²¹

Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom' (*Guantanamo*) was first produced at the Tricycle Theatre in 2004 and directed by Nicholas Kent and Sacha Wares with the set designed by Miriam Buether. It was presented (and published) as a continuation of the Tribunal documentary plays, preceded by *Justifying War* and *The Colour of Justice*, concerning the Stephen Lawrence trial.²² Of course, this play about Guantanamo Bay prison was not a reworking of any official trial or enquiry. The play is unusual as being one of the few Iraq/Afghanistan-conflict plays to be written by women and because it projects the voice of the seeming 'Other', the suspected terrorist, onto the London stage.

The play addresses three British subjects: Moazzam Begg, Jamal Al-Harith and Wahab Al-Rawi (although the focus is on his brother Bishar) who were subject to 'Extraordinary Rendition' from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Gambia respectively; then imprisoned and tortured in Bagram/Kandahar airbase before being sent to Cuba.²³ Through the later testimony of the prisoners combined with those of family and legal professionals, it is clear that all these prisoners are entirely innocent. Moazzam Begg was an aid worker in various roles in Afghanistan. Jamal Al-Harith was on a religious holiday when he was taken by the Taliban, then let free and retaken by Americans. The Al-Rawis had escaped Saddam Hussein's Iraq where their father was 'tortured and abused'. They were installing a nut-oil plant in the Gambia when arrested by the Gambian secret service for suspicious activity.²⁴ Wahab Al-Rawi notes that at every opportunity in his capture he asked to contact the British High Commission and they declined the request commenting, 'Who do you think ordered your arrest?'²⁵

This work is perhaps unusual in that it is a British play that focuses on the (largely portrayed as) American abuse of British citizens abroad. There is only scant comment of Britain's own involvement, or of Britain's contemporaneous issues with Belmarsh

²¹ Victoria Brittain & Gillian Slovo, 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', *The Tricycle Collected Tribunal Plays: 1994: 2012* (London: Oberon Books, 2014), p. 515.

²² See V. Brittain, N. Kent, R. Norton-Taylor & G. Slovo's, *The Tricycle Collected Tribunal Plays: 1994: 2012* (London: Oberon Books, 2014)

²³ 'Extraordinary Rendition' means seizing a suspected criminal or terrorist suspect covertly to be interrogated in a country with less rigorous regulations for the humane treatment of prisoners.

²⁴ 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 517.

²⁵ 'Ibid.', p. 528.

prison (which ran from 2001), where similar detainees were held without charge or trial.²⁶ Moreover, the focus is entirely on detainees who are portrayed as clearly innocent. This means, as Philip Fisher notes, that any sense of 'political balance' is compromised. He adds there has to be 'at least the possibility that some of those still held were terrorists or at the very least, sympathisers.'²⁷ Such possibilities are not explored. As such, this play is not a nuanced debate on terrorism but an emotive critique of the crimes that seem to have been made by America but with unstated British support. Nonetheless, this play staged in mid 2004, acts as a theatrical echo of the international headlines and discomfort at the camp. One leading media voice of protest, the *New York Times*, contended at the time that Guantanamo taints Britain and America: these 'Detentions insult some of our most cherished ideals and harm our national interest.'²⁸

The play repeatedly imparts the information that all the detained subjects discussed in the work are clearly innocent through frequently intercut monologues. These are directed at the audience from a stage that, as Phillip Fisher observes in his analysis of the opening production at the Tricycle theatre in 2004, 'is flanked by tiny, claustrophobic 8ft x 8ft cages'.²⁹ The play has minimal stage directions but when I saw the original production in May 2004, for the scenes set at the exposed Camp X-ray, the prisoners are caged as they would be in the real Guantanamo Camp X-Ray. For scenes at the covered Camp Delta, the prisoners are seen on beds in the background (as in the picture above) while the media, lawyers and named detainees speak to the audience from the front.³⁰ Across large parts of the original play, unidentified prisoners are witnessed at the back of the stage eminently visible in orange jumpsuits but mostly silent. One of the few stage directions printed in the play text describes Bisher Al-Rawi 'putting on the orange boiler suit of Guantanamo' before his long monologue.³¹ Timothy

²⁶ See for example Shami Chakrabati's 2009 summary of Belmarsh in, 'Court of Human Rights Rules Indefinite Detention Without Charge Wrong', *Liberty*, 19 February 2009, < <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/news/press-releases/court-human-rights-rules-indefinite-detention-without-charge-wrong> > [accessed 1 March 2019]

²⁷ Phillip Fisher, 'Guantanamo: Honor Bound to defend Freedom', *British Theatre Guide*, May 2004 < <http://www.britishtheatreinfo.info/reviews/guantanamo-rev> > [16 March 2017]

²⁸ Anon., 'The Guantanamo Scandal', *The New York Times*, 15 May 2003 < <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/15/opinion/the-guantanamo-scandal.html> > [accessed 5 March 2019]

²⁹ Phillip Fisher, 'Guantanamo: Honor Bound to defend Freedom'.

³⁰ I attended the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn production on 27 May 2004.

³¹ 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 538.

Youkers noted how in the Tricycle Production these detainees more usually just ‘linger in their orange jumpsuits’ whilst, as I noted in the early production, offering up expressions of challenge and concern.³²

Although the actual layout of Camp X-Ray in everyday function is very hard to establish, the use of outdoor single-cell, see-through cages in Camp X-Ray was likely designed as a clear enhancement of Jeremy Bentham’s eighteenth century Panopticon design.³³ See-through cages allow full visibility of the prisoners but with added discomfort provided by the Cuban weather.³⁴ Challengingly, the visible form of the stage-set at the Tricycle Theatre production also used see-through cages and placed the audience effectively in the surveillance position of the Panopticon guard. This is enhanced, as Raymond Whittaker notes, because ‘Thanks to the Tricycle’s scaffold seating, the viewer feels like a participant.’³⁵

In line with Foucault’s later ideas, Clare Chambers explains that the Panopticon works by ensuring that through constant surveillance, the prisoner internalises their conformity so that ‘Crucially obedience becomes unconscious and habitual.’³⁶ By placing the audience in a position of gazing power, this version of the Panopticon, in my contention, perhaps suggests the audience themselves have unconsciously internalised their own complicity to Guantanamo Bay. The spoken testimony aims to unsettle them further.

The first half of the play explores the detainees’ arrival in Cuba. Moazzam Begg is perhaps the lead character. Speaking directly to the audience, he explains his story of

³² Timothy Youkers, *Documentary Vanguard in Modern Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp., 183-185.

³³ Bruce Bennett believes that ‘Camp X-Ray is a prison camp that realizes the disciplinary and design principles of Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon.’ Bruce Bennett, ‘X-Ray Visions: Photography, Propaganda and Guantanamo Bay’, *Controversial Images: Media Representations on the Edge*, ed. Feona Attwood et al (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 75.

³⁴ For an overview of design and layout of the prison, see Tim Maly & Emily Horne, *The Inspection House: An Impertinent Field Guide to Modern Surveillance* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2014), pp. 49-61.

³⁵ Raymond Whittaker, ‘Guantanamo – Honor Bound to Defend Freedom, Tricycle, London’, *The Independent*, 30 May 2004 < <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/guantanamo-honor-bound-to-defend-freedom-tricycle-london-565362.html> > [accessed 13 May 2019]

³⁶ Clare Chambers, *Sex, Culture and Justice: The Limits of Choice* (Pennsylvania: Penn State, 2010), p. 23.

being kidnapped whilst organising water access to an Afghan village. As he had not been released from Guantanamo during the writing of the play, his communications about the experience are expressed in heavily-censored letters his father reads out. At the start of Act 2, one of his distressing but 'patiently hopeful' letters is contrasted with a range of press statements from Donald Rumsfeld, played 'spookily' well according to Nicholas De Jongh, by William Hoyland.³⁷ Hoyland's portrayal is at its most bitter as Rumsfeld celebrates arresting 'some of the most vicious killers on the face of the earth.'³⁸ When asked by a journalist about the humanity of detainees held in a small cell with no walls, Rumsfeld replies:

RUMSFELD: [...] To be in an eight-by-eight cell in beautiful sunny Guantanamo Bay, Cuba is not a – inhumane treatment. And it has a roof.³⁹

This tonal flippancy is in marked contrast to the resigned style and content of Moazzam Begg's letters where he recounts how he is grateful that it is winter because of the decline of the 'melee of scorpions, beetles, mice and other creepy-crawlies', which populate his cell.⁴⁰

A more nuanced contrast to such tales of unjust suffering is offered through the intercutting of the character Tom Clarke's monologues. Tom Clarke is a British man whose sister was murdered in the 9/11 attacks. In his second monologue, he argues that once any prisoners are put in Guantanamo, 'Yeh, lock 'em up, throw away the key'.⁴¹ Lindsey Mantoan notes his role is to represent 'the audience members who may have reservations about critiquing the detention center.'⁴² Yet despite his grief and fury at the New York attacks, once he realises the innocence of the British prisoners, he demands they are freed and given 'the justice they deserve'.⁴³ As Mantoan notes, his

³⁷ 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 537. Nicolas De Jongh quote in Terry Stoller, *Tales of the Tricycle Theatre* (London: A&C Black, 2013), p. 165.

³⁸ 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 541.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 542.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 544. Also see discussion of 'camel spider' in the cages, Megan Lane, 'Letters Home from Guantanamo Bay', *BBC News*, 17 July 2003 < <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/3072529.stm> > [accessed 1 March 2019]

⁴¹ 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 550.

⁴² Lindsey Mantoan, *Imagining Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Theater: Global Perspectives*. eds. F.N. Becker, B. Werth & P. Hernandez (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 114.

⁴³ 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 552.

desire for restorative action is undermined because these Guantanamo 'detentions taint[s] the justice he seeks'.⁴⁴

The second half of the play explores the detainees' experiences at Guantanamo and physical suffering is foregrounded, although never blatant or enacted. As one of the already released prisoners, Jamal Al-Harith can recount without censorship his harrowing experiences of inhuman treatment. At one point, he notes the often contradictory nature of the interrogations, and how he can tell by the chains which interrogation he will suffer:

JAMAL AL-HARITH: If they came with chains that made you sort of hunch up [...] they were going to be hard on you [...] if the chains were where you can actually stand up [...] they're going to be nice.⁴⁵

He talks colloquially of beatings, electrocutions, sleep as well as water deprivation and later recalls being, 'fed on food marked as up to 12 years past its use-by date.'⁴⁶ Jamal is a more combative prisoner who refuses to wear a wrist-tag or admit to anything even under duress. As a consequence, he has spent much of his time in solitary confinement. For Clare Chambers and Susan Watkins, the form of Jamal Al-Harith's monologue creates an empathetic clash between the informal and 'ordinary' lexis of Jamal's recount and the 'extraordinary, almost inhuman treatment' he receives.⁴⁷ This clash may have had mortal significance. Later in the play, Lord Justice Steyn expresses fears about the new 'Martyrs' that may be created by their Guantanamo experience.⁴⁸ Sadly, this 2004 documentary play has a cruel postscript. In February 2017, Jamal Al-Harith, though seemingly an innocent during his detention, 'detonated a car bomb at an Iraqi Army Base', killing a number of soldiers.⁴⁹ Amongst a multi-layered debate that prompted

⁴⁴ Lindsey Mantoan, *Imagining Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Theater*, p. 114.

⁴⁵ 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 545.

⁴⁶ Damian Gayle and Nazia Parveen, 'ISIS Bomber Jamal al-Harith: from Manchester to Iraq via Guantanamo', *The Guardian*, 22 February 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/22/how-jamal-al-harith-became-isis-suicide-bomber-manchester-iraq-guantanamo>> [accessed 21 March 2017]

⁴⁷ Claire Chambers & Susan Watkins, 'Writing Now', *The History Of British Women's Writing, 1970 – Present: Volume Ten*, eds. M. Eagleton & E. Parker (New York: Springer, 2016), p.251.

⁴⁸ 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 547 & p. 566.

⁴⁹ 'BBC News, 'British Suicide Bomber dies in attack on Iraqi forces in Mosul', *BBC*, 21 February 2017 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39045923>> [accessed 21 March 2017]

speeches from Prime Ministers about possible motivations, many inferred but only *The Sun* stated that Jamal al-Harith's family 'blamed his treatment at Guantanamo Bay'.⁵⁰

Ruhal Ahmed is a markedly different example of the consequences of Guantanamo detention. He is introduced later in the narrative. He was captured at a wedding in Pakistan and is one of the famously innocent 'Tipton Three' locked up without charge for over two years. Due to an ocular problem and denied access to an eye specialist, he lost much of his sight. On returning home, the impact on this civilian seems a form of combat trauma. Ruhal Ahmed's father notes:

Mr Ahmed: He's got less feeling, less feeling than before [...] The whole night he walks [...] He say [...] I need small room. Small places. I don't sleep.⁵¹

Towards the end of the play, Jack Straw appears to announce that a number of detainees including Jamal Al-Harith are to be released. From this point, the play broadens its scope to briefly consider Britain's own detainees in Belmarsh prison that 'undercut[s] our ability to be patronising to the Americans'.⁵² The play concludes with a range of lawyers and judges providing summary judgement on Guantanamo. Lord Justice Steyn demands, 'Our government [...] make plain [...] our condemnation of the utter lawlessness at Guantanamo Bay.'⁵³ This was never achieved and as Amelia Kritzer also notes, at this point, this play was the only judicial 'public forum to which they [the detainees] had access.'⁵⁴

Guantanamo is a remarkably powerful play because of its single-minded purpose and unilateral form. At the time, it was one of a tranche of television and newspaper documentaries that helped publicise and foster popular discontent against the prison.⁵⁵ As such, *The Telegraph* theatre reviewer Jasper Rees did not 'recommend' seeing the

⁵⁰ G. Mullin, L. Fruen, N. Baker & T. Wells, 'He Was Never The Same Again', *The Sun*, 22 February 2017 < <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2924281/jamal-al-harith-isis-suicide-mosul-guantanamo-bay/> > [accessed 21 March 2017]

⁵¹ 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 556.

⁵² Ibid., p. 558.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 566.

⁵⁴ Amelia Howe Kritzer, *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain: New Writing: 1995-2005* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pp. 197-199.

⁵⁵ Guantanamo images entered theatre through many other plays, see: Joshua Abrams, 'The Ubiquitous Orange Jumpsuit: Staging Iconic Images and the Production of the Commons', *Political and Protest Theatre After 9/11: Patriotic Dissent*, ed. Jenny Spencer (London: Routledge, 2011)

play to his readers; instead he 'insist[ed] on your moral obligation to do so.'⁵⁶ *The Economist* agreed but noted the play's form was barely theatrical and more an 'exercise in story-telling', the actors 'conduits' for political change.⁵⁷ This is ultimately a rhetorical play of intersecting and provoking stories. For, using the testimony of the innocent detainees, the terror of their family and the sober judgement of legal experts and a 9/11 victim, the audience are vocally hammered, time and again, and asked to consider how Guantanamo Bay can be allowed to exist.

Because the physical abuses are not enacted, only recited, the play seems to avoid the accusation levelled at similar theatre by Dan Rebellato that Verbatim theatre tends to embrace a 'deep voyeurism'.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the images of sometimes chained and jump-suited prisoners reciting stories of extreme suffering might well be argued to be voyeuristic in indulging the audience in the pain of others. For instance, Jamal Al-Harith recalls being:

In the isolation cell [...] there was nothing except bare metal – just like a freezer blowing cold air for 24 hours [...] some people admitted to stuff in Kandahar, because of the beatings [...] they used electricity on some of the people.⁵⁹

Wendy Hesford and Amy Shuman explore in detail issues surrounding the media and arts exploitation of stateless people and contend that voyeurism is usually manifested as a 'symbiosis of suffering and spectacle' that works to obscure or reduce 'the complexity of the social situations being depicted'.⁶⁰ Thus 'voyeurism' is perhaps a less tenable critique to level at this play, as the spectacle of suffering is not performed. However, the wider complexity of Guantanamo Bay is perhaps reduced by the intense and exclusive focus on innocent prisoners and their suffering. Despite this, by placing the audience in the mimetic position of the panopticon guard, the audience's own moral culpability is situationally highlighted within the theatre space and further accentuated by the inert

⁵⁶ Jasper Rees, 'Theatre Leads the Way in the War on Terror', *The Telegraph*, 22 June 2004 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3619413/Theatre-leads-the-way-on-the-war-on-terror.html>> [accessed 4 March 2017]

⁵⁷ Anon., 'Books and Arts: Is It Theatre? Guantanamo on Stage', *The Economist*, 3 July 2004 <<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.glos.ac.uk/docview/224007256?accountid=27114>> [accessed 17 March 2017]

⁵⁸ Dan Rebellato, 'New Theatre Writing: Dennis Kelly', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Iss. 17 (Abingdon: Taylor-Francis, 2007), p. 604.

⁵⁹ 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 547.

⁶⁰ Wendy Hesford and Amy Shuman, 'Emergent Human Rights Contexts: Greg Constantine's "Nowhere People"', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer 2011, p. 316.

but jump-suited chorus at the back of the stage.⁶¹ Such a structural and visible challenge to the audience arguably creates a critical and reflective distance that negates the sense of the performance as voyeuristic spectacle.

When considered in terms of Verbatim plays, such as *Black Watch*, which are concerned to reflect and interrogate their own claims to authenticity, *Guantanamo* is unusually confident about its own claims to truth. There is very little problematizing focus within the play that suggests any of the detainees are anything but innocent and that the prison is anything but a crime. Even Tom Clarke, whose personal loss might infer a more equivocal view of Guantanamo, sees the imprisonment as profoundly unjust. In similarly uncomplicated terms, Donald Rumsfeld as the voice of incarceration, is characterised as brimming with improvised mendacity, as here:

RUMSFELD: There are certain standards that are generally appropriate for treating people who were – are prisoners of war, which these people are not, and – in our view – but there [...] we will end up using roughly that standard.⁶²

Ryan Claycomb argues this unchallenged approach and narrow focus on British detainees makes Brittain and Slovo's play problematic. He argues that its monologic style allows no room for dialogue in form or meaning. He notes, it may be appropriate to be 'decidedly one-sided' because the U.S is enacting 'a kind of bio-power' on these "'innocent" detainees'. However, through the figures of the detainees moving 'silently in the background' the terrorist and Other becomes a 'staged absence'.⁶³ In this way, Brittain and Slovo are echoing the U.S. approach, silencing the terrorist Other and only giving 'voice' to these British prisoners because they share western values. This is perhaps a supportable argument because the play does not allow room for a dramatic conversation about problematic areas, such as whether the Guantanamo regime might be justified for actual terrorists and combat enemies. In the play, the character Tom Clarke would be likely to approve Guantanamo for the guilty but the audience might well not. By avoiding exploring such questions we are deprived of a more nuanced debate. Of course, this argument assumes that at least some guilty parties were held in Guantanamo Bay. Yet, with no trial in (or before) Cuba, guilt or innocence is persistently

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⁶² 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 540.

⁶³ Ryan Claycomb, 'Voices of the Other', *Political and Protest Theatre After 9/11: Patriotic Dissent*, ed. Jenny Spencer (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 103-105.

unknowable. Claycomb's argument doesn't quite address this pivotal point. Nevertheless, it is extremely unusual that a prison-based play should not include the voices of anyone from the prison who is seen as guilty. Likewise, nor do we hear from anyone with credible disciplinary authority. Rumsfeld is introduced but only to be derided. Presumably some sincere groups have a, however tenuous, belief in the value of the prison to justify its existence? Because of this restricted focus, according to Claycomb, the play is impaired and guilty of sidestepping:

The cultural and political rage underpinning the ideologies that have sparked terrorism and thus the entire global conflict.⁶⁴

Claycomb's argument seems tenable in terms of Brittain and Slovo's play whose choice of subject does not allow any room for a wider debate on the Iraq war, the details of any Islamic political alienation or even a theatrical glimpse of a guilty detainee in a prison. The play focuses only on the innocent and British detainees wrongly imprisoned at a much-derided prison and was first performed at the Tricycle theatre, which has a rich Fringe/Alternative heritage. As such, this tends to make the play, as Derek Paget suggests is common to documentary theatre, 'vulnerable to the charge of preaching to the converted.'⁶⁵

Despite this, the play's achievement as Timothy Youker notes is to:

Humanize people whom the state tries to render invisible and poignantly showcase the state apparatus's careless destruction of lives.⁶⁶

The play may well be narrowly concerned with the authentic voice of victims who are British and wrongly abused but this very choice of subject matter ensures a more strident indictment of the state and its injustices at Guantanamo Bay. Clearly, there is a fragile argument for Guantanamo's existence for some wrongdoers, but there is not one for imprisoning businessmen, students and aid workers because of their race and religion. Indeed, to consider other possibly guilty prisoners with other histories within

⁶⁴ Ryan Claycomb, 'Voices of the Other', p. 103.

⁶⁵ Derek Paget, 'The 'Broken Tradition' of Documentary Theatre and its Continued Powers of Endurance', *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 230.

⁶⁶ Timothy Youkers, *Documentary Vanguards in Modern Theatre*, pp., 183-185.

the narrative might well work to undermine this play's approach, which as Wendy Hesford notes, functions to 'humanize the detainees by enabling audience identification.'⁶⁷ In this way, the audience's response is provoked to work both within the position of the complicit observer and also to become the incarcerated.

Nonetheless, the subject matter remains removed from a more complex perspective. As such, for Brittain and Slovo, it seems the constituent sides of right and wrong have to be stripped of their problematized forms in order to foster real political change. Perhaps, some injustices go beyond cultural equivocation. In 2008, U.S. President Obama agreed and felt the detention centre a crime beyond debate. He declared that Guantanamo Bay must be closed for it is a place that 'Undermines our standing in the world [...] a stain on our broader record.' Adding, that despite its existence 15 years after 9/11, 'not a single verdict has been reached in those attacks – not a single one.'⁶⁸

Guantanamo is a remarkably static play with limited diversity in structure or style. It has a logical plot development, moving from detainee monologues to the broader world of lawyers, politicians and judges commenting on the morality and justice of Guantanamo Bay. Calls to prayer for the Islamic detainees at Camp X-Ray are the extent of the multi-media employed.⁶⁹ At no point does the play structurally 'draw-back' from the narrative to consider its authenticity and this perhaps echoes a traditional and modernist theatrical form of sustained themes and slowly evolving narratives. Nevertheless, as the jump-suited prisoners on beds persistently suggest, the inert nature of the play's form also works to echo the stasis of sustained imprisonment.

Whilst apparently absent in the play's form, the monologues recount that elements of postmodernism seem to taint the disciplinary approach to Guantanamo Bay. The play presents and recounts how prisoners are housed in panopticons while their reality is undermined by prison procedures such as sleep deprivation, blinding lights, hooding,

⁶⁷ Wendy Hesford, *Spectacular Rhetorics: Human Rights Visions, Recognitions, Feminisms* (Durham N.C: Duke University, 2011), p.89.

⁶⁸ At time of writing, 45 prisoners are still held. Quote is from President Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President on Plan to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay', *The White House Archives*, 23 February 2016 < <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/02/23/remarks-president-plan-close-prison-guantanamo-bay> > [accessed 23 March 2017]

⁶⁹ The calls to prayer are given stage directions, see 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 516 and 537.

music and repeated disorientating interrogations.⁷⁰ Consequently, as the monologue from the human rights' lawyer Gareth Peirce notes, the feeling that builds within the prisoners is that they're 'not meant to get out of this'.⁷¹

Clearly, Guantanamo Bay works as a power structure looking to exert bio-power on its detainees. However, Gilles Deleuze seems a more pertinent theorist of this disciplinary version of postmodernism than Michel Foucault. Deleuze was a poststructuralist philosopher who considered a broad range of social power structures. He argued that via globalisation (and Deleuze's own term of 'deterritorialization') the dominant neoliberal structures were moving away from Foucault's 'Disciplinary Society' to a new less concrete 'Society of Control'; one embodying, as Alex R. Galloway explains, 'ultrarapid forms of free-floating control'.⁷² Galloway summarises Deleuze's development of Foucault:

The disciplinary societies are characterized by the signature and the document, while the societies of control are characterized by the password and the computer.⁷³

In his 1990 essay, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', Deleuze argues that, the post-Foucauldian cultural approach is signified by '*limitless postponement* [sic]'; for in 'the societies of control one is never finished with anything.'⁷⁴ His argument is that the majority of neoliberal society is now free from the enclosing structures of the factory, and mobile technology no longer requires regular physical attendance at Universities or white-collar work. Instead, control is now diffused throughout a person's public and private life. Deleuze's 1990 essay clearly prefigures the mobile workplace, social media and the way in which casual employment contracts and consumer debt function to keep the worker insecure and so encourage social conformity.⁷⁵ As Caameron Crain

⁷⁰ Interrogations are detailed in 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 540.

⁷¹ 'Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to defend Freedom'', p. 565.

⁷² Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), p.86.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, Vol. 59 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), p. 3 & p. 5. <

https://cidadeinseguranca.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/deleuze_control.pdf > [accessed 17 March 2017]

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 3-7.

comments, the overall 'Effect is the same as with 'the panopticon' in creating a 'feeling that you might be under surveillance at any moment.'⁷⁶

Guantanamo Bay seems to make '*limitless postponement*' concrete. Brittain and Slovo's play details perpetually postponed trials for the detainees, continually delayed release dates and persistent interrogations on the same subject. Meanwhile, external cages, loud music and glaring lights blur the line between inside and outside, sleep and wakefulness; creating Deleuze's understanding of neoliberal structures as increasingly blurred: 'metastable state[s] coexisting in one and the same modulation, like a universal system of deformation.'⁷⁷

Such temporal control mechanisms, as expressed by Deleuze, resonate through to the play's conclusion. The strategic use of manipulating time is innate to Guantanamo and is central to Clive Stafford Smith's closing critique of Guantanamo:

The concept that we can just detain people is just like *Minority Report*. I mean [it's as if] we're going to predict that these people are going to be violent in the future.⁷⁸

Consequently, it is the '*limitless postponement*' of trial and release that underpins the criminal gravity of Guantanamo, and closes the drama, as a disembodied voice explains that:

Voice: UK citizens are [...] among more than 650 prisoners held in Guantanamo [...] They are being held indefinitely.

3.3 *Crime and Punishment* by Mark Ravenhill (2007)

Within his 2007 analysis of *Guantanamo*, Ryan Claycomb argues that this Verbatim work 'side-stepped' the character and actions of the Other. He then contends that:

Acts, agents and discourses of violence remain unrepresented and potentially unrepresentable.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Caameron Crain, 'Living In A Society of Control', *The Mantle*, 30 July 2013 < <http://www.mantlethought.org/philosophy/living-society-control> > [accessed 13 March 2019]

⁷⁷ Caameron Crain, 'Living In A Society of Control', p. 5.

⁷⁸ 'Guantanamo: Honor Bound to defend Freedom', p. 558.

⁷⁹ Ryan Claycomb, 'Staging Guantanamo', *Politics and Culture*, Iss. 1 (New York, T. Kaposy, 2007) < <https://politicsandculture.org/2009/10/02/ryan-claycomb-on-staging-guantanamo/> > [accessed 22 March 2017]

Evidently most of the plays concerning the Iraq war focus on the British or coalition experience while the Iraq insurgent and the impacted citizen are usually absent. The dramatist Gregory Burke argues that this is due to the political implications of a Western dramatist representing a foreign culture and so undertaking a theatrical act of cultural appropriation. He comments:

I can't tell an Iraqi person's version of the war, and to think that I could would be to adopt the same attitude that made us invade their country in the first place.⁸⁰

From Burke's perspective, to attempt to write and dramatise the voice of another culture seems itself an act of colonialism. Burke echoes Erika Fischer-Lichte's point as articulated in 2014, that the theatrical application of 'interculturalism/interweaving' is difficult and usually unsuccessful.⁸¹ Fischer-Lichte notes that:

[N]umerous contemporary performances that interweave cultures fail because they reiterate and reaffirm forms of representation and/or configurations of power that can only be described as neo-colonial, imperialistic and/or racist.⁸²

Yet, one of the inbuilt difficulties with maintaining cultural authenticity by focusing on the domestic, as Claycomb notes above, is that in the context of the Iraq War the subjugated Iraqi citizen and insurgent have a severely limited ability to be heard on the British stage. Consequently, the possibility of a wider understanding of the conflict and its complexity, from an Iraqi perspective, is obscured.

After critiquing existing forms of interculturalism, Fischer-Lichte suggests the theatrical response is often to completely avoid the dramatic representation of other cultures. Yet, she questions why producers, 'periodically abstain from, resist or oppose recognizable

⁸⁰ Mark Brown, 'Tales From the Front Line', *New Statesman*, 26 March 2007
<<http://www.newstatesman.com/arts-and-culture/2007/03/black-watch-iraq-burke>> [accessed 8 November 2016]

⁸¹ Erika Fischer-Lichte prefers the term 'interweaving' because of 'interculturalism's' assumption of an equal power-balance, which is rarely the case. See Anton Krueger, 'The politics of interweaving performance cultures: beyond postcolonialism', *South African Theatre Journal*, (London: Routledge, March 2015), pp. 94-99.

⁸² Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Rethinking Intercultural Theatre": Towards an Experience and Theory of Performance Beyond PostColonialism', *The politics of interweaving performance cultures: beyond postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p.14.

processes of interweaving?"⁸³ Fischer-Lichte contends that the explanation lies in a limitation associated with the term "intercultural", which she argues:

Implies a sharp division between "our" and the "other" cultures, assuming that cultures are hermetically sealed, homogeneous entities.⁸⁴

Focusing on the common cross-cultural ground of human suffering and injustice, some fictional theatrical forms such as Mark Ravenhill's *Crime and Punishment*, attempted to present Claycomb's 'Other' perspective. Mark Ravenhill's 2007 play *Crime and Punishment* presents an interweaving of cultures through the fictional narrative of an interrogation between a seeming Iraqi 'Woman' and coalition 'Soldier'.

Crime and Punishment uses Ravenhill's previously observed combination of the distanced and the symbolic to present a violence-strewn interrogation. The setting is in the 'Occupied Zone' of Iraq, and is undertaken by a (initially cast as American) 'Soldier' who is interrogating an Iraqi 'Woman.'⁸⁵ There are echoes of Guantanamo Bay as the Woman has been kidnapped on her way to hospital and is never properly named or accused of any crime. Additionally, the Soldier swings wildly from calmness and talk of cultural 'Love', to extreme torture.

From the start, Ravenhill uses numerous techniques to distance the character of the Iraqi woman from the audience's domestic culture. Her first words in response to the Soldier's request for a common language, suggest the overriding problem of understanding the Other:

Soldier: Do you speak English? speak English?

Woman: Speak English.⁸⁶

⁸³ Ibid., p.18.

⁸⁴ Erika Fischer-Lichte, "Rethinking Intercultural Theatre", p.14.

⁸⁵ The original Cottesloe production used an American actor with a hint of the Welsh see Phillip Fisher, 'Crime and Punishment, *British Theatre Guide*, 2008 < <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/shootgetrepeat1-rev#C> > [accessed 28 March 2017] Quotation - 'Mark Ravenhill, 'War and Peace', *Plays 3* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 88.

⁸⁶ Mark Ravenhill, 'Crime and Punishment', *Plays: 3* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 85.

When the soldier asks her to state her name, the unspecified 'Woman' distances herself further from a specifically-located culture, referring to her own narrative in the third person:

Woman: A woman who was once a wife and mother and is now a widow.⁸⁷

Both the character's name and detached dialogue highlight the Woman as primarily symbolic. In Phillip Fisher's review these are 'rather heavy-handed symbol[s]'.⁸⁸ Yet the symbolic abstraction perhaps helps nullify any complaints of cultural appropriation and also implies that the Woman's precise English is to be understood as representational rather than autobiographical. However as with Ravenhill's *War and Peace*, once the distanced and symbolic seems foregrounded, the Woman then provides a grounding personal history that locates her in Iraq. Under questioning, she explains how grateful she is that 'the dictator' was killed, as under Saddam Hussein, her:

Woman: Brother had a hot-iron applied to his arm because he wrote in a newspaper.⁸⁹

Things appear to have escalated further downhill as the Woman explains how her husband and son were killed in the coalition bombings. Then, that she was kidnapped by the Americans so that she could appear on the 'Primetime' Television recording of the toppling of Saddam's statue. In perhaps a satirical comment on documentary drama, Ravenhill's Woman recalls being forced to be a wordless actor in a fabricated documentary. The Soldier asks her how she felt witnessing the event that heralded:

Soldier: Freedom, Democracy, History.

She replies:

Woman: Nothing [...] I don't feel anything for these big words [...] My duty is with My mother-in-law.⁹⁰

Whilst her own voice is made mute in the crowd and the interrogation, the coalition forces fill the absence with three nouns that seem both ambiguous and sinister. As Margherita Laera explains the two nouns 'Freedom and Democracy' in the play are:

⁸⁷ 'Crime and Punishment', p. 85.

⁸⁸ Fisher, Phillip, 'Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat - 1', *British Theatre Guide*, May 2004 < <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/shootgetrepeat1-rev#C> > [16 March 2017]

⁸⁹ 'Crime and Punishment', p. 86.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 87 & p. 88.

A meaningless refrain degraded by overuse and misuse [...] an example of how the society of the spectacle expropriates and alienates language itself.⁹¹

Caroline McGinn notes, 'Despair breathes through' the dialogue as the Woman explains that 'Freedom and Democracy' seem just as treacherous as Saddam Hussein:⁹²

Woman: Is it better to have a bad man or no civil war? [...] frying pan or fire?⁹³

This response enrages the soldier who expresses his political confusion in terms distanced by the theme of mediatized romance and market consumption:

Soldier: I really want you to love me. If we were back home, I'd take you to a bar, drink all you can, a film, a Chinese [...] But here – how do I make love to you here?⁹⁴

In Ravenhill's narrative, the Soldier does not understand why the Iraqi citizen is not grateful for his work in removing a vicious dictator and not receptive to a consumer lifestyle. The Woman has been kidnapped on her way to see her mother-in-law in hospital and seems only to see hope in cultural responsibility. Under threat from a rifle, the Woman pretends to hug the Soldier in forced gratitude but it is insufficient and the soldier shoots the 'detainee' in the foot and knee to encourage her to 'love' him. Understandably she curses revenge, but it is coded in perhaps grating fundamentalist terms:

Woman: May [...] my husband, my son and a thousand million angry spirits rise up and bring their hate to you [...] your civilisation will burn.⁹⁵

As the Woman refuses to say 'I love you' to the Soldier, the play closes while he '*cuts out her tongue*' onstage. Thus the play ends in a bloodletting that recalls Shakespeare's Lavinia seen through an Artaudian spectacle of 'a crimson river of warm blood.'⁹⁶

⁹¹ Margherita Laera, 'Mark Ravenhill's Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat: A Treasure Hunt In London', *Theatre Forum*, No. 35 (San Diego, University of California, 2009), p.7. <

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/57302/1/RavenhillFINAL.pdf> > [accessed 30 March 2017]

⁹² Caroline McGinn, 'Mark Ravenhill's Iraq Plays Blog,' *Time Out: London*, 7 April 2008 < <http://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/mark-ravenhills-iraq-plays-blog-1> > [1 April 2017]

⁹³ "Crime and Punishment", p. 86.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 88.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 96.

⁹⁶ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* (London: Methuen, 1968), 2.4.22

Although Ravenhill's play uses a non-naturalistic form, his narrative echoes Brittain and Slovo's documentary recount of innocents under torture. However, here Ravenhill provides us with a dramatized torturer along with an ultimately radicalised Iraqi citizen. Pointedly, the victim is the voice of reason when declaring in the midst of her torture:

Woman: I want freedom. I want democracy. I don't want this. I don't want you.⁹⁷

Yet not only does the Soldier not listen to the Woman, he classifies all her comments as worthless, babble, as 'blah, blah'.⁹⁸ Ravenhill seems to be criticising the way in which the native Iraqi voice is wilfully ignored by the coalition soldier and perhaps the wider theatrical establishment. Thus the Iraqi Woman with her tongue hacked off is an appropriate echo of Lavinia from *Titus Andronicus*, as abused woman, desperate to communicate but muted by violence.⁹⁹

Fundamentally, Ravenhill's play in considering the voice of the Other, attempts to highlight Claycomb's concern about representation. For Ravenhill, the Iraqi voice has been knowingly repressed. As Jenny Hughes argues, Ravenhill's short play is fundamentally about the 'failure of the voice' and the 'breakdown of control over the *significance* of the voice.'¹⁰⁰

As valid as Ravenhill's point is, this symbolic exposition of the Iraq occupation is perhaps guilty of reducing the complexities of the Coalition aims and the colonised citizens to a form of liberal trope. This is perhaps the sort of concern that caused Aleks Sierz to criticise the whole series as showing the 'narrowness of Ravenhill's imagination'.¹⁰¹ Despite this, as Jenny Hughes notes, this play responds to and echoes the rhetoric of the 'War on Terror', which also uses narrow simplifications that are 'Falsely heroic and mythologizing excisions of good and bad or 'us and them''.¹⁰²

In contrast, Charles Spencer felt that this play about a 'callow soldier' was a shining example of a Ravenhill series that 'struck' him as 'Glib and predictable, little more than

⁹⁷ "Crime and Punishment", p. 96.

⁹⁸ 'Crime and Punishment', p. 88 & p. 90.

⁹⁹ Lavinia herself also refers back to Philomela in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

¹⁰⁰ Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror: Critical Mimesis and the Age of Uncertainty* (Manchester: M.U.P., 2011), p.121.

¹⁰¹ Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today* (London: Methuen, 2011), p. 78.

¹⁰² Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror*, p.120.

knee-jerk cringes of liberal guilt and angst.¹⁰³ Certainly, the characters seem to be mostly accentuated symbols. The Iraqi Woman is a victim whose family and herself suffer far more from her liberators than in her recollections of Saddam Hussein. This is perhaps historically debatable. Similarly, the Soldier seems a stereotypical neoliberal aggressor. Perhaps stepping-out fully-formed as the villain from the pages of Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*, taking advantage of the chaos to install a lucrative consumer lifestyle.¹⁰⁴ Conversely, Margherita Laera sees the Soldier as an appropriately narrow symbol of a narrow capitalism, for the Soldier is alienated from the Woman because he is 'the product of a society that [...] only responds to the laws of the market.'¹⁰⁵

Ultimately, Ravenhill's 'Crime and Punishment' is a challenging work. Not least because he clearly explores the seismic contradiction at the heart of the coalition's tactic in Iraq: if the aim of the occupation is to win 'Hearts and Minds', then human rights abuses against innocents are surely counter-productive.¹⁰⁶ When the Woman reminds the soldier of the international treaties giving her the 'right to respect', the Soldier's response robs her of voice and significance:

Soldier: Oh yada Oh yada / Oh yada Oh yada dooo.¹⁰⁷

Bereft of her family and voice, the Iraqi Woman is ultimately forced towards considering extreme action and ominously threatens: 'your country and your people will burn.'¹⁰⁸

By presenting us with a violated citizen who turns into a potential enemy, Ravenhill's play is unusually materialistic. He suggests that without a significant voice and human rights, Freedom and Democracy mean nothing. Indeed, Ravenhill also echoes the arch-materialist Terry Eagleton in the play's Introduction. Whilst exploring the 'postmodern', Ravenhill observes its dangers: 'there is a real possibility for moral evasion if everything

¹⁰³ Charles Spencer, 'Mark Ravenhill: Where's the courage in these tales of war?', *The Telegraph*, 8 April 2008 < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3672412/Mark-Ravenhill-Wheres-the-courage-in-these-tales-of-war.html> > [accessed 21 March 2017]

¹⁰⁴ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008)

¹⁰⁵ Margherita Laera, 'Mark Ravenhill's Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat: A Treasure Hunt In London', *Theatre Forum*, No. 35 (San Diego, University of California, 2009), p.7. < <https://kar.kent.ac.uk/57302/1/RavenhillFINAL.pdf> > [accessed 30 March 2017]

¹⁰⁶ 'Hearts & Minds' campaign as detailed in the Iraq version of John A. United States Army, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007)

¹⁰⁷ 'Crime and Punishment', p. 88.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

is subjective.’¹⁰⁹ Ravenhill’s fragmentary series of plays, although liberally imbued with postmodern forms and concerns, are firmly material in meaning.

3.4 *How Many Miles to Basra?* by Colin Teevan (2006)

The Iraq War was a conflict where the combat behaviour of the British soldier came under intense public examination both in Iraq and at home. *The Observer* noted how after the Abu Ghraib photographs ‘ferocious scrutiny’ attended much of the Army’s actions and thus being seen to deal fairly and promptly with civilian allegations became pivotal.¹¹⁰

At the time of writing, the Ministry of Defence state they have received ‘3,390’ ‘allegations of abuse’ made by Iraqi civilians against combat soldiers. As a consequence of this, an independent Iraq Historic Allegations Team (IHAT) was set up to consider complaints covering the period 2003 to 2009. IHAT note that ‘1,666’ allegations have been ‘sifted out’ and ‘696’ closed ‘(as of December 2016).’¹¹¹ IHAT received many of their claims from a human rights’ lawyer named Phil Shiner, who was acclaimed for the work he undertook on the Baha Mousa enquiry, which is the focus of Richard Norton Taylor’s play *Tactical Questioning*, discussed below. Yet in early 2017, Phil Shiner was ‘struck off as a solicitor’ after being found guilty of ‘dishonesty and lack of integrity’. Specifically, for paying a middleman a fee for each new allegation along with other activities that ‘cast doubt on the reliability of some of the remaining allegations.’¹¹² Shiner’s downfall was largely related to his pursuance of the Al-Sweady case. This relates to a 2004 event after a battle in Basra, when the MoD took a number of dead bodies and live prisoners back to their base, Camp Abu Naji. The taking of the bodies seemed an act to cover-up some form of war crime.¹¹³ After much legal investigation, the inquiry found that the MoD took the bodies as they thought one was a high profile

¹⁰⁹ Mark Ravenhill, ‘Introduction’, *Plays: 3* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. xii.

¹¹⁰ M. Townsend, J Doward & P. Beaumont, ‘The Army on Trial’, *The Observer*, 23 January 2005 < <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2005/jan/23/iraq.military> > [accessed 21 March 2017]

¹¹¹ Ministry of Defence, Iraq Historic Allegations Team (IHAT), *Gov.uk* < <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/iraq-historic-allegations-team-ihat> > [accessed 21 March 2017]

¹¹² Owen Bowcott, ‘Phil Shiner: Iraq human rights lawyer struck off after misconduct’, *The Guardian*, 2 February 2017 < <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2017/feb/02/iraq-human-rights-lawyer-phil-shiner-disqualified-for-professional-misconduct> > [accessed 21 March 2017]

¹¹³ BBC News, ‘Q&A What is the Al-Sweady Inquiry?’, *BBC*, 17 December 2014 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21740286> > [accessed 4 April 2017]

insurgent and needed to confirm his identity.¹¹⁴ During the inquiry, Shiner admitted 'paying a middleman' to find people who had witnessed the British Army's actions and his claims against the Army crumbled along with his reputation.¹¹⁵ Yet, in interview, Richard Norton-Taylor pointed out that the whole inquiry 'would not have happened if the Ministry of Defence had been open' in the first place.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, following the collapse of Phil Shiner, 'bankrupt and everything else' according to Norton-Taylor, his cases against the Army were all seen as compromised.¹¹⁷ Consequently, the Defence Secretary Michael Fallon committed to close IHAT and pass the remaining 20 cases to the military to resolve.¹¹⁸

Therefore, the extent of abuse in Iraq seems to be a persistently fluid truth swinging from being well over 3,000 to well under 50. This was perhaps matched by the swing in public opinion: disgust when the Abu Ghraib photographs were released in 2004 and following the Phil Shiner revelations, as the Daily Mail noted in 2017, anger from the public and 'soldiers tormented for years over spurious claims.'¹¹⁹

Clearly, the role of the soldier in Iraq was extremely complicated. Primarily trained in combat procedures and physically demanding work, they were asked to help build community relationships as part of a 'Hearts and Minds' strategy. When engaging in combat they were required to carefully process a range of rules before beginning any attack. These rules were complicated, as this extract from the US 'Rules for Engagement in Iraq' shows. Before engagement a soldier should ensure compliance with:

- a) Positive identification (PID) is required [...] PID is a reasonable certainty that the proposed target is a legitimate military target. If no PID, contact your next higher commander for decision.
- b) Do not engage anyone who [...] is out of battle due to sickness or wounds.

¹¹⁴ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'What is the Al-Sweady Inquiry' *The Guardian*, 7 December 2014 < <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/dec/17/what-is-al-sweady-iraq-inquiry-key-points> > [accessed 3 April 2017]

¹¹⁵ Owen Bowcott, 'Lawyer May Have to Repay £3.2m over al-Sweady inquiry, court told', *The Guardian*, 1 February 2017 < <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/feb/01/lawyer-may-have-to-repay-32m-over-al-sweady-inquiry-court-told> > [accessed 3 April 2017]

¹¹⁶ Appendix II, *Transcript of Telephone Conversation with Richard Norton-Taylor*.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Peter Walker, 'Iraq War Claims Unit to be Shut Down, says UK Defence Secretary', *The Guardian*, 10 February 2017 < <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/10/iraq-war-claims-unit-to-be-shut-down-says-uk-defence-secretary> > [accessed 21 March 2017]

¹¹⁹ Paddy Dinham, 'Struck off in disgrace: Lawyer who hounded British soldiers' *The Daily Mail*, 2 February < <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4184066/Human-rights-lawyer-Phil-Shiner-GUILTY-dishonesty.html> > [accessed 21 March 2017]

d) Do not fire into civilian populated areas or buildings unless the enemy is using them for military purposes or if necessary for your self-defence.¹²⁰

The difficulty of following such rules in a combat situation is the subject of Colin Teevan's 2006 play, *How Many Miles To Basra?* The play was first performed as a Radio play and broadcast on Radio 3 in 2004. Its first theatrical performance was at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in 2006 where reviewer Charles Hutchinson described it as a 'stark, dark night of a zeitgeist play.'¹²¹

The play tells the story of four soldiers who are stuck at a vehicle checkpoint in Iraq with an embedded journalist. This takes place a week after Saddam Hussein's statue has fallen and when the BBC and government are at loggerheads over the controversial Andrew Gilligan story. The soldiers stop and search a car with three Iraqi 'Bedouins' and find a large sum of money. Thinking this might be Saddam Hussein's missing millions, the soldiers seize it. The Iraqis, assuming the bundle of money is being stolen, 'make a grab for it'.¹²² The guarding Private appears to warn the Iraqis the required three times, but they are pleading/pulling at the soldier and one Iraqi appears to have something threatening in his hand.¹²³ In a confused struggle, the three Bedouins are shot and two killed by Private Freddie. Private Dangermouse, Freddie and Sergeant Stewart review the situation afterwards:

DANGERMOUSE: They were armed boss. I swear

FREDDIE: Hearts and Minds is all very well Stew, but if it's him or me, it's him.

DANGERMOUSE: Freddie warned them, boss, three times.

STEWART: Perhaps but in what language? How did he know you weren't talking about the fucking weather?¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Off Target: The Conduct of the War and Civilian Casualties in Iraq* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2003), p.138. <

<https://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/usa1203/11.htm> > [accessed 21 March 2017]

¹²¹ Charles Hutchinson, 'Review: How Many Miles to Basra?', West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds', *The Press* (York), 30 September 2006 <

http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/theatre/946659.review_how_many_miles_to_basra_west_yorkshire_playhouse_leeds/ > [accessed 26 March 2017]

¹²² Colin Teevan, *How Many Miles to Basra?* (London: Oberon, 2006), p. 26.

¹²³ According to Ian Cobain the Rules of Engagement in Iraq were often less stringent. Ian Cobain, 'British Army Permitted Shooting of Civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan', *Middle East Eye*, 4 February 2019 < <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/exclusive-british-army-permitted-shooting-civilians-iraq-and-afghanistan> > [accessed 15 August 2019]

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

The journalist has recorded the incident on her phone and it becomes increasingly clear that this is now a recorded war crime. Yet before his dying breath, one Bedouin explains that the money was actually being used to pay off a Sheikh who had kidnapped the Bedouin's wife and child. In an act of atonement, Sergeant Stewart and his unit try to find the Sheikh and save the life of the dead Bedouin's family. The journalist attempts to keep track of the soldiers and the story whilst befriending a sardonic and courageous Iraqi translator called Malek.

Teevan's dramatized soldiers, who skirt the borders of morality, are also set against a wider political backdrop. The time is following the Gilligan accusation of 'sexing-up' the published dossier that justified the Iraq invasion. In fear of upsetting the government further, the journalist's BBC employers cower from publishing this Iraq story and telling another unpalatable truth.¹²⁵ In this context, the illegal but accidental killing by three British soldiers is contrasted to an apparent political abuse, which is not accidental and likely to cause many more deaths. As Lynne Walker summarises:

The dilemma at the heart of Teevan's drama is the definition of truth and morality in war. The issues of responsibility and morality in the army, in politics and in the media are turned over, kicked around, but ultimately and rightly left unresolved.¹²⁶

Whilst the narrative is largely 'unresolved', Teevan ensures his soldiers are all (probably) killed and the Journalist is left trying to do the right thing in impossible circumstances.

Colin Teevan's play is a layered exploration of wrongdoing that considers the way in which the seemingly best intentions of a soldier and journalist can be undermined. The characters continuing aim to make amends, casts a pall over the government's own intents. Yet, as Aleks Seirz notes, this play 'offers a generous view of the British Army abroad' whilst being scornful of the government.¹²⁷ The translator Malek leads the polemic against the British machinations. Malek is an articulate but enraged Iraqi

¹²⁵ *How Many Miles to Basra?*, p. 19.

¹²⁶ Lynne Walker, 'How Many Miles to Basra?: West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds', *The Independent*, 1 October 2006 < <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/how-many-miles-to-basra-west-yorkshire-playhouse-leeds-418374.html> >[accessed 27 March 2017]

¹²⁷ Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today* (London: Methuen, 2011), p. 86.

civilian, echoing Ravenhill's Woman, who points out his perspective on the British historic involvement in Saddam Hussein's regime and its consequences:

MALEK: To remove this monster Saddam, whom you made to keep us in our place [...] you have bombed us, impoverished us [...] You reduce a country to rags and then you call us ragheads.¹²⁸

Malek's comments are visually underlined by Jeremy Daker's set, which as Lynne Walker notes, uses a backcloth on which are projected, 'The skeletal outline of a city [...] and a heap of rubble.'¹²⁹ Malek's is a dominating and scathing theatrical voice that combined with the military and media characters, resolutely implicates the government.

The play is ultimately an exploration of the soldier's dilemma, as Christian Hogsbjerg's explains, of 'how to reconcile doing "your job" with doing "the right thing" when the two are irreconcilable'.¹³⁰ From this reading, Teevan's play is in marked contrast to the less contestable plays about the Baha Mousa and Abu Ghraib abuses.

3.5 *Tactical Questioning* by Richard Norton-Taylor (2011)

In 1971, the Irish Republic brought a case to the European Court of Human Rights against the British government concerning the British Army's use of torture against suspected IRA members.¹³¹ The 'Five Techniques' of hooding, wall-standing, subjection to noise along with deprivation of sleep and denial of food and drink, were the key issues under question. Complicity was suggested by the response, when Prime Minister Edward Heath agreed to ban questioning strategies that seemed to equate to torture. In the House of Commons in 1972, Edward Heath stated that 'the techniques [...] will not be used in [...] all future circumstances.'¹³² This change became part of a published 'Directive on Interrogation' that was passed across all British Services in the early

¹²⁸ *How Many Miles to Basra?*, p. 64.

¹²⁹ Lynne Walker, 'How Many Miles to Basra?'

¹³⁰ Christian Hogsbjerg, 'How Many Miles to Basra?', *Socialist Worker Reviews*, 14 October 2006, Iss. 2022. Hogsberg effectively ascribes tragic hamartia as a central tenet of a British soldier in Iraq's terms of employment.

¹³¹ According to Norman Baker M.P., one of the key legal defenders of British 'practices' in Northern Ireland at the European Court in 1978 was Lord Hutton, later to be the government's choice to consider the sensitive and questionable events surrounding the death of Dr Kelly. See Norman Baker M.P., *The Strange Death of David Kelly* (London: Methuen, 2007), p. 77.

¹³² Edward Heath, Prime Minister, 'Interrogation techniques (Parker Committee's Report)', *Hansard*, 2 March 1972, HC Deb 02, Vol. 832, cc 743-9 < <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1972/mar/02/interrogation-techniques-parker> > [accessed 3 April 2017]

1970s.¹³³ Ian Cobain contends that these 'general guidelines' were only Part I, and that there were two parts to this directive. The second part remained a permanent 'draft' and dealt with the 'actual conduct of interrogation'. According to Cobain, Part II appears to directly contradict the prohibition of the five techniques stated in Part I.¹³⁴ Part II was only released when 'the MoD was forced to hand the document over to a public inquiry into the death of Baha Mousa'.¹³⁵ The Baha Mousa public inquiry brought the use of the five techniques back to the court and this case remains the most notable success of Phil Shiner's legal firm, *Public Interest Lawyers*.

Richard Norton-Taylor's *Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry* (*Tactical Questioning*), first produced in June 2011 at the Tricycle Theatre, dramatizes the key speeches from the inquiry. It was produced after the evidence but before the final report, which was published in September 2011. From the play and the inquiry, the British Army was clearly using the five techniques against Iraqi citizens.

The play opens with the character Gerard Elias QC standing at his chipboard desk and referencing Edward Heath's statement banning torture. The play goes on to explore the context and circumstances surrounding Baha Mousa's death in September 2003. This death occurred when Baha Mousa was being held in custody by the 1st Battalion Queen's Lancashire Regiment (1QLR), in Basra. In the play, Elias recounts that a post-mortem on Baha Mousa found '93 separate injuries' that were 'consistent with a systematic beating.'¹³⁶

The audience first learn how in 2003 the city of Basra was in a state of chaos where the army was required to deal with policing a town in civil anarchy. *The Telegraph* noted, at the time, from dealing with children 'throwing stones to full-scale riots' the area was 'falling apart at the seams'.¹³⁷ The situation deteriorated further when a 1QLR soldier,

¹³³ Ian Cobain, *Cruel Britannia: A Secret History of Torture* (London: Portobello Books, 2013), pp. 135-165.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 164.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 163.

¹³⁶ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', *The Tricycle Collected Tribunal Plays: 1994: 2012* (London: Oberon Books, 2014), p. 780.

¹³⁷ Defence Correspondent, 'Baha Mousa Inquiry: British troops struggled to keep order in Basra', *The Telegraph*, 8 September 2011, <
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/8748795/Baha-Mousa-inquiry-British-troops-struggled-to-keep-order-in-Basra.html?wptouch_preview_theme=enabled > [accessed 5 April 2017]

Captain David 'Dai' Jones, was killed in a roadside bomb while travelling in a marked ambulance. In order to find those responsible, 1QLR soldiers searched a number of hotels in the Basra area. In one hotel they found Baha Mousa and other suspects alongside 'a quantity of weapons [...] fake identity cards and other suspicious materials.'¹³⁸ The fact that Captain Jones was a respected colleague was seen to be significant in the later treatment of these suspects. When interviewed by Elias, Private Aaron Cooper from the 1QLR notes that the Captain's death caused the soldiers to become 'generally more aggressive.'¹³⁹

The inquiry hears that when Baha Mousa and the suspects are first detained they are subjected to permanent hooding and clear evidence of the other proscribed techniques being used. Private Cooper notes the suspects being kept anxiously awake and being placed in 'stress positions, hooded, plasticcuffed'.¹⁴⁰ This was added to by regular physical abuse. Cooper notes that all of the Privates along with 'Lieutenant Rogers, Corporal Redfearn' and 'Corporal Payne' repeatedly punched the prisoners 'as you would normally hit in a fight.' The treatment was mentally and physically abusive and aimed to humiliate and degrade. Cooper recalls Corporal Payne going round and poking the suspects in turn 'in the stomach' so they all made 'different noises', which Payne referred to as the 'choir'.¹⁴¹

Baha Mousa's death comes about, according to Private Cooper, after Baha Mousa is found to have taken off his own hood as well as plasticuffs and is wandering disorientated out of his open cell. Corporal Payne finds him untied and tries to get the hood and cuffs back on. Corporal Payne is annoyed, and he aims 'punches and kicks' at, and bangs Baha Mousa's 'head against the wall', as Cooper details, until eventually Baha Mousa 'stopped moving'.¹⁴² Corporal Payne is described by (a seemingly promoted)

¹³⁸ 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', p. 780.

¹³⁹ 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', p. 787.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 787. 'Stress positions' means suspects standing against a wall with arms and head stretched up and (sometimes) legs bent. When fatigue takes over, the suspect is forcibly returned to the position until compliant for interrogation. Plasticcuffed means hands bound with plastic ties. Mocked examples of such techniques have recently become visible and entered living rooms via Channel 4's, *SAS: Who Dares Wins*. See < <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/sas-who-dares-wins/on-demand/60652-005> > [accessed 4 April 2017]

¹⁴¹ Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', p. 789 & p. 791.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 793 & p. 794.

Sergeant Redfearn as a 'bully'.¹⁴³ When asked about the acts of abuse, Payne is brusque but honest:

ELIAS: Did your conduct include punching and kicking?

PAYNE: Yes.

ELIAS: - routinely to detainees?

PAYNE: Yes.¹⁴⁴

The details of the tortures and circumstances of the death of Baha Mousa occupy the first half of the play. Corporal Payne is clearly the most implicated, if not the only member of the regiment involved. Corporal Payne was court-martialled and sentenced to 12 months in prison in 2007. Thus his evidence takes place after his adjudicated guilt. His imprisonment is extremely significant for being the first British soldier to be convicted of a war crime.¹⁴⁵ The sentence was extremely short and this is partly because the soldiers, as Gerard Elias QC notes, were 'working very, very long hours, often with little respite.'¹⁴⁶ Similarly, the short sentence was also because of the clear involvement and awareness of senior staff in the regiment, the Armed forces and the Ministry of Defence. Corporal Payne's sentencing Judge, Mr Justice McKinnon claimed 'there had been a "serious failing in the chain of command all the way up to brigade and beyond."'147

Consequently, the play goes on to interview the senior staff. As Aleks Sierz bluntly notes, 'if Payne is vile, his superior officers are scarcely more impressive.'¹⁴⁸ In the play, Private Cooper and Corporal Payne claim that their immediate officer Lieutenant Rodgers was involved in assaulting the detainees.¹⁴⁹ Payne alleges seeing Rodgers pour

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 797.

¹⁴⁴ 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', p. 814.

¹⁴⁵ Steven Morris, 'First British soldier to be convicted of a war crime is jailed for ill-treatment of Iraqi civilians', *The Guardian*, 1 May 2007 < <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/may/01/military.iraq> > [accessed 5 April 2017]

¹⁴⁶ 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', p. 779.

¹⁴⁷ Steven Morris, 'First British soldier to be convicted of a war crime is jailed'.

¹⁴⁸ Aleks Sierz, 'Tactical Questioning, Tricycle Theatre', *Aleks Sierz (Reviews)* < <http://www.sierz.co.uk/reviews/tactical-questioning-tricycle-theatre/> > [accessed 7 April 2017]

¹⁴⁹ 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', p. 789. & p. 823.

a 'jerry can of water' over a hooded Iraqi and lit a match so that 'the young lad went hysterical.'¹⁵⁰ When interviewed about his violence, Rodgers denies everything.

Equally unlikely, under interview Lieutenant Rodgers also manages to avoid admitting to any awareness of the use of the five techniques. Elias asks about the detainees:

ELIAS: Were they in stress positions

RODGERS: I can't recall, sir.¹⁵¹

Yet, Payne notes that the use of the five techniques, termed 'conditioning', was clearly evident to more senior members of his regiment, up to his Commanding Officer and B.G.I.R.O. (Battlegroup Internment Review Officer), Major Peebles, and beyond. When asked by Elias who was aware in 'the chain of command through you' about the detainee's treatment, he replies:

PAYNE: Everybody

ELIAS: How [far] did it go?

PAYNE: All the way up.¹⁵²

The B.G.I.R.O. then takes the stand and argues that he thought the five techniques were authorised.¹⁵³ Next, the Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence, Adam Ingram is interviewed and claims he had no knowledge of the use of the five techniques. Elias points out that he should have received a letter of complaint from the Red Cross who were concerned about detainee's treatment that referred to the five techniques and was signed by British soldiers. Ingram can't recall it. Then Elias points out that after the date of the Red Cross complaint, Ingram sent a letter to a concerned M.P., Michael Foster, stating that the Red Cross 'expressed themselves content' with the detainee's treatment.¹⁵⁴ When questioned by Elias on whether he knew about the Red Cross complaint before writing the reassuring letter to Michael Foster, Adam Ingram looks to redefine truth:

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 823.

¹⁵¹ 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', p. 805.

¹⁵² 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', p. 806.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 827.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 848.

ELIAS: If you had known [...] Would you have put your signature to the letter [to Michael Foster, M.P.] as it is here drafted?

INGRAM: I would have probably tried to establish ground truth. /There was nothing to be gained from people telling something that wasn't true because the truth would always surface. So I don't think it was a denial of honesty.¹⁵⁵

Daniel B. Yates notes that in the performance, Ingram's 'jargonised prevarications' drew 'incredulous moans from the audience.'¹⁵⁶

The play makes it apparent that the conditioning techniques were apparent at the highest level, but as Cooper notes in the opening:

COOPER: In the British Army, you all work as a team and try to stick as a team [...] Lieutenant Rodgers [...] his suggestion was that all the blame be put on Corporal Payne.¹⁵⁷

Although Adam Ingram's ministerial position allows his evidence to close the play, the broader failure and reasons for the detainee's abuse is expressed by Lieutenant Colonel Mercer. He comments on a lack of training for the soldiers in interrogation techniques. Moreover, he notes a need for a different culture where:

MERCER: Soldiers are taught to intervene rather than turn a blind eye – and this is what I refer to as the moral compass.¹⁵⁸

Tactical Questioning is a profoundly unsettling play that shows how torture can be employed by junior soldiers, presumably under orders, and the responsibility and blame avoided by all those senior ranks and agencies implicated in allowing it to happen. Highlighting how the play helps cast a slur on the national self-image, *The Telegraph* comments this story is not about someone held in a 'Robert Mugabe' or 'Syrian hell hole' but an 'Iraqi civilian' held by the British. For them, this makes the play 'a compelling slab of theatrical viewing.'¹⁵⁹ Aleks Sierz sees the play as 'depressing' and argues it shows

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 848.

¹⁵⁶ Daniel B. Yates, 'Tactical Questioning', *Exeunt Magazine*, 2 July 2011 < <http://exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/tactical-questioning/> > [accessed 5 April 2017]

¹⁵⁷ 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', p. 794.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 843.

¹⁵⁹ Dominic Cavendish, 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', Tricycle Theatre London, Review', *The Telegraph*, 8 June 2011 < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/8563179/Tactical-Questioning-Scenes-from-the-Baha-Mousa-Inquiry-Tricycle-Theatre-London-review.html> > [accessed 5 April 2017]

that, 'Like any army, they are a society in miniature: brutal working-class soldiers led by upper-class toffs.'¹⁶⁰

Although abundantly guilty, Corporal Payne seems to function as a form of state scapegoat. As with classical drama, Payne seems used as a public purge to expunge the guilt of the Armed Forces and perhaps the nation. Terry Eagleton comments that in Greek theatre the scapegoat is:

Symbolically loaded with the guilt of the community, which is why it is selected from the lowest of the low. Then thrust out into the wilderness,' [so we don't have to] contemplate it.¹⁶¹

Michael Billington sees the play in similarly classical terms, noting the play's 'Sophoclean capacity for gradual revelation', as the culpable military and social ranks slowly escalate up towards government.¹⁶²

More comfortably than in other Tribunal plays, this stage set works both to replicate the original inquiry and to inform the plot. Nicholas Kent as Director and Polly Sullivan as designer, created a remarkably mundane replica of the inquiry that included visible cabling and teeming numbers of box-files on cheap desks occupied by a bored stenographer, shown in the photograph below. As Daniel B. Yates observes, 'everything is bureaucratic order and bland precision.'¹⁶³ This sense of plodding thoroughness is echoed in the dialogue, which includes requests for speakers to slow down evidence so the translator can keep up, alongside devised failures of video links. The point presumably being that this bureaucratic blandness contrasts pointedly with, as *The Telegraph* puts it, the 'squalid rooms in which Mousa was broken.'¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, the production's subdued voices and absence of emotion also works to replicate the approach and style of the senior military officers.

¹⁶⁰ Aleks Sierz, 'Tactical Questioning, Tricycle Theatre'.

¹⁶¹ Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), p. 278.

¹⁶² Michael Billington, 'Tactical Questioning – Review', *The Guardian*, 7 June 2011 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2011/jun/07/tactical-questioning-review> > [accessed 4 April 2017]

¹⁶³ Daniel B. Yates, 'Tactical Questioning'.

¹⁶⁴ Dominic Cavendish, 'Tactical Questioning'.



Figure 7. Stage Set for Tricycle Theatre's *Tactical Questioning*¹⁶⁵

The absence of the emotive extends to include a glaring omission within the play, according to Aleks Sierz. Although we know a great deal about the five techniques, 'There is no attempt to tell us who' Baha Mousa 'Was, or what he did in his short life.' In Sierz's conclusion, 'the production has a gaping hole at its centre.'¹⁶⁶ It is certainly true that the absence of a biography of Baha Mousa's life seems odd in a play centred on his death. This possibly reflects the coverage of Baha Mousa in the British media. Yet Baha Mousa's background seems pertinent. Ian Cobain notes that Baha Mousa's father was 'a uniformed Colonel in the Iraqi police [...] whom the British permitted to carry a pistol.'¹⁶⁷ Such information, as with the fact that Baha Mousa worked as a hotel receptionist, might help justify his innocence and location on capture.

Despite this, Baha Mousa's death is perhaps largely symbolic. The play opens on a short scene where an anonymously interviewed Iraqi, entitled D002, describes his own experience of 1QLR's use of hooding, water deprivation and being hit with 'Metal they got off the pane of the window.'¹⁶⁸ After asking 'Where are the human Rights?', D002 breaks down and is unable to speak.¹⁶⁹ Clearly D002, as the actual voice of the Iraqi

¹⁶⁵ Photograph reproduced with kind permission, Polly Sullivan (Designer), *Tactical Questioning*, Tricycle Theatre 2011 < <http://www.pollysullivan.info/tactical-questioning/gt1iomdz3m9hp2cae7gknizjdrtoq> > [accessed 4 April 2017]

¹⁶⁶ Aleks Sierz, 'Tactical Questioning, Tricycle Theatre'.

¹⁶⁷ Ian Cobain, *Cruel Britannia*, p. 289.

¹⁶⁸ 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', p. 783.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 785.

civilian silenced by violence, stands in for Baha Mousa and suggests that the play pertains to a much wider arena of abuse. Still, as commented on by Ryan Claycomb above, the breakdown and withdrawal of the Iraqi citizen is also another theatrical exit for the Other's voice, if here symbolic rather than censored.

As noted previously, Verbatim theatre is sometimes criticised for not being direct about its fabrication and attempting to obscure the difference between factual inquiry and mimetic theatre. Stephen Bottoms calls this absence a failure of 'self-referentiality'. His point being that such plays ought to 'acknowledge their dual and thus ambiguous status as both "document" and "play"'.¹⁷⁰ This is perhaps still the case in *Tactical Questioning* as the play has been tightly edited and despite the 'distancing' effect created by the stage managed notification of changes of speakers and the dates of their evidence projected on multiple 'screens', the play does not look to reflect on its own authenticity or subjectivity.¹⁷¹ However, different forms and styles of theatre approach dramatized 'truth' from distinctive perspectives. Tribunal theatre productions such as *Tactical Questioning* see the source document and its political implications as the dominant focus and perhaps consider interrogating its own claims to truth might also undermine the documented facts.

In 2017 I interviewed Richard Norton-Taylor about a number of his Tribunal works and I attempted to ask for his response to the critiques levelled by Stephen Bottoms, and others, about the fact that *Tactical Questioning*, like his other Tribunal plays, was ambiguous in that it is both document and play. I attempted to express this in terms of the 'radical doubt', relating to issues of theatrical authenticity and he responded:

You know there's two elements of radical doubt isn't there ... one is that this is evidence, i.e. it's not fake news or whatever ... radical doubt in the sense of ... in the philosophical sense whatever ... because it's actually what was said about what happened ... so it's explaining the truth if you like ... or ... evidence of what actually had happened ... now the interaction of these things is because there's radical doubt about mainstream er/or journalism.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Stephen J. Bottoms, 'Putting the Document into Documentary An Unwelcome Corrective', *The Drama Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (T 191) (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), p. 57. < http://www.academia.edu/8429204/Putting_the_Document_into_Documentary_An_Unwelcom_e_Corrective > [accessed 6 April 2017]

¹⁷¹ Appendix V, Polly Sullivan', *Emailed interview questions* –, 5 April 2017.

¹⁷² Appendix II, *Transcript of Telephone Conversation with Richard Norton-Taylor*.

Effectively, Richard Norton-Taylor argues that the larger fabrication of the government and the military to cover-up the Baha Mousa killing, is the primary issue of fabrication to be considered. Norton-Taylor in interview also repeatedly implies that it is the authenticity of the play in its scrupulous attention to the document that ensures and underlines the state's mendacity. He notes that 'doubt' should be firmly focused on the state not because:

We are in the age of 'radical doubt' or what you call it ... because we see before our eyes ... their [state authorities] incompetence, racism, whatever you want to call it.¹⁷³

This performed act of uncovering the truth that constitutes the narrative of *Tactical Questioning* is so politically and socially pivotal that any attempt to self-reflect on the play's claims to truth might well reflect back as an insecurity on the enquiry's findings of British involvement in murder and torture.

Whilst there might be some significant complications around *Tactical Questioning's* status as both play and document, the content of this portrayal of the Baha Mousa enquiry is not as open to nuanced interpretations as the Hutton Inquiry, dramatized in Norton-Taylor's *Justifying War*, or the political backdrop to the Iraq invasion, presented in David Hare's *Stuff Happens*. *Tactical Questioning* offers few points of diverse debate other than perhaps the one expressed by Michael Billington in his review: 'Who finally bears moral responsibility for sanctioning torture?'¹⁷⁴ As with *Guantanamo*, the event being portrayed offers only one interpretation and that is opposition and revulsion to the narrated abuse.

Arguably this itself is a failing of *Tactical Questioning* as theatre. In a critique of Alecky Blythe's *Little Revolution*, and incorporating Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Dan Rebellato points out that theatre should offer both a political and aesthetic interpretation. He notes that:

¹⁷³ Appendix II, *Transcript of Telephone Conversation with Richard Norton-Taylor*.

¹⁷⁴ Michael Billington, 'Tactical Questioning – Review', *The Guardian*, 7 June 2011 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2011/jun/07/tactical-questioning-review> > [accessed 4 April 2017]

What the aesthetic does is often make things more ambiguous, uncertain, and difficult.¹⁷⁵

In *Guantanamo*, while the monologues accuse the American and British states explicitly, the stage presence of orange jump-suited detainees staring outwards suggests that the audience are also somehow culpable and thus the verbally expressed meaning is made layered and 'difficult'. *Tactical Questioning* has a different approach to aesthetic considerations, as it overwhelmingly concentrates on the content and form of the original enquiry. As such, there is scant room for any debate on uncertainty or mimetic authenticity. I put Dan Rebellato's point directly to Richard Norton-Taylor in interview:

L. Cotterell: Dan Rebellato suggests that one of the difficulties with [...] the Tribunal plays ... Is that the political meaning overpowers the aesthetic [...] do you think that's fair?

R. Norton-Taylor – Well some people say it wasn't theatre ... Is it a play or is it not a play ... basically ... I say I'm not a playwright ... [...] I'm editing something ... but not a single word is my word. Nicholas Kent is ... very keen on you know not adding words or even keeping the chronology of the thing in a very kind of austere way [...] You know David Hare makes it up.¹⁷⁶

Verisimilitude to the original enquiry is the prime focus and therefore it is tacitly suggested that aesthetic considerations should, where possible, only work to recall and validate the truth of the proximity to the source. In this way, as Derek Paget observes, Tribunal theatre is significantly different to Verbatim theatre in that:

1. In tribunal theatre, the 'plays' are edited transcripts (redactions) of trials, tribunals and public inquiries. These constitute the basis for theatrical representation.
2. In verbatim theatre, 'plays' are edited [...] interviews [...] aural testimony constitutes the basis for theatrical representation.

Where tribunal theatre is concerned, *mise-en-scene* and acting style must be realistic and 'authentic' in that sense. The courtroom of an enquiry must look like a courtroom.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Dan Rebellato, 'Kant, Complexity, and not as much as there should be on Little Revolution', *Spilled Ink blog*, 2014 <<http://www.danrebellato.co.uk/spilledink/2014/9/14/kant-complexity-and-little-revolution>> [accessed 4 April 2017]

¹⁷⁶ Appendix II, *Transcript of Telephone Conversation with Richard Norton-Taylor*.

¹⁷⁷ Derek Paget, 'The Broken Tradition of Documentary Theatre', *Get Real: Documentary theatre past and present*, eds. Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 233-234.

As such, because Tribunal plays like *Tactical Questioning* bring the state courtroom and document into public space, the malleability of the theatrical representation is necessarily constrained and any aestheticized 'uncertainty' is avoided.

Fundamentally, Norton-Taylor seems to see Tribunal theatre's prime purpose in terms of opening a civic space for a public discussion of political 'facts' that journalism no longer seems to enable. In my interview, Norton-Taylor notes that journalism is now unable to question larger political issues because:

The audience you know is ... is confused... doesn't follow it [...] because of all sorts of physical reasons ... the way that the media is sort of broken up and treats running stories and the butterfly mindedness ... that's my word of/for err news editors [...] 'Oh my God not another story about this'.¹⁷⁸

In response to this failure, Norton-Taylor is perhaps aligned to an older, classical view of theatre as described by Richard Halpern, who notes that in the Greek polis:

Theatre played a central role in civic life [...] theatre helped to educate the demos in the deliberative reason, critical judgement and civic values that undergirded political life.¹⁷⁹

Norton-Taylor in interview, commented how some had assessed his Tribunal plays in terms of Ibsen, even classical Greek theatre:¹⁸⁰

Certainly other people have said ... comparing the Tribunal plays with ancient Greek theatre [...] and even with the Oresteia [...] the audience is the chorus if you like...¹⁸¹

From some perspectives, plays like *Tactical Questioning* reinterpret the Greek canon by working as an evolving and emotive catalyst. Ideally, such plays should function to motivate its silent audience into an active chorus of political action who will protest

¹⁷⁸ Appendix II, *Transcript of Telephone Conversation with Richard Norton-Taylor*.

¹⁷⁹ Richard Halpern, 'Theater and Democratic Thought: Arendt to Ranciere', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 545.

¹⁸⁰ Michael Billington, 'V is for Verbatim Theatre', *The Guardian*, 8 May 2012 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/may/08/michael-billington-verbatim-theatre> > [accessed 19 March 2019]

¹⁸¹ Appendix II, *Transcript of Telephone Conversation with Richard Norton-Taylor*.

against the abuses of state and military power presented within the civic space of the theatre.

Despite this, such ideas are predicated on the democratic neutrality/objectivity of the writer and the civic space. Social geographers like Henri Lefebvre note how the concept of a civic space untrammelled and enabled to discuss the state is itself loaded with politics. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre observes how often the contemporary civic space is itself highly socio-political and usually owned by those with social power. He notes, “*The space of a (social) order is hidden in the order of space...*”¹⁸² In Lefebvre’s argument, the radical plays at, for example, the Royal Court are perhaps compromised by taking place in a space financed in part from the funds of neoliberal enterprises such as the Jerwood foundation. Similar arguments can and have been levelled at BP’s sponsorship, as discussed In Appendix I. From this perspective, radical and protesting theatre perhaps becomes a slightly edgy, but heavily implicated neoliberal spectacle. A point Timothy D. Taylor makes is common to all cultural industries:

The culture industry’s identification of, and creation of, what is thought to be hip, cool, or edgy is just one example of how capitalism is able to absorb critiques, to adapt and survive, even flourish [this is] not just important to the reproduction of capital but essential.¹⁸³

Yet whilst Lefebvre’s argument may be true of some theatres, this was perhaps not so true of the Tricycle theatre. The Tricycle, a notable Fringe venue, is based in the metropolitan margins of Kilburn in an area with a rich history of diversity and opposition. Dan Carrier notes that since its opening in 1980 The Tricycle:

Developed a global reputation for being the home of cutting-edge political theatre ... and [...] also offered a space for new Black and Irish actors.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Andrew Light, Jonathan M. Smith, eds., *Philosophy and Geography II: The Production of Public Space* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), pp. 59-60.

¹⁸³ Timothy D. Taylor, *Music and Capitalism: A History of the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 63.

¹⁸⁴ Dan Carrier, ‘Protests over plan to change Tricycle theatre’s name to the Kiln’, *Camden New Journal*, 19 April 2018 < <http://camdennewjournal.com/article/protests-over-plan-to-change-tricycle-theatres-name-to-the-kiln> > [accessed 5 March 2019]

However in 2018, it was announced that The Tricycle theatre had received a “multi-million pound refit”, new management and a new name: ‘The Kiln’. Nicholas Kent believed the change was ‘tragic’ and a ‘commercial misstep’.¹⁸⁵ Taking over from Nicholas Kent as Artistic Director, Indhu Rubasingham commented:

“I do believe in political theatre,” says Rubasingham. “But I think I express it differently ...”¹⁸⁶

It is unclear whether the theatre will be able to continue as a form of civic space in the way Richard Norton-Taylor and Nicholas Kent imagined and deployed it.

Such ambiguity about who owns the theatrical power at the Tricycle/Kiln perhaps echoes Lefebvre’s larger concern about the ownership of social power in the theatrical space. This in turn recalls Stephen Bottoms’ point about identifying who owns the power of the potentially-biased dramatic perspective in edited documentary theatre: Bottoms suggests that the power relations between the playwright, the source document and the audience should be made plain within the production of a documentary play. However, Tribunal plays such as *Tactical Questioning* do not achieve, and rarely strive for, such self-reflexivity. Nonetheless, as Janelle Reinelt summarises, such Tribunal plays, while flawed, are certainly not ineffective. Reinelt reviews that the main promise of documentary theatre:

Is to provide access or connection to reality through the facticity of documents but not without creative mediation [...] The reality is examined and experienced differentially; it is produced in the interactions between the document, artist and the spectator. It is never enough. [...] The mediation is always suspect. And yet [...] it has its measure of efficacy.¹⁸⁷

In *Tactical Questioning*, the Tribunal form is efficacious because of its ability to replay and publicise human-rights violations even if the civic space and perspective is partially compromised. Nevertheless, its tight-documentary form does not allow it to interrogate

¹⁸⁵ Dan Carrier, ‘Protests over plan to change Tricycle theatre’s name to the Kiln’.

¹⁸⁶ Nosheen Iqbal, ‘Kilburn’s Tricycle relaunches as Kiln theatre with Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*’, *The Guardian*, 11 April 2018 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/apr/11/indhu-rubasingham-relaunch-kilburn-tricycle-theatre-the-kiln-zadie-smith-white-teeth> > [accessed 5 March 2019]

¹⁸⁷ Janelle Reinelt, ‘The Promise of Documentary’, *Get Real: Documentary theatre past and present*, eds. Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 22-23.

the broader questions *Tactical Questioning* itself raises. These include such questions as: What does a willingness to practise and comply with torture say about British culture? As one of few direct responses, Roy Williams' *Days of Significance* attempts to explain this point in a fictional and provocative form.

3.6 *Days of Significance* by Roy Williams (2007)



Figure. 8: *Days of Significance*. RSC/Tricycle Theatre 2008. Scene design by Lizzie Clachan.¹⁸⁸

In *Frames of War*, as discussed, Judith Butler, with particular reference to the soldiers' abuses in Iraq, tries to examine from where in our culture such violations are borne and deemed acceptable. Butler attempts to detail how it is that our cultures can feel revulsion and 'grievability' for its own citizens or troops being killed and abused, but little for the enemy Other. Butler finds the state and media responsible for controlling who is in the 'frame of grievability'. She notes that this frame is always 'constructed' but it is 'fallible' for under scrutiny the:

Frame never quite contained the scene it was meant to limn, that something was

¹⁸⁸ Used within copyright exception. Copyright owned by Lizzie Clachan: see <
<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/149885493831793568/?lp=true> > [accessed 19 March 2019]

already outside, which made the very sense of the inside possible, recognizable.¹⁸⁹

Roy Williams attempts to scrutinize what lies outside and behind this frame in his presentation of a pair of young soldiers from suburban Britain in *Days of Significance*. Williams suggests the problems lie innate in a youth culture where masculine aggression is the behavioural norm. Williams shows us how the Iraq war works to explode this vulnerability into a war crime.¹⁹⁰ For this reason, Charles Spencer termed the play an 'anthem for doomed youth.'¹⁹¹

Days of Significance was first shown at the Swan Theatre, Stratford Upon Avon in a production by the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), in 2007, ostensibly intended as an updated version of *Much Ado About Nothing*. It received a wider release and drastic edits in later productions. The dialogue fizzles with style and Susannah Clapp argued it was the first play to bring the 'Beat of the street to the Royal Shakespeare Company.'¹⁹²

Williams' play opens by showing three young men, Ben, Jamie and Dan in a small South-Eastern town on a weekend night, drunk and fighting whilst being goaded by their friends. Two police officers, one male and one female, come to help. As the Police Officers intervene, the young fighting men are loyal and protect each other in the face of authority but do this by mocking the female Officer, Gail, in aggressively sexist terms:

Ben: Little doggy loves to bark.

Gail: These your mates then [...]

Jamie: Why don't you take me to bed?¹⁹³

As Williams shows us the young men's violence, disdain for authority and sexism, it becomes clear that the most socially disruptive men, Jamie and Ben, have joined the army and are due to go to Iraq. Through dialogue and action, it seems Jamie and Ben are meant to be as offensive as possible. Michael Pearce summarizes the fact that they are

¹⁸⁹ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), p.8 & p.9.

¹⁹⁰ The same point is made in Esther Wilson's *Ten Tiny Toes*, (Liverpool Everyman, 2008) where a bankrupt Liverpool youth culture seems implicated in the war crimes of a grieving mother. Esther Wilson, *Ten Tiny Toes* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2008)

¹⁹¹ Charles Spencer, quoted in Janelle Reinelt 'Selective Affinities: British Playwrights at work', *Modern Drama*, Vol. 50, Iss. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 317.

¹⁹² Susannah Clapp, 'Army Dreamers', *The Observer*, 21 January 2007 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2007/jan/21/theatre1> > [accessed 10 April 2017]

¹⁹³ Roy Williams, *Days of Significance* (London: Methuen, 2007), p. 5 & p. 6.

by turns 'misogynistic, homophobic, xenophobic' and can only communicate in bellicose banter.¹⁹⁴ Their verbal bile was often visually underlined, as at the later Lowry production, where according to David Chadderton there was a profusion 'of bodily fluids – spit, vomit and urine – ejected before our eyes.'¹⁹⁵ Significantly, Jamie and Ben also ridicule learning.¹⁹⁶ Their friend Dan is going to college, which Ben sees as him effectively staying at home 'Wid the women.'¹⁹⁷ Dan seems intelligent and concerned about his friends. He asks them why they have joined the army but Ben and Jamie cannot articulate their thoughts:

Dan: I just want you to think about what you're doing.

Ben: Boring.

Jamie: Smart arse.¹⁹⁸

Ben and Jamie's best explanation for why they are joining up is that Saddam is a 'cunt' and Jamie can tell that because:

Jamie: You grow a tache that big, yer up to summin.¹⁹⁹

It is these moments of social vulnerability and glimpses of humour that allow some empathy to build for the young men. Although Dan calls them 'little boys', Jamie points out that there is 'Nothing little about serving your country.'²⁰⁰ The young men are mirrored by a similar group of young women led by Trish and Hannah. The young women seem largely as aggressive as the men. Hannah is the female corollary to Dan but she pairs off with Jamie. Meanwhile, Ben attempts to charm Trish using his bantering manner but Trish gives as good as she gets. Discussing the previous fight, Ben pretends:

Ben: It was nothing.

Trish: Like yer dick.

Ben: You loved my dick, I could hear your groaning.

¹⁹⁴ Michael Pearce, 'Roy Williams', *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen, 2013), p. 163.

¹⁹⁵ David Chadderton, 'Days of Significance', *British Theatre Guide*, 2009 < <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/RSCdayssignifDC-rev> > [accessed 12 April 2017]

¹⁹⁶ *Days of Significance*, p. 5 & p. 33.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Trish: To keep from laughing in yer face.

Ben: If only my motor could go as fast as yer mouth.

Trish: Face? Bovvered?²⁰¹

Because the play was initially written as a modern response to *Much Ado About Nothing*, the troubled romance of Ben and Trish as well as Jamie and Hannah frames the play and echoes the couples in its Shakespearean source. Similarly, the character Dan is in the Don John role and manipulates the lovers by having an affair with Hannah behind Jamie's back. However, the extent of Shakespeare's influence is nominal as can be seen from the last two pieces of dialogue expressed by Ben and Trish above. This directly references Benedick and Beatrice's verbal jousting from *Much Ado About Nothing*:

Benedick: I would my horse had the speed of your tongue

Beatrice: You always end with a jade's trick. I know you of old.²⁰²

Although, the horse/motor transposes logically, 'jade's trick' in Trish's dialogue becomes the media-derived 'Bovvered'.²⁰³ As such, Williams' version of Shakespeare seems to accentuate the play's presentation of an impaired youth culture lost in aggressive masculinity and sexually-loaded but barren communication. Michael Pearce notes 'you could not provide a starker contrast to [...] *Much Ado*.'²⁰⁴

Yet, like Shakespeare's play, *Days of Significance* is set in the context of battle and the second act shows how this impaired contemporary culture has drastic consequences in Iraq.

Later in the next act we see Ben in a combat situation. According to his Sergeant, Ben has not adapted to military life well and he has quickly become 'wired up' and a 'psycho'.²⁰⁵ When surrounded by Iraqi insurgents, Ben has again mocked authority, disobeyed orders and killed a young Iraqi boy seemingly trying to get his lost football back. In his defense, Ben argues the boy was 'signaling' to Iraqi insurgents.²⁰⁶ When his Sergeant

²⁰¹ *Days of Significance*, pp. 15-16.

²⁰² William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1979), 1.1.126-130.

²⁰³ 'Bovvered' is a catchphrase from the 'Catherine Tate Show', aired on BBC Two and BBC One from 2004 – 2015. See BBC Iplayer < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006m8fh> > [accessed 10 April 2017]

²⁰⁴ Michael Pearce, 'Roy Williams', *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen, 2013), p. 162.

²⁰⁵ *Days of Significance*, p. 56.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

criticizes him for the killing, Ben's argument is:

Ben: These kids they're nothing but maggots. Their fucking dads are maggots [...] They are not people they aren't human.²⁰⁷

Through others conversation, we later understand that Ben ends a hero as he is killed in action and there is no further communication of any military crime. However, in Act 3 we learn that Jamie has been involved in an Abu Ghraib-styled incident of prisoner torture and is due in court. Unlike a Shakespearean play, there is no exploration of guilt as Jamie recalls to Hannah:

Jamie: We used dogs on them, [...] They'd be lying on the ground stark naked, heads covered with bin liners, We'd take turns sitting on top of them [...] That's when we took the pictures.²⁰⁸

Hannah: You musta known it weren't right.

Jamie: I was following orders.²⁰⁹

Hannah argues such allegiance is misplaced and Jamie should blame his superiors as 'they sold you out'. But Jamie remains loyal:

Jamie: Can't go there crying like a little bitch, I had a job to do.²¹⁰

Thus Williams' conclusion seems to be that the overtly masculine culture and values of Jamie and Ben have led them to become war criminals. As Sierz notes, 'the drink-fuelled fear that paralyses the streets of Britain is exported to terrorize Iraq.'²¹¹ Nevertheless, there is also an explicit critique of military authority in Hannah's comments about selling out. This criticism of authority is thematically extended to the immediate family community. There is only one adult role model in the play and that is Hannah's stepfather, Lenny. He is a hard-working man who runs the burger van, 'working here all nights.'²¹² He is scathing about the young men calling them society's 'fast-food' but his

²⁰⁷ *Days of Significance*, p. 58.

²⁰⁸ Such a recounted scene of prisoners and dogs recalls Harold Pinter's 1989 play *Mountain Language* about proscribed language and surreal levels of abuse. The meaningless levels of swearing in turn recall 1991's 'The New World Order'. *Harold Pinter: Plays 4* (London: Faber, 1993), pp. 249-278.

²⁰⁹ *Days of Significance*, p. 91.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92. In later productions blind loyalty is emphasized and unusually well articulated, as Jamie's speech becomes 'Grass on my mates? Dishonour myself as well as my unit?...' Roy Williams, *Roy Williams: Plays 3* (London: Methuen Drama, 2008), p. 228.

²¹¹ Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today* (London: Methuen, 2011), p. 87.

²¹² *Days of Significance*, p. 19.

comments are given thematic authority when he comments to the young men:²¹³

Lenny: There's just no lines drawn with you lot, is there? [...] Don't know you yer born, what you believe.²¹⁴

The young men's lack of understanding of the conflict and absence of values seems pivotal. However, Lenny at one point undoubtedly sexually propositions his own stepdaughter. He expresses his love in a verbal and physical crossing of the line, sufficient to make daughter Hannah call him a 'pervert'.²¹⁵ Hannah pointedly criticises Lenny for abusing his authority and giving into the aberrantly masculine:

Hannah: You're like a dad to me. You brought me up [...] But you couldn't resist.²¹⁶

Despite this, the play ends with Lenny persuading Hannah to do the right thing and support Jamie at the court trial. As such, Lenny appears to be the only point of moral guidance in the play, yet he is fiercely compromised by being equally confused by his own masculinity.

Williams' play is a provocative and wholehearted criticism of the vacuum in morality, aspiration and behavior that he sees in the working-class culture of the young. One that he suggests lies behind the abuses in Iraq. It is perhaps for this reason that the *Daily Mail* slammed his play for leaving the 'bitter taste of treason' in its portrayal of 'our squaddies as cowardly, rapacious, socially incontinent, selfish, feral losers.'²¹⁷ Such is a typically caustic response from a newspaper often noted for its right-wing views and a reviewer infamous for his strident opinions.²¹⁸ Benedict Ledent in a later response suggested the

²¹³ Ibid., p. 28.

²¹⁴ *Days of Significance*, p. 28.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 94.

²¹⁶ In later productions, Hannah propositions Lenny. Presumably, this then bolsters Lenny's role as reliable moral authority. See Michael Pearce, 'Roy Williams', *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen, 2013), p. 166. Quotation: *Days of Significance*, p. 94.

²¹⁷ Quentin Letts, 'Quentin Letts First Night Review; Days of Significance by Roy Williams, Swan Theatre Stratford on Avon', *Daily Mail* (Daily Mail, 17 January 2007), p. 29.

²¹⁸ Rachel Cooke playfully reviews Quentin Letts status on Letts leaving the Daily Mail in, 'Is this Britain's Most Opinionated Man?', *The Guardian*, 18 October 2009 < <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/oct/18/quentin-letts-journalist-rachel-cooke> > [accessed 15 March 2019]

article's right-wing bias was to the fore, "Would Quentin Letts have been so virulent [...] if its author had not been a black playwright portraying white troops?"²¹⁹

It is perhaps interesting to note that many of the readings about *Days of Significance* as portraying a society of 'feral losers' with dubious morality, even as expressing a crisis in masculinity, are readings potentially available with respect to Simon Stephens' *Motortown*. Yet the response to Stephens' work was significantly less vitriolic. Stephens' play also concerns an ex-soldier who, with intimations of PTSD, is a violent killer who is unable to form a relationship with the opposite sex and ends up abusing and murdering a young black woman. Graham Saunders notes that Williams' 2007 play owes 'its genesis to plays by contemporaries' such as 2006's *Motortown*.²²⁰

Yet, although portraying a corrupted Essex landscape that probably underpins Danny's crimes, there is a lack of solid clarity about how and why Stephens' Danny becomes an alienated killer. Conversely, *Days of Significance* seems to argue that, in Michael Pearce's summary, the Iraq war crimes can be seen in inception within the youth culture of 'misogynistic, homophobic, xenophobic and racist' behaviour emanating from the bile-soaked streets of South-East England.²²¹ Despite this, there are other characters who seem less susceptible to such extreme behaviour in Williams' play, notably Dan and Hannah, who are from the same streets. Pearce notes that, perhaps much like Stephens' *Motortown* where Danny seems both social victim and innately troubled, Williams' play intentionally 'blurs binaries of [...] society/individual and ethnicity/race.'²²²

Nonetheless, there are undoubtedly larger critiques of authority and the state that are embedded in *Days of Significance*. As Butler contends in *Frames of War*, the media and institutions of state should be seen as central in establishing the values that are consumed by the culture.²²³ Jamie and Ben seem abandoned by them all. They have not only failed to succeed in state education but have seemingly become alienated from the

²¹⁹ Benedict Ledent, 'A Play of Significance: Roy Williams Days of Significance and the Question of Labels', *Engaging with Literature of Commitment. Vol 2: The Worldly Scholar*, ed. by Gordon Collier, Marc Delrez, Anne Fuchs & Bénédicte Ledent (New York: Rodopi press, 2012), p.300.

²²⁰ Graham Saunders, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Appropriation in Contemporary British Drama: 'Upstart Crows'* (New York: Springer, 2017), p. 49.

²²¹ Michael Pearce, 'Roy Williams', *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen, 2013), p. 163.

²²² Ibid., p. 167.

²²³ Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, pp. 9-11.

concept of learning itself, seeing University as simply 'robbing us of our taxes.'²²⁴

Significantly, Jamie is literally abandoned by his superiors who have issued the orders to abuse prisoners for which Jamie is to be charged. And in one of a number of echoes of *Black Watch*, Dan recalls that Jamie and Ben were manipulated to sign up for the army by a cynical appeal to their uncomplicated masculinity:²²⁵

Dan: They had some woman soldier handing out leaflets [...] The only time him [Ben] and I weren't looking at her arse is when they were staring at her tits.²²⁶

As Lenny points out, Jamie and Ben are society's 'fast-food'.²²⁷ Presumably this means they are cheap to produce and easy to consume. If Lenny's sexual advances on his daughter are significant, then it seems evident that the play dramatizes a series of abused relationships between British authority figures and its young charges. In this way, Williams' play seems to constitute a materialist indictment of a British society that has fostered a barbarous masculinity within its youth, and created this potential for military abuse. The link is clear, as Sierz notes, between 'ignorant male posturing and military malpractice.'²²⁸ We might see Ben and Jamie in terms of proffered fictional biographies of the real abusers of Iraqi detainees in *Tactical Questioning*. Michael Billington understands the play in these terms, as:

A frankly terrifying and utterly compelling examination of the morality of sending young men to fight a war when they are ill-equipped to do so in every way.²²⁹

Despite this perspective, there is very little other criticism of the state authorities, the media, education, police or other institutions within the play. The young men are aggressive and anti-intellectual from the start and their own personal context is not discussed. Similarly, Jamie and Ben are part of a male and female social group who are largely portrayed as sharing similarly corrupted values and thus they cannot be seen as individuals distinct from their social group. Indeed, the University aspirant Dan and Hannah are seen as unusual by their own peer group. Thus despite the isolated critiques

²²⁴ *Days of Significance*, p. 32.

²²⁵ In some ways *Days of Significance* seems a critique and Bloomian misreading of *Black Watch*.

²²⁶ *Days of Significance*, p. 27.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²²⁸ Aleks Sierz, Aleks, *Rewriting the Nation*, p. 87.

²²⁹ Michael Billington, 'Days of Significance', *The Guardian*, 21 March 2008 <
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/mar/21/theatre1> > [accessed 10 April 2017]

of the government, there is a clear sense in which the young men are presented as a pejorative form of the working-class, the 'Chavs' of tabloid renown. Janelle Reinelt sees the play as primarily about an 'underclass' in British society:

Caught between some fleeting notion of British patriotism and an utter lack of comprehension.²³⁰

Roy Williams makes this reading justifiable. He sees his play as a critique of:

A society that allows its young to drink themselves into oblivion at weekends, then expects them to defend its moral values in a war thousands of miles away.²³¹

However, because they are so unreconstructed, morally confused and incommunicative, Jamie and Ben prevent the audience from forming an empathetic response on their behalf. Their lives are not problematized and thus effectively, as Pearce underlines, 'Williams presents us with stereotypes'.²³² This is reductive, for as Owen Jones explains in *Chavs*, these young men do not appear as social threats without a clear historical and political context. Such derogatory images of the working-class are politically 'constructed', as Jones argues, by:

The almost complete absence of accurate representations of working-class people in the media, on TV, and in the political world, in favour of grotesque 'chav' caricatures.²³³

Nonetheless, if we are to criticize Williams' play for a lack of materialist context in the construction of these young men, then his own theatrical context seems highly pertinent. His acclaimed previous plays, notably *Sing Yer Heart Out For The Lads*, explores the problems of a white working-class culture that is endemically racist and unwilling to allow black men equal and valued cultural significance. *Days of Significance* is in some ways a continuation of this theme of working-class racism. Indeed in the Tricycle theatre and R.S.C. productions in 2008, set designer Lizzie Clachan and Director Maria Aberg, created an overpowering, almost fore-staged, Coca-Cola sign for the scenes set in Iraq, as shown above. The red sign is torn, decaying and barely visible so that the

²³⁰ Janelle Reinelt 'Selective Affinities: British Playwrights at work', *Modern Drama*, Vol. 50. Iss. 3, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p.317.

²³¹ Roy Williams, 'Introduction', *Roy Williams: Plays 3* ((London: Methuen Drama, 2008), p. x.

²³² Michael Pearce, 'Roy Williams', *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen, 2013), p. 161.

²³³ Owen Jones, *CHAVS: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London: Verso, 2012), p. x.

underlying whiteness behind the surface gloss shines through.²³⁴ Racism seems suggested and its thematic significance is most apparent in the combat scene with Ben and Sergeant Brookes. The orders that Ben is given not to shoot the young Iraqi child are delivered by Sergeant Brookes, the only black male character in the play.²³⁵ He is drawn as a man of good-humoured authority. Brooks is 'Williams' only black hero' in Michael Pearce's review of his plays, who willingly commits suicide to save the life of his own men.²³⁶ Before his demise, as the other private Sean calls the insurgents 'sand-niggers', Ben attempts to explain his shooting of a child and talks back to his Sergeant using a racist slur:

Ben: That kid was signaling to them [...] you can cry all you like, boy, I saved yer life.

Brookes: Did you just call me boy? Pass my gun [...] I'm gonna shoot him.²³⁷

Ben's articulated dismissal of Iraqis as 'not people' seems extended to include his own Sergeant as 'boy' because he is black. Innate racism could also explain Jamie's acts of torture and might inform a scene in the early part of the play where Jamie claims that he almost glassed a 'black geezer' in a nightclub who called him 'a thug in uniform'.²³⁸

However, racism is not foregrounded in Jamie's recounts nor is it significant in the early part of the play to a level that might suggest it is a dominating theme. Racism seems only expressed, as above, when Ben and Jamie come under social or combat pressure. Racism seems largely a dormant corollary to the young men's default position of sexism and homophobia.

Nonetheless, the theme of race in Roy Williams' work seems markedly more significant when we consider that this is a black playwright, noted for his plays about the failure of British society to enable full equality, who is presenting us with a visual performance dominated by white characters in a white working-class town. Arguably, this itself foregrounds the issue of race. Certainly, Sierz sees the play as an example of 'working-

²³⁴ See Figure 8 above: Iraq scene with dominating sign from *Days of Significance*. RSC/Tricycle Theatre. Scene design by Lizzie Clachan.

²³⁵ Although the female character, Donna, is also black and she has problems in her friendship group with Hannah when Donna spills her drink on Hannah. Hannah wildly overreacts and threatens Donna for the spillage by saying to her 'I'll cut yer face'. *Days of Significance*, p. 17.

²³⁶ Michael Pearce, 'Roy Williams', p. 161.

²³⁷ *Days of Significance*, p. 58.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

class patriotism [...] based on masculine insecurity [...] and hatred of the Other.’²³⁹

Benedicte Ledent argues that although race is important to the play, it is not dominant and she cogently contends that, ‘It would surely be reductive to insist on seeing Days of Significance in terms of race’. She argues that the ‘underclass’ in this play is clearly defined as the white working-class Ben and Jamie who are unable to prosper, then sacrificed to and by the war.²⁴⁰ There are perhaps no straightforward readings in this play, which in its initial form is perhaps too rich in connotation. As Kathryn Prince observes, ultimately the play is a, ‘Mucky, complex mess’ of moral quandaries about the:

War in Iraq, the state's duty to educate its citizens, and the nature of modern love, among others.²⁴¹

Perhaps this is why in later productions the play was edited wholeheartedly, and made to end in a significantly more Shakespearean and empathetic wedding.

3.7 Conclusion

The above discussed plays that focus on the abuse of prisoners and Iraqi civilians by British and coalition forces are less consistent and confident in ascribing these crimes of torture and abuse to a material foundation that can be derived from the structures and relationships of a neoliberal economy. The Verbatim and Tribunal plays: *Guantanamo* and *Tactical Questioning* both contend that these abuses are a war crime in which the coalition governments and authorities are highly culpable but both plays fall short of arguing for, or implying, that the abuses are an outcome of a systematic structure within neoliberalism. In contrast, Mark Ravenhill’s *Crime and Punishment* expresses the belief that the coalition’s main aim was to rebuild Iraq with their version of ‘Freedom and Democracy’ as part of a globalizing of neoliberal values. It is the failure in enforcing this new mode of production that escalates the conflict into chaos, as symbolized by the coalition Soldier and Iraqi Woman’s understanding of the invasion’s meaning:

Soldier: I really want you to love me. If we were back home, I’d take you to a bar,

²³⁹ Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation*, p. 87.

²⁴⁰ Benedicte Ledent, ‘Plays of Significance: Roy Williams Days of Significance and the Question of Labels’, p. 299.

²⁴¹ Kathryn Prince, ‘Days of Significance’, *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*, Vol. 11, Iss. 2 (Athens: University of Georgia, 2006), p. 6.
<<http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/781468/show>> [accessed 10 April 2017]

drink all you can, a film, a Chinese [...] But here – how do I make love to you here?²⁴²

Woman: I want freedom. I want democracy. I don't want this. I don't want you.²⁴³

Woman: May [...] my husband, my son and a thousand million angry spirits rise up and bring their hate to you [...] your civilisation will burn.

*He cuts out her tongue.*²⁴⁴

According to Ravenhill, in a rather emblematic form, when the heavy-handed colonial military and its aims were rejected by the Iraqi people, the coalition had no alternative but increasingly aggressive action to enforce their policies, until the nation was left in factional turmoil. This is perhaps a simplistic portrayal from a short play but largely echoes Naomi Klein, Noam Chomsky and particularly Patrick Cockburn in their analyses of the Iraq war.²⁴⁵

Roy Williams' *Days of Significance* is possibly more contentious in arguing that war crimes by British soldiers are a direct result of a contaminated youth culture where a paucity of education and opportunity seems to have developed citizens who are sexist, homophobic and endemically racist with all the uncontrolled rage of potential torturers. As such, young soldier Ben sees Iraqis as subhuman and not worthy of human rights:

Ben: These kids they're nothing but maggots. [...] They are not people they aren't human.²⁴⁶

It is also, however, implied that the war crimes committed by Ben's compatriot Jamie were under instruction from the military hierarchy and thus the corruption of British society seems as widely pervasive as in *Motortown*. Despite this, within the play there are no performed military or societal authorities, or a clear explanation of a pivotal systematic failure, and it is ultimately ambiguous as to where the responsibility for Jamie and Ben's Iraqi crimes lie, other than perhaps character failings enhanced by social neglect.

Nevertheless, such intimations of British systematic corruption echo the documented

²⁴² 'Crime and Punishment', p. 88.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 96.

²⁴⁴ 'Crime and Punishment', p. 96 & p. 97..

²⁴⁵ For a close dissection of the invasion see particularly Patrick Cockburn, *The Occupation: War and Resistance in Iraq* (London: Verso, 2006). Similar ideas are expressed in Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008)

²⁴⁶ *Days of Significance*, p. 58.

facts of Richard Norton-Taylor's *Tactical Questioning*. Whilst the play avoids the exploration of a wider social and material context, it spends much of the second-half of the play noting that the military superiors and government quietly acknowledged that British military torture was taking place in Iraq and did not attempt to stop it. Moreover, the play begins with a discussion of the practice of torture in Northern Ireland and thus, in Norton-Taylor's play, there is the implication that torture is a continuing aspect of British Imperialism. This is effectively Ian Cobain's view of Britain's role in torture. He explains the usual response by the British state to allegations of torture:

Faced with questions about involvement in torture, British officials responded in the post-9/11 era as they had for decades with denial, obfuscation, ridicule, threats and lies [...] Britain had been employing such cruelties for generations.²⁴⁷

Contentiously, *Tactical Questioning* might imply that torture is a continual British mode of production in wartime. Such intimations contrast markedly with *Days of Significance*, *Guantanamo*' and *Crime and Punishment* who through their exclusive focus on recent events, tacitly argue that the Iraq military abuses are a contemporary failure of neoliberal governments and their military.

Despite this, there were only a limited number of plays that directly explored the human rights violations practised by the coalition forces in Iraq. Most of these were careful of characterising torture in outright terms as a systematic tool of neoliberalist governments in pursuit of economic or political ends. Often torture is suggested as an individual or isolated social/authority aberration. Possibly, this was because, as Huw Bennet believes, the nation was not comfortable criticising its own structures and soldier's behaviour. He argues that:

Open debate is constrained [...] The media debate on abuses in Iraq has generally avoided attributing blame to ordinary soldiers [...] This makes [...] asking questions difficult for politicians.²⁴⁸

Debatably, this limited analysis by government and media was also because these abuses marked a watershed point in the Iraq conflict, a point when the moral and cultural superiority vaunted by the coalition states was found to be itself an

²⁴⁷ Ian Cobain, *Cruel Britannia*, p. 307.

²⁴⁸ Huw Bennett, 'The Baha Mousa Tragedy: British Army Detention and Interrogation from Iraq to Afghanistan', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 16 (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), p. 227.

unsustainable fiction.

Nonetheless, the British plays that aimed to consider the human rights abuses were fierce and unabashed in their critique of the state and military's behaviour in detaining seemingly innocent British and Iraqi citizens for unproven reasons in inhuman conditions. Although *Days of Significance* seems the most scathing in seeing working-class society as inherently culpable, there is an argument that this period is when Verbatim drama found its epoch. The application of Verbatim fact in such sensitive areas as questioning the national Army seemed the most authentic and incisive. Certainly, that was the view of the usually authority-friendly media outlets such as *The Telegraph* who expressed unbridled political outrage at the findings expressed in the *Guantanamo* and *Tactical Questioning* theatrical productions.

What was arguably unusual about these plays was that many of them offered, if sometimes carefully, highly empathetic images of the 'enemy' Other: the possible terrorist and the Iraqi citizen. *Guantanamo* presented emotive images of the jump-suited, although innocent, suspected terrorist; *Crime and Punishment* presented a symbolic version of an Iraqi citizen and showed her evolution to violent protest; *How Many Miles To Basra?* briefly presented innocent Iraqi citizens accidentally killed by soldiers; while *Tactical Questioning* granularly explored the torture and murder of an Iraqi citizen and portrayed other unnamed victims to represent the abused citizens of Iraq. Significantly, all the Iraqi characters portrayed in these works were innocent and thus Ryan Claycomb's suggestion that 'Acts, agents and discourses of violence remain unrepresented and potentially unrepresentable,' seemed maintained.²⁴⁹

Despite this, Jamal al-Harith, as portrayed in *Guantanamo*, eventually became a suicide bomber allegedly because of his experience of coalition brutality at Guantanamo. Thus the Other was accidentally portrayed on the British stage in Verbatim form.

Theatre at this time was significant and culturally challenging in broadening the British cultural frame of empathy to ensure that British and Iraqi citizens were shown as a victim of persistent and vindictive acts of abuse, torture and murder. Significantly, in *Tactical Questioning*, *Crime and Punishment* and *Guantanamo* (to some extent in *How*

²⁴⁹ Ryan Claycomb, 'Staging Guantanamo', *Politics and Culture*, Iss. 1 (New York: T. Kaposy, 2007) < <https://politicsandculture.org/2009/10/02/ryan-claycomb-on-staging-guantanamo/> > [accessed 22 March 2017]

Many Miles To Basra?) plays that were performed during a time of war and most of which portrayed British and coalition soldiers within each work, it is the Iraqi victim or incarcerated Muslim who is the ultimate locus for audience empathy. This is perhaps a testament to the boldness of these theatrical works. Theatre in these plays seemed to work to explode the received view of who the media defined as rightly grievable and worthy of social empathy. Judith Butler in *Frames of War* saw such inflating of the margins of cultural empathy as central to establishing a progressive view of war. In her text she argues for:

An alternative to models of multiculturalism that presuppose the nation-state as the exclusive frame of reference and pluralism as an adequate way of thinking heterogeneous social subjects.²⁵⁰

Theatre clearly attempted to achieve Butler's aim in its dramatization of Iraq war abuses. Indeed, *Guantanamo* showed how superficial and innately partisan the state's approach to pluralism and nationality could be when British subjects were detained without trial by their American partners.

Despite the drama of Colin Teevan's *How Many Miles to Basra*, which offered us a view of the average British soldier keen to act with morality and self-sacrifice in impossible circumstance, *Days of Significance*, *Crime and Punishment* and *Tactical Questioning* suggest this was not the only image of the British soldier that was available. Whilst such plays did not necessarily suggest such incidents were the norm, they surely helped destabilise the empathetic image of the British soldier. This was in keeping with much of the media and the judicial view. Following the Abu Ghraib photos, Judge Advocate Michael Hunter said that the scandal had "undoubtedly tarnished the international reputation of the British army and to some extent the British nation too."²⁵¹ As expressed in these plays, it seems clear that British and military values were undermined and problematized by the Iraq War both abroad and in the nation's mind. Neal Ascherson writing just before many troops pulled out of Iraq in 2008, reviewed the war and its aftermath, and saw its detrimental effects as profound:

²⁵⁰ Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 31.

²⁵¹ Kim Sengupta, 'You have tarnished the reputation of the Army and the British Nation', *The Independent*, 24 February 2005 < <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/you-have-tarnished-the-reputation-of-the-army-and-the-british-nation-484570.html> > [accessed 10 April 2017]

What have we done to Iraq? [...] What has Iraq done to us? [...] Britain [...] became smaller. "Britishness", supposed to be a brand or a list of values, was already in a poor state. Iraq - and Afghanistan - diminished the probity and reliability of the United Kingdom.²⁵²

One of very few retorts to such a polemic is perhaps the probity of the theatrical response.

²⁵² Neal Ascherson, 'The War That Changed Us', *The New Statesman*, 13 March 2008
<<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2008/03/iraq-war-british-britain>>[accessed 10 April 2017]

4. Neoliberal Theatre?

4.1 Introduction

Theatre under New Labour was understood as a 'creative industry': one of a number of artistic and cultural products that could be used for economic benefit, whilst also working as a force for social cohesion.¹ Such ideas were clearly evident in Tony Blair's ten-year review speech, delivered to 'industry leaders' in 2007. Blair suggested the power of the Arts' business sector had been well-proven within the early part of New Labour's tenure. *Arts Professional* magazine reported how in the speech the Prime Minister:

Celebrated the impact of the arts on the UK's economy [...] He went on to acknowledge the role of the arts in "almost incidentally" achieving Government goals in regeneration and social cohesion.²

The phrase 'almost incidentally' seems markedly to underplay the role that theatre was given under New Labour as a central thread of 'Prevent': part of the counter-terrorist strategy that aimed to address what was seen as a growing trend of Islamic radicalism preying on the youth of Britain. This was an ideological radicalism believed to have incited a number of Islamist terrorist incidents that seemed to escalate from the 7th July 2005 public transport bombing in London.³

Following the 9/11 attacks in New York, the new Labour government had developed an initial counter-terrorism strategy called CONTEST. The government noted this was really only a first step, a 'slender document'.⁴ Following the 2005 London transport

¹ See discussion of New Labour funding in Appendix I.

² Anon., 'Blair joins arts funding debate', *Arts Professional*, 12/03/2007 <<https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/article/blair-joins-arts-funding-debate>> [accessed 15 October 2017]

³ See timeline up to 19 June 2017: BBC News, 'London Bridge Attack: Timeline of British Terror Attacks', *BBC News*, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40013040>> [accessed 16 October 2017]. It is noticeable that this only includes Islamist or early IRA incidents and ignores, for example, Jo Cox M.P.'s murder on 16 June 2016. Scotland Yard argue they have prevented many further terrorist incidents. In a 2017 report the Met Police chief noted Scotland Yard had over '600 active investigations' see Ryan Wilkinson, 'UK 'a breeding ground' for jihadist terrorists, warns Met Police Chief', *The Independent*, 5 September 2017 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/terrorism-uk-breeding-ground-jihadis-isis-islamic-extremists-met-police-neil-basu-a7929871.html>> [accessed 15 October 2017]

⁴ House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, *Project CONTEST: The Government's Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Ninth Report of Session 2008–09*, (London: House of Commons, 7 July

attacks and two failed Al-Qaeda attacks on London and Glasgow, amongst others, the government publically enlarged their counter terrorism strategy to consider four main strands:⁵

- Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks;
- Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism;
- Protect: to strengthen our protection against terrorist attacks, and
- Prepare: where an attack cannot be stopped, to mitigate its impact.⁶

In the 2008/9 strategy document, the government noted that ‘the Prevent strand of CONTEST is the most important’, as it sought to stop:

People from supporting or embracing violent extremism of whatever kind [and] is not solely a function of a counter-terrorism strategy, but in fact must be regarded as part of a much wider approach to attitudes and attitudinal change.⁷

In practice, ‘Prevent’ considered and implemented a range of ‘soft-power’ strategies, such as youth and community talks/debates/activities designed to deter young people from being lured into radicalism.⁸ A central part of this strategy, as Jenny Hughes summarises, was an ‘unprecedented endorsement of theatre as ‘best practice’ [...] aiming to win the hearts and minds of Muslim communities’.⁹ In a later 2009 document, local theatre was explained as being pivotal in underpinning the government’s ‘Two cross-cutting work streams’, which were:

- developing **understanding, analysis and information**; and [sic]
- strategic **communications**. [sic]

Local partners have key roles to play in meeting all of these objectives [...] ¹⁰

These ‘local partners’ included a range of police, youth and religious organisations that together held differing forms of access to seemingly at-risk youth groups. A significant

2009), p. 5. < <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/212/212.pdf> > [accessed 15 October 2017]

⁵ This was known as CONTEST 2, and was at the time when the seemingly exposed event of the London Olympics was in the early planning stage.

⁶ House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, *Project CONTEST*.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See HM Government, *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England -Stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists and violent extremists* (London: HM Government, May 2008)

⁹ Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror: Critical Mimesis and the Age of Uncertainty* (Manchester: M.U.P., 2011), p.154.

¹⁰ HM Government, *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England*, p. 16.

number of these 'strategic communications' were reliant on regional theatre groups, including the Khayaal Theatre Company discussed below.¹¹

A later range of documents was created by central government to provide a more detailed and focused list of resources for schools/youth organisations to use in implementing the Prevent strategy. The October 2009 document, *Prevent resources guide: Supporting Learning together to be safe: a toolkit to help schools contribute to the prevention of violent extremism*, listed seven approved and recommended resources, five of which were focused on the use of theatre as the principal site of de-radicalizing influence.¹² As one recommended resource, 'West Sussex Youth Theatre Company and Sussex Police's' production of *On The Edge* highlights, often the connection between the state and artistic work was foregrounded.¹³ As such, although the emphasis was mostly on those Muslim youths still in education, a centralized and managed theatre was to be used as a pivotal tool in the domestic struggle against radicalism and terrorism. Thus in this period, theatre became used as a state tool to help mitigate the problems of ethnic relations in British society.

One of the implicit concerns of subsidized theatre is the state's ultimate economic control of its funding and the impact this may have on theatre's independent voice. Traditionally in Britain, this funding is through the arms-length approach of the Arts Council, which usually allows a reasonable amount of creative freedom.¹⁴ Prevent introduced a much closer, and perhaps uneasy, relationship between state and theatrical producer, not only through its production partnerships but also through its own dedicated 'Pathfinder' funding. Pathfinder was a separate funding stream made available, according to Maria W. Norris, to any local authority with a Muslim population of at least 5%.¹⁵ Local religious and associated youth groups used the funding under

¹¹ HM Government, *The Prevent Strategy: A Guide for Local Partners in England*, pp. 38-40.

¹² Government Office for the South East and Faith Associates, *Prevent resources guide: Supporting Learning together to be safe: a toolkit to help schools contribute to the prevention of violent extremism* (Faith Associates: London, October 2009). The five theatre productions were Khayaal's *Hearts and Minds*, Theatre Veritae's *Not In My Name*, West Sussex Youth Theatre Company and Sussex Police's *On The Edge*, GW Theatre Company's *One Extreme To The Other*. More debatable as theatre in this context was Lancashire Police's role-play structured *Act Now*

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See Appendix I for discussion of the Art's Councils role under New Labour.

¹⁵ Maria W. Norris 'The Secretive World of Counter-Extremism Funding', *Public Spirit*, October 2015 < <http://www.publicspirit.org.uk/the-secretive-world-of-counter-extremism-funding/> > [accessed 18 October 2017]

guidance from local authorities and police/government agencies to develop theatrical and other cultural activities targetted at young Muslims. Alice Bartlett notes that for theatre groups the money was vital:

Extremism (PVE) within the citizenship curriculum of mainstream schools and Further Education colleges from September 2009, has resulted in Prevent becoming increasingly regarded as a potential lifeline for some smaller-scale theatre companies.¹⁶

The Department for Communities and Local Government noted that in the financial year 2007/2008, 70 local authorities received a share of £6 million in Pathfinder funding.¹⁷ They also note that £45 million was to be made available from 2008 to 2011, specifically for Prevent work in the local community.¹⁸

As such, the government's involvement in theatre funding became a racially-focused form of finance with an instrumental aim to use theatre (amongst other arts) to inculcate a form of ideological hegemony over what were seen as at-risk, even risky, sections of the population. One of the playwrights discussed below, Alice Bartlett, expressed her own concern at this 'potential appropriation through audience of young people as political agents.'¹⁹ In similar terms, theatre might here be argued to be central in constituting a state-controlled means of production working to deliver social and individual compliance in a manner arguably not visible since the patriotic cinema of the Second World War. Consequently, the Prevent strategy at this time received, and continues to receive, a great deal of criticism for the way it used the arts and theatre as a form of disciplinary regulation.²⁰ Numerous academics saw the use of Prevent in clearly

¹⁶ Alice Bartlett, 'Preventing Violent Extremism and 'Not In My Name': theatrical representation, artistic responsibility and shared vulnerability', *Drama and Theatre in Urban Contexts*, eds., K Gallagher and J. Neelands (London: Routledge, 2014), p.24.

¹⁷ Karen Kellard, Leighton Mitchell and David Godfrey for BMG Research/Communities and Local Government, *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund: Mapping of project activities 2007/2008* (Leeds: Communities and Local Government Publications, 2008), p. 14 < webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/www...gov.../1098036.doc > [accessed 18 October 2017]

¹⁸ Maria W. Norris notes that actual funding figures are increasingly hard to establish after this period, see. 'The Secretive World of Counter-Extremism Funding'.

¹⁹ Alice Bartlett, 'Preventing Violent Extremism and 'Not In My Name', p.26.

²⁰ Examples of critics (before the Prevent focus also added a Monitoring duty to schools and colleges) includes Birt (below), C. Heath-Kelly, 'Counter-terrorism and the counterfactual: Producing the 'radicalisation' discourse and the UK PREVENT strategy', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Issue 15, 2013, 394–415 and T. Martin 'Governing an unknowable future: The politics of Britain's Prevent policy', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 7, Iss. 1, 2014, pp. 62–78.

Foucauldian terms, as working to create a ‘continuous exercise of power through [...] individualisation and normalisation’.²¹ Yahya Birt also argued that the Prevent strategy was disciplining the Muslim subject via ‘bio-politics’ with the aim to create ‘Self-Regulating Muslim Communities’.²² Nonetheless, it is perhaps important to counter these interpretations with the obvious fact that schools and youth groups are repeatedly the recipient of centralised theatrical works looking to dissuade young people from unsafe behaviours in dealing with, as examples, social media, sexual behaviour, narcotics or other perceived social threats. Such a focus was usually delivered through external theatre companies employed through Theatre in Education, an evolving concept since the mid-sixties which, according to Roger Wooster deploys “empathy and objectivity’ derived from Epic theatre [...] to encourage the audience as critical observers.’²³ The below Prevent plays can perhaps be considered in these terms.

Wooster argues Theatre in Education has its roots in ‘such genres as agitprop’ and a related sense of cultural tension is evident in the two plays discussed below.²⁴ *Hearts and Minds* and *Not In My Name* use differing approaches to managing their allegiance with the state’s strategy but both are equivocal and often visibly uncomfortable in endorsing the full extent of the state’s counter-terrorism aims.

I intend to consider two of the early Prevent strategy plays in some depth to analyse how they worked to support and question the aims of the strategy and the political context of the War on Terror.

²¹ Therese O’Toole, Nasar Meer, Daniel Nilsson DeHanas, Stephen H Jones, Tariq Modood, ‘Governing through Prevent? Regulation and Contested Practice in State-Muslim Engagement’, *Sociology*, Vol. 50, Iss. 1 (London: Sage, Feb 2016), pp. 160–177.
< <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4735676/#bibr4-0038038514564437> >
[accessed 18 October 2017]

²² Y. Birt, ‘Governing Muslims after 9/11’, in *Thinking through Islamophobia: Symposium Papers*, eds. S. Sayyid & A. Vakil (Leeds: Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, 2008), pp. 26–29.

²³ Roger Wooster, *Contemporary Theatre In Education* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2007), p.2.

²⁴ Ibid.

4.2 *Not In My Name* by Alice Bartlett (2008)

Not in My Name was commissioned by the Lancashire Constabulary in the late 2000s in order to enable 'young people to discuss current issues around terrorism and extremism.'²⁵ It was written by Alice Bartlett of *Theatre Veritae* and first performed at Burnley Youth Theatre in April 2008 before being toured widely. It was recommended by the then Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families, Ed Balls, for 'its potential value as a resource for every teaching establishment in the country.'²⁶ It was aimed at a 14 to 25 year old audience. The play was presented using young people from the local community where it was to be performed.²⁷ Bartlett notes in her introduction to the play that her work is intended primarily for schools as 'a vehicle for class discussion'.²⁸ As such, the play is followed by a 'structured forum session' to discuss 'issues raised' by the play.²⁹

The play's narrative concerns the aftermath of a fictional 'terrorist' bombing on a supermarket in the North West of England. The attack kills six innocent people, the perpetrator and maims many others. The bombing is carried out by a lone youth called Shahid who is from the Islamic tradition. Following the failure of a promising career as a footballer, we hear that Shahid 'withdrew' and became 'sullen'.³⁰ Under the mistaken understanding that his race was a factor in him being let go from the football club, Shahid becomes vulnerable to being radicalised by an unidentified local extremist.³¹ The play provides a short build-up to the event and focuses on the impact of the bombing and the physical devastation it causes before exploring the escalating aftermath of social and civil unrest. Whilst not avoiding some quite extreme graphic descriptions of the impact of a nail bombing, the play is careful not to perform the act of violence to the young audience. Thus the details of the bombing are reported second-hand and

²⁵ Alice Bartlett, *Not in My Name* (London: Oberon Books, 2009), p.32.

²⁶ Alice Bartlett, 'Preventing Violent Extremism and 'Not In My Name'', p.24.

²⁷ See notes on 'Working with Us', P4S: *Prevent for schools.org* < http://www.preventforschools.org/index.php?category_id=57 > [accessed 23 October 2017]

²⁸ *Not in My Name*, p.24.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.83.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.59.

³¹ Shahid's friend Stuart's loaded joke to Shahid is, 'it's a pity your name ain't Smith innit?' *Not in My Name*, p.58.

accompanied by a sharp break in the stage lighting and a structural move to chopped and visceral monologues:

A stark lighting change.

SON: There was a really loud bang

GIRL2: The blast was huge

GIRL 3: Body parts. Bits of body parts [...] Screaming.³²

Many of the monologues contain gruesome details but express the horror in factual terms ensuring the violence does not overwhelm the empathy created, nor the ongoing narrative of coping with the repercussions:

NURSE: An elderly man had nails lodged in his lungs. His family held a vigil by his bedside [...] All of the victims [...] will have permanent psychological scars.³³

Bartlett portrays the native Muslim and 'white' population's response to the attack becoming increasingly funnelled along racial lines. There are many empathetic local interpreters after the event, notably Shahid's brother:

BROTHER: I don't know why he's done it. All I know is he's done the wrong thing [...] The Koran don't say that.³⁴

Yet it is the voices of extremists across the cultures, which dominates. Meanwhile, the Police Officers, here a Muslim PCSO, attempt to arbitrate, as occurs structurally in this extract:

WHITE TEEN: Bet it was them fuckin' Pakis!

PCSO: It's just one of them things people have that mentality [...] I heard some Asian kid say:

ASIAN TEEN: So what it's our Holy Book, innit? It's alright what he's done.

PCSO: And the white kids were giving me a hard time [...] ³⁵

³² *Not in My Name*, p.40.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.57 & p. 60.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.44.

The situation escalates into a full-scale civil riot, which is performed on stage and represented by two groups of antagonistic youths:³⁶

[...] the two sides launch at each other. It should be impossible to say who moves first.³⁷

Clearly Bartlett's dramatized narrative argues that such terrorist events are usually successful in their wider aim of dividing diverse communities. Yet one of her main points in the work is the way in which the media can function to exacerbate this division. Soon after the bombing, the local paper seems culpable:

WHITE LAD1: 'War on Terror gets Local'

ASIAN LAD2: Most people just read the headline [...]

[Supermarket]

ASSISTANT2: Lack of real information puts things into people's minds, don't it.

GIRLFRIEND: The media never shows the fact that the Muslim community condemn violent extremism [...] it's not about religion. They should write about what drove him to it.

SPECIAL

BRANCH: The problem is when the media use the phrase 'Islamic terrorist' then ninety-nine point nine per cent of Muslims who are not terrorists feel that there's something about being Islamic that's about being a terrorist.³⁸

Thus, a clear critique is made by the community and the Police that the media/newspapers are almost as socially divisive as the extremists. In this way, the play offers a prescient foreshadowing of the 2012 Leveson Report's identification of the British media's:

Recklessness in prioritising sensational stories, almost irrespective of the harm these may cause.³⁹

³⁶ Likely meant to recall the racially-explained North West riots of 2001, see BBC Asian Network, 'Oldham Riots: Ten Years On', *BBC Asian Network Reports*, 26 May 2011 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b011p4lp> > [accessed 23 October 2017]

³⁷ *Not in My Name*, p.69.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-71.

³⁹ See Marshall Soules, *Media, Persuasion and Propaganda* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p. 213. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance reported the same problem in 2016 and identified *The Sun's* headline (amongst others): November 2015: '1 in 5 Brit Muslims' sympathy for jihadis' as a notorious example of the problem. See Lizzie Dearden, 'The Sun and Daily Mail accused of fuelling prejudice' in report on rising racist violence and hate speech in UK', *The Independent*, 8 October 2016, < <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/press/the-sun-and-daily-mail-fuelling-prejudice->

Yet if the media are implicated, other authorities are not. In *Not In My Name*, the Police are represented by the SPECIAL BRANCH officer, WPCs and the PCSO. All are extremely sympathetic characters. The SPECIAL BRANCH officer is given the rare dramatic power to break the fourth wall when discussing the bombing. The same character provides an effective dénouement to the play by discussing her/his own conversion to Islam after researching the 'misrepresented and misinterpreted' tenets of the religion.⁴⁰ At one point, Shahid's brother and family are taken in for questioning by the police at gunpoint. Whilst this event makes Shahid's brother 'very angry', he also explains that the police 'made no attempt to provoke us'.⁴¹ Similarly, in the wholly censured recount of the civil riot, the WPC narrates but the neutral supermarket assistant clarifies that the rioters seem primarily antagonistic to the Police:⁴²

WPC1: There was a lot of fighting.

ASSISTANT 2: I mean a lot of it was like white groups with the police, Asian groups with the police. There wasn't much white on Asian or Asian on white.

WPC2: We were in the middle.⁴³

Here the rioters seem characterised as apolitical troublemakers and the police as victims. Of course, many reports by independent and Islamic organisations suggest the police's relationship with Muslim communities has been and is markedly less pacifying. In the early days of CONTEST anti-terrorism in 2004, the campaigning civil liberties group Liberty noted that: 'Police powers have been used disproportionately against the Muslim population' with Muslims describing 'themselves as 'being under siege''.⁴⁴ In 2015, a Muslim ex-Senior Police officer, Dal Babu, argued that:

[racist-violence-hate-crime-speech-uk-ecri-report-a7351856.html](https://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/sites/default/files/impact-of-anti-terror-measures-on-british-muslims-june-2004.pdf) > [accessed 18 October 2017]

⁴⁰ Only the BROTHER and the SPECIAL BRANCH Officer are allowed to speak directly to the audience in *Not in My Name*, p.51. Religious conversion speech see, p. 76.

⁴¹ *Not in My Name*, p.55.

⁴² Of course the previously staged battle between the youths should perhaps draw this into question?

⁴³ *Not in My Name*, p.69.

⁴⁴ Liberty, 'The Impact of Anti Terrorism Powers on the British Muslim Population', *The National Council for Civil Liberties*, June 2004 < <https://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/sites/default/files/impact-of-anti-terror-measures-on-british-muslims-june-2004.pdf> > [accessed 24 October 2017]

Because police counter-terrorism units were mainly white, with few Muslim officers, they did not fully understand issues of race, Islam and gender.⁴⁵

As such he notes, 'Prevent is a toxic brand'.⁴⁶ By presenting the police as culturally sensitive peacekeepers, Bartlett is perhaps unduly de-problematizing a persistent social tension. In this case, as Jenny Hughes notes, such well-intentioned performances as *Not In My Name*:

Risk an uncritical participation in an affect economy of a war on terror that attaches threat to all those belonging to [...] Muslim communities.⁴⁷

In a play written for the young and commissioned by Lancashire Police, it is perhaps only natural that the police are seen as the only reliable authority in a narrated climate of generalised panic. Bartlett is perhaps understandably concerned to not aggravate any sense of tension by implicating those authorities responsible for keeping the peace. However, at times it seems unusual that the audience's empathy is directed more towards the civil authorities than the community.

There are numerous other concerned voices eager to be understood but with limited scope to do so in the chaos following the terrorist attack, but it is only Shahid's friends and immediate family who are witnessed rebuilding their community as the play draws to a close. However, structurally, this is only achieved alongside the guidance of the PCSO and SPECIAL BRANCH characters who end the play. The final words being given to the SPECIAL BRANCH officer who assures the audience that whoever gave Shahid these 'distorted interpretations' of the Koran will be brought to justice but he/she warns, 'be vigilant. And don't become his next victim'.⁴⁸

One of the great strengths for involving and adapting *Not in My Name* for a community of young people is its long list of characters who combine to echo Bartlett's theme of 'an entire community pulling apart before coming together'.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ BBC News, 'Muslim ex-Police Officer Criticises Prevent anti-terror strategy', *BBC News* < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31792238> > [accessed 18 October 2017]

⁴⁶ BBC News, 'Muslim ex-Police Officer Criticises Prevent anti-terror strategy'.

⁴⁷ Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror*, p.155.

⁴⁸ This is expressly not a group but an individual who is never identified or established within the play. *Not in My Name*, pp. 82-83.

⁴⁹ Alice Bartlett, *Some notes on the play* < <http://www.preventforschools.org/download/file/nimn/NiMN%20Casting%20Notes.pdf> > [accessed 18 October 2017]

The multiple voices employed give audience to the many individuals Bartlett interviewed about other terrorist incidents prior to writing the play. Bartlett argues that as a play this is 'ostensibly Verbatim' as much of the dialogue is from interviews in and around Burnley with a 'diverse' range of 'local Muslim' and 'non-Muslim perspectives'.⁵⁰ She also observes that because the characters are 'compositely inspired' only the plot is fictional.⁵¹ Therefore, characters in this play reflect the views and language of the local populace and so this Verbatim play contrasts quite markedly with the earlier discussed Tribunal and Verbatim plays of R.N. Taylor and David Hare. In these more celebrated works, the characters are usually public figures from within the context of an enquiry or other public setting. They are given a real name, monologue and a performed character to be replicated upon the stage set. In *Not In My Name*, the sources are not public figures, the characters are usually anonymous (the speakers are: **Girl 1, PCSO...**) and the playwright is the creator of the source document.

Arguably, Bartlett's approach to Verbatim seems more interrogative and perhaps democratic than using a range of publically available source documents with high-profile characters, as with a Tribunal play. Robin Soans uses a similar technique to Bartlett in plays such as in *A State Affair*, where he creates 'composite...unknown characters' from the words of 'real people'.⁵² Soans argues that his role is 'to provide an amplification of an otherwise lost voice' and that this is 'the reason why I think Verbatim is so important.'⁵³

One of the benefits of this approach in *Not in My Name* is that it allows the culturally underrepresented 'local Muslim' to have a significant dramatic voice. Moreover, Bartlett's use of Verbatim interviews to give voice to the Muslim community helps avoid any questions about cultural appropriation in this multi-cultural context. Bartlett also ensures that the cultural balance of her community is represented with domestic

⁵⁰ Jenny Hughes explains that the interviews draw on the accounts of victims after the 2005 attacks in London and the 'disturbances' between Asian and white youths in Northern towns in 2001. Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror*, pp. 165-166.

⁵¹ Alice Bartlett, 'Preventing Violent Extremism' and 'Not In My Name', p. 31 & p.29.

⁵² Robin Soans, *Verbatim Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*, eds. W. Hammond & D Steward (London: Oberon Books, 2008), pp. 32-34.

⁵³ Robin Soans also contends that creating one composite character 'incorporating lines from both originals' is 'dramatically economic without becoming a misrepresentation', Robin Soans, *Verbatim Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*, pp. 32-34.

Muslim characters existing alongside far-right voices and rioters. In so doing, Bartlett underlines that:

Dangerous or violent extremism is not in this country at the present time purely a concern over Islamic fundamentalism.⁵⁴

Not In My Name as a Verbatim Prevent play in some ways adapts Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre for counter-terrorism by asking a community of actors to role-play a terrorist incident.

Boal explained Forum Theatre in *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* as a means to 'make the audience participants in a dramatic action, but in complete consciousness of the reason'.⁵⁵ Boal suggested Forum Theatre should stage a dramatic action with a clear political dimension, use performed protagonists and antagonists (such as factory workers in conflict with management) and directly involve the audience in the decision-making process. Under the intermediary support of the 'Joker' role, key elements of the performance would be repeated and the audience invited to stop the action at any point, and propose a new direction or resolution. Ideally, the audience should then take part on stage as 'Spect-actors' and perform this new approach to its conclusion. Boal argued this process taught the beset community how to use the 'strategies of the oppressed' and so encouraged the belief that 'new solutions are possible'.⁵⁶

Not in My Name allowed an after-performance 'forum session', where the character Shahid remains in role and the audience are engaged to empathise and become involved by suggesting the alternate agencies from whom Shahid might have been able to redress his anger and social alienation.⁵⁷ Despite these Forum-style contributions, the audience are not quite 'Spect-Actors' as they do not have the delegated power to stop the performance or to present their own suggestions on stage. In this way, the focus is on the audience's passive reasoning of how Shahid might have responded to his situation rather than allowing the audience to performatively express any new approaches.

⁵⁴ *Not in My Name*, p. 26.

⁵⁵ Augusto Boal, transl. A. Jackson, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 272.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 272-275.

⁵⁷ The 'Structured Forum Session' is explained in *Not in My Name*, p. 83. Jenny Hughes notes one performance where one youth suggested that Shahid should express his anger by organising a 'college occupation'. She notes 'the suggestion was reconfigured' by the facilitator'. *Performance in a Time of Terror*, p. 170.

Thus the dramatic power remains, largely undistributed to the community, and concentrated upon the stage. However, with the post-show discussion the audience are at least able to work towards a more optimistic resolution for Shahid in a community setting. This is one of the key aims of Forum theatre for young participants as explained by S. Houston et al, as this process enables the young to take part in 'a collective process of seeking realistic solutions to real problems.'⁵⁸

Nevertheless, Boal's Forum Theatre was often designed to focus on 'the oppressed' classes and those alienated by a lack of social agency or resources. Such references to a broader class or ethnically-focused sense of social deprivation are markedly absent in *Not In My Name*. This is perhaps incongruous as it is clear that Shahid's alienation is at least partly caused by a lack of opportunity and belief in his social future, which occurs when his one dream of being a professional footballer falls apart. As such, the play might be argued to de-problematize issues of social deprivation. Ultimately, Shahid's social isolation is perhaps fundamentally instigated by a poverty of opportunity and class/ethnic alienation and only then exploited by religious extremism. Although this reading is available within the play, perhaps like the Prevent strategy itself, the context of urban deprivation and limited opportunity seems partially sidestepped and the oppressor only identified as the violent extremist.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, as Jenny Hughes notes, any such critiques of the play must also be considered in their historical context and bear in mind that such theatre groups:

Partnership with what some might see as a right-wing security agenda reflects the complexities of performance's politics during a time of terror.⁶⁰

Despite this, the feedback published on the play's website clearly suggests the heartening significance of Bartlett's work in opening a dialogue with and between her audience. A dialogue that the reviews imply is a clear success of such applied theatre in vocalising a class and ethnic alienation exacerbated by ideological extremism, misinformation, and perhaps state-led approaches to counter-terrorism:

⁵⁸ S. Houston, T. Magill, M. McCollum, T. Spratt, 'Developing creative solutions to the problems of children and their families: communicative reason and the use of forum theatre', *Child and Family Social Work*, Vol. 6 (Belfast: Blackwell, 2001), pp 285–293.

⁵⁹ Shahid's Girlfriend suggests a class analysis: 'it's not about religion. They should write about what drove him to it.' Alice Bartlett, *Not in My Name*, pp.68-71.

⁶⁰ Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror*, p.157.

“The boys’ feedback was really good, they felt the play really spoke for them. [...] The show gave them a way to talk to people. Before they didn’t know how to approach people about it.”

Doaa Alsoraimi, Al Ghazali Community Centre⁶¹

4.3 *Hearts and Minds* by Khayaal Theatre Company (2007)



Figure. 9: *Hearts and Minds* performance at the Highfields Centre, in Leicester 27 March 2009.⁶²

Hearts and Minds was created by Luton’s Khayaal Theatre Company in 2007. It was originally commissioned by the Muslim Education Forum in Luton and the Berkshire Forum Against Extremism.⁶³ It received Pathfinder funding from Local Government in 2007/08 and toured schools, colleges, universities and young offender institutions from March 2008.⁶⁴ The play takes a markedly different approach when considering counter-terrorism to *Not In My Name*. It develops a few complex fictional characters

⁶¹ ‘Background’, *P4S: Prevent for schools.org* <

http://www.preventforschools.org/index.php?category_id=57 > [accessed 23 October 2017]

⁶² Used within copyright exception. Copyright owned by *Moblog.net*, see <

<http://moblog.net/view/883746/hearts-and-minds-2> > [accessed 11 March 2019]

⁶³ The Khayaal Theatre company had already produced a play about extremism called *Sun & Wind* (reflecting on the London Bombings) before they were granted funding by the Community Leadership Fund and were granted 3 years of funding by the government’s Prevent team to deliver both plays and other Muslim Heritage works. Appendix III, *Transcript of interview with Khayaal Theatre Company’s Luqman Ali and Director Eleanor Martin*, 20 Sept. 2017, pp.1-2.

⁶⁴ The Pathfinder funding here amounted to ‘just under’ £100,000 per year over 3 years but Luqman Ali notes what ‘they were asking for in terms of delivery was huge... 200-300 performances.’ See Appendix III, *Transcript of interview with Khayaal Theatre Company’s Luqman Ali and Director Eleanor Martin*, 20 Sept. 2017, pp. 1-2.

connected by their community and considers them in the context of their dreams for the future and their responses to their own faith. Consequently, the government's recommendation for the play considered it as working from a 'Community Cohesion Starting Point' and saw it as a place from which to 'address Prevent' issues raised in the post-performance discussion, which follows the same part-mimetic approach as Bartlett's after-performance forum.⁶⁵

This production was directed by Eleanor Martin alongside Mo Sesay and was predominantly written by Luqman Ali. Luqman Ali is a freelance pastoral Imam in London and is known for his broader involvement in counter-radicalization approaches. In 2015, he was part of a British delegation sent to Sudan to dissuade British doctors from joining Islamic State.⁶⁶ I was fortunate to be able to interview both Luqman Ali and Eleanor Martin about the play's funding, creation and reception, in person at Wardown House, Luton in late 2017. The transcript of this interview is detailed in Appendix III.⁶⁷

Hearts and Minds is unusual in not only presenting and expressing the voice of Islam within British theatre but also in the play's foregrounding of issues around faith. Jenny Hughes in a discussion of Janelle Reinelt's analysis of Howard Brenton's plays *Paul* and *In Extremis*, quotes Reinelt's observation that the absence of faith as a theme or context in recent theatre seems particularly inappropriate when, as Reinelt observes:

We live in a moment when understanding how and why people believe in various spiritual realities is critical if we are to combat the intolerance, violence, and wars of religion.⁶⁸

The play focuses on the tribulations of the character Asif, a school-aged young man who is described as 'Pakistani by memory, urban British by culture and Muslim by sentiment.'⁶⁹ At the start of the play, we see Asif as the confident alpha-male at school with his schoolmates Vicky and Aisha, all ably supported by their teacher Ms Hussain. Ms Hussain has asked the three students to come up with a design for a flag as part of a

⁶⁵ Government Office for the South East and Faith Associates, *Prevent resources guide: Supporting Learning together to be safe: a toolkit to help schools contribute to the prevention of violent extremism* (Faith Associates: London, October 2009), p. 4.

⁶⁶ Mark Townsend, 'Britain acts to stem flow of young doctors recruited by ISIS in Sudan', *The Guardian*, 2 January 2016 < <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/02/young-uk-doctors-urged-not-to-join-isis> > [accessed 30 October 2017]

⁶⁷ Appendix III, *Transcript of interview with Khayaal Theatre*.

⁶⁸ J.G. Reinelt, 'The "Rehabilitation" of Howard Brenton.' *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 51 No. 3, 2007, pp. 167-174 < muse.jhu.edu/article/220802 > [accessed 15 October 2017]

⁶⁹ Luqman Ali, DVD cover, *Hearts & Minds* (Luton: Khayaal Theatre Company, 2011) [DVD]

competition for the upcoming London Olympics that will express the best of British humanitarianism. There are many layers of authority in Asif's life and within the play. His teacher, mother and father are all presented as warm, generous and liberal guides through his and their challenging environment. The play opens with the male role model, Asif's father Hassan, working late into the night as a taxi driver, and concerned about his son:

I wish Asif would care more about his life, where he's going. [...] He just wants to be cool, more money, more things [...] maybe I'll take him to Pakistan.⁷⁰

The sense of struggle in being able to thrive within British culture is then amplified as Hassan's employer, also Vicky's mother, chastises Hassan over the taxi's radio-mic and grumbles to a customer about arranged marriages. Thus very early on a cultural conflict is set up that Asif does not initially notice. Instead, Asif has embraced western capitalist culture wholeheartedly. He is introduced to the audience at school proudly wearing large booming headphones, talking in urban slang and looking to sell pirated DVDs and CDs from his blazer pockets to his schoolmates in the manner of a black-market trader. It is this embracing of meaningless consumption that Asif's devout father bemoans and that the playwright Ali seems to suggest is itself a form of extremism. Echoing post-Marxist scholars like Slavoj Zizek, the play seems to see capitalism as a socio-economic 'truth-without-meaning' that drives a wedge between Asif and his father's values.⁷¹ And so religion becomes, as Zizek also mentions, identified as a site of protest, now 'rediscovering its mission' to question the value of capitalism.⁷² Significantly in the context of the play, Asif's commerce also comes between himself, the model student Vicky (who has purchased a broken DVD) and the more radical Aisha who feels Asif has corrupted his culture and values.

Aisha through much of the play represents a conservative strain of Islam but she is a layered character who also wants to avoid being married too quickly, so she can become an independent lawyer. Her pious strain dominates at the start as she complains about Asif's 'wheeling and dealing [...] but no believing'.⁷³ Although she is apparently concerned about religious formality, she expresses her beliefs in a stylish urban

⁷⁰ Luqman Ali, *Hearts & Minds* (Luton: Khayaal Theatre Company, 2011) [DVD], 01:07-01:30

⁷¹ Slavoj Zizek, *First as Tragedy Then As Farce* (London: Verso, 2009), pp. 24-26.

⁷² Ibid., p. 26.

⁷³ *Hearts & Minds* [DVD], 02:35-02:38

vernacular, as here when she complains to a relative about the wrong sort of music being played at a family wedding:

Salaams to the ignorant ... our peeps need to keep faith and stop demeaning themselves with all the jahiliyat.⁷⁴

Similarly layered, Asif is shown taking his earnings home to help his mother and revelling in learning how to cook at her side. As such, like Aisha, Asif is a realistically complex character open to influence and the weight of prevailing personal and cultural pressures.⁷⁵

Within the play, Asif is pushed to consider a more radicalised viewpoint by a number of external factors but the overarching context is explained when Ms Hussain meets her school board to justify her flag project for the Olympics. Ms Hussain notes her purpose is to celebrate her pupils' 'shared humanity'.⁷⁶ The school authorities cannot see beyond their plans about addressing extremism, and she cautions them to consider that:

The approach that most of you are advocating will be counter productive because it starts off with the negative implication that all young Muslims are potential terrorists because of their religious affiliations. You know identity is so important to a human being that if you foist an erroneous one onto the vulnerable, the disconnected, the aggrieved for long enough, they will adopt it.⁷⁷

And thus within this government-recommended Prevent play, there exists a clear critique of the state's 'hearts and minds' communications strategy from the most empathetic character, Ms Hussain. As Hughes notes, Ms Hussain clearly charges the Prevent strategy with intensifying a 'climate of fear and insecurity' and of fostering the very radicalisation it was designed to remedy.⁷⁸ This is a point that Zizek echoes in his text *Violence*, as part of his broad critique of the domestic European responses to Islamist terrorism. Zizek argues that even such seemingly liberal responses to terrorism as Prevent embodies, ultimately only feed the conflict between government and

⁷⁴ *Hearts & Minds* [DVD], 02:28-02:31. Definition of 'jahiliyat' is 'a state of pre-Islamic ignorance' via Pakistan Historical Society, *Proceedings of the Pakistan History Conference*, Vol. 1 (Lahore: Pakistan Historical Society, 1951), p. 61.

⁷⁵ In my interview with Luqman Ali and Eleanor Martin, they argued that simplifying characters was 'very dangerous' and too simplistic and perhaps symptomatic of the historical context where 'Muslims and Islam were ... caricatures .. and there was little humanity in it', Appendix III, *Transcript of interview with Khayaal Theatre*.

⁷⁶ *Hearts & Minds* [DVD], 06:29.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 07:28-07:50.

⁷⁸ Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror*, p.176.

fundamentalist, both 'caught up in a deadly vicious cycle, each generating the very forces it tries to combat.'⁷⁹

Soon after this scene, further examples of ill-conceived state provocation are narrated, initially in a partly-humorous tone when an Islamic rap band called *Pirates of the Correct Deen* are arrested.⁸⁰ The fictional band express peaceful messages in their lyrics, which focus on the language and images surrounding the War on Terror, such as: 'my jihad ain't about no bullets or bombs'. The band are coming to play a gig in Britain but have been arrested at Luton airport.⁸¹ This is because of a confusion about the meaning of their album entitled 'Don't Stop the Jihad'.⁸² In these circumstances, 'jihad' is meant to denote only an inner moral and ethical struggle with a social dimension, rather than violence. Such issues are central to the Pirates' music, and they are presented rapping in their prison cell about the, readily apparent, power of language to motivate: 'When a bruvver lets rip with the truth... Boom!'⁸³ Language and symbol are dominating themes throughout the play, combining as here, to suggest to the young audience that meaning must be carefully weighed-up by all users for, particularly in fractious times, language is a Barthesian 'explosion' of meaning, with huge power to provoke or ameliorate.⁸⁴ The point is underlined earlier, via myth, when Ms Hussain spins a spiritual/scientific allegory to her class about a recent discovery by a Japanese scientist. The scientist 'Masaru Emoto' has found that positive language creates beautiful crystals in water, and consequently in the sea of the human body, positive language has significance far beyond the magnitude of the raw sound waves.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ It is of course debatable whether Prevent is a 'liberal' response. Slavoj Zizek, *Violence* (London: Profile Books, 2009), pp. 68-70.

⁸⁰ The title is a religious pun on the Hollywood film *Pirates of the Caribbean*. 'Deen' is defined as the Islamic religion/way, see Shireen Hunter, *Modernization, Democracy and Islam* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 2005), p. 84.

⁸¹ Such a scene echoes the large number of Muslims arrested/detained in/at Luton. See list on Muslim Community portal: 'Database of Arrests and Outcomes', *Salaam*, < http://www.salaam.co.uk/themeofthemonth/september03_index.php?l=48#0table > [accessed 3 November 2017]. Quotation: Luqman Ali, *Hearts & Minds* (Luton: Khayaal Theatre Company, 2011) [DVD], 21:41-21:44.

⁸² 'Jihad' means struggle or effort and is usually in the context of personal wrestles with belief rather than Holy War. See Religions, 'Jihad explained ...', *BBC*, 23 August 2009 < http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/beliefs/jihad_1.shtml > [accessed 1 November 2017]

⁸³ *Hearts & Minds* [DVD], 24:27-24:40.

⁸⁴ Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, transl. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1993), p. 18.

⁸⁵ *Hearts & Minds* [DVD], 03:12-04:25.

Ms Hussain's lecture initially falls on stony ground as Asif and Aisha go angrily to protest outside the prison where the rap band is incarcerated. It is here that Asif first seems to come into contact with the more fundamentalist aspects of his community in the form of three scheming terrorists. Notably, Ali presents the three potential terrorists (played by the three young actors) plotting whilst dressed in black, in shadow and with their back turned to the audience. As Hughes notes, dramatically the group are 'denied life in this imposture.'⁸⁶ Because of their dual status as characters with a hint of their Other selves, they are tinged with the Jungian shadow-version of Vicky, Asif and Aisha that seems to suggest the dark possibility of violence is more fundamental than ideo-cultural. An issue of social atavism, rather than politics.⁸⁷ Luqman Ali has noted that for him theatre and 'Art cannot be about just spouting anger one has to censor out one's [...] dark side.'⁸⁸

This idea of a 'dark-side' equating to terrorism is echoed in Zizek's contentious and, arguably culturally flattening, psycho-social point when he argues that some forms of Islamic fundamentalism are best understood as a response to a modern world replete with the 'hegemony of scientific discourse'. Zizek suggests these scientific discourses that dominate new knowledge and cultural formations in the West, built up slowly, but shocked and obliterated religious cultural codes and associated values in some Islamic states. Zizek contends that in many Muslim societies their 'symbolic screen was perturbed [...] brutally.' And thus he concludes that such societies could only protect themselves from total breakdown by an aggressive reassertion of religion employing the ideologically subconscious 'shield of fundamentalism'.⁸⁹ However, Ali's play suggests these narrated fundamentalists have some grounds for their discontent as regards real and symbolic attacks on Muslim cultures worldwide. One terrorist argues that there are no opportunities for Muslims in Britain and that abroad, 'The West Bomb all our Muslim countries [...] and then win the contracts to rebuild those countries'.⁹⁰ Yet within the play, these shadowy fundamentalists are portrayed recommending violence as the appropriate resolution for all conflicts, even a playground argument amongst children.⁹¹ Not only are they portrayed as ethically incoherent they are also hypocritical and funded

⁸⁶ Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror*, p.178.

⁸⁷ In my interview, Eleanor Martin observed how she wanted the play to consider 'extremism in the human psyche', Appendix III, *Transcript of interview with Khayaal Theatre*, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror*, p.179.

⁸⁹ Slavoj Zizek, *Violence* (London: Profile Books, 2009), pp. 69-71.

⁹⁰ *Hearts & Minds* [DVD], 36:40-36:46.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 36:17-36:22.

by a range of capitalist enterprises themselves, such as an equally shadowy 'import and card business.'⁹² In characterising the would-be terrorists in this way, the play both expresses and problematizes the concept of violent fundamentalism as having clear ethical and rational grounds.

In contrast to these capitalising terrorists, is the devout role model Hassan. As a responsible citizen and member of the community and his family, he has taken his and his neighbours hard-earned money out to Pakistan to pay for his friends and family's flood relief and medical care. Unfortunately, he is arrested abroad with a large sum of money under suspicion of funding terrorism.⁹³ Asif's anger and distrust of authority at this second misunderstanding, is closely followed by him hearing a racist comment directed at his father from Vicky's Mum.⁹⁴ Asif's anger, under Aisha's direction, helps drive Asif into considering taking violent action and he joins the Islamic radicals who are planning a bombing campaign at the 2012 Olympics.

As Asif's world falls apart, a counter-narrative of education and applied faith runs alongside to buoy the audience.⁹⁵ This strain is exemplified by Ms Hussain's project to create a celebratory flag for the Olympics and through the compassionate responses of Asif's father. These supportive family and community structures combine when Vicky and Asif are jointly tasked with designing a flag and are looking for inspiration, when Vicky meets Hassan in the taxi. In conversation, Vicky learns about the Urdu poet Ghalib and his ghazal of unconditional love. Vicky mentions it to Asif at school and Ms Hussain translates and explains it's about:

Unconditional love. He says: don't break relations with me, let there be some connection even if it's enmity. I think he must have been inspired by this verse in the Qu'ran which says: Respond to bad with that which is better so that your enemy becomes like your best friend.⁹⁶

⁹² A context which echoes the wealth and enterprises of the bin Laden family. See Nick Allen, 'Osama bin Laden: Profile', *The Telegraph*, 2 May 2011 < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/8487349/Osama-bin-Laden-profile.html> > [accessed 5 November 2017]. Luqman Ali, *Hearts & Minds* (Luton: Khayaal Theatre Company, 2011) [DVD], 20:17-20:19.

⁹³ A situation not dissimilar to Moazzam Begg who is discussed earlier in the analysis of *Guantanamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom*.

⁹⁴ Vicky's Mum says Hassan is lazy in his taxi and working on 'Paki time.' *Hearts & Minds* [DVD], 37:22.

⁹⁵ Throughout the play scenes are short and intercut. Any scene of discontent is usually swiftly parried by one of optimism.

⁹⁶ *Hearts & Minds* [DVD], 35:17-35:42.

Together Vicky and Asif are inspired to use an image of a heart in their flag, which not only wins the Olympic competition but inspires Asif to abandon his role in a terrorist attack and to tell the police about the planned bombing. Asif's renouncing of violence is shown as a spiritual wrangle, a personal jihad, visually represented in a gestus of restraint, physically tied between the knotted folds of Islamic and British flags held by Aisha and Vicky. Marking the significance, Ms Hussain here breaks the fourth wall and asks the audience directly how Asif might resolve his inner struggle? The answer is to create and fly his own combined flag of a heart inspired by the ghazal of unconditional love. Though emotionally loaded, these scenes are rarely clichéd and the play ends on an accommodating version of Aisha (now at law-school) alongside Asif and Vicky, all united and being introduced to the crowd at the Olympic opening ceremony.

With Ms Hussain's help, Aisha and Asif have been recognised by the breadth of British society and are empowered to renounce antagonism and join Vicky on the national stage. Such an optimistic, if politically redolent, metaphor is apposite and moving for its audience in its resolution on a theme of faith in a shared future marked by a celebration and a commitment to the values of community.

As with Ms Hussain's myth about a scientist who argues that words perform a significant physical disturbance, the play contends that religious texts, cultures and people are multi-layered and offer a myriad of powerful readings. The text suggests the vulnerable can, via duress or misinterpretation, find manifold evidence through text and history to breed discontent and infer violence, but that a careful reading of these symbols and language will explain that violence is ultimately an issue of psychology not religion. Ali notes the message he wanted to give his audience was that 'you are the story you tell yourself.'⁹⁷ The play's strength is that these points are made through theme, narrative, structure and symbol and thus the performance, as the government's *Prevent Resources Guide* states, expresses, 'some of the dilemmas and discourses occupying the hearts and minds of some young Muslims'.⁹⁸ The work's success is attested to by Luqman Ali who recalls that the sense of identification from the audience was palpable:

The overwhelming response from young people was 'Wow [...] I think it touched something in young people that they didn't ... in terms of spirituality, aspiration

⁹⁷ Appendix III, *Transcript of interview with Khayal Theatre*, p. 4.

⁹⁸ Government Office for the South East and Faith Associates, *Prevent resources guide: Supporting Learning together to be safe*, p. 9.

... angst ... marginalization ... with big global issues. And I think it really struck a chord.'⁹⁹

4.4 Prevent Postponed

Both *Not In My Name* and *Hearts and Minds* as Prevent strategy plays created alongside government agencies and primarily focused on groups of young people considered as at risk of radicalisation, are some of the most successful of the New Labour era's attempt to engage young people in theatre. It is therefore surprising that, as Luqman Ali recalls, whilst funding for some theatre projects was extended into the 2011 coalition, many others like the Khayaal Theatre Company had their funding removed. His observation mixes both shock and concern:

We had a privileged relationship with Muslim communities. We took that privileged relationship to work with government despite our misgivings because we felt that there needed to be representation of a holistic, humanitarian cultural perspective. We generate all this momentum across the country. I would say critical mass really ... you know 25,000 young people – across a hundred partners [...] and then you basically pulled the plug.¹⁰⁰

Ali summarises earlier in the conversation that as of 2017:

This Tory government has pretty much stopped the upstream work [...] which means you are still having people drawn in because you cut the youth stuff.¹⁰¹

Many of these plays created by community theatre companies were cut in 2011 when the new government attempted to combine an austerity agenda with reassessing the Prevent aims and objectives. In 2011, the coalition government explained that:

The Prevent strategy has been re-focused following a review [...] Prevent will make a clearer distinction between our counter-terrorist work and our integration strategy.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Appendix III, *Transcript of interview with Khayaal Theatre*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Appendix III, *Transcript of interview with Khayaal Theatre*, p. 7.

¹⁰¹ 'Upstream' in this context means engaging young people before radicalisation becomes a possibility. Appendix III, *Transcript of interview with Khayaal Theatre*, p. 7.

¹⁰² Gov.Uk, 'Prevent Strategy 2011', *Home Office*, 7 June 2011 < <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-strategy-2011> > [accessed 6 November 2017]

Perhaps this distinction explained the funding cut, or perhaps it was the problem of measuring who hasn't become a terrorist as a response to Prevent theatre.¹⁰³ Regardless, the loss of such plays seems a retrograde step. Driven by government funding, these plays express the authentic and diverse voice of the British Muslim community that is so often absent from other larger works. The problems and tensions of communities facing stigmatisation from media and policy are explored in their problematic relief and the state responses found wanting in design and delivery. It is perhaps darkly ironic that these domestic Muslim communities, historically at the sharp end of government cuts with issues of urban neglect and industrial decline, received focused funding here largely in terms of community theatre.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, these works have been undoubtedly significant in preventing urban alienation and limited opportunities from being stoked into violent fundamentalism. As importantly, these Prevent plays, unlike a large number of the national works discussed, express a stake in the future and a consequent belief in the power of communities to work together to solve issues. Significantly, Shahid and Asif's community of family and friends express perhaps rather conservative, traditional working-class values of hard work, family and responsibility.¹⁰⁵ And so despite their different contexts, the values in these plays are arguably more those of the tight-knit soldiers of *Black Watch*, driven by family history, a lack of opportunities, distrustful of the media and doubtful for the future. As expressed in these plays about anger set around supermarkets, taxi-ranks and pubs, class is perhaps quite as important as culture.

4.5 Class and Theatre Concerns

The Prevent plays discussed above were primarily directed at areas of Britain with a high Muslim population, which were predominantly working-class. In a 2015 survey it was noted that 46% of the British Muslim population lived in the 10% most deprived

¹⁰³ The BBC's Dominic Casciani argued this stating that 'Very few of the schemes could be assessed to show one way or another whether they worked'. Dominic Casciani, BBC News, 'Analysis: The Prevent strategy and its problems', *BBC*, 26 August 2014 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28939555> > [accessed 28 November 2017]

¹⁰⁴ Muslim Council of Britain, *British Muslims in Numbers: A Demographic, Socio-economic and Health Profile of Muslims in Britain Drawing on the 2011 Census* (London: Muslim Council of Britain, 2015), p. 46 < http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport_2015.pdf > [accessed 5 November 2017]

¹⁰⁵ Now these families might well be termed part of the new 'Precariat'. See BBC Science, 'The Great British Class Survey – Results', *BBC*, 3 April 2013 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/0/21970879> > [accessed 6 November 2017]

areas of Britain.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, Prevent, alongside strategies such as *Creative Partnerships* and *Theatre in Education*, encouraged access to and involvement in theatre from the most ethnically diverse areas of the British working-class.¹⁰⁷ However, as noted above, Prevent itself was tainted with claims that the strategy was part of a neoliberal agenda to 'discipline the Muslim community.'¹⁰⁸ And thus theatre seemed to become considered itself as a suspect tool of the establishment; one that echoed wider and growing concerns about theatre's lack of cultural and class diversity.

Yet despite its contested failings, Prevent significantly enhanced engagement in theatre and involved people like Luqman Ali who could use theatre to build on their 'privileged relationship with Muslim communities'.¹⁰⁹ This was significant because these theatrical relationships occurred in places where the working-class and Muslim population were more usually absent, perhaps even alienated, from theatre.

In the late 2000s, Arts Council England produced *Theatre Assessment 2009* to establish a detailed picture of how mainstream theatre had changed after a reinvigorated New Labour focus to funding from 2003.¹¹⁰ The review analysed 74 theatre-organisations from 2001 to 2007 and despite a number of achievements, their research found that class and cultural attendance had not significantly changed. They noted in their findings:

There was a strong consensus of opinion about a lack of socio-economic diversity in this [theatre] sector.¹¹¹

With regard to theatre attendance they found that:

¹⁰⁶ In a 2015 survey using the 2011 census, it was established that 46% (or 1.22 million) of the Muslim population lives in the 10% 'most deprived' areas in Britain. 1.7% (46,000) of the Muslim population live in the 10% 'least deprived' areas in Britain, Muslim Council of Britain, *British Muslims in Numbers: A Demographic, Socio-economic and Health Profile of Muslims in Britain Drawing on the 2011 Census* (London: Muslim Council of Britain, 2015), p. 46 < http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport_2015.pdf > [accessed 5 November 2017]

¹⁰⁷ For a more detailed analysis of Theatre funding under New Labour see Appendix I: *Fund Managing and Subsidised Theatre*.

¹⁰⁸ Y. Birt, 'Governing Muslims after 9/11', in *Thinking through Islamophobia: Symposium Papers*, eds. S. Sayyid & A. Vakil (Leeds: Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, 2008), pp. 26–29. For a more nuanced perspective see Francesco Ragazzi, 'Suspect community or suspect category? The impact of counter-terrorism as 'policed multiculturalism'', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 42, Iss. 5 (2016), pp. 724–741.

¹⁰⁹ Appendix III, *Transcript of interview with Khayaal Theatre*, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Arts Council England, *Theatre Assessment 2009* (London: Arts Council, 2009) < <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/theatre-assessment-2009> > [accessed 10 November 2017]. See Appendix I for detailed discussion of funding under New Labour.

¹¹¹ Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital: The Rise and Fall of Creative Britain* (London: Verso, 2014), p. 203.

Those with higher levels of education 'are significantly more likely to attend'.¹¹²

Robert Hewison summarises that for regular attendance:

Social status was [...] a strong predictor and [...] black and minority ethnic adults were less likely to attend.¹¹³

Whilst this perhaps continues the tradition of theatre as class-bound cultural capital as detailed in Bourdieu's *Distinction*, it seemed that government money and focus was not changing the class and cultural makeup of theatre attendance.¹¹⁴ Some suggested that the theatrical form itself was to blame and there were some isolated but tenacious attacks on theatre as an exclusive, establishment medium from elements of the working-class arts establishment. Irvine Welsh, after staging 1994's *Trainspotting* and 1998's *You'll Have Had Your Hole*, contended in 1999 that theatre is exclusive and excluding:

Elitist and moribund [...] 'Theatre is posher and older than most mediums. The [...] cricket Test ambience of the theatre [...] is designed to keep a younger, hipper crew away.' He declares: "Shakespeare would have empathised with the lager brigade."¹¹⁵

A clear sense of class friction is evident in many of the plays of this era. As *Hearts and Minds* narrates a tension between working-class teacher and middle-class management, Mark Ravenhill's 2008 *War and Peace* and Simon Stephens' 2006 *Motortown* both detail a hostility that tends toward violence between the (identified as) working-class soldiers and the middle-class hedge-fund manager and teacher/media executive respectively. In *War and Peace*, the young boy's affluent family and wider social class have eviscerated the soldier's own life and culture.¹¹⁶ In *Motortown*, the middle-class teacher and media executive are portrayed as hypocrites and only concerned with ethics when it comes to protesting about the Iraq War, but seem less ethical when it comes to their own sexual proclivities.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Williams' *Days of Significance* and Norton-Taylor's *Tactical Questioning*, suggested the government and military establishment were covering up

¹¹² Arts Council England, *Theatre Assessment 2009*

¹¹³ Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, pp. 203-204.

¹¹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (London: Routledge, 2010)

¹¹⁵ David Lister, 'Welsh attacks elitist theatres', *The Independent*, 5 February 1999 <
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/welsh-attacks-elitist-theatres-1068785.html>>[accessed 10 November 2017]

¹¹⁶ Mark Ravenhill, 'War and Peace', *Plays: 3* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 52-63.

¹¹⁷ Simon Stephens, *Motortown* (London: Methuen, 2006), pp. 54-56.

their own orders to commit torture then scapegoating the working-class soldiers who carried those orders out.¹¹⁸

Such a focus on strains between the classes seemed persistent throughout a number of works of the period and significantly they, at times, implicate the theatre as a central part of the middle-class cultural clique. This is most apparent in *Black Watch*. Gregory Burke's play echoes Welsh's views in the soldiers' narrated extreme circumspection in trusting the writer with their stories and their history.¹¹⁹ In these plays, many of which look to document the difficulties of the British soldier and beset citizen with empathy, a sense of social division seemed to be emerging and theatre itself regarded as on the side of an established middle-class elite.

4.6 Theatre and Commodified Culture

Antagonism was also being expressed at the way in which theatre seemed to be wholeheartedly embracing New Labour policies of implementing the market within its underlying structures of funding and presentation. At the end of the 1990s, Aleks Sierz identified theatre funding's 'wholesale commodification', with its role becoming ever-compromised by 'commercial pressures' meaning 'audiences became customers and shows became product.'¹²⁰ By the mid-2000s, theatre was being regarded by New Labour as a 'creative industry' in its own right.¹²¹ As such, there was a growing awareness that theatre's role as a creative art embodying social comment might have become subordinate to theatre's role as product. Such views are summarised in Jen Harvie's *Fair Play* of 2013 where, focusing on the increasing commercial imperative, she asks might theatre:

[Be] complicit with the agendas of neoliberal capitalist culture? Sometimes offer a spectacle of communications and social engagement rather more than a qualitatively and sustainably rich and even critical engagement?¹²²

¹¹⁸ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Tactical Questioning: Scenes from the Baha Mousa Inquiry', *The Tricycle Collected Tribunal Plays: 1994: 2012* (London: Oberon Books, 2014), pp. 779-854.

¹¹⁹ Gregory Burke, *Black Watch* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p.46.

¹²⁰ Aleks Sierz, *Modern British Playwriting: the 1990s* (London: Methuen, 2012), p. 34.

¹²¹ See discussion of Theatre funding under New Labour in Appendix I: *Fund Managing and Subsidized Theatre*.

¹²² Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (New York: Springer, 2013), p. 3.

Such ideas of theatre as empty middle-class spectacle and commodified product seem to inform Mark Ravenhill's and Tim Crouch's 2007 plays *Birth of a Nation* and *ENGLAND*. Both of these plays argue that by the late 2000s, British theatre and the arts had become fully marketized products. Furthermore, both suggest at different levels that theatre and the arts had some connection with the apparent neoliberal imperialism both authors imply surrounded the invasion of Iraq.

Such ideas were evident in Caryl Churchill's influential 2000 play *Far Away*. This was termed 'the best play written about 9/11', according to playwright Alistair McDowall, despite being written the year before.¹²³ As briefly mentioned earlier, in a surreal play about a world riven in faction, a central scene presents two artists, Joan and Todd, who make avant-garde hats to be worn by a large number of chained prisoners at their unexplained execution. Both Artist characters discuss their desire for better pay and ignore the plight of the condemned, noting about the hats, 'It seems so sad to burn them with the bodies.'¹²⁴ Here the artistic product symbolically covers, even decorates, the crime whilst serving no functional purpose other than to keep the British artists employed. In this way, art seemed connected to international murder. Mark Ravenhill saw *Far Away*'s 'grotesque parade of designer hatted prisoners' as an 'iconic moment[s] in contemporary British Theatre'.¹²⁵ His play *Birth of a Nation* and Tim Crouch's *ENGLAND* seems to echo a number of the themes of Churchill's work.

4.7 *Birth of a Nation* by Mark Ravenhill (2007)

Mark Ravenhill's 'Birth of a Nation', is play sixteen in his *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* series first shown in 2007. Directed by Ramin Gray, It follows a similar theme to Churchill's *Far Away* but with a satirical tone that Philip Fisher terms, part 'Harold Pinter', part 'Wallace Shawn'.¹²⁶ In the play, we learn that a group of **Artist/Facilitators** have gone to a foreign land that has been decimated by the artists' national army. At the Royal Court production, the play opened with the four-person cast 'applauding the

¹²³ Comment made by Alistair McDowell, Keynote Address: *The Importance of Story*, TAPRA conference, University of Salford, 1/9/17.

¹²⁴ Caryl Churchill, 'Far Away', *Plays 4* (London: Nick Hern, 2008), pp.143-151. Quotation p. 150.

¹²⁵ Mark Ravenhill, 'Caryl Churchill: She Made Us Raise Our Game', *The Guardian*, 3 September 2008 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/sep/03/carylchurchill.theatre> > [Accessed 2 February 2019]

¹²⁶ Philip Fisher, 'Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat -3', *British Theatre Guide*, 2008 < <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/shootgetrepeat3-rev> > [Accessed 13 November 2017]

audience'.¹²⁷ It becomes clear that the audience have become the representatives of the decimated city and the unnamed and unattributed chorus of artists declare directly to the audience that the city was once a seat of:

- Amazing culture [...] stories, your alphabet, sculpting, dancing [...] thousands of years ago.¹²⁸

The artistic team are thus presumably in Baghdad and they include a painter, writer, dancer and a theatrical practitioner of 'a sort of performance installation sort of bonkers thing'.¹²⁹ The artists are bringing their skills to the city in order to:

- Start the healing process by working through, by working with art. [...] No listen, okay, no listen, right, bear with us okay? [...] This works. This totally works.¹³⁰

The lexical choices imply a mocking cultural stereotype of the middle-class artist practitioner.¹³¹ This lexical suggestion then draws into doubt the dancer's claim that,

- I was a miner. I was born a miner. There'd been mines in my region for centuries.¹³²

The dancing facilitator notes that he came from a community heritage of mining but that has long gone along with his socialism and now he works to heal and 'to give meaning' to the world.¹³³ The female painter then describes in horrific detail the sexual abuse she suffered from her father, as explanation for her belief in art's healing power.¹³⁴

However, it seems starkly clear that little healing has taken place in any meaningful way:

¹²⁷ As described by Philip Fisher, 'Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat -3', *British Theatre Guide*

¹²⁸ Mark Ravenhill, 'Birth of a Nation', *Plays: 3* (London: Methuen, 2013), p. 201. Baghdad's rich history is recently explored in Jim Al-Khalili's, *Science and Islam*, BBC 4 (Oxford Scientific Films, 2009) < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00gnqck> > [accessed 14 November 2017]

¹²⁹ 'Birth of a Nation', p. 202.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ As similarly satirised in BBC2s *League of Gentleman's* traveling theatre troupe: Legz Akimbo. See as example: J. Dyson, M. Gatiss, S. Pemberton & R. Shearsmith, *League of Gentlemen*, Series 1, Episode 4 'The Beast of Royston Vasey' (BBC2, 1999)

¹³² Of course, this speech also may reference Billy Bragg's – from Barking, Essex – opening lyrics form *Between the Wars*: 'I was a miner/ ...'

¹³³ Clearly a reference to the musical *Billy Elliot*. The dancer was played by Pearce Quigley (*Detectorists*) in the Royal Court production. Philip Fisher, 'Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat -3', *British Theatre Guide*, 2008 < <http://www.britishtheatreinfo.info/reviews/shootgetrepeat3-rev> > [Accessed 13 November 2017]

¹³⁴ Initially played by Monica Dolan from BBC TV's *W1A*.

- My father fucking raped me you cunt help me [...] Heal through Art. I saw the sign at the hospital [...] I was at my lowest ebb [...] And so I went to a meeting [...] and there was the paints [...] and Lynne just said: 'Use the paints and let it all out.'¹³⁵

Then later when it seems the audience won't try to take part in art, the characters' demands become aggressive and abusive:

- Why aren't you painting/dancing/writing [...]?
- This is art, you bastards, everybody wants art.¹³⁶

Halfway through the brief play, it becomes evident that the group are simply selling a product and the speaker's voice seems unveiled as a Tony Blair figure, using high pressure selling to get the victims to buy culture:

- Look, I don't want to be heavy-handed about this, but [...] You want inward investment? You want tourism? You want freedom and democracy? [...] then let some culture in, sign up for some culture.¹³⁷

It is quite clear that the team are trying to hawk a product that even they do not believe in. The artists' commercial enthusiasm sees art and healing manifesting everywhere, as is shown at the close. The play ends in a grotesque tableau that works as both *gestus* and uncomfortable satire. A local victim of the conflict, a **Blind Woman**, apparently also without a tongue, appears on stage.¹³⁸ She is given a brush, pen and seems to shake. As Sarah Grochala observes, the woman's 'body is thrown into convulsions, which the artists translate as a form of dance' and they congratulate her:¹³⁹

- That's it, be brave. Express. Create. Be bold.¹⁴⁰

Samuele Grassi sees the play as 'ludicrously bleakly ironical' in the fact that the artists describe their own pain in graphic detail while the foreign victim mutilated by war has no ability to communicate except with the alienating implements of brush and pen, enforced on her by the colonial artists.¹⁴¹ As such, this is a performed expression of the types of 'systems of representation', which as the postcolonial academic Edward Said noted, are symptomatic of imperialism:

¹³⁵ 'Birth of a Nation', p. 205.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 207.

¹³⁷ 'Birth of a Nation', p. 207.

¹³⁸ The Blind woman without a tongue is probably the tortured Woman from *Crime and Punishment*.

¹³⁹ Sarah Grochala, *The Contemporary Political Play: Rethinking Dramaturgical Structure* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 216.

¹⁴⁰ 'Birth of a Nation', p. 209.

¹⁴¹ Samuele Grassi, *Looking Through Gender: Post-1980 British and Irish Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), p. 66.

What we must eliminate are systems of representation that carry with them the authority, which has become repressive because it doesn't permit or make room for interventions on the part of those represented.¹⁴²

In this conclusion, Ravenhill appears to suggest that any curative claims for exporting some western theatre might best be understood as old-style colonialism rebranded as art therapy.

The play is a tragi-comic indictment of a theatre so packaged and market-friendly, in Ravenhill's view, that it has become the second-wave of colonialism backing up the military invasion.

This seems a process reminiscent of theatre's role in the British Empire. *The World Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Drama: Africa* recalls British theatre's role in 1920's colonial Tanzania and observes that 'English drama' was, 'a colonial tool for inculcating western cultural values among the colony's subjects.'¹⁴³ Simon Stephens, in a speech at the Stückemarket in 2011, suggests that British theatre's 'post-colonial' arrogance still exists. He notes of the Royal Court:

Rather than opening the theatre's doors to an exciting array of aesthetics and assumptions carved from five continents, the Royal Court, it could be argued has spent the past ten years on a kind of mission of theatrical colonialism, tantalising playwrights everywhere with the possibility of an international career, as long as they write plays like British playwrights do.¹⁴⁴

Although Ravenhill's fundamental point is similarly provocative, *Birth of a Nation's* tone is perhaps uneven and the political comment heavy-handed. Michael Billington in review, notes that he was not 'smitten by the [...] overtly satirical Birth of a Nation.' [sic]¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Edward Said, *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, ed. G Viswanathan (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), pp. 41-42.

¹⁴³ Don Rubin, Ousmane Diakhate, Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh, (eds.) *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Drama: Africa* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 301.

¹⁴⁴ Simon Stephens also sees this as reflecting back on British theatre so that when foreign work is commissioned in Britain 'We anglicise its presentation. We make actors act naturalistically and sets evoke the same naturalism. We chose the plays that most accord to our assumptions of what a play should be'. Simon Stephens, 'Skydiving Blindfolded, Or Five Things I Learned From Sebastian Nübling', *Keynote Speech at the opening of Stückemarkt 2011* on 8th May 2011 at Haus der Berliner Festspiele < <https://theatertreffen-blog.de/tt11/2011/05/09/skydiving-blindfolded/> > [accessed 20 February 2019]

¹⁴⁵ Michael Billington, 'The Mother/Birth of a Nation', *The Guardian*, 15 April 2008 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/apr/15/theatre2> > [accessed 17 November 2017]

Despite this, the play works on multiple levels, suggesting the artists are in Baghdad (but perhaps Beirut or Sarajevo) while simultaneously in the city where the performance takes place. Either way, Ravenhill makes a contentious statement as a theatre practitioner that under New Labour British culture may be little more than a hollow product without value or sincerity, whose sole purpose is to provide employment at a time of industrial decline. Ravenhill's critique through the scene of the *Blind Woman*, suggests that in recovering Iraq British arts culture actively obscures aiding the post-war populace by seeming to offer healing and support, while the native voice is actually repressed.

Ravenhill's play might be tenuously argued to have some validity when a cursory (and contemporary) glance at the *British Council: Iraq* website displays a host of Shakespeare events taking place across present day (2016-17) Iraq. Notable is a *Shakespeare Lives* season and a Globe tour of *Hamlet* in Erbil, Kurdistan.¹⁴⁶ These events are organised by the British Council, which was memorably described by a Kenyan academic as 'a foreign imperialist cultural mission' but whose modern remit is to 'connect people with learning opportunities and creative ideas from the UK'.¹⁴⁷ Jen Harvie notes in 2005 that the British Council had recently broadened its cultural scope away from high culture to include *Mr Bean* and *Benny Hill*. However, she expresses her fear that New Labour's focus on branding and exporting 'creative industries' might simply be classical:

Neo-imperialism, exporting and potentially imposing its cultural models beyond its borders.¹⁴⁸

Considering its current theatrical offerings in Iraq, it can perhaps be argued that a country like Iraq, which is still decimated by war, faction and poverty, might not need a new version of *Hamlet* in Kurdistan as much as infrastructure and employment. Nonetheless, such arguments probably omit the significance of the play's time and location. In 2017, 92% of Kurdistan voted for independence from Baghdad and local elections are due but have been delayed by the conflict with ISIS in Kurdish areas.¹⁴⁹ In

¹⁴⁶ This seems largely to celebrate the 400 year anniversary in 2016, 'Our Work in Arts', *British Council: Iraq* < <https://iraq.britishcouncil.org/en/programmes/arts> > [accessed 17 November 2017]

¹⁴⁷ *British Council: Iraq* < <https://iraq.britishcouncil.org/en/programmes/arts> > [accessed 17 November 2017] and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics* (Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1981)

¹⁴⁸ Jen Harvie, *Staging the UK*, (Manchester: M.U.P., 2005), p. 24.

¹⁴⁹ See Martin Chulov, 'More than 92% of voters in Iraqi Kurdistan back independence', *The Guardian*, 28 September 2017 < <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/27/over-92-of-iraqs-kurds-vote-for-independence> > [accessed 13 November 2017]

this political context, a version of Hamlet supported by Britain using local actors might be multiply intertextual in expressing a subtext of independence from a time of faction. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that Shakespeare is being appropriated, in Alan Sinfield's words 'in the interest of subordinated people.'¹⁵⁰

However, at first glance the work of the charity *Clowns Without Borders*, seems to step uncannily out of the pages of Ravenhill's work.¹⁵¹ In 2016, an Irish group of clowns went to offer their services to Syrian Refugee children. They had previously worked in Iraq and other war-torn areas and received some money from their national arts funding body, *Culture Ireland*. In a news article, one employee discussed the role of clowns, the 'healing power of humour' and that his work was effectively 'psychosocial first aid.'¹⁵² Such quotations might echo *Birth of a Nation* but this is to undercut the worker's genuine compassion. He notes of his work:

Circus is a tool that goes beyond boundaries and beyond ideas of what war is. It's a light in the darkness.¹⁵³

We might readily think of other priorities for destitute refugee orphans and question the culturally appropriate use of circus and clowns in this context. Conversely, developing the potential to laugh at chaos and inept autocracy, even if only symbolically through clowns, is perhaps a vital tool for child victims of international conflict. Of course, similar carnivalesque humour is a staple for more revered theatre practitioners such as Dario Fo and Bertolt Brecht amongst numerous others.

Michael Billington makes a similar point where he contradicts Ravenhill's to observe that:

Not all warzone visitors are colonising guilt-trippers: think of Susan Sontag staging Beckett in Sarajevo.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Alan Sinfield, 'Heritage and the market, regulation and desublimation', *Political Shakespeare*, eds, J. Dollimore & A. Sinfield (Manchester: M.U.P., 1994), p. 255.

¹⁵¹ See *Clowns Without Borders International* < <http://www.cwb-international.org/> > [accessed 13 November 2017]

¹⁵² Ellie O'Byrne, 'Clowns without borders are jest what the doctor ordered', *The Irish Examiner*, 19 July 2016 < <http://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/features/clowns-without-borders-are-jest-what-the-doctor-ordered-411014.html> > [accessed 13 November 2017]

¹⁵³ Ellie O'Byrne, 'Clowns without borders are jest what the doctor ordered'.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Billington, 'The Mother/Birth of a Nation'.

Silvija Jestrovic in a detailed analysis of Sontag's 1993 production of *Waiting for Godot*, regards Sontag's Sarajevo performance as one of the most 'iconic events' of that period of conflict.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, in 2005 the authorities in Sarajevo felt it appropriate to name a city square in honour of Sontag's role in the performance.¹⁵⁶

A more contemporary example of a successful theatrical export is detailed in the performance artist Anne Bean's recount of her theatrical work with a women's group in 2008 in Erbil, Kurdistan, funded by the British Council. All the women had been made bereft and scarred by conflict and a performance piece was set up in a prison courtyard to help them express their grief. Each Kurdish woman brought clothing from a lost family member, cut flower shapes out of the material and tied it to a black helium balloon. The dresses floated high over the prison walls, emotively:

Leaving hundreds of cut-out fabric flowers on the concrete wall [...] the women [...] each recognised what they'd gone through.¹⁵⁷

As such, individual examples of blatant theatrical exploitation in Iraq are hard to identify but Ravenhill's larger point perhaps remains valid: that any colonial art which does not express the actual voice of the indigenous community using a medium and participants from their own culture, should be first understood as cultural colonialism. A form of soft imperialism of the type Kim Kang notes of Shakespearean theatrical exports in Korea:

Cultural hegemony, a dangerous weapon in camouflage, an indirect means to weaken and destroy [...] native culture and tradition.¹⁵⁸

Contentiously, but in keeping with other expressed concerns about theatre's new role in the New Labour economic model, Ravenhill's *Birth of a Nation* sees some exported theatre as a state-sponsored product of negligible value; one that works to deny the

¹⁵⁵ Silvija Jestrovic, 'Waiting for Godot: Sarajevo and its Interpretations', *Performance, Space Utopia: Studies in International Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 115-128.

¹⁵⁶ Anon., Sarajevo Times, 'The Square "Susan Sontag" in Front of the National Theater Sarajevo to be Reconstructed', *Sarajevo Times*, 24 May 2017 < <http://www.sarajevotimes.com/square-susan-sontag-front-national-theater-sarajevo-reconstructed/> > [accessed 25 February 2019]

¹⁵⁷ Dominic Johnson, *The Art of Living: An Oral History of Performance Art* (London: Macmillan, 2015), pp. 54-55.

¹⁵⁸ Kim Kang, 'Political Shakespeare in Korea', *Shakespeare's Asian Journeys: Critical Encounters, Cultural Geographies, and the Politics of Travel*, eds. Bi-qi Beatrice Lei, Judy Celine Ick, Poonam Trivedi (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2016), p. 123.

authentic voice and culture of the occupied nations of the Middle-East. Notably similar ideas are explored in Tim Crouch's ENGLAND.

4.8 *ENGLAND* by Tim Crouch (2007)



Figure. 10: Whitechapel Gallery production of *ENGLAND*, 13 July 2011.¹⁵⁹

Tim Crouch's *ENGLAND* is a more layered piece of work than Ravenhill's, whilst following similar themes and style of performance. The play seems postdramatic, with unattributed dialogue, characters swapping roles, direct audience address and audience immersion. However, the narrative is largely secure and logically builds, while the mutable form serves the larger motifs of fluidity and inter-connectedness reflecting the globalized world being explored. Crouch's advertising synopsis expresses this lack of fixity as central to a play, which is:

The story of one thing placed inside another: [...], a culture inside another country's culture, theatre inside a gallery, a character inside an actor, a play inside its audience.¹⁶⁰

The play is written to be performed in large white-walled rooms within art galleries. It was first performed in 2007 for the Traverse theatre at the Fruitmarket Gallery as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. It is a two-hander and was originally performed with Tim Crouch and Hannah Ringham as Museum attendants, although their characters are persistently fluid.

¹⁵⁹ Used within copyright exception. Copyright owned by *Karl James* see < <http://www.timcrouchtheatre.co.uk/shows-2/england/images-2> > [accessed 11 March 2019]

¹⁶⁰ Tim Crouch, 'England', *Tim Crouch Theatre* < <http://www.timcrouchtheatre.co.uk/shows-2/england> > [accessed 14 November 2017]

One male and one female actor perform as museum guides, and they alternate lines but share the delivery of an account concerning one ungendered person. For example, two actors speak:

I'm also English.

My boyfriend is American.¹⁶¹

As Lyn Gardner clarifies, the play 'features two people but one narrative voice'.¹⁶²

The play is in two distinct parts. The first act is a mini-promenade where the audience are led around the gallery room to look at the internationally-sourced exhibits. Slowly, however, one narrative emerges, told directly to the audience about a character who lives in a converted jam factory in 'Southwark' and has a boyfriend, an American art dealer who we are told travels and deals across the world.¹⁶³ The boyfriend is so wealthy that he lines his stark walls with contemporary art, even a small William de Kooning.¹⁶⁴ The speaker notes the boyfriend bought it just before the painter died:

It's always good to buy art just before the artist dies, because after they die it goes up in value.¹⁶⁵

It is narrated that the main character has recently become very ill:

You can see the chest heave and gallop [...] My skin is grey.¹⁶⁶

And despite life-saving support from a Ghanaian doctor and Lebanese cardiologist, the character urgently needs a heart transplant. As the white walls of the gallery's cubes become indicative of a hospital ward, *ENGLAND*'s first act ends.

Act Two takes place in a separate room in the gallery where the audience are seated. *Blasted*-like, the play has moved to a hotel in a war-zone in the Middle East and the main character is now an individual named 'English', and has had a successful heart

¹⁶¹ Tim Crouch, *ENGLAND* (London: Oberon, 2007), p. 14.

¹⁶² Lyn Gardner, 'England', *The Guardian*, 13 May 2009, < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/may/13/review-england-whitechapel-gallery> > [accessed 16 November 2017]

¹⁶³ *ENGLAND*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁴ Willem de Kooning is a celebrated Dutch-American abstract expressionist. In 2015 one of his paintings sold for almost \$300 million. See Tate Gallery, 'Willem de Kooning: 1904 – 1997', *TATE* < <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/willem-de-kooning-1433> > [accessed 16 November 2017]

¹⁶⁵ *ENGLAND*, p. 19.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31 & p. 32.

transplant.¹⁶⁷ English has travelled abroad to pay the donor's widow for the new heart using the boyfriend's de Kooning painting as currency. The two actors still share the character English but now by swapping the role half-way through this act. Meanwhile, the other actor performs the role of an Interpreter who provides an English rendering of the (part) absent Widow's monologue. Notably, the Widow is performed, as the Stage Directions show, by the spectators:

*The wife is us, the audience.*¹⁶⁸

The dialogue in Act Two shows a significant clash of understanding and of cultures, with English seeming to show little empathy or cultural sensitivity. On meeting the Widow, English comments to the Interpreter:

ENGLISH: Are they allowed Coke?

Does she understand anything?

Hard to see how they're feeling with just the eyes.¹⁶⁹

Stephen Bottoms argues that this absent but apparently veiled Islamic woman in an Iraq-like warzone is treated as 'utterly alien, even primitive', although we learn that the Widow's husband was an accomplished computer engineer.¹⁷⁰ The Interpreter informs us that the Widow's husband was injured in a bombing with an American outside the 'Marriot' hotel.¹⁷¹ According to the Interpreter, the widow has been manipulated and she is rightly aggrieved:

INTERPRETER: My husband's death was not an accident.¹⁷²

It seems that although her husband was injured, the Widow was told he would survive but later she was approached to donate his organs for a large sum. The Widow forbade

¹⁶⁷ Such a shift in time and location echoes Sarah Kane's *Blasted*.

¹⁶⁸ *ENGLAND*, p. 44.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45, p. 48 & p. 50.

¹⁷⁰ Stephen Bottoms, 'Materialising the Audience: Tim Crouch's Sight Specifics in *ENGLAND* and *The Author*', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol. 21, Iss. 4 (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 458.

¹⁷¹ *ENGLAND*, p. 45, p. 60.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

this to happen but she 'signed a paper' and she has never seen her husband or his body again.¹⁷³ English is shocked and replies, crassly:

ENGLISH: I'm really sorry for you. At least he didn't die for nothing, you know. He could be just one of countless others, you know? In the floods, or whatever, you know?¹⁷⁴

English appears to confuse the Middle East with the floods in Bangladesh. Yet the transplant is not a similar confusion. It seems that English is alive because someone has tricked a signature out of a foreign wife. Thus English has benefitted from, as Bottoms notes, 'an unwelcome neo-colonial presence' in the Widow's country.¹⁷⁵

Such an apparent plot of colonial trickery might remind the audience of the way in which the Maoris (as one instance) were reputedly duped and made to sign over their historic land rights in English documents they didn't understand.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, English's lack of concern for the death seems a reference to British imperialism's alleged inability to equate foreign lives as being quite as valuable as those of the colonists.¹⁷⁷ However, this play concerns an updated corporeal imperialism with foreign organs implanted into the colonist and foreign workers implanted into the nation. Arguably, it seems for Crouch that globalisation is just an updated version of the imperial tricks of British history where indigenous people lose their land and self-determination.¹⁷⁸

Yet despite these likely connotations, the play's meaning is undermined by huge gaps in nation and time. The exact locations and characters blur and crossover. These intentional confusions are most obvious in the dubious role of the Interpreter, who seems not to be trusted and is played by both actors at different times. At times he/she only very loosely and opaquely translates detailed dialogue. At one point, English explains over most of a printed page, and thus in some detail, his/her own innocence of

¹⁷³ *ENGLAND*, p. 57.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁷⁵ Stephen Bottoms, 'Materialising the Audience', p. 459.

¹⁷⁶ For a discussion on the disputed facts surrounding this, see Edward Jenks, *A History of the Australasian Colonies: From their Foundation to the year 1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

¹⁷⁷ The ultimate subtext in this play about unequal exchange value, is of course how many Iraqi dead equate to a British/American death. The US government's infamous quote "We don't do body counts" implies a discrepancy between the value of a domestic and foreign life. See Hall Gardner, *American Global Strategy and 'The War on Terrorism'*, (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 38.

¹⁷⁸ As Stephen Bottoms effectively argues, 'Materialising the Audience', pp. 458-461.

any crime and expresses the desire for 'understanding' and 'reconciliation'. However, the Translator just passes on to the Widow:

INTERPRETER: Look. I'm alive. I was going to die but now I'm alive.¹⁷⁹

Thus we cannot be sure that the Widow and English have communicated any authentic meaning at all across the cultural and linguistic divide. The insecurity of the form extends also to the narrative and the slippery nature of cross-cultural truth persists to the close. Still, as the audience are playing the role of the Widow they are narratively obliged to draw a conclusion from the scant information provided by English and the Interpreter. In this way, the problem of establishing truth and empathy at a time of a War on Terror is made thematic.

In keeping with these problematized exchanges, the play ends with an unbalanced transaction. The de Kooning painting 'worth a lot of money' is handed over to the Widow.¹⁸⁰ The Widow responds emotionally, ignoring the gift and asking English if the Widow can 'listen at' her 'chest' and so hear the last vestiges of her husband via his working heart. In consequence, English is culturally and ethically confused, her transaction rebuffed, and the play closes with English repeatedly asking the translator and the audience:

ENGLISH: What is she saying?/ What did she say?¹⁸¹

Tim Crouch's play is a work that envelops theme and symbol to suggest a myriad of politicised connotations. *The Scotsman* saw the play offering:

Layer after layer of poetic depth; not only as a study of basic global injustice, but [...] of Englishness itself, increasingly swamped by the sheer power of 21st-century global markets, and turning to ashes in the mouth.¹⁸²

The play's title, motifs and close argues for a more biting post-industrial interpretation: that England is stealing the figurative heart out of the Middle East simply to keep itself alive and obscuring this with selling art as 'cultural aid'. In this context, as Bottoms

¹⁷⁹ *ENGLAND*, p. 59.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁸² Theatre Correspondent (Anon.), 'ENGLAND', *The Scotsman*, 7 August 2007 < <http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/england-1-912342> > [accessed 19 November 2017]

contends, symbolically the play portrays an act of 'aestheticizing foreign horrors'.¹⁸³ Moreover, the critique is also domestic as with industrial home-produced wealth (symbolised by the gentrified Jam factory) long gone, all England has to trade is a middle-class culture that is costly but of negligible intrinsic value. The hospital sound effects of beating hearts that suggest a sickness broader than the character English, Bottoms also notes, is added to by the noises of 'grinding girders and crashing masonry' to soundtrack a crumbling nation.

Bottoms references the fine art critic John Berger to underline Crouch's use of art as the locus for a tale of a nation built on overvalued culture. Berger argues that the point of white-cubed modern art galleries is to create a sacred theatre for art,

An atmosphere of entirely bogus religiosity [...] that both masks and inflates their [art objects] material exchange value.¹⁸⁴

This play is not simply about fine art. Lyn Gardner points out that in the Whitechapel Gallery performances in 2009, the two actors appear at times as only visible through two square-windowed sculptural pieces.¹⁸⁵ Whilst this may suggest the significance of cultural perspectives, more significantly it underlines that theatre as product exists quite clearly within the same cultural 'frame' as contemporary fine art.¹⁸⁶ Theatre is thus visibly complicit. As such, Crouch's work seems a layered indictment of Labour's 'creative industries' and its globalisation policies as constituting little more than contemporary colonialism. Of course, unlike British historic imperialism that might enforce the trading of opium on China or Cotton back to India: sullied products with high intrinsic value, this time the only trade available is a western culture of dubious value.

Crouch's play is perhaps also unusually political in its structure and form. Significantly more than other political plays of the period, is Crouch's dramaturgical effort to engage the audience. In *ENGLAND* the audience are engaged physically, as promenading gallery visitors, as well as psychologically. When seated, they seem implicated as imperialists but then become a performer, as a grieving Islamic Widow. This style, a version of 'immersive theatre' for the audience's immersion into the fiction, is a significant feature

¹⁸³ Stephen Bottoms, 'Materialising the Audience', p. 461.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p.21.

¹⁸⁵ See Figure 10 as a photographed example from the Whitechapel performance.

¹⁸⁶ These are Isa Genzken pieces designed as walls with vacant window apertures, as photographed at, Lyn Gardner, 'England', *The Guardian*, 13 May 2009, <
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/may/13/review-england-whitechapel-gallery> >
[accessed 16 November 2017]

of groups such as Punchdrunk and Belt Up that grew in significance during the early part of the twenty-first century. George Home-Cook observes in 2015:

If one were to identify a key trend in British theatre in the last few years one might well point to the rise of immersive theatre.¹⁸⁷

In Adam Alston's analysis, immersive theatre is best defined as a performance where the audience 'refashion and co-produce theatre performances' and are thus joint enablers of the means of 'aesthetic production.'¹⁸⁸ Whilst the two Prevent plays have to stage an after-show discussion to engage the audience directly, more experimental works such as Ravenhill's *Birth of a Nation* appeal directly to the audience throughout the performance as if the spectators were natives of a Middle Eastern nation receiving a theatre troupe. Yet, in none of these works is the audience fully functioning as a 'co-producer'.

Although immersive elements exist throughout the genre/era, such innovations are more often absent in Iraq war plays, with their focus on Verbatim and naturalistic forms. Tim Crouch's *ENGLAND* is markedly more immersive.

Stephen Bottoms argues that Crouch's immersive approach is influenced by Jacques Ranciere's essay *The Emancipated Spectator*.¹⁸⁹

In his 2009 work, Ranciere suggests that, historically, theatre has not been effective in putting the 'spectator' at the heart of the 'discussion of the relations between art and politics'.¹⁹⁰ Ranciere looks to problematize this relationship between audience and actor. He suggests that Brecht, Artaud, and to some extent Guy Debord, have misread the traditional theatrical audience as largely separated and passive gazers upon a distanced spectacle. Ranciere argues that during a performance spectators are also a set of active individuals who behave like a school pupil who 'observes, selects, compares, interprets' the theatrical work; functioning as 'both distant spectator and active interpreters of the spectacle'.¹⁹¹ For Ranciere, being part of an audience is often an act of personal (while also communal) adaptation and ownership. With each spectator:

Playing the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in

¹⁸⁷ George Home-Cook, *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), p. 216.

¹⁸⁸ Adam Alston, *Beyond Immersive Theatre: Aesthetics Politics and Productive Participation* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), p.7.

¹⁸⁹ Stephen Bottoms, 'Materialising the Audience', pp. 445-465.

¹⁹⁰ Jacques Ranciere, *The Emancipated Spectator*, (London: Verso, 2009), p. 2.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p13.

order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own.¹⁹²

As Alston summarises, such a spectator participates in 'the performance by refashioning it'.¹⁹³ In its conclusion, Ranciere's work argues for a different theatrical approach that allows the audience increasing scope to refashion its narrative, characters and theme and so become joint owners of the theatrical means of production.

In this context, Crouch's *ENGLAND* is one of very few fully politicised forms considering the Iraq war and its context.¹⁹⁴ Because, as Bottoms notes, in Crouch's play the spectator is both 'emancipated and implicated'.¹⁹⁵ Despite this, whilst *ENGLAND* is more involving than most plays of the period, the audience are cast as a character (the Widow) whom they have never heard or seen with no background notes. As such the audience, if indeed cognisant of their role, are perhaps not so much acting as psychologically improvising.

Despite this, by being cast as a character the audience are empowered to become, in Ranciere's description, 'active interpreters' who in this production almost literally 'develop their own translation.' In *ENGLAND* the spectator is re-fashioned as a Middle-Eastern Widow and asked to consider her situation and response in a foreign language. In this way, Crouch actively problematizes the relationship between the audience and actor.

Such a process of problematizing the audience's response is markedly different to the Brechtian use of the V-Effect also used to resituate the audience, and much explored in other plays of the period. The V-effect, as Peter Thompson and Glendyr Sacks explore, was designed to:

Reduce [...] the audience's empathy with the characters on stage in order to aid their intellectual understanding.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² *The Emancipated Spectator*, p.22.

¹⁹³ Adam Alston, *Beyond Immersive Theatre*, p.7.

¹⁹⁴ Slung Low's 2009 play *Beyond The Front Line* at the Lowry in Salford about troops in Iraq used 200 students to act as nurses and soldiers. They also employed the audience to write a postcard to frontline troops in a short-run promenade piece described as 'bold, ambitious theatre and quite moving' as well as 'frustratingly brief and underdeveloped'. See Anon., *What's On Stage*, 9 October 2009 < http://www.whatsonstage.com/blackpool-theatre/reviews/10-2009/beyond-the-front-line-salford_15584.html > [accessed 20 November 2017]

¹⁹⁵ Stephen Bottoms, 'Materialising the Audience', p. 463.

¹⁹⁶ Peter Thompson & Glendyr Sacks, *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht* (Cambridge: CUP,

Brecht saw empathy, and its related focus on catharsis, as an impediment to engaging the audience's rationality and thus their understanding of wider social relations.¹⁹⁷ Crouch's method in *ENGLAND* of encouraging the audience to psychologically identify with a Middle-Eastern Widow, is significantly different. It perhaps echoes Georg Lukacs' idea that the truly effective artwork should directly engage the audience's empathy and create:¹⁹⁸

Its "own world" and break into the recipient's soul-complex, suspending his concern [for] his personal life and transforming him into a sense of [...] the destiny of humanity.¹⁹⁹

Brecht and Lukacs openly disagreed on the role of catharsis, and whether to encourage close identification with characters in theatrical productions.²⁰⁰ Although both remained suspicious of a dominant concern for emotions in art, Lukacs argued that some emotional connection was a necessary requirement to theatre because it could help the audience:

"Re-live" or "live through" the heroes' struggles realizing that the objective significance of their [the character's] choices and actions does have a meaning for our lives.²⁰¹

As such, Lukacs suggests in contrast to Brecht, that the act of identifying with characters creates the very possibility for social change. Nevertheless, Lukacs also observed that within the performance itself nothing could be ultimately resolved, for in terms of the audience:

The problems remain problems, they 'merely broaden man's horizons' and reveal

2006), p. 279.

¹⁹⁷ Brecht was primarily responding to Aristotle's focus on catharsis as expressed in the *Poetics*: Aristotle, *Poetics* transl. Richard Janko (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), p. 7.

¹⁹⁸ Gyorgy Lukacs, *Az esztetikum sajátossága II* (transl. Bela Kiralyfalvi,) [The Peculiarity of Aethetics] (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1969), p. 516.

¹⁹⁹ Bela Kiralyfalvi, 'The Aesthetic Effect: A Search for Common Grounds Between Brecht and Lukacs', *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Vol. IV, No. 2 (Lawrence: University of Kansas, Spring 1990), p. 24.

²⁰⁰ For a discussion of Brecht and Lukacs disagreement see Bertolt Brecht, 'Against Georg Lukacs', *New Left Review*, Vol I, Iss . 84 (London: New Left Review, 1974); Hans-Thies Lehmann *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp.161-164

²⁰¹ Bela Kiralyfalvi, 'The Aesthetic Effect', p.28

conditions and consequences otherwise doomed to oblivion.²⁰²

Such a focus on revealing otherwise obscured 'conditions and consequences' are central to Crouch's *ENGLAND*.

Tim Crouch's malleable characters and use of the audience in *ENGLAND* also work to express a level of alienation that develops and perhaps refashions Georg Lukacs' early theory on reification. Reification is an idea developed from Karl Marx's understanding of commodity fetishism. Marx saw the process of capitalist commodity exchange entering into a partly-illusory world with its own quasi-religious fetishistic jargon and logic, where retail value had no link to production cost or intrinsic value. He observes that in capitalist markets:

Commodities have absolutely no connexion with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There [...] assumes [...] the fantastic form of a relation between things. [...] This I call the [...] Fetishism of commodities.²⁰³

Clearly, such concepts are highly relevant to a modern culture market infused with globalisation, and in Crouch's work, particularly relevant to a Dutch-American painter of primitivist totems.²⁰⁴

Lukacs extends Marx's concept, observing how commodity fetishism leads to the creation of 'phantom objectivity' and new 'invisible laws' of commodity exchange, such as trading rules, stocks and shares and the 'Free' market, which he argues are man-made, illusory structures now recast as objective truths of capitalism.²⁰⁵ Yet at the same time, the capitalist process abstracts the individual's work into units of specialised labour, which must be sold as a commodity. This two-fold process that Timothy Bewes calls 'crystallisation' and 'abstraction', Lukacs summarises as:²⁰⁶

²⁰² Gyorgy Lukacs, *Az esztetikum sajátossága II* (transl. Bela Kiralyfalvi), p. 488.

²⁰³ Karl Marx, *Capital: An Abridged Version* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1999), p. 97.

²⁰⁴ See Rosalind E. Krauss, 'Totem and Taboo', in *Willem de Kooning Nonstop: Cherchez la Femme* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 35-38.

²⁰⁵ Reification means 'making into a thing' and was later repudiated by Lukacs as Hegelian rather than Marxist. Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), p. 87.

²⁰⁶ Timothy Bewes, *Reification, or The Anxiety of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 4.

The universality of the commodity form is responsible both objectively and subjectively for the abstraction of the human labour incorporated in commodities.²⁰⁷

Crouch's play focuses on a piece of abstract art exchanged for a Middle Eastern extracted heart. As such, the play seems to suggest that current globalisation confirms the concept of reification and that it has accelerated beyond Lukacs' process so that such an absurd exchange as the one performed might seem like a contemporary 'objective reality.'

The mimetic theatrical form itself is of course an ideal medium to suggest 'phantom objectivity'. In the play, it is aided by the dual actors presenting a seemingly coherent and unified life story. Consequently, false objectivity is multiply layered in an apparently culturally-industrialised *ENGLAND*; one replete with, as Bottoms summarises, 'the global hegemony of white westerners' now dependent upon highly-skilled immigrants for its intrinsically vital functions.²⁰⁸ This England, which is sick at the heart with commodities is represented in theme and setting by, in Bottoms' words, an 'irruption of reality' into an art market where fetishism is at the point of absurdity. Products are worth many millions, the intrinsic value is minimal, and the labour often takes place far away from its sterilised walls.²⁰⁹

As in Lukacs' theory, the prime focus in the play is on the alienating abstraction, which is pervasive. The play is split across character, location and nation, while the Muslim widow is so splintered as to be divided across the audience. As such, Crouch's point seems to be that this alienation is not at all equal. As the Middle Eastern husband is exploded by bombing and then by surgery, so the many referenced immigrants are fractured from their homes and families. The speakers' empathetic understanding of her Middle Eastern donors' life and concerns seems itself abstracted and unformed, confused by concerns with status, commodity acquisition and postponing death.²¹⁰ All these values seem to English as objective realities more significant than exploiting the modern proletariat in the Middle East.

As a work to express the alienation and exploitation of capitalism through theme and form, Crouch's *ENGLAND*, as Lyn Gardner notes:

²⁰⁷ Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), p. 87.

²⁰⁸ Stephen Bottoms, 'Materialising the Audience', p. 457.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ As such, this echoes closely, Martin Crimp's *Advice to an Iraqi Woman*.

Burns with the desire to provoke as it explores not just the nature of theatre but the way we live now, in a world where commerce knows no borders.²¹¹

Whilst it focuses on the art world through its form and critiques of those connected to the culture industries, it is clear that the play's issue is the blanket commodification of English culture and its exchange, not simply art. As such, this play is a more damning and comprehensive criticism than Ravenhill's work. Particularly, as it implies that theatre itself, as a prized product and export of this England, cannot escape being tainted with the very same fetishes and cruelties of globalisation that are detailed in Crouch's work.

Nonetheless, by using the theatrical form to highlight this, Crouch implicitly argues that the redemptive role of theatre, with some Ranciere-inspired adaptations, remains intrinsic to its form and its use as a subtly didactic instrument. Dan Rebellato observes this play highlights theatre's 'persistent ability to sympathetically reach out across the distances to affirm the value of the human.'²¹² This is evident in perhaps the play's greatest achievement, certainly in terms of many other works of the Iraq war, which is to place the audience for a short time in the position of the oppressed, the Other. Here, the audience become a veiled Middle Eastern widow who is very much like us, but her loved ones have been exploited by our nation's apparent chicanery.

Crouch's play works to remedy the problems of the abstraction of human empathy that Crimp, Ravenhill, Churchill, Williams and a range of Verbatim dramas also explore. Yet, perhaps only ENGLAND is comprehensively effective in challenging this empathetic dissonance directly through character, theme, symbol and the formal device of audience immersion. Ian Shuttleworth notes the impact of Crouch's play at an Edinburgh show:

Almost tangentially, Crouch gives the most compassionate and salient account of difference I hope to see on a Fringe which this year is awash with Middle East-themed work. [...] In many ways, this is nothing like theatre as we usually understand it, and yet in crucial elements this is its very essence.²¹³

²¹¹ Lyn Gardner, 'England', *The Guardian*, 13 May 2009, <
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/may/13/review-england-whitechapel-gallery> >
[accessed 16 November 2017]

²¹² Dan Rebellato, *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009* (London: Methuen, 2013), p. 138.

²¹³ Ian Shuttleworth, 'Lost In A World of Difference', *The Financial Times*, 6 August 2007 <
<https://www.ft.com/content/c77d6d68-443b-11dc-90ca-0000779fd2ac> > [accessed 16
November 2017]

4.9 Conclusion

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their poststructural analysis of capitalism see it as essentially schizophrenic in nature. Echoing but adapting Derrida and Baudrillard, they understand the lack of a stable foundational referent of authenticity and 'reality' alongside the fragmentation of cultural values in psycho-social terms. Jonnah Peretti explains:

It is the schizoid's ability to scramble and decode that Deleuze and Guattari associate with contemporary capitalism. Like the schizophrenic, capitalism can insert itself anywhere and everywhere as a decoder and scrambler.²¹⁴

According to Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, there are two dominating tendencies when capitalism 'inserts itself' into different cultures. Firstly, a process to commodify and 'decode' all aspects of human cultural experience and replace it with the market. Secondly, an accompanying state-sponsored drive to implement a 'society of control', a system of regulating and maintaining the new cultural values. In his analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas, Ronald Bogue explains the two tendencies as follows:

"Society of control" a kind of universal social order of constant self-monitoring and self-regulation whereby individuals construct, organize, discipline and shape one another and themselves [...] The basic tendency of capitalism is to undo complex social codes that limit relations of production [...] Everything is converted into a quantitative unit of capital, all relations of production, exchange and consumption are commodified and the world tends to resemble a universal machine of schizophrenic interconnecting flows that mingle commodified bits of people, places, things, processes, fantasies. Yet capitalism depends on the state apparatus for a regulation of these schizophrenic flows.²¹⁵

All of the plays discussed in this chapter seem to be grappling in different ways with one or both of these neoliberal tendencies.

Arguably, the Prevent strategy itself seems best understood as a self-disciplining aspect of such 'Societies of Control'. The audience of Muslim and domestic youths attending

²¹⁴ Jonnah Peretti, 'Towards A Radical Anti-Capitalist Schizophrenia', *Critical Legal Thinking* (London: CLT, 21 December 2010) < <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2010/12/21/towards-a-radical-anti-capitalist-schizophrenia/> > [accessed 26 July 2019]

²¹⁵ Ronald Bogue, 'Nomadism, Globalism and Cultural Studies', *Deleuze's Way: Essays in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), pp. 131-133. Summary of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

Not in My Name, *Hearts and Minds* and other Prevent plays, are effectively being asked to 'discipline and shape one another and themselves', and ensure that they are urged away from violent radicalism and conform with the neoliberal norms and values of consumption and passive social duty.

However, the Prevent strategy itself seems less sinister when considered as a logical development that evolved from New Labour's belief in theatre as an instrument of social cohesion alongside economic growth.²¹⁶ Nonetheless, when 'social cohesion' is directed with one message towards one isolated ethnic group, Prevent theatre becomes largely a blunt and divisive instrument of social control. Indeed, we might laudably argue that the domestic stage for this strategy became refigured as a disciplinary structure, exerting bio-power perhaps in the form of a touring panopticon, with the actors exerting visual control over the young audience. Such perspectives seemed so widely expressed towards the Prevent strategy that, the government had to eventually accept the strategy's divisiveness. In 2016, the Home Affairs Committee for Radicalism agreed that:

The concerns about Prevent amongst the communities most affected by it must be addressed. Otherwise it will continue to be viewed with suspicion by many, and by some as "toxic".²¹⁷

Despite such a reading of the Prevent strategy as persistently 'toxic', what is curious about the plays *Not In My Name* and *Hearts and Minds* is how they render, and at times subvert, this regulating government strategy. Significantly, *Not in My Name* is about the bombing of a symbol of consumption, the supermarket. But the thematic issue is the way in which the community is one of the key victims, while it is the social deprivation: the lack of access to Western culture in the shape of becoming a professional footballer that initiates the young Shahid's turn towards radicalism. Similarly, in *Hearts and Minds*, it is Asif's embrace of consumption by selling blackmarket CDs, and so the local pressure to undo the domestic and Muslim 'complex social codes', that is presented as being almost as destructive as Asif's turn towards fundamentalism: Asif's 'Wheeling and dealing but no believing' destroys his relationship with his small community at school and at

²¹⁶ See Appendix I for a discussion of New Labour's use of theatre as a social instrument.

²¹⁷ House of Commons: *Home Affairs Select Committee, Radicalisation: the counter-narrative and identifying the tipping point*, Eighth Report of Session 2015-2016, HC 135 (London: House of Commons, 25 August 2016), p. 19.

home.²¹⁸ Equally undermining, is that both plays end by establishing either a faith in a community (*Hearts and Minds*) or in the value of the tenets of Islamic religious worship and tolerance as in *Not in My Name*. Thus both plays subtly work against the process of normalising consumption and levelling cultural distinctions. Nevertheless, as in *Not in My Name*'s police officers and *Hearts and Minds*' school governors, the regulating influence of authority seems a pervasive presence.

Mark Ravenhill's *Birth of a Nation* considers this same concept of using theatre as a form of cultural control but extends it out into the globalised Middle East. In Ravenhill's work, theatre and the arts are wholly emptied of meaning and now merely a product used by Western agencies to encode neoliberal values of culture, as Ravenhill's Blair-inspired artist explains:

- You want inward investment? You want tourism? You want freedom and democracy? [...] then let some culture in, sign up for some culture.²¹⁹

As Deleuze and Guattari theorise, when Western culture becomes an exported product so the 'complex codes' of the native culture are 'scrambled'. Thus in *Birth of a Nation*, the Iraqi Woman's voice and culture are rendered dumb, her fit and convulsions recoded as normative artistic expression by the 'art therapists':

- That's it, be brave. Express. Create. Be bold.²²⁰

Now muted and given a brush and pen, these physical structures of control ensure communication can only take place through enforced and approved mediums of expression. *Birth of a Nation*'s title offers us the implication that this act is symbolic of a wider neoliberal renaissance where any domestic cultural or physical activities that limit the relations of production are severed or recoded. In this reading of Ravenhill's short play, theatre is seen as a material unit of capital that creates economic profit and encourages cultural suffocation.

²¹⁸ Luqman Ali, *Hearts & Minds*, [DVD], 02:35-02:38

²¹⁹ 'Birth of a Nation', p. 208.

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 209.

Ravenhill's play seems to find the art form itself now culpable as a social and cultural controlling mechanism. Whilst the theatrical work offers a progressive socio-political reading through satire, theatre as narrative subject is no longer a relatively stable art form that expresses progressive 'structures of feeling' as Raymond Williams may once have argued. Instead, theatre is a form of neoliberal tool for social conformity and domestic profit as Jen Harvie had expressed, theatre may now,

[Be] complicit with the agendas of neoliberal capitalist culture? Sometimes offer a spectacle of communications and social engagement rather more than a qualitatively and sustainably rich and even critical engagement?²²¹

In these arguments, theatre is no longer to be understood for its usually challenging response to the relations of production; rather, theatre is in the process of being recoded as a fully capitalised product, and its relations of production disseminated and replicated to a global market.

As intimated in *Birth of a Nation*, many other plays in Ravenhill's *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* series of plays and through the Prevent strategy, British society in this period is portrayed as more concerned with quelling the potential threat from the British and Iraqi Muslim population than attempting to understand or listen to their vocalised experience. All of the plays in this chapter are successful in challenging this cultural subtext and ensuring that British Muslims and Iraqi citizens are either given a staged voice or its absence is shown as a form of violent exploitation, as in Ravenhill's work

Tim Crouch's *ENGLAND* explores the same ideas but uses a subtly different approach that works to directly address Judith Butler's questioning of the framework of who should be grievable in a time of war. Moreover, *ENGLAND* appears to respond to similar concerns about the way the media abstracts and hollows out empathy. E. Ann Kaplan's argues that media reporting constructs:

²²¹ Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*, (New York: Springer, 2013), p. 3.

“Empty empathy”, closely allied to sentimentality, through its practice of providing fragmented images of individual pain [...] coverage of the Iraq War seemed ‘unreal’.²²²

Crouch’s work expands the theatrical frame beyond the stage until it is immersed into the audience, and so attempts to reconstruct empathy, while at the same time allowing his work to reflect the cultural schizophrenia of unstable signifiers and insecure meanings expressed by Deleuze and Guattari.

In ENGLAND, this instability is rendered in the protagonist English who has no understanding of the Iraqi widow and no common points of reference. English expresses limited sentimental concern about the Widow’s dead husband but uses a piece of art to trade for a fragment of the dead husband’s body and so keep herself alive. In the protagonist’s domestic culture, where art seems to have immense economic and cultural value, she cannot understand why an Iraqi woman believes a de Kooning painting is not worth as much as a dead man’s heart.

Crouch here offers a reading of an ethical vacuum at the heart of neoliberalism, which scrambles domestic cultural and foreign codes of intrinsic and emotional value into economic units. Crouch’s inbuilt solution to this neoliberal confusion, is the most optimistic point of the plays considering theatre’s portrayal as suspect, commodified product. Crouch casts the whole audience in the indistinct, roughly interpreted identity of the Iraqi Widow. In so doing, the play performs an immersive act of empathy, and theatrically engages the audience to contemplate and identify with the life, culture and experience of an Iraqi Woman. Significantly, the Interpreter as the prime structure which controls language and meaning here, is shown as insecure and implicated. Nonetheless, the fragmented and regulated language and experience of the Widow’s life is partially reconstituted and found sufficient for each spectator to begin to identify with and contemplate her experience. The play thus dismantles its own representational structural frame of control: the stage, and refashions it to include and involve all the spectators in attendance. The work attempts to refashion dramatic empathy and so the Interpreter’s last translation from the widow lingers with the spectators:

²²² E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), p.93.

INTERPRETER: Touch you. She asks if she can touch you.

Silence

ENGLISH: What's she sayng?²²³

Consequently, the importance of understanding and identifying with the experience of British and Iraqi Muslims; a concept that is implicit in the two works that respond to the Prevent strategy and that is the underlying meaning behind *Birth of a Nation*, reaches a form of immersive, if fragmented, fulfilment in Crouch's version of ENGLAND.

Conclusion

I. Historical Context

In May 2011, the last British soldier came home from the Iraq war. Thus marking the end of a conflict that Jeremy Corbyn termed:

By any measure, the invasion and occupation of Iraq has been [...] a catastrophe.¹

However, after an eight-year war, Iraq had been relieved of a tyrannical dictator from the minority Sunni elite who was replaced by a leader now representing the Shia majority. Also in place were a well-equipped national police force and a Kurdish following in the North who were resolutely loyal, as they were lobbying for an independent nation state. Nonetheless, these achievements were negligible recompense for a country persistently on the verge of civil collapse due to a factional violence that spilled across to Syria and has been felt far beyond Iraq's borders. Richard Norton-Taylor and Matt Woodhead recall a senior 'British military commander' reviewing the Iraq invasion as:

The 'original sin' which provoked years of violence, Sunni-Shia sectarian war, and from which the emergence of Isis sprung.²

²²³ ENGLAND, p. 62

¹ BBC Politics, 'Jeremy Corbyn: Iraq Invasion Was a Catastrophe', *BBC*, 6 July 2016 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36724707> > [accessed 2 February 2018]

² Richard Norton-Taylor and Matt Woodhead, 'Introduction', *Chilcot* (London: Oberon books, 2016), p. viii.

The war and its aftermath have created a post-invasion infrastructure in Iraq that is fundamentally unstable and largely uninhabitable. Overwhelming numbers of Iraq's citizens have become homeless, destitute and many have been forced to seek refuge elsewhere. In 2017, The U.N.H.C.R. stated:

The ongoing conflict in Iraq has resulted in more than 3 million people fleeing for their lives. More than 2.6 million Iraqis have been forced from their homes but remain inside of the country. 220,000 are refugees in other countries.³

Despite its impact on Britain and America's domestic sphere, the myriad individual and human tragedies of the Iraq citizen is, of course, the pivotal locus of failure when considering the impact of the Iraq war. And it has been profound.

Theatre has been employed in Iraq in an attempt to articulate the human cost. One of the first responses was a theatrical piece of Verbatim theatre, funded and produced by the Italian theatre group Teatro di Nacsoto in October 2011.⁴ Its reportage form seemed ideal for expressing an experience that was too close and overpowering for fiction.

Voices of Baghdad used four Iraqi actors to recount the stories of Baghdad residents:

Losing family members, of witnessing explosions, of seeing people die on the road [...] under oppression, in prison or in poverty [...] alone in a moment of torture, of solitude in your cell.⁵

Apart, of course, from the devastating loss of 179 British soldiers in the Iraq war and mainland terrorist victims, the conflict's impact on Britain was perhaps less cataclysmic, yet nonetheless significant. The Iraq invasion drew to a close at the same time as the Leveson phone-hacking inquiry was instigated by David Cameron's coalition and while the public were reeling from the M.P.'s expenses scandal, beginning in 2009. Thus the British public tended to view the Iraq failure in the context of a broader problem of, as Anthony Clavane explains, an 'out-of-touch metropolitan elite'.⁶ Such antagonism to

³ UNHCR, Iraq Refugee Crisis, *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2017 <<https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/iraq/>> [accessed 2 February 2018]

⁴ *Teatra di Nacsoto* translates as Hidden Theatre.

⁵ Arabella Lawson, 'Voices of Baghdad: An Interview', *Peace Insight* <<https://www.peaceinsight.org/blog/2011/10/voices-of-baghdad-interview/>> [accessed 18 February 2018]

⁶ Anthony Clavane summarises this perspective in 'Brexit in Blairland: How Tony Blair's Heartland Lost its faith in Europe', *The New European*, 17 January 2018 <

unaccountable 'elites' gave fresh momentum to questions about the legality of the initial Iraq invasion; questions which were all focused on Tony Blair who had resigned the premiership in 2007.

As Blair stepped down, Richard Norton-Taylor and Nicholas Kent's 2007 theatrical response was the play *Called to Account: The Indictment Of Anthony Charles Lynton Blair For The Crime Of Aggression Against Iraq – A Hearing*. This was an excoriating fictional trial, first performed at the Tricycle theatre, examining the legality of Tony Blair's role in the invasion of Iraq. This was an unusual combination of part Tribunal play and part mock-trial. Numerous expert witnesses from Kurdish academics and politicians to U.N. Weapons Inspectors were interviewed by Norton-Taylor's lawyers about whether they felt the grounds for the Iraq invasion were valid and thus whether there were sufficient grounds for indicting Tony Blair as a war criminal. The testimony was performed in the form of an oppositional Tribunal. The evidence ranged from a justification for the war as a humanitarian act because, as the Kurdish academic explains, 'the regime of Saddam Hussein, it was our Weapon of Mass Destruction', to Blair's Cabinet M.P. Clare Short stating the legal basis for the invasion was brought about by Blair's 'straightforward deceit'.⁷ With adversarial opinions established, the play ends and the audience become Tribunal judge and jury, left to cast their own verdict on the invasion as War Crime, Humanitarian Act or something in between. Aleks Sierz comments that in 2007 this play was so popular that it received the highest number of advance bookings in the Tricycle theatre's history. He adds, 'The Brits, it seems, longed for trial and retribution.'⁸ Some commentators thought the whole concept was simply stoking resentment against a well-intentioned but unfortunate humanitarian intervention. David Aaronovitch in *The Times* argued that the whole play was a pointless, 'Obsessive attempt to change history.'⁹ The oversubscribed audience seemed to disagree as Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister from 2007, attempted to quell the persisting public hostility about the invasion by instigating the Chilcot Inquiry in 2009.

<http://www.theneweuropean.co.uk/top-stories/tony-blair-heartland-lost-faith-europe-brexit-1-5351671> > [accessed 12 February 2018]

⁷ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Called to Account: The Indictment Of Anthony Charles Lynton Blair For The Crime Of Aggression Against Iraq – A Hearing', *The Tricycle Collection: Tribunal Plays 1994-2012* (London: Oberon, 2014), p. 674 & p. 695.

⁸ Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today* (London: Methuen, 2011), p. 71.

⁹ David Aaronovitch, 'Does Blair Deserve to be in the dock?', *The Times*, 23 April 2007 < <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/does-blair-deserve-to-be-in-the-dock-05thl5jthq6> > [accessed 30 July 2019]

The inquiry's brief was to consider 'decision-making in relation to the invasion of Iraq', and Sir John Chilcot began seven years of interviews.¹⁰ Consequently, Chilcot managed to keep Britain's role in the Iraq invasion publically contentious up until July 2016, before delivering his verdict. Chilcot's final report was broad-ranging and at 2.6 million words, was 'five times as long as War and Peace'.¹¹ Its indigestible length itself became a point of theatrical comedy. Whilst the theatre of the Iraq War is notable for its lack of satirical works, a number of stand-up comedians managed to combine tacit satire and Verbatim theatre by reading the complete Chilcot report over a two-week period at the Edinburgh Festival in 2016. Hannah Elis-Peters observed this was 'pushing the boundaries of entertainment'.¹²

Norton-Taylor and Woodhead's Verbatim play *Chilcot*, first presented in May 2016 at the Battersea Arts Centre, looked to conclude the Iraq War Tribunal series. The play was presented prior to the final report and, sensitive to the anaesthetic nature of the source text, *Chilcot* intersperses recounts of the trial with other testimony from British veterans' families alongside Iraqi civilians and combatants. Thus between performed evidence from Geoff Hoon (Labour Defence Secretary) and Tony Blair, both discussing the failings in preparation for the war, we hear from the father of Lance Corporal Shaun Brierley. Brierley was killed in Iraq because the protective armour for his patrolling Land Rover was placed over the headlight by untrained staff and 'the Landrover [...] overturned' in the dark.¹³

Similarly disturbing, is the narrated fact that there was no individual within the government given responsibility for 'co-ordinating [the] approach to the aftermath'.¹⁴ Planning for peace was not a priority and the key member of the Cabinet who ought to

¹⁰ Anon., www.parliament.uk, 'The Chilcot Inquiry', *House of Commons Library* <<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06215>> [accessed 31 January 2018]

¹¹ Mikey Smith, 'What is the Chilcot Report and how long is it? Cost of the Iraq War inquiry findings explained', *The Daily Mirror*, 7 July 2016 <<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/chilcot-report-due-what-it-8350484>> [accessed 28 February 2018]

¹² Hannah Ellis Peterson, 'Chilcot's 6,000-page report becomes Edinburgh Festival Fringe event', *The Guardian*, 21 July 2016 <<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/jul/21/chilcots-6000-page-report-an-edinburgh-festival-fringe-event>> [accessed 20 February 2018]

¹³ Richard Norton-Taylor & Matt Woodhead, *Chilcot* (London: Oberon books, 2016), p. 37.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

be responsible for post war planning, Claire Short, was not trusted and thus not briefed about the imminent invasion.¹⁵

The overwhelming sense of the play and the inquiry is that the government had committed to America and war long in advance but did not wish to be caught preparing *in flagrante* by the media, so did not plan properly. In this post-war play, Tony Blair is found still maintaining his belief in Iraq's regime change as a humanitarian act, reiterating that 'We are safer, more secure' and that 'Iraq is better'.¹⁶ However, the play has already undermined this argument at the opening, by quoting a 2001 memorandum from MI6 to Blair, observing that invasion might be very beneficial as it could 'give new security to oil supplies'.¹⁷ Similar suggestions of double-dealing, even a whitewash in the very form of the inquiry, are also (possibly unintentionally) implied by the actor Raad Rawi performing as both Tony Blair and Sir John Chilcot at different times.¹⁸ In the play, Clare Short expresses these intimations of mendacity and damns the leadership's preparations for war as less than transparent. Short notes:

The Cabinet didn't work in the way that [...] it is supposed to work [...]. There were never papers. There were little chats about things. [...] It became a sofa government.¹⁹

Chilcot's conclusion was less wholesale. Chilcot found that:

The conflict was "unnecessary" and evidence that weapons of mass destruction were operated by Saddam Hussein had not been substantiated "beyond doubt" when the decision to invade was made.²⁰

¹⁵ Her responsibility as Secretary of State for International Development. Alistair Campbell is particularly damning about Clare Short's stance against the invasion, stating 'When Clare Short and her department were in support of a Government policy or position, then I think she was both trustworthy and competent.' Richard Norton-Taylor & Matt Woodhead, *Chilcot* (London: Oberon books, 2016), p. 53.

¹⁶ *Chilcot*, p. 44.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁸ As observed by Michael Billington in 'Chilcot review – devastating account of Blair cabinet's Iraq war delusions', *The Guardian*, 5 June 2016 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jun/05/chilcot-review-iraq-war-blair-government-delusions-inquiry> > [accessed 19 February 2018]

¹⁹ *Chilcot*, p. 55.

²⁰ Siobhan Fenton, 'Chilcot Report: How the world reacted to its damning conclusions on the Iraq war', *The Independent*, 6 July 2016 < <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/chilcot-report-iraq-war-inquiry-tony-blair-how-the-world-reacted-a7123486.html> > [accessed 20 February 2018]

Most British politicians were circumspect in response to the inquiry, but Alex Salmond felt that the Chilcot conclusions gave grounds for Tony Blair to be tried as an international war criminal.²¹ When The Hague's lawyers rejected such a possibility at the international court, the *Daily Telegraph* railed at the apparent hypocrisy that while Tony Blair could not be tried for war crimes, other British soldiers could well be indicted.²²

The Chilcot Report was eventually delivered on 6 July 2016. In their later notes to the *Chilcot* play, Norton-Taylor and Woodhead note that this was two weeks after the European Union vote on 23 June 2016 and they express their concern that the revelations and criticisms of the Chilcot inquiry will be 'lost, smothered, and eclipsed by the consequences' of this vote.²³ Indeed, the indignation that seemed to implicate the New Labour government, the Civil Service and the full hierarchy of the military may well be largely forgotten amidst the extended turbulence of Brexit.

Yet, many contend that Brexit itself must be seen as a response to Iraq. *The New Statesman* noted that:

Many of the causes of the public's vote to leave the European Union – the loathing of mainstream politicians, the distrust of the elite, [...] can be traced back to the decision to invade Iraq 13 years ago.²⁴

Similarly, the decision by Britain to distance itself from Europe is also perhaps an echo of Britain's desire to disregard the U.N. and Europe at the outset of the Iraq invasion. Slavoj Zizek argues that Brexit, but it is perhaps also relevant to Iraq, shows:

The logic of the wrong era in an age of global problems: ecology, biotechnology, intellectual property.²⁵

²¹ Michael Settle and Fiona McKay, 'Alex Salmond raises prospect of Tony Blair being tried for war crimes in Scottish courts', *The Herald (Scotland)*, 4 July 2016 < http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14595614.Alex_Salmond_raises_prospect_of_Tony_Blair_being_tried_for_war_crimes_in_Scottish_courts/ > [accessed 20 February 2018]

²² Robert Mendick, 'Outrage as war crimes prosecutors say Tony Blair will not be investigated over Chilcot's Iraq war report – but British soldiers could be', *The Telegraph*, 2 July 2016 < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/02/outrage-as-war-crimes-prosecutors-say-tony-blair-will-not-be-inv/> > [accessed 19 February 2018]

²³ *Chilcot*, p. vii.

²⁴ Anon., 'Leader: The Iraq War and Its Aftermath', *The New Statesman*, 6 July 2016 < <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2016/07/leader-iraq-war-and-its-aftermath> > [accessed 19 February 2018]

²⁵ Slavoj Zizek and Benjamin Ramm, 'Slavoj Zizek on Brexit, the crisis of the Left, and the future of Europe', *openDemocracy*, 30 June 2016 < <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make->

Britain's continuing international approach is perhaps a reprise of imperial-style protectionism, a modernist response in a globalised, postmodern context; a fractious combination, which perhaps underpins a number of plays of the era.

II. Material Theatre

Undoubtedly, one prominent feature of the Iraq war was the continual and rich oppositional reaction from British theatre. In its response to the Middle Eastern wars, J. Colleran contends that theatre across the coalition has shown its cultural power:

As a live, embodied, communal art form to raise awareness of complex issues flattened out through hype and spin, to offer a public space of exchange and to invigorate political analyses and action.²⁶

What is abundantly clear from this thesis is that the British subsidised theatre of the Iraq war manifested a multi-layered, penetrating and sustained critique of the British government's policies in the context of the invasion. The extent might be seen by the fact that Richard-Norton Taylor alongside Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo's collection of Tribunal/Verbatim plays, perhaps on their own, offer a thoroughly incisive critique. Beginning with plays concerning the Arms-to-Iraq inquiry through to the Hutton inquiry, presenting works on Guantanamo Bay and prisoner abuse by the British military, and closing with *Chilcot*, they dramatically frame and repeatedly puncture Britain's claims to justice, peace-keeping and probity.

When these Tribunal/Verbatim plays are considered together with Roy Williams and Simon Stephens more naturalistic and socially-layered plays; then Mark Ravenhill, Tim Crouch and Martin Crimp's more abstracted but encompassing works, it is clear that theatre remains a cultural scourge of the unjust. Whilst we might argue the point as made by the Arts Council's *Theatre Assessment 2009*, that theatre is a niche pursuit for the privileged classes, theatre can still reach beyond these cultural constraints and directly address those implicated or involved in the historical facts behind the

it/slavoj-zizek-benjamin-ramm/slavoj-i-ek-on-brexite-crisis-of-left-and-future-of-eur > [accessed 22 February 2016]

²⁶ J. Colleran, *Theatre and War: Theatrical Responses Since 1991* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p. 13.

performance.²⁷ In a brief interview with ex-M.P. Clare Short, I asked her whether the New Labour government in 2003 were remotely aware of the plays about the Iraq invasion, particularly Richard Norton-Taylor's *Justifying War*. Clare Short informed me that she:

Went to a couple of the plays at the Tricycle.

Andrew Mckinley [sic] who was a member of the Select Committee that interrogated Dr Kelly was at that verbatim play.²⁸

Others may have gone but almost certainly not the leaders still defending the policy.²⁹

Consequently, it seems clear that political theatre still has an audible and influential voice in British and international politics.

Significantly, Iraq became such a dominant issue that it pulled within its bounds an often unlikely diversity of other theatrical works. Joshua Abrams article *The Ubiquitous Orange Jumpsuit* notes how a publicly released photograph of Guantanamo prisoners was soon being echoed in performances as seemingly unconnected to the Iraq war as 'The Children of Herakles, Measure for Measure and Hair'.³⁰

Specific plays about the Iraq invasion encompassed a diversity of styles of contemporary British theatre. Numerous techniques and dramatic forms were employed to deliver a political critique on Iraq; with documentary, naturalistic and other forms verging on the postdramatic, all employed in the same oppositional cause. Yet, a significant number of these divergent works offer a shared understanding of the Iraq War as stemming from a Western culture disfigured by contemporary politics, society and economy.

²⁷ As discussed in Appendix I. See Arts Council England, *Theatre Assessment 2009* (London: Arts Council, 2009) < <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/theatre-assessment-2009> > [accessed 10 November 2017]. This research found that the class and cultural makeup of theatre audiences had not significantly changed despite New Labour's efforts. They noted in their findings: 'There was a strong consensus of opinion about a lack of socio-economic diversity in this [theatre] sector.'

²⁸ Andrew Mackinley was the M.P. whose comment to Dr Kelly at the Hutton inquiry that Kelly was 'chaff', was misinterpreted as derogatory when he meant it as a military metaphor for obscuring radar systems with erroneous information. See BBC News, 'Mackinlay defends Kelly grilling', *BBC News*, 26 August 2003 < http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3180805.stm > [accessed 1 March 2018]

²⁹ For Clare Short e-mail interview see Appendix V. 'Permission to publish interviews and images.'

³⁰ Joshua Abrams, 'The Ubiquitous Orange Jumpsuit', *Political and Protest Theatre: Patriotic Dissent* (New York: Routledge, 2012)

III. Cultural Materialism

This thesis motivating focus was to establish:

If theatre's understanding and representation of the conflict can be seen as ultimately inspired by a cultural materialist reading; even if the theatrical and cultural language of the 2000s may seem more akin to Jacques Derrida and Jean-Francois Lyotard than to Raymond Williams.³¹

These plays of the 2003-2011 Iraq War period take place some time after the 1960s to the 1980s era when cultural materialism seems at its most culturally pertinent. Nevertheless, much of the political understanding that drives these works suggests that the Iraq war is a material outcome of Western neoliberal culture and its modes and relations of production. As Dollimore and Sinfield explained, so these twenty-first century plays seem to express, that culture cannot:

Transcend the material forces and relations of production.³²

This can most clearly be seen in some of the more formally innovative plays of the period. Plays such as those in Mark Ravenhill's *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* series and Tim Crouch's *ENGLAND* set their work in the context of a material culture, which seems to exist after a long history of class and industrial struggle. In these plays, an eviscerated working-class culture is now reborn as a middle-class world of hollow values. The ghost soldier in Ravenhill's *War and Peace* recalls his house, once 'This was all council' but now his 'Estate. Wiped away'.³³ Here, the soldier's social roots have been wholly gentrified and his council home replaced by a secure gated community in which Alex, the young hedge fund manager, now lives and safely hides from a larger world of class and poverty. His appearance in Alex's bedroom functions as a form of Dickensian ghost of a working-class past that has built the foundations of this new middle-class world of juicers, 'SUV's' and 'property ladders'.³⁴ Ravenhill's soldier sees himself, his home and

³¹ *Suspect Device*, p. 18.

³² J. Dollimore & A. Sinfield, (1985) *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. vii.

³³ Mark Ravenhill, 'War and Peace', *Plays: 3* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 60.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

culture as sacrificed to the Middle Eastern wars to protect a bourgeois society in which the soldier does not belong. This gentrified culture according to Alex:

Alex: It's for my life. My perfect life. It's not for you
Soldier: This place, gated community, hedge funds, that's over
 unless I'm fighting.³⁵

In Ravenhill's work, the Iraq War is one fought for profit and to ensure the unbalanced relations of production between Alex and the Soldier continue to be maintained.

Tim Crouch's play *ENGLAND* is set in a fictionally 'converted jam factory' in the once deprived London borough of 'Southwark', which has now been restored as a duplex with 'white walls'.³⁶ The original production was at the actual Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh, 2007. Crouch's script references that this actual art gallery was once a 'fruit and vegetable market' until 1974 but now it's a hospital-like white room with 'clean lines'.³⁷ In Crouch's play, the industrial past is again understood as whitewashed and the historical context lost and forgotten. In the play, the protagonist's lack of understanding of his/her industrial past seems a corollary of his/her ignorance of a widow in Iraq. Thus, in Crouch's play gentrification seems part of a larger shift to use capital to eviscerate both the domestic urban and global landscape. As Neil Smith articulated in 2002, gentrification was once only local but is now,

Global, and it is densely connected into the circuits of global capital and cultural circulation [...where] the investment of productive capital holds definitive precedence.³⁸

Similarly recalling Ravenhill's 'juicers', Crouch's fictionalised middle-class economy is centred on the production and sale of status-based cultural goods of negligible intrinsic value traded to acquire vital foreign goods of high intrinsic value. In *ENGLAND*, as in Ravenhill's *Birth of Nation*, western culture is now a fully marketised international product that can be exported for profit and exchange. However, Crouch's neoliberal

³⁵ War and Peace', p. 59.

³⁶ Tim Crouch, *ENGLAND* (London: Oberon, 2007), p. 17.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 15 & p. 16.

³⁸ Neil Smith, 'New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy', *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*, Vol. 34, Iss. 3, December 2002 (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell)

world is comprehensive and has applied the market to all facets of human existence, as expressed by Deleuze and Guattari, where 'everything is converted into a quantitative unit of capital'. Thus an Iraq citizen's heart has become, at least in Western eyes, a tradable commodity.³⁹ This means in ENGLAND, western art and Middle Eastern body parts become factors of production in an economic exchange. Whilst this clearly portrays the ethical paucity of neoliberal Britain as life-threatening to the global world, this also seems a potential metaphor for the Iraq invasion as trading empty consumer goods in exchange for the heart of the Middle East: oil.

The larger political point in ENGLAND is the way in which this modern capitalist drive to spread the market into every facet of human existence creates the type of wholesale alienation that Marx and Lukacs once wrote about earlier forms of capitalism and which Frederic Jameson, in an adapted postmodern context, terms 'derealisation'.⁴⁰ In the neoliberal climate, alienation is now globalised, normalised and cultural empathy reified. These are dominating themes throughout *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat, ENGLAND* and also Martin Crimp's *Advice to an Iraqi Woman*. In Ravenhill's opening play, *Woman of Troy* a number of (possibly American) women are awash in products, simply unable to understand why they are being attacked by terrorists but subconsciously understanding that bombs and shops are somehow connected:

- Coffee, the bombs, the shops ... they are for us. For us to use the good people.⁴¹

This is closely paralleled in Martin Crimp's *Advice To An Iraqi Woman* where the speaker is wholly unable to conceive of the context of an Iraqi Woman being similarly bombed by coalition planes. The speaker is marooned in a world of products that seem themselves to prevent her from understanding someone from another culture. However, she subconsciously/subtextually glimpses that the products are loaded with the potential for War:

³⁹ Ronald Bogue, 'Nomadism, Globalism and Cultural Studies', *Deleuze's Way: Essays in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), pp. 131-133. Summary of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

⁴⁰ See Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), p. 87 and Karl Marx, *Capital: An Abridged Version* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1999), p. 97 and Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 34 & p. 44.

⁴¹ Mark Ravenhill, 'Women of Troy', *Plays: 3* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 15.

- A home, just like an orchard, just like a zip, is a minefield.⁴²

In these plays, it is the actual products of neoliberalism that are integral and implicated in the Iraq War, and its associated acts of violence. As such, these are unusually materialist readings, in often postmodern and postdramatic forms, of the Iraq war as not just connected to, but the outcome of the present means of neoliberal production.

Whilst these plays do not clearly explain the contemporary connection between the products and the violence, the audience seem urged to reconnect the links themselves because of the juxtaposition of consumer goods with weapons and acts of war. As in Ravenhill's repeated choral refrain throughout his series of plays, it is the desire to embrace and export the products and values of 'freedom and democracy' that has set the Middle East ablaze and abstracted the ability of the Western citizen to locate her ethics.⁴³ Effectively, these plays are theatrical expressions of Frederic Jameson's understanding of the neoliberal world as creating a wholesale '*derealisation*' of 'everyday reality [...] transcending the capacities of the human body to locate itself.'⁴⁴ These plays show the Western citizen as ethically adrift in a minefield of products. And it is this neoliberal culture that is being forcefully exported to Iraq. As in Ravenhill's placement of the two nouns in the above monologue, the 'bombs' come just before the 'shops'.⁴⁵

The arguably less experimental plays of Simon Stephens, Roy Williams and Jonathan Lichtenstein, focus and concentrate this understanding of the Iraq war and its crimes as having a neoliberal foundation evident in the domestic environment. These plays consider how the Iraq War has shaped Britain and how British subjects have behaved in

⁴² Martin Crimp, *Advice to Iraqi Women*, The Guardian, 10 April 2003, <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2003/apr/10/theatre.artsfeatures1>> [accessed 28 May 2017]

⁴³ As noted, the phrase 'Freedom and Democracy' usually in whole (rarely in part) is in the Bloomsbury 2013 published edition of the 245 page script, mentioned on pages 8,9, 14, 17, 61, 69, 70, 74, 80, 84, 87, 89, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 101, 124, 130, 132, 135, 142, 145, 159, 169, 173, 174, 175, 186, 190, 192, 193, 196, 197, 198, 207, 209, 216, 219, 222, 224, 227, 228, 230, 232, 235, 241, 242, 243, 248, 249, 250, 252, 253 (it is often repeated on the same page).

⁴⁴ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 34 & p. 44.

⁴⁵ Such ideas seem a performed expression of Naomi Klein's arguments in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008)

some of the most visible acts of misconduct in the military campaign. Often these plays provide a backdrop of a Britain that is socially sullied; yet not directly by products as in the previous plays, but instead by an endemic culture of corruption, which at times alludes to the wider political arena, but is largely expressed through portrayals of working class culture and behaviour.

The most encompassing play that links Iraq and Britain is Jonathan Lichtenstein's *The Pull of Negative Gravity*. Here, a poverty-stricken Welsh farming family is forced to send one son, Dai, to war in order to pay the bills. The poverty is not isolated to this generation, as the father has previously killed himself to help make ends meet. In this harsh world, the only approach is to survive by dissimulation: as such, the farms' neighbours have manufactured a Foot and Mouth outbreak for the insurance money, Dai's girlfriend is having an affair with Dai's brother Rhys while the family tries to make ends meet by stuffing envelopes selling the products of the private health-care market. In such an environment, helicopters carry the injured home from the Iraq war to hospital but these soldiers only wish is to die. In this barren landscape, Dai returns home from the war crippled with an unexpressed history of personal corruption: war crimes that leads to his own desire for suicide. In this unremittingly stark work, the Iraq War is so inextricably connected to the domestic that it is mapped directly onto the geography of harshly-deprived Wales. As Jeni Williams explains, 'The boundaries between them and us [...] are slipping'.⁴⁶ Here the austerity of the war and the economy suggest an overpowering sense of personal and social meaninglessness.

This image of a rural Britain that fundamentally cannot thrive under neoliberalism is echoed in the urban environment of *Days of Significance* and *Motortown*. Both plays are remarkably similar in presenting a group of young men from South Eastern towns who seem without family, nurture or ethical foundation, who then join the military and commit grave acts of torture. As the dubious role model Lenny explains to the young soldiers in Williams' *Days of Significance*: 'There's just no lines drawn with you lot, is there? [...] Don't know [...] what you believe.'⁴⁷ All these young soldiers home

⁴⁶ Jeni Williams, 'The Pull of Negative Gravity', *Theatre in Wales: Theatre dance and performance reviews*, 18 August 2004 < http://www.theatrewales.co.uk/reviews/reviews_details.asp?offset=2675&reviewID=793 > [accessed 21 February 2017]

⁴⁷ Roy Williams, *Days of Significance* (London: Methuen, 2007), p. 28.

environment is portrayed as a place without moral structure. *Motortown* is a present-day Essex populated by small-time gangsters, fantasists pursuing social status in a bankrupt culture of guns and gangsta-rap. This scene is political and economic, as it is set around a car factory in Dagenham that has long ago ceased to offer a secure future. In this context, the Iraq military torture is a foreign reverberation of domestic British violence, which itself seems a product of a post-industrial economy shorn of stability, community and aspiration. As such, though largely implied in *Motortown*, the sub-criminal characters are alienated not just from the means of production but also from production itself.

This sterile context for the Essex precariat is replicated in *Days of Significance*. Here two future soldiers bereft of domestic aspiration exist in a macho street culture that encourages violence, misogyny and a blind nationalism that seems very like racism. For these men, fighting for your country in a dubious war seems to have more social status than education or employment. With such suspect values, the violence, racism and nationalism easily turn to acts of torture and military crimes. Kathryn Price regards *Days of Significance* as,

An important modern play, and future generations will find in it a record of the linguistic and moral impoverishment of early twenty-first century popular culture.⁴⁸

These two plays present the audience with a range of close-up portraits of a domestic Britain that is clearly post-industrial, insecure and shorn of any structures that might provide a nurturing future for the working class male. Although these plays are not expressed in highly politicised terms, the images of a neoliberal nation without effective supportive state agencies, employment and community are searing portraits of an ethically disordered Britain in the midst of a foreign war. Janelle Reinelt explains that *Days of Significance*, but it seems partially true of *Motortown*, is primarily about an 'underclass' in British society who have entered the war because they are:

Caught between some fleeting notion of British patriotism and an utter lack of

⁴⁸ Kathryn Prince, 'Days of Significance', *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation*, Vol. 11, Iss. 2 (Athens: University of Georgia, 2006), p. 6.
<<http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/781468/show> ? > [accessed 10 April 2017]

comprehension.⁴⁹

In this way, these plays suggest that the Iraq war has worked to export the ethical failure at the heart of neoliberal British society onto the Middle East.

As in a vast number of these plays about the Iraq War, the conflict is used repeatedly to reflect back on the failings of British society. A notable exception to this is in perhaps the most heartening and optimistic play, *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* by the Welsh playwright Owen Sheers. This play tightly limits its perspective in order to express the real-life and emotive experiences of soldiers mentally and physically scarred by the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. To maximize identification with the soldiers, there is almost no sense of historical context, social background, class, politics or any martial/patriotic elements that you might expect when creating a theatrical image of the coalition soldier. Tellingly, the soldier and main actor Cassidy Little noted of this play about war wounded that it is, 'not about being a soldier. It's about people recovering'.⁵⁰ To emphasize this distance from the concerns of other more critical soldier plays, the main protagonist Charlie F. is not a Private, not British but Canadian, and the war exists only as a looping and poisonous memory in the minds of men who are struggling to adjust to a secure domestic world. In this case, the soldier can only be made empathetic if the war is wholly depoliticized.

In contrast, the Verbatim-styled work *Black Watch* that aims to focus on the 'real' experience of Scottish soldiers is highly critical of the Iraq invasion while also reflecting the sense of soldiering as a role motivated by economic necessity in the deprived areas of Scotland. The lead character Cammy notes that other than soldiering, 'What else are we gonna do anyway? [...] The pits are fucked.'⁵¹ The play is rich in historical context, which is portrayed via image, song, uniform and dance. These songs and folk allusions create a persistent image of the Scottish soldier as a historic tool of the paternalist Scottish landowning classes, the inherited 'Golden Thread' of military service working as

⁴⁹ Janelle Reinelt 'Selective Affinities: British Playwrights at work', *Modern Drama*, Vol. 50. Iss. 3, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p.317.

⁵⁰ Matt Trueman, 'Charlie F and the real theatre of war: 'this isn't like Miss Saigon'', *The Guardian*, 18 March 2014, < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/mar/18/two-worlds-of-charlie-f-uk-tour> > [accessed 13 February 2017]

⁵¹ Gregory Burke, *Black Watch* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p.29.

an emblematic class manacle.⁵² The implication being that the working-class are kept in economic poverty so they can be more easily employed as soldiers in their nation's colonial exploits. Although the play is set as the regiment is to be disbanded and the conflict is largely without political analysis, the Iraq War through juxtaposition with its antecedent invasions, becomes the last in a long line of plundering imperial adventures. Perhaps more clearly expressed here than in any other play, is the material relations of society and of production that lead a soldier from the pit, shipyard or unemployment to the front-line at the behest of the establishment and their martial symbols.

As previously noted, Verbatim theatre has a rich radical history that was initially associated with the historically materialist readings of society by Erwin Piscator and his associates.⁵³ The Verbatim plays of Gillian Slovo and Victoria Brittain alongside the Tribunal plays of Richard Norton-Taylor follow this line by being sharply critical of the behavior of the government before and during the Iraq War. However, these plays focus their content on specific events or experiences often removed from a wider politicized or historicized context. Norton-Taylor's plays, such as *Tactical Questioning*, *Justifying War* and *Chilcot* rework government inquiries about torture, wrongful imprisonment and government manipulation. Yet these works are presented without a clear historical context that would make the crimes seem more systematic rather than just isolated aberrations of weak government and military procedure. As Jenny Hughes notes of Mrs Kelly's role in *Justifying War*, by setting such plays as *Tactical Questioning*, *Justifying War* and *Chilcot* in the context of a Tribunal, amidst the unruffled but forensically-detailed questions from worthy legal teams, a larger political problem seems ignored. Hughes contends that such a focus on the value of the Tribunal,

Highlights how political theatre plays a role in the regulative maintenance of the political fictions of liberal democracy.⁵⁴

In these terms key associated factors in, for instance *Tactical Questioning*, such as the soldiers' social class, the self-preserving culture of the military, and a judiciary/media

⁵² The phrase is peppered throughout the play. In the introductory notes to the play, Burke recalls that even in Iraq 'there were lads serving alongside their fathers', *Black Watch*, p. viii.

⁵³ As detailed in Gary Fisher Dawson, *Documentary Theatre in the United States: An historical survey and analysis of its content, form and stagecraft* (Westport: Greenwood publishing, 1999)

⁵⁴ Jenny Hughes, *Performance in a Time of Terror: Critical Mimesis and the Age of Uncertainty* (Manchester: M.U.P., 2011), p. 98.

unwilling to expose military criminality is only ever left as a light-touch implication. Whilst part of this is of course an issue of form as these Tribunal plays rely exclusively on the document of the inquiry, Verbatim plays such as *Guantanamo* are similarly constrained. *Guantanamo* ably accentuates the horror of the Guantanamo institution and the suffering of wrongly imprisoned detainees alongside critiquing the American government, however in this highly political work there is no wider exploration of political context such as, for example, what abandoning British Muslims in Guantanamo Bay might say about the structures of British government and its neoliberalist values. Arguably, David Hare's part-Verbatim work *Stuff Happens* does consider the war in wider terms: referencing the geo-political requirements to gain access to oil, to help resolve Israel, Palestine and related issues. However, this is a 'history' play, which ultimately suggests Blair is motivated by an ethical crusade while it imagines President Bush's warm conversations with his advisers about Iraq. By doing so, as Sara Brady notes, the play works to 'humanize' Bush' and also Blair.⁵⁵ Thus this 'history' play ends up seeing the Iraq war as ultimately about two quite empathetic political personalities, who both seem markedly removed from a wider context of neoliberal history and politics.

Nonetheless, what these Verbatim and Tribunal works often offered were concentrated images into the 'real' and extended suffering of the innocent victims of the Iraq campaign. This was usually alongside glimpses of government and establishment structures and decision-making processes which, with the exception of *Stuff Happens*, offered repeated images of authority figures manipulating facts, people and media to maintain the neoliberal status quo. In this way, as Olivera Simic summarizes, such theatre could, at best, function as a catalyst:

A site of social intervention that opens up a space for the re-negotiation of lived experiences, and also a site of practical endeavor that may advance justice for past violence.⁵⁶

The Prevent strategy plays were similarly a state-sponsored 'site of social intervention'. Here theatre emerged fully formed as political instrument deployed to inculcate worthy

⁵⁵ Sara Brady, *Performance, Politics and the War on Terror: 'Whatever it Takes'* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p. 27.

⁵⁶ Olivera Simic, *An Introduction to Transitional Justice* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2016), p. 228.

values of tolerance, peaceability and community but uncomfortably focused on one specific ethnic group. The strategy's application at this time was widely considered 'a toxic brand'.⁵⁷ It was perhaps particularly inappropriate to apply cultural 'bio-power' in the form of theatre, to a British Islamic population already scarred by urban deprivation and a growing culture so apparently hostile that its government might tacitly ignore the fact that British Muslims were imprisoned without trial in Guantanamo Bay. The strength of the two plays *Hearts and Minds* and *Not In My Name* is that they portray the experience of economic deprivation within an antagonistic domestic culture in some detail; then they close their works by reassuring the audience with the suggestion to embrace the values of their own religion and community. These theatrical responses to the Prevent strategy were progressive in setting high value on Islamic culture and the Muslim community, whilst at the same time ultimately recommending cultural insularity at this time of foreign war and Islamic terrorism. These two plays thus tacitly imply that neoliberalism has persistently excluded this ethnic group and that the war and associated acts of terrorism, as Marie Gillespie and Ben O'Loughlin observe, have 'Exacerbated the marginalisation and racialization of [...] British Muslims'.⁵⁸

It seems highly tenable that the majority of these theatrical works under discussion can be understood as a cultural response to the Iraq War that sees the invasion as a material event motivated by a neoliberal political culture that wishes to both export a democratic consumer lifestyle and wants to control access to Iraq's mineral resources. The war has then worked to expose the fractured domestic environment and functioned to accentuate the marginalisation of the British Muslim population.

Nonetheless, these are rich and multi-layered plays and perhaps to understand these works in such tight Cultural Materialist terms might be reductive. As previously noted, Cultural Materialism due to its Marxist roots, offers the implication that political change to a socialist form of state is the ultimate 'reality' that needs to be achieved through application of the theory. This is clearly the meaning behind Dollimore & Sinfield's

⁵⁷ BBC News, 'Muslim ex-Police Officer Criticises Prevent anti-terror strategy', *BBC News* < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31792238> > [accessed 18 October 2017]

⁵⁸ Marie Gillespie & Ben O'Loughlin, 'The Media-Security Nexus', *Routledge Handbook of Media, Conflict and Security*, (eds.) P. Robinson, P. Seib & R. Frohlich (London: Routledge, 2016), p.56.

Cultural Materialist term 'political commitment'.⁵⁹ Of course, within these twenty first century plays there are no suggestions of any alternative state, government or culture that might be offered as being more egalitarian or successful.

These Iraq War plays often offer only a portrayal of a social, government or military failure and, if they offer any suggestion for the future, it is one of either fixing the structures of government, such as is largely implied in all the Tribunal plays, or embracing the local community. Plays such as *The Two World of Charlie F.*, *Hearts and Minds* and *Not In My Name* suggest some hope lies in the values of a shared community. As such these plays often have an ultimately self-preserving and perhaps conservative resolution.

Despite this, in Ravenhill's *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* series, *Guantanamo*, *Motortown*, *Advice to An Iraqi Woman* and *ENGLAND*, British culture is more radically presented as beyond apparent repair. Britain is seen as a place of profound societal illness that seems on a path to more embedded forms of denial, of exploitation and of political manipulation. These are stark plays embodying a form of bleak social materialism where, as Jacqueline Bolton notes of *Motortown*:

Devastating acts of violence are understood as the symptom not the causes of a society in moral chaos.⁶⁰

Perhaps also questioning a confident materialist reading, are the plays which work with a more postmodern or postdramatic form or content. These works seem to respond to Derrida, Lyotard and other postmodern arguments that there is no underlying reality at all. As such, a Cultural Materialist reading of these plays is perhaps to offer a form of coherent or foundational 'reality', as explained by Liz Tomlin as 'originary truth[s]', that are denied in the playwright's choice of a form and content that expresses an insecurity in authenticity, identity and meaning.⁶¹ In plays such as *ENGLAND* and *Advice to an Iraqi Woman*, the plays form and theme offers us a portrayal of a contemporary culture where the meaning of an Iraqi woman or widow is unknown. In these plays the speakers

⁵⁹ J. Dollimore & A. Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, p. vii.

⁶⁰ Jacqueline Bolton, 'Simon Stephens', *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009*, ed. Dan Rebellato (London: Methuen, 2013), p. 111.

⁶¹ Liz Tomlin, *Acts and Apparitions: Discourse on the Real in Performance Practice and Theory, 1990-2010* (Manchester: MUP, 2013), p.4.

are unattributed and split across multiple actors, and their language either malformed (through an unreliable Interpreter in Crouch's play) or layered in myriad connotation, as in Crimp's play. As such, to derive a secure and Cultural Materialist reading is to perhaps compromise the work's comprehensive sense of the indeterminate. In these plays, the visible and theatrical relations of production in form, content, character and theme are insecure, and thus the performances' reflection of, or connection to, the wider economic means of production perhaps must remain as only one of a range of contingent meanings.

Of course, according to Frederic Jameson, this contingency is itself fundamentally a material response to a culture where alienation is the contemporary mode of production. From ethically confused domestic youths, British Muslims incarcerated without trial, wounded soldiers adrift back home and young Muslims at risk of radicalism, alienation from a thriving society and culture seems a thematic concern. Jameson explains that the contemporary form of alienation is more correctly a 'derealisation' from meaning, purpose and the traditional relations of production. Referencing Raymond Williams, Jameson contends that this form of alienation is the dominant 'Structure of Feeling' in the current 'great global multinational and decentred communicational network' of neoliberalism.⁶²

IV. Cultural Empathy

An additional research question was to explore Judith Butler's understanding of how cultural empathy, as expressed in her 2009 text *Frames of War*, was reflected in the plays of the Iraq War. Butler's text explains and challenges the way in which domestic media and establishment agencies manage social empathy within stringent terms during times of war. In this context, my aim was to establish whether:

British theatre worked to challenge, complicate and expand the British establishment and media's apparent framework of grievability.⁶³

⁶² Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 34 & p. 44.

⁶³ *Suspect Device*, p. 21.

Extending empathy was a dominant feature in the majority of the above-discussed plays. In works such as *Guantanamo*, *Tactical Questioning*, *Justifying War*, *ENGLAND* and *Advice to An Iraqi Woman*, the desire to highlight the plight of the British and Iraqi victim was persistently foregrounded. Similarly, *Black Watch* and *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* functioned almost wholeheartedly to help the audience to identify with the experience and unforgiving facts of the serving British and coalition soldier. Other works, such as *How Many Miles to Basra?* and *The Pull of Negative Gravity*, although concerned with a wider domestic arena, also offered up predominantly empathetic images of soldiers working under extremely difficult conditions. In contrast, *Motortown* and *Days of Significance* are notable in this context in problematizing the media-dominant image of the serving soldier as beset public servant performing a valiant role. *Hearts and Minds* and *Not In My Name*, although working with a clearly divisive establishment agenda provided important and sympathetic images of British Muslims attempting to thrive in a hostile domestic environment.⁶⁴ As such, British theatre repeatedly attempted to articulate a voice of challenge and concern from those marginalised by the war and those at the sharp end of the conflict. However, the frames of who was deserving of theatrical empathy evolved and adapted throughout the timeline of the war.

At the start of the conflict, many of the early plays saw their dramatic frame to be most comfortable when focusing on the experience of the British soldier as the key location for justified empathy. Foreign combatants and Iraqi civilians were not within this area of concern. Indeed, limiting this frame to the British soldier was argued as the only culturally authentic thing to do by Gregory Burke in 2004's *Black Watch*.⁶⁵ However, empathy for the British soldier was an accepted part of the domestic media frame, especially as news coverage and documentaries often included embedded journalists, as referenced within the script of *How Many Miles to Basra?* and *Black Watch*. Justin Lewis, focusing on US Soldiers to explain the British public's response, saw journalists embedded with front-line soldiers as problematic and limiting the wider context of the war, he notes:

⁶⁴ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009)

⁶⁵ Gregory Burke stated, 'I can't tell an Iraqi person's version of the war, and to think that I could would be to adopt the same attitude that made us invade their country in the first place.' Mark Brown, 'Tales From the Front Line', *New Statesman*, 26 March 2007, <<http://www.newstatesman.com/arts-and-culture/2007/03/black-watch-iraq-burke>> [accessed 8 November 2016]

What the embed system did do was to get journalists to focus on the progress of the war at the expense of broader contextual issues. [...] traditions of taste and decency [...] made it difficult to show the ugly side of war, creating a stream of footage that humanized the US-led forces and dehumanised the Iraqis.⁶⁶

Later works such as *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* (2012), managed to interrogate such problematic issue of public 'taste' by concentrating on the specifics of the damage done to these British soldiers and allowed the soldiers' personal and verbatim struggles to be articulated by the wounded themselves. This idea was so successful that it became part of a wider BBC television documentary with accompanying short-lived media coverage.⁶⁷

However, *Black Watch's* achievement was less emotive but instead managed to provide a rich historic, social and personal context for the front-line soldiers and yet avoid any sense of combat as somehow viscerally exciting or necessary. As such, the play 'rounded' and partially problematized the heroic image of the front-line British soldier willing to be sacrificed for the good of the nation. Nevertheless, critics such as David Archibald still felt the theatrical frame offered by *Black Watch* was politically 'limiting, ambiguous [...] reactionary'. He argued that the play failed in that it did not also problematize the history of the regiment, and explore the brutal facts of the soldier's combat experience as visited on the victims of this, and other, wars.⁶⁸ For Archibald, extending theatrical empathy to front-line British troops seemed to implicitly suggest a consequent absence of empathy towards the enemy.

Other earlier Verbatim plays, such as *Guantanamo* of 2004, were perhaps more challenging of the representational frames of the media by highlighting that there were many other British subjects involved in the war's front-line who were also deprived of a public voice. The British Muslims imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay, not practising but only receiving violence having committed no discernible crime, clearly needed similar public concern to the British soldier. Their omission from the front pages of the media

⁶⁶ Justin Lewis, Television, 'Public Opinion and the War in Iraq: The Case of Britain', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 16, No.3 (Oxford: OUP, 2003), p. 308.

⁶⁷ See for example the BBC News report on the play by Andy Roberts on the BBC, 'Owen Sheers' Two Worlds of Charlie F: war stories on stage': < <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-19018370> > [accessed 6 August 2019]

⁶⁸ David Archibald, "We're just big bullies ..." Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*', *The Drouth*, Issue 26 (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2007)< http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/3896/1/The_Drouth3896.pdf? >[accessed 15 November 2017]

and the public consciousness seemed expressed in the stares of the jump-suited prisoners collecting at the back of Slovo and Brittain's production.

Later in the conflict, following the revelations of the Abu Ghraib torture and Baha Mousa's murder, even the (alleged) guilty Iraqi combatants seemed to need inclusion into the empathetic frame because British soldiers had carried out their abuse. Concerns over British soldiers' role in war crimes became the theatrical focus in Richard Norton-Taylor's *Tactical Questioning* (2011), Roy Williams' *Days of Significance* (2007) and to a more limited extent in Simon Stephens' *Motortown* (2006). These works are highly significant in thematically complicating the Iraq War frames of media representation. These plays showed that enemies when abused by native soldiers deserved the British public's concern, and that the received image of the heroic British soldier could not be maintained alongside their evident role as torturers. Dora Apel reflecting on the American response to the Abu Ghraib images, similarly noted how these images of torture exploded the public mythos of the soldier. The pictures seemed:

Not only an image defeat for the Bush administration [...] but also for the American archetype image of the heroic warrior male.⁶⁹

Despite this, in these plays there is often an interesting and subtle balance between horror and empathy. The plays suggest revulsion at the soldiers' acts of torture and the officers who ordered/ignored it. This is further problematized because there often seem to exist burgeoning forms of empathy at British soldiers charged with torture but seemingly socially deprived of the ethical foundations to know this might be unacceptable and, moreover, at their scapegoating by superior officers and government. Such theatrical portrayals offer a more nuanced but comprehensive assessment of who is guilty, which echoes the summary by A.T. Williams on Baha Mousa's murder:

Protestations that Britain respects [...] human rights and the laws of war have been accompanied by civilian and military commanders who look the other way [...] The killing of Baha Mousa holds up a mirror up to this very British attitude. It reflects a light on all those foot soldiers and staff officers [...] priests and politicians [...] involved.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Dora Appel, *War Culture and the Contest of Images* (New Jersey: Rutgers Press, 2012), p. 81.

⁷⁰ A.T. Williams, *A Very British Killing: The Death of Baha Mousa* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2012), p. 2.

Throughout these plays, who is fully deserving of narrative empathy seems to be a shifting and provisional negotiation.

What is unusual is that these shifts are taking place during the context of a national war and thus within the managed space of the patriotic requirement to keep the enemy short on sympathy. Of course, this becomes increasingly difficult as ethics and patriotism vie for supremacy across the news outlets and stages of Britain. The consequence is that the theatrical frame of empathy is continually dismantled and redrawn by differing playwrights writing at different junctures. Susan Sontag recalls seeing three emotive photographs of a wounded Taliban soldier in 2001 and amongst her 'pity and disgust', asking, 'what pictures, whose cruelties, whose deaths are *not* being shown.'⁷¹ What becomes apparent is that the government and media framing of virtuous invaders taming an inhuman enemy increasingly seemed a truth, slippery and postmodern; one that could never quite make it in stable form to the national consciousness or the national theatre.

Arguably, the plays discussed here express a concern over the cultural frame and work to continually problematize specifically who is deserving of empathy through theme and character. I would argue that this questioning concern seems so significant and pervasive that it amounts to one of the dominant 'Structures of Feeling' over the period. In Raymond Williams' terms, a Structure of Feeling, is defined as the 'Perceptions and values shared' by artists of a given period.⁷² One dominant area of concern is the British subjects' perception of, or ability to identify with, an Iraqi subject. This theme is especially pronounced in Ravenhill, Crouch and Crimp's work.

Mark Ravenhill's group of seventeen plays portrays a number of small scenes involving characters who have limited frames of perception, notably about their own purpose, consumerism, and an inability to understand their attackers lives or motivation. Across them all, as with the dream-like ghost soldier with no head in *War and Peace*, is a sense that something dark and visceral is being repressed. This subtext underpins every play's encompassing anxiety and usually undermines each character's perceptive frame.

⁷¹ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 13.

⁷² Raymond Williams quoted in Adrian Blackledge & Angela Creese, *Heteroglossia as Practice and Pedagogy* (New York: Springer Science, 2013), p. 124.

Suman Gupta argues that this paranoia in Ravenhill's work is largely derived from that 'expressed in the anxiety generated by images of war [it] simmers without clear definition.'⁷³ However, the violence and aggression dominating each play suggests this paranoia hides something more bestial and atavistic. Similarly, Martin Crimp's *Advice to Iraqi Women* sets up a thematic framework in the title and then ignores it. The play provides no advice to any women in Iraq, only a Freudian-styled narrative about domestic risks to children told by a British parent, which parapraxis erupts with the anxious language of contemporary war. Crimp and Ravenhill's plays continually suggest that the restrictive frames of contemporary culture prevent the British subject being able to empathize with the Iraqi citizen or understand the terrorist 'Other'.

Tim Crouch's *ENGLAND* addresses this limitation directly. He literally reframes the audience's empathy away from the fragmented spectacle of a British speaker and onto a bereft Iraq widow, as the play unfolds. Significantly, Crouch uses real and fictional works of modern art to explain through script, object and symbol that we structurally cannot sympathise with an Iraqi widow. This is apparently because our ideologies of market consumption, culture and status have blinkered us from understanding other cultures with non-market values. In this way, malformed empathy and neoliberalist modes of production seem inextricably linked.

Such ideas infer Guy Debord who argued that contemporary alienation is an aspect of 'social relations', mediated and structured by appearance-focused modes of consumption that confer status, such as Ravenhill's SUVs, mobile phones, kitchen gadgets (juicers), and Crouch's modern art. In Ravenhill, Crimp and Crouch's work alienation is emphasised through these specific consumables of status and the characters' world is framed, made alien and atomised, by this consumption. As Debord suggests, this mode of consumption is ultimately a materialist construct that creates a postmodern fracture:

Where modern conditions of production prevail, all life presents as an immense accumulation of spectacles that once was directly lived has become mere representation.⁷⁴

⁷³ Suman Gupta, *Contemporary Literature: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 52.

⁷⁴ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1967), paras. 25-167.

These plays tacitly argue that the neoliberal mode of production has created these forms of fractured empathy and thus they are at root material and historical.

Judith Butler makes a similar point in seeing the representational frames of the Iraq War as an aspect of a larger neoliberal problem that continually works to narrow those who are deserving of empathy both domestically and globally. She sees the role of the Left as being to:

Refocus and expand the political critique of state violence including both war and those forms of legalized violence by which populations are differentially deprived of basic resources [...] in the context of crumbling welfare states and those in which social safety nets have been torn asunder.⁷⁵

What is particularly significant about Crouch's *ENGLAND* is that his play not only performs but attempts to refocus and reframe the way his audience understands its world by creating an audience responsive to the needs and values of Iraqi victims. As Debord contended, 'Revolution is not 'showing' life to people but making them live.'⁷⁶ In this way *ENGLAND* is an emergent form of socially instrumental theatre that sees empathy as the most effective challenge to neoliberalism and the cultural alienation of the market.

V. NEW MATERIALISM

One of the underpinning tenets of Cultural Materialism, as Andrew Milner explains in his discussion of Raymond Williams' work, is that of the pivotal role of human agency:

Williams persists in seeing human society and culture as the products of human agency, albeit an agency that is often alienated from itself.⁷⁷

Williams understood Cultural Materialism as the way in which 'the mode of production' and the 'dominant social order' influences 'human practice, human energy and human intention.'⁷⁸ Like the versions of Marxist historical materialism from which it is derived, Cultural Materialism centres itself around the significance of the human responses, often

⁷⁵ Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 32.

⁷⁶ Tom McDonough, *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Text and Documents* (Boston: MIT Press, 2004), p.404.

⁷⁷ Andrew Milner, *Cultural Materialism* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1993), p. 107.

⁷⁸ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1977), p. 125.

focusing on an absence of agency, to a set of material, economic conditions that are owned and created by other human agents.

In the late twentieth and early twenty first century it became increasingly clear that the crucial factors in human development were now non-human agents, particularly climate change. Climate change in turn seemed to influence a host of natural disasters: the flooding in New Orleans (2005), earthquakes in Haiti (2010) and China (2008), Tsunamis in the Indian Ocean (2004) and the Bangladesh cyclone (1991), amongst numerous other catastrophic events. In such a context of climate change, the focus on the significance of human agency with regard to anything other than pollution, seemed to miss a globally pivotal perspective. As Norman K. Denzin commented in Marxist language in 2017, 'Social scientists are no longer called to just interpret the world [...] Today we are called to change the world.'⁷⁹

As such, one of the most important challenges to Cultural Materialism came with the growing climate emergency and the consequent development of New Materialism.

New Materialism is a theory that looks to resituate the significance of the non-human and thereby to reposition, often effectively relegate, the role of the human in the context of the global environment. Javier Monforte in a summary of New Materialist approaches, explains that New Materialism is an:

Umbrella term used to represent a range of theoretical perspectives that share the re-turn to a focus on matter [...] The most characterising feature [...] is a firm stand against the transcendental and humanist (dualist) traditions that dominate modern natural science as well as most postmodern cultural theories. New materialist scholars [...] challenge these paradigms anthropocentric and logocentric focus.⁸⁰

As such, the humanist understanding of man as situated at the centre of existence and the postmodern focus on language as both an expression of (and sometimes transcendence of) humanity is fundamentally challenged. Thus New Materialism is sometimes considered as similar to a 'posthumanist' theoretical approach. Nevertheless,

⁷⁹ Norman K. Denzin, 'Critical Qualitative Inquiry', *Qualitative Inquire (QI)*, Vol. 23, Iss. 1, 2017, p. 9.

⁸⁰ Javier Monforte, 'What is new in new materialism for a newcomer?', *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2018, pp. 378-390,

the focus is often on how these non-human objects, in terms recalling Deleuze and Guattari idea of the 'affective turn', produce and limit human agency.⁸¹ However, the 'objects', as in the discussion of the Fukushima power plant and Annie Dorsen's algorithmic performances below, can be man-made and consider the 'fleshy' materiality of the human body as an object.

It is often suggested that Judith Butler's argument about gender as 'performed' and without a definitive biologically material referent is one of the key ideas that influenced early New Materialist theorists such as those by Karen Barad.⁸² Barad expresses a New Materialist understanding of material objects as also having 'performative' potential. She argues that the non-human is not inert as it can express agency by 'intra-acting' between other objects and humans, as part of a 'mesh' of dynamic system.⁸³ Such ideas perhaps suggest the influence of the World Wide Web as a theoretical model.

Theron Schmidt provides an example of such 'intra-acting' in a performative context at a Sydney Art gallery in 2017, as expressed through the artwork *A Walk in Fukushima*. In this work the visitors wear a headset that shows video footage of the current landscape of the Fukushima nuclear power plant, which exploded in 2011 and is too lethal for humans to visit. Schmidt explains that the headset works as an object-human 'intra-action' that creates a decentring performance dynamic. The point of the artwork being that although much of the Fukushima power plant can be observed, the spectator's viewpoint can never be located and thus the human is continually elsewhere. Such ideas seem to perform Jameson's concept of the 'derealisation' of the contemporary world. As Schmidt notes this artwork shows how:

⁸¹ For an exploration of the theory of the 'Affective turn' see P.T. Clough & J. Halley (eds.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke Press, 2007). For flesh as material see Donna J. Haraway 'Situated Knowledges. The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1998, pp. 575-599.

⁸² As discussed in Francesco Ferrando, 'Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism and New Materialisms: Difference and Relations', *Existenz*, Vol 8, No. 2., 2013, p. 31. Also see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990)

⁸³ Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 28, Iss. 3, 2003, pp. 801-831.

Performance can create experiences that reconfigure the centrality of the human [...] we cannot see our own vantage point, for it is precisely this ability to be 'in the scene' that has been displaced.⁸⁴

Traditionally, live theatre makes the human subject and their agency the central focus. Rebecca Schneider comments that dramatic 'performance appears to trade, promiscuously in animacy'.⁸⁵ However, New Materialism and its understanding of non-human performativity have had significant impact on performance studies and new performance. Nonetheless, as Schneider notes, certain types of performance have always emphasised the absence of the human and the logocentric:

Within performance studies, too, we have seen important contributions at the intersections of performance studies and ecocritical new materialism. Of course the argument could be made that theatre, dance, and performance art have always troubled the borders of the so-called human and the so-called non.⁸⁶

Schneider suggests recent studies by Baz Kershaw and Margaret Werry, amongst others, as examples of recent research that attempts to interweave elements of New Materialism into performance theory.⁸⁷ Other works such as Marlis Schweitzer and Joanne Zerdy's *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things* (2014) explore historic theatre and work to resituate and foreground the significance of props and associated objects.⁸⁸ Schweitzer and Zerdy's text includes such analysis as that about a 1906 dress for the character of Salome as well as research about a human skull residing at the University of Pennsylvania that was used as Yorick for numerous performances of Hamlet since the 19th Century. Lezlei C. Cross explains that:

The skull's journey from human being to relic to stage performer to archived artifact demonstrates the animating power of both humans and things through

⁸⁴ Theron Schmidt, 'What Kind of Work Is This? Performance and Materialism in the Gallery', *Performance Paradigm*, Vol. 13, 2017, pp. 23-24.

⁸⁵ Rebecca Schneider, 'New Materialisms and Performance Studies', *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4, Winter 2015, p. 9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-17.

⁸⁷ Baz Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007/2009). Laura Levin, *Performing Ground: Space, Camouflage, and the Art of Blending In* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Margaret Werry, 'Interdisciplinary Objects, Oceanic Insights: Performance and the New Materialism', In *Theatre Historiography: Critical Interventions*, eds. Henry Bial and Scott Magelsen (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. 221-234.

⁸⁸ Marlis Schweitzer & Joanne Zerdy (eds.), *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014)

the medium of theatrical narratives.⁸⁹

In these particular instances, a New Materialist approach perhaps allows a social, cultural and historical context to be explored via the performing object.

However New Materialist performances such as Heather Cassils' clay creations and Annie Dorsen's work with algorithms, perhaps seem to avoid any sense of a wider context or theatrical tradition. Heather Cassils' *Becoming an Image* staged at a boxing gym in Montreal in 2012, mixes performance and sculpture. Here in front of an audience, the lights are switched off and a large piece of clay is pummeled by a boxer, who it turns out is actually Cassils. When the light returns, the clay is shown in a lumpen but largely human form, as the below image shows. Amelia Jones argues that having witnessed the performance, the object becomes both non-human and embodied. Jones comments:

I'm "in" the clay and it's "in" me. We reciprocally define each other, both of us relating back to "Cassils" as a previous materiality, a previous embodiment, as well as an agential force of making.⁹⁰

Whilst this seems a profoundly non-human and apolitical piece, Cassils has, as the *Passenger Art* website explains, in 'previous performances, chronicled the transformation of her own body into an idealized and hyper-masculine form'. As such, contemporary notions of identity and politics seem implied within the clay.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Lezlie C. Cross, 'The Linguistic Animation of an American Yorick', *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things*, eds. Marlis Schweitzer & Joanne Zerdy (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), p. 63.

⁹⁰ Amelia Jones, 'Material Traces: Performativity: Artistic "Work", and New Concepts of Agency', *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4, Winter 2015, p. 21.

⁹¹ Reillybstall, 'The Agony and the Ecstasy of Becoming an Image', *PassengerArt*, 20 March 2013<
<https://passengerart.com/2013/03/20/the-agony-and-the-ecstasy-of-becoming-and-image/>>[accessed 8 August 2019]



Figure. 11: *Becoming an Image*, photo documentation of performance, 2012⁹² (photo: Heather Cassils and Eric Charles)

In Annie Dorsen's 2017 work *The Great Outdoors* at the Florence Guild Hall in New York, the audience lie back and stare at a projection of the stars, as a female performer reads angry comments from the website Reddit selected at random by an algorithm. Dorsen's intention was to use an algorithm as a 'potentially important theatre artist, in the sense that algorithms do things, they make choices.'⁹³ Her website states that the work,

Invites us to imagine the Internet's infinite possibilities as a new form of celestial authority, and the comments as the Internet's id — unrestrained.⁹⁴

As such, New Materialism explores the objects malleability and 'intra-action' in a material and technological world where the non-human is both agent and recipient of agency. Whilst such ideas seem to have a political comment on the way in which media enforces images of femininity and technology encourages forms of instinctual behaviour, both works also suggest the randomness and unpredictability of the inter-relationship with the non-human, as is ultimately evident in the arbitrariness of both works final form.

⁹² Used within copyright exception. Copyright owned by *Heather Cassils and Eric Charles* see < <https://passengerart.com/2013/03/20/the-agony-and-the-ecstasy-of-becoming-and-image/> > [accessed 11 August 2019]

⁹³ Annie Dorsen, 'On Algorithmic Theatre', *Theatre Magazine: Digital Dramaturgies*, Vol. 42, Iss. 1, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012)

⁹⁴ Noted in Christopher Tibble, 'Algorithms are Artists', *Medium*, 9 October 2017 < <https://medium.com/artsculturebeat18/algorithms-are-artists-b7b15f81a128> > [accessed 19 August 2019]

Nonetheless, it might be argued that these works effectively repress the way in which the politics of identity and culture shape the human, and instead emphasise the haphazard nature of human existence. These works seem to abstract the material from the culture and the political. The New Materialist critic Matthew Mullins notes the parallels between the way New Materialism levels differences between human and object/environment, and the way neoliberalism levels the wider culture to an economic unit: 'Under neoliberalism, state, market, human, and nature have all been subsumed under the logic of capital.'⁹⁵ Arguably, New Materialism and Neoliberalism both express the same cultural and theoretical displacement of the politically radical under the unrelenting and normalising dominance of the market. This is Bruce Braun's perspective. He observes that both Neoliberalism and New Materialism date from a similar period and that:

A more skeptical reading of new materialisms locates a hidden complicity between its concepts and ideas and neoliberal capitalism, [...] By this reading notions of non-deterministic nature can be seen as, if not ideological to their core, at least remarkably naïve and uncritical, unable to recognize their role in "naturalizing" capitalism's most recent forms.⁹⁶

More contentiously, the focus on objects and man-made technology is perhaps reminiscent of Marx's concept of 'commodity fetishism' where the modes and production of capitalism are given totemic status. Marx noted where:

Commodities have absolutely no connexion with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom [...] There [...] assumes [...] the fantastic form of a relation between things.⁹⁷

Nonetheless, New Materialist performances can be both abstracted and expressly political, particularly in the context of the Middle Eastern wars. The Canadian artist Helen Vosters' work, *Unravel: A meditation on the warp and weft of militarism* is a relevant example. In 2011, she presented a weeklong performance installation at Edmonton's Visualeyez festival. Vosters had collected a number of combat fatigues from

⁹⁵ Matthew Mullins, 'From Old to New Materialism: Rethinking Freedom After Neoliberalism', *Open Library of Humanities*, Vol. 4, Iss. 2, p.18 <

<https://olh.openlibhums.org/articles/10.16995/olh.350/> > [accessed 9 August 2019]

⁹⁶ Bruce Braun, 'The 2013 Antipode RGS-IBG Lecture: New Materialisms and Neoliberal Natures', *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*, Vol. 47, Iss. 1, Jan 2015, pp. 1-14.

⁹⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital: An Abridged Version* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1999), p. 97.

those worn by coalition soldiers in Afghanistan, then began to unravel the clothing thread by thread until she found:

War's effects have become reconstituted in and through the assemblage of materials [...] the conglomeration of actants involved in the production of thread, cloth, camouflage design and the national identities they once constituted [,to create] "a polyvalence of sign and symbol".⁹⁸

Such acts of deconstruction are at once political, fragmentary and New Materialist. Notably, Vosters regards her work in terms that effectively respond to Judith Butler's concerns over frames of grievability. Vosters notes her work is concerned with working 'Towards a deterritorialization of empathy'.⁹⁹

New Materialism is thus not necessarily apolitical. William Connolly points out that:

[The new materialism] casts light on the dissonant relations between the drives of neoliberal capitalism and boomerang effects from nonhuman forces.¹⁰⁰

Nonetheless, New Materialism may at times foreground the political, but by questioning the role of the human as economic subject and pivotal catalyst this causes a number of difficulties for any form of Marxist or Marxist-derived analysis. T. Morton makes the point that 'Marx is an anthropocentric philosopher'.

Of course in man-made issues of global significance such as the Iraq War, New Materialist theories might perhaps have little to offer for an analysis of the decidedly human mesh of mortally-focused human agency. Despite this, in *Black Watch* when the Americans use the technology of aeroplane, drone and guided missile to bomb Fallujah, soldier Cammy notes, this 'isn't fucking fighting'.¹⁰¹ In this conflict, technology and object had perhaps begun to replace the human.

⁹⁸ Helen Vosters, 'Military Memorialization and its Object(s) of Period Purification', Marlis Schweitzer & Joanne Zerdy (eds.), *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), pp. 104-105.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 108.

¹⁰⁰ William, Connolly, 'The New Materialism and the Fragility of Things', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 41, Iss. 3, 2013, pp. 399-412.

¹⁰¹ Gregory Burke, *Black Watch* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), pp. 39-40.

Arguably, a New Materialist analysis of the plays of the Iraq War might well focus on the non-human objects that affect and at times obliterate the human response. In these terms, works such as Ella Hickson's 2016 play *Oil*, that explores the history of the human relationship with underground oil across conflict and empire, is both a political and a New Materialist reading that resituates the object whilst privileging the historical context.¹⁰² As such, a New Materialist analysis of stage objects such as the Claymore sword employed in *Black Watch*, which symbolises the golden thread of national allegiance and helps recruit soldiers, would require close analysis because of its role as a historically situated, intra-active, object. Similarly, an exploration of the cages in *Guantanamo* and the documents that inspired and pepper the mimetic courtroom on the stage of the Tribunal plays might reveal a belief in the objects role as symbol of methodical analysis and the probity (or otherwise) of establishment structures.

Of course, we might tenably argue that certain plays such as Owen Sheers' *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, and Tim Crouch's *ENGLAND* have already responded to New Materialism and already work to re-situate the human in a performance environment. Sheers' play is dominated by the human body as fleshy object, which is acted upon by non-human weapons, and the 'affect' leaves body, mind and culture severed. Similarly, in Crouch's *ENGLAND*, the abstracted heart of an Iraqi citizen and William de Kooning painting, are both non-human actants that help perform a wholehearted critique of the neoliberal construction of humanity and empathy. Both objects interact and intra-act with and upon the audience. Arguably, New Materialism is at its most incisive when it incorporates old-styled materialism.

Although ultimately uncomfortable with Marxism and historical or Cultural Materialism, New Materialism and its critique of the way in which the raw materials of nature have been exploited and polluted persistently suggests the need for a political change away from a seemingly rapacious neoliberalism. As such, its aim is perhaps ultimately to extend the socialism of people to include the resources and environment of the global sphere. In so doing, it implicitly calls for an economic and material revolution of global culture, which is perhaps more realistic and imminent, but not dissimilar to, the social

¹⁰² Ella Hickson, *Oil* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2016)

and political object of revolution that is integral to Marxism, Raymond Williams and which Dollimore and Sinfield once term 'political commitment'.

Appendix I. Fund Managing and Subsidised Theatre

Eleven years after New Labour's first election victory and five years after the invasion of Iraq, Mark Ravenhill's series of plays entitled *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* was performed in 2008 across a range of subsidised venues in London. Play 16: *Birth of a Nation*, appeared at the Royal Court in the spring and presented a narrative concerning a 'team of **Artist-Facilitators**' who visit (seemingly) Iraq to sell their services.¹⁰³ The dominant and unattributed speaker tells an unseen listener in a voice with the rhythms of Tony Blair:

- Look, I don't want to be heavy-handed about this but you have to ... [sic] You want inward investment? You want tourism? You want freedom and democracy? [...] then let some culture in, sign up for some culture, embrace some culture, let some culture into the ruins of this shattered city.¹⁰⁴

Mark Ravenhill here satirises the way in which the culture of the arts had, by 2008, become loaded with a range of political benefits such as social cohesion, political wellbeing, financial growth and international trade.

Ravenhill's speaker encourages his fictional locals to 'embrace' culture. Yet, it was not indigenous art that was being encouraged, but a decidedly British culture that foreign nations were being sold. Jen Harvie notes that:

Soon after New Labour's 1997 election victory, it launched Panel 2000 a co-ordinated effort by the Foreign Office, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and others, to promote the UK and its culture overseas.¹⁰⁵

The Department of Culture Media and Sport's (D.C.M.S.) 2001 *Creative Industries Mapping* document suggested the performing arts earned export revenue of £80 million pounds per year.¹⁰⁶ A figure, which, Jen Harvie comments, ignores the then reputed benefits of British culture's subtle role in helping advance Britain's image worldwide through 'soft diplomacy'.¹⁰⁷ In this way, under New Labour, British culture received a fresh and politicised emphasis for its role in domestic cohesion and in developing international trade and diplomacy.

At the end of Ravenhill's *Birth of a Nation* an apparently mute and '**Blind Woman**' is pushed onto the stage and the previous speaker forces her to hold a brush and pen after which she collapses and appears to experience an epileptic fit. The Blind Woman '*screams, throws pen and brush away*' and '*convulses [...] in spasms*'.¹⁰⁸ The speaker's final

¹⁰³ Mark Ravenhill, 'Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat' in *Plays:3* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 199.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 207.

¹⁰⁵ Jen Harvie, 'Nationalizing the 'Creative Industries'', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Volume 13, No. 1 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), p. 23.

¹⁰⁶ DCMS, *Creative Industries Mapping Document*, (London: Department of Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS], 2001)

¹⁰⁷ Jen Harvie, 'Nationalizing the 'Creative Industries'', p. 21.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 209.

monologue recalls the lyrics of *Transmission* by Ian Curtis, the singer of the band *Joy Division* whose epileptic illness was hidden within his stage dance: 'Oh yes, dance, dance, dance.'¹⁰⁹ This dark humour suggests that for Ravenhill, arts' power is not a form of social palliative: not only unable to fix real material problems but actively involved in obscuring them.

Nonetheless, Mark Ravenhill was one of many flourishing playwrights such as Roy Williams, Dennis Kelly and Debbie Tucker Green, whose theatrical ambitions benefited significantly from the increase in support, finances and attention that came from the New Labour government's policies, beginning from 1997. The range and success of 1990's theatre, especially the 'In Yer Face' plays of Ravenhill, Tucker Green and others, was a focal aspect of a new-found confidence captured in the infamous tagline 'Cool Britannia'. Such developments continued into the start of the Twentieth-First Century.

Sarah Sigal in her 2016 work *Writing in Collaborative Theatre-Making*, notes that during the New Labour period:

An increasingly wide variety of theatre companies were being funded and encouraged to develop a more expansive and innovative programme.¹¹⁰

As evidence, Sigal refers to a 2012 *Economist* article reviewing the New Labour period, which noted that under the theatre sector's 'principal funding conduit', the Arts Council 'funding doubled from £179m in 1998-99 to £453m in 2009-2010'. Aleks Sierz saw this creating 'a renaissance in regional theatre'.¹¹¹ He also observed in a 2010 lecture at the Art Workers' Guild in London that:

Today, New Writing is everywhere. Everywhere, you can watch plays that are examples of New Writing; everywhere, you can meet new writers; everywhere there are New Writing festivals. There's even a New Writing scene. In fact, there is an absolute deluge of the new.¹¹²

In an Arts Council commissioned survey in 2009, covering the period 2003-2008 the writers noted that:

New writing in theatre at a grassroots level appears to have undergone a period of renaissance over the past six years. Additional funding has enabled a wider variety of new writing/new work to take place in an extraordinary mix of venues across the country. A new more diverse generation of voices is emerging into a culture of experimentation and change.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Jen Harvie, 'Nationalizing the 'Creative Industries'', p. 209. For Ian Curtis perspective, see Peter Hook, *Unknown Pleasures: Inside Joy Division* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2013)

¹¹⁰ Sarah Sigal, *Writing in Collaborative Theatre-Making* (London: Macmillan, 2016), p.8.

¹¹¹ Aleks Sierz, 'Art flourishes in times of struggle', *Creativity, Funding and New Writing*, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol 13, No. 1, (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 40.

¹¹² Aleks Sierz, 'Blasted and after: New Writing in British Theatre Today', *Society for Theatre Research*, (lecture at the Art Workers Guild, London, 16 February 2010)

¹¹³ Emma Dunton, Roger Nelson & Hetty Shand, *New Writing in Theatre 2003-2008: An assessment of new writing within smaller scale theatre in England* (London: Arts Council England, 2009)

This was the economic context for the British theatre that would respond to the invasion of Iraq: reinvigorated with additional finance for companies and buildings, and a provocative approach emboldened by the new voices of the In-Yer-Face generation and its successors.

Britain at this time seemed awash with edgy visual art, popular music, fashion designers and architects in a seeming Renaissance of British arts' culture. Drama was just one arm of this cultural regeneration but it was consistently lauded for its shocking and confrontational style, becoming so acclaimed by aspects of the media that the New Labour era was marked as a 'new golden age of theatre'.¹¹⁴ Yet after the government invasion of Iraq, the banking crisis of 2008 and mounting accusations of government chicanery, the comprehensive loss of faith in New Labour seemed to extend across all sectors, even the Arts establishment. Those celebrated artists who had benefited most from the New Labour culture and subsidy were often the most vitriolic. Towards the end of the New Labour term, in 2009, Ravenhill recalled meeting Tony Blair's once Chief of Staff, and advocate of the Iraq invasion, Jonathan Powell in a Radio 4 green room and feeling obliged to shake Powell's hand. Ravenhill comments, 'Everyone's life is, I'm sure, full of similar tiny acts of self-betrayal, but I still felt grubby for weeks afterwards.'¹¹⁵ Such uncomfortable relations between arts and politics perhaps symbolises the achievements and drawbacks of New Labour's approach to arts and its funding.

The nature of theatre funding changed directly and indirectly in the New Labour period and these changes created the context for the theatre that was produced in response to the Iraq invasion. Likewise, the changes in the material conditions influenced the form and focus of these productions. For, as Ric Knowles notes, alongside working conditions, funding is often 'absent from discourses of contemporary theatre criticism' but it functions as a 'fundamental framing circumstance(s)' that works to 'shape meaning in the theatre to a degree that equals any other'.¹¹⁶

There are numerous types of theatre existing in contemporary Britain, including amateur, community, commercial and professional theatre, amongst others, with numerous gradations in between. All have differing financial models that might include support from private, charitable, trust /conglomerate investment, government subsidy or be run as an entirely self-funding business model. As the Arts Council recently noted, distinctions might once have been clearly defined between profit making and not for profit theatre. Yet, now the lines are considerably more blurred.¹¹⁷ Stephen Hetherington in a contemporary survey of theatre, analysed 409 theatrical institutions around Britain and found that as of 2015:

¹¹⁴ Mark Lawson's quote is from Polly Toynbee, *The Verdict: Did Labour Change Britain* (London: Granta Books, 2011), p105.

¹¹⁵ Mark Ravenhill, 'Playwrights are more important than politicians. So why do powerful people mesmerize them?', *The Guardian*, 16 March 2009, < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/mar/16/mark-ravenhill-playwrights-politicians> > [accessed 20 January 2017]

¹¹⁶ Ric Knowles, *Reading The Material Theatre* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2004), p. 53.

¹¹⁷ The Arts Council suggest that making a distinction between profit and not for profit theatre was once 'prevalent'. See Arts Council, *Analysis of Theatre in England: A Strategic Overview*, 2018. < <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Analysis%20of%20Theatre%20in%20England%20report%20-%20Arts%20Council%20response.pdf> > [accessed 15 April 2019]

The “theatre industry”[...] is not the singular entity the term suggests. There is no single operating paradigm, [...] but an indefinable range of operating constitutions [...] Furthermore, the spectrum of productions types [...] would challenge even the most assiduous taxonomist.¹¹⁸

In order to understand theatre’s financial structures, Hetherington attempted to group theatre into three ‘operating models’ for regional theatre, as follows:

- i. Subsidised Production companies. [where he defines ‘subsidised’, as financial support granted by the state or public body]
- ii. “Receiving Theatres” operated by independent trusts. [who put on others’ work]
- iii. Private profit distributing limited companies. [which still may have some public funding]¹¹⁹

But ultimately Hetherington concludes that this taxonomy is flawed: ‘Any notion of there being simply a “commercial” and a “subsidised” theatre is misleading.’¹²⁰ Hetherington observes that in recent years amidst the broad rise of differing sources of subsidy (Arts Council, Local government, Lottery, European commission, etc...), the overlap between market-driven and subsidised theatre makes identifying differing operating models almost unworkable. Part of this complexity of operating structures is due to the numerous changes to theatre funding made by John Major’s creation of the National Lottery and by Tony Blair’s particular focus on increasing funding in amount and availability for theatre from the early 2000s.

Since the Second World War subsidised theatre in the United Kingdom has been funded via an arms-length approach by Central government who use the Arts Council as its distribution channel. Alongside its support of the wider Arts’ sector, The Arts Council provides grants to a broad range of theatres, theatre companies and practitioners as well as funding for ad-hoc projects, festivals or causes. However, local authorities also tend to support regional theatres as part of their civic responsibility while private sponsorship, philanthropy and more recently grants from the European Commission have offered varying degrees of support over the post-war decades.¹²¹ Nevertheless, the Arts Council is the most influential source of funding for subsidised theatre across Britain. However, because the Arts Council is effectively an arm of the Treasury, funding is subject to the fluid influence of economic circumstances and the particular focus given to theatre, or certain types and locations of theatre, by the government of the day.

The latter point is often ideologically bound. Jen Harvie notes how, following its inception, the Arts Council initially centred much of its funds on selected metropolitan

¹¹⁸ Stephen Hetherington, *The Interdependence of Public and Private Finance in British Theatre* (Manchester: Arts Council England, August 2015), p.8.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 55.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 72.

¹²¹ Olivia Turnbull, *Bringing Down the House: The Crisis in Britain's Regional Theatres* (Bristol: Intellect books, 2008) provides a good overview of how this works at the regional level.

theatres through the 1950s. However in the 1960s and 1970s, government policy aimed to broaden the reach of subsidized theatre by increasing support to the regions. She observes there was 'a more democratic emphasis on socializing, achieved by offering 'the best to the most.'"¹²² However, during the Margaret Thatcher government that spanned the 1980s, all arts funding suffered significantly, as Michael Billington summarises: 'Her tenure began with a 4.8% cut to Arts Council grants and ended with one of 2.9%.' For this Conservative government, self-funding was seen as integral to any going concern no matter its aesthetic or communal merit. In the same article, Billington recalls Margaret Thatcher's reprimand to the Director of the National Theatre, Peter Hall. When Hall complained about the state of British theatre to Margaret Thatcher, she contradicted him and she 'pointed to the popularity of [British] theatre the world over. "Look", she said with menacing, jabbing finger "at Andrew LLOYD Webber."'"¹²³

The larger government approach and policy of restricted Arts Funding did not directly change under John Major's following administration, from 1990 to 1997. As an indication of continued underfunding, the Liverpool Playhouse almost went bankrupt in 1990 and the Liverpool Everyman was forced to close in 1993.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, a number of Major's new policies paved the way for significant and beneficial changes to British subsidised theatre. The Department of National Heritage was set up in 1992 to provide, as Aleks Sierz explains, the very 'first ministry for culture' that began to enable a unified government focus for culture, even if mostly that linked to heritage.¹²⁵ The second was brought about by the unexpected success of the National Lottery, which was first introduced in 1994 under the management of the Camelot group. This provided a wholly new stream of revenue that would be made available to cultural activities and other charitable causes. Baz Kershaw notes that between '1994 and 2000, 10 billion pounds was raised' by the National Lottery and that taking 1995-96 as an example, the Arts Council was able to distribute some extra '£340 million [...] to the professional theatre.'¹²⁶ This funding was only granted for building renovations and other capital projects but it allowed theatres such as the Royal Court to begin refurbishment without impacting its regular grant-in-aid funding stream. For Kershaw, Lottery funds began 'belatedly remedying the chronic decline in the architectural fabric of British Theatre.'¹²⁷ This did often mean that within richly refurbished buildings, workers and productions remained on limiting budgets.

Despite these constraints, it is the middle years of Major's government in the 1990s that saw the apparent paradigm shift to a new style of theatre and Aleks Sierz's explanation

¹²² Jen Harvie, 'Nationalizing the 'Creative Industries'', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Volume 13, No. 1 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), pp. 15-32.

¹²³ Michael Billington, 'Margaret Thatcher Casts a Long Shadow Over Theatre and the Arts', *The Guardian*, 8 April 2013 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/apr/08/margaret-thatcher-long-shadow-theatre> > [accessed 1 December 2016]

¹²⁴ Aleks Sierz, *Modern British Playwriting: the 1990s* (London: Methuen, 2012), p. 32.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Baz Kershaw, *The Cambridge History of British Theatre* (Cambridge, C.U.P., 2004), pp. 430-432. Ruth Blandina M. Quinn's, *Public Policy and the Arts: A Comparative Study of Great Britain and Ireland* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), provides an analysis of the earlier parts of John Major's administration.

¹²⁷ Baz Kershaw, *The Cambridge History of British Theatre* (Cambridge, C.U.P., 2004), p. 431.

of an 'avant-garde of 'In Yer Face' writers'.¹²⁸ 'In Yer Face' seemed like a new style of theatre with a number of young playwrights producing works that were seen as being provocative and shockingly violent. The Victoria and Albert Museum now define it as a historic movement that was 'aggressive, raw, confrontational and angry. Designed to assault the audience's sensibilities'.¹²⁹ Anthony Neilsen's 1993 play *Penetrator* arguably initiated the new spirit, but Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) and Sarah Kane's ground-breaking first production of *Blasted* (1995) symbolised the new dramatic movement. Aleks Sierz noted in 1999 how such theatre seemed caught up in the alleged British pop and art renaissance of 'Cool Britannia', and recalled how infamous and popular this new theatrical form was, suddenly 'theatre was somehow newsworthy again [...] Wherever you looked.'¹³⁰ In a separate and reflective article in 2003, Sierz argues that, 'In Yer Face' dates 'from about 1994,' and notes that, despite Lottery funding, this took place in a time of relative austerity for theatre funding.¹³¹

Nonetheless, Lottery funding was perhaps making some difference. These new and more indirect approaches to arts' support were extended by New Labour who in September 1997 established a referendum in Wales and Scotland to create a National Assembly with limited devolution of certain government responsibilities. This meant that these nations eventually became able to control much of their own Arts' budget and so their theatre could become a question of regional rather than national funding and control. Jen Harvie cautiously suggested in 2003, that these benefits of Blair's 'New Britain' were significant and she argued that 'positively, this shift can be credited for imagining the UK's parts more equitably [...] and actually facilitating more democratic expression.'¹³²

New Labour's landslide victory in May 1997 was a pivotal source of change for direct funding and of great optimism for British subsidised theatre and the arts generally. New Labour appeared to offer a future where the arts could gain in finance and profile as part of the wave of national pride in British culture nominally captured in the already extant phrase 'Cool Britannia'. A buoyant confidence that was symbolised by Noel Gallagher of the band *Oasis* claiming the party was 'Top' whilst celebrating amongst other doyens of Indie Music at a gathering in No.10 Downing Street in July, only 2 months after Blair's election victory.¹³³ In the same month, the Department of Heritage lost the conservative connotations of 'Heritage' and became the more contemporary Department of Culture,

¹²⁸ Aleks Sierz, 'Art Flourishes in Times of Struggle': Creativity, Funding and New Writing, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Volume13, No. 1 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), p. 36.

¹²⁹ Victoria and Albert Museum, 'Modern Theatre: 'In Yer Face' Theatre', V&A < <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/m/in-yer-face-theatre/> > [accessed 29 March 2019]

¹³⁰ Aleks Sierz, 'Cool Britannia? 'In Yer Face' Writing in the British Theatre Today', *New Theatre Quarterly* 56, Vol 14, Part 4 (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1999) p. 324.

¹³¹ Aleks Sierz, 'Art Flourishes in Times of Struggle', p. 36.

¹³² Jen Harvie, 'Nationalizing the 'Creative Industries'', p.21.

¹³³ Stuart Jeffries, 'So How Did We Do?', *The Guardian*, 2 May 2007 < <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/may/02/politicsandthearts.artsfunding1> > [accessed 2 December 2016]

Media and Sport (D.C.M.S.) under the thoughtful leadership of new Culture Secretary, Chris Smith.

These moves were reassuringly in-line with the 1997 Labour Party Manifesto, which had declared New Labour's commitment to the arts in strident terms:

Arts and culture

The arts, culture and sport are central to the task of recreating the sense of community, identity and civic pride that should define our country. Yet we consistently undervalue the role of the arts and culture in helping to create a civic society - from amateur theatre to our art galleries.

Art, sport and leisure are vital to our quality of life and the renewal of our economy. They are significant earners for Britain.¹³⁴

This commitment to the arts was extended in Tony Blair's preface to the *Labour Party's Strategy for Cultural Policy*, where the arts were to become part of the government's 'core script'. Blair argued:

The arts and cultural industries help define who we are as a nation. They enrich our quality of life and create a thriving society. They have enormous economic benefits and bring enjoyment to millions and for far too long arts and culture have stood outside the mainstream, their potential unrecognised in Government. It has to change and under Labour it will.¹³⁵

Ten years later, in 2007, for many involved in arts funding this promise had been fulfilled. Christopher Frayling, then Chairman of the Arts Council England reviewed the first ten years of New Labour by saying 'I think this has been a golden age for the arts in Britain. I really believe that.'¹³⁶ Whilst the new government began slowly in order to keep some of John Major's budgetary controls in place, the following table shows New Labour's financial commitment to the arts was both honoured and significant:

¹³⁴ 'Labour Party Manifesto 1997', *Political Science Resources*, ed. Richard Kimber < <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man/lab97.htm> >[accessed 1 December 2016]

¹³⁵ HL Deb 15 Mar 2000, Column 1631, Lords Hansard, < <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199900/ldhansrd/vo000315/text/00315-11.htm> > [accessed 1 December 2016]

¹³⁶ Stuart Jeffries, 'So How Did We Do?'

Table 1: ACE Grant In Aid Income and Arts Expenditure (£000s)¹³⁷

Year	Cash Terms		Real Terms (2014/2015 Prices)			
	Income	Expenditure	Income	Expenditure	Income PC	Expenditure PC
1994/95	185,990	179,921	296,465	286,791	6.15	5.93
1995/96	191,133	186,095	295,734	287,939	6.11	5.93
1996/97	185,133	187,899	275,017	279,126	5.67	5.74
1997/98	186,600	190,580	272,931	278,752	5.61	5.71
1998/99	189,950	196,942	272,642	282,678	5.58	5.77
1999/00	228,250	222,469	324,920	316,691	6.63	6.43
2000/01	237,155	236,215	329,932	328,624	6.70	6.65
2001/02	251,455	244,211	345,088	335,146	6.98	6.75
2002/03	289,405	275,847	387,055	368,922	7.79	7.39
2003/04	324,955	308,543	423,609	402,215	8.48	8.01
2004/05	368,859	345,288	466,302	436,504	9.29	8.63
2005/06	408,678	380,826	501,957	467,748	9.92	9.18
2006/07	426,531	404,158	508,847	482,156	9.98	9.38
2007/08	423,601	403,868	491,342	468,454	9.56	9.04
2008/09	437,631	412,380	494,515	465,982	9.54	8.93
2009/10	452,964	429,860	500,021	474,517	9.58	9.01
2010/11	438,523	435,140	469,969	466,343	8.93	8.78
2011/12	393,602	375,270	415,380	396,034	7.82	7.40

¹³⁷ Noel Dempsey, *Arts Funding: Statistics*, Briefing Paper No., CBP 7655 (London: House of Commons Library, 27 April 2016) < researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7655/CBP-7655.pdf > [Accessed 15 April 2019] Printed with kind permission: Crown Copyright (Open Government Licence) as per < <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/> > [accessed 3 July 2018]

The 'Cash Terms – Income' column in the table above shows the funding from the Department of Heritage and later the Department of Culture Media and Sport. The table shows that under Tony Blair's New Labour alone, funding increased from £186,600,000 in 1997 by over double to £423,601,000 by 2007 and this does not include the figures for National Lottery funding and other ad-hoc subsidies. The funding drops significantly with the new coalition in 2011.

However, some of New Labour's funding changes were slow to start. The table shows negligible change in funding from John Major's later term until 2000/2001. The delayed boost in funding was so slow it seemed almost too late.

Because of New Labour's initial spending controls, many regional theatres were still struggling throughout the later years of the 1990s. *The British Theatre Guide* in a later article noted that research at the time showed that out of 50 regional theatres inspected, 30 were 'trading insolvently'.¹³⁸ Seemingly as a response to these concerns, the Arts Council in 1998 commissioned a review of Regional Theatre to be undertaken by Peter Boyden Associates and the report published in 2000 was unusually direct in stating that regional theatre was dying through underfunding and that a little funding would provide considerable returns. Dan Rebellato underlines New Labour's response: 'To its eternal credit the Government listened.'¹³⁹ The Arts Council were swiftly granted a further £25 million pounds and almost overnight regional theatre was stabilised, as Michael Billington notes:

The result was an exponential leap in funding over the next three years: increases of 91 per cent for Sheffield theatres, 112 per cent for Newcastle's Live Theatre [...] theatres large and small benefitted from the post-Boyden boom.¹⁴⁰

Thus from 2000 onwards, a number of theatres were in significantly better health than they had been for well over a decade. Consequently, some of the key stages for hosting political drama such as the Tricycle theatre, source of *Justifying War*, and the Royal Court, home of *Advice to Iraqi Women*, became financially and dramatically reinvigorated by New Labour's budgets just in time for the Iraq war of 2003. Billington in 2007 saw this as 'the ultimate irony of the Blair years' that New Labour's 'extra cash has enabled British theatre to resume its traditional oppositional role.'¹⁴¹

The plays produced in this period seem to suggest that this might well have been a 'golden age'. One of the period's first award winners was *East is East* in 1998 by Ayub Khan-Din and together with Joe Penhall's *Blue/Orange* at the National, these suggested a Britain genuinely considering coming to terms with its racial diversity. Mark Ravenhill's *Mother Clapp's Molly House* repositioned the history of sexual diversity while Gregory Burke's *Gagarin Way* in 2001, 1997's *The Weir* by Conor McPherson and Martin McDonagh's *A Skull in Connemara* suggested that the regional tensions within the United

¹³⁸ 'Is Regional Theatre Dying?' *The British Theatre Guide*, ed. David Chadderton, 20 February 2000 < <http://www.britishtheatreinfo.info/articles/200200a.htm> > [accessed 16 November 2016]

¹³⁹ Dan Rebellato, *Modern British Playwriting 2000-2009: Voices, Documents, New Interpretations* (London: Methuen, 2013), p.70.

¹⁴⁰ Michael Billington, 'Tony Blair: British Theatre's Accidental Hero', *The Guardian*, 3 May 2007 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2007/may/03/tonyblairbritishtheatre> > [accessed 1 December 2016]

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Kingdom were now ready to be brought to the capital and embraced. New work by Sarah Kane, Jez Butterworth, Caryl Churchill and Martin Crimp, seemed to indicate that theatre was becoming less 'In Yer Face' and more experimental. The reworked musical about the 1960s' pools winner Viv Nicholson, in *Spend, Spend, Spend*, seemed far more relevant in 1998 than 1999's austere version of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. And it was perhaps appropriate that Blair's term came to a close with Tom Stoppard's 2007 *Rock n Roll*. This play, presented at the Lottery refurbished Royal Court, explored pop music's liberatory role in the demise of Soviet communism. The play celebrates the death of the collectivist East, won an Olivier award for Rufus Sewell as Best Actor, and is perhaps a fitting theatrical testament to a Tony Blair who had changed the Labour Party's 1917 commitment: 'To secure [...] common ownership of the means of production', to 1995's significantly less socialist: 'By the strength of our common endeavour [...] to create a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many'.¹⁴²

Jen Harvie writing in 2013 about the later Coalition government, seems tentative in agreeing and ascribing the New Labour period as a 'golden age' of arts' funding but notes that in the context of later Conservative/Liberal cuts, New Labour's term of office seemed 'golden' by comparison. Under New Labour:

ACE's total investment [...] grew in cash terms by 130 per cent [...] alongside project awards from the grants [...] totalling almost £65 million [...] because of these comparatively well-supported contexts [...] the cuts announced in March 2011 were acutely felt.¹⁴³

By the end of Blair's term the arts seemed transformed. Robert Hewison summarises some of New Labour's achievements apart from just the arts' funding there was:

The removal of all entry charges to all national museums and galleries [...] the nation's cultural infrastructure had been refurbished from the Great Court of the British museum to the Sage Gateshead [...] regional theatres, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre were adventurous, and their theatres full.

Hewison notes so thriving were the arts that:

Labour's 2010 cultural manifesto, *Creative Britain*, boasted that the 'creative industries' contributed 10 per cent of Gross Domestic Product.¹⁴⁴

Yet, all of this new finance and focus seemed to come at a significant cost to the independence of the arts and theatre as is inferred in Hewison's references to 'creative industries' and 'Gross Domestic Product.' New Labour supported the arts because alongside, and seemingly above its aesthetic and communal value, they saw it as financially profitable and untapped. Even if many theatres had difficulty making a profit, the larger cultural environment they promoted stimulated economic growth in the form of employment, tourism, international sales and national 'branding', or so it was argued.

¹⁴² For a broad discussion of Clause iv's evolving significance to the Labour Party, see Tudor Jones, *Remaking the Labour Party: From Gaitskell to Blair* (London: Routledge, 2005)

¹⁴³ Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*, (New York: Springer, 2013), p. 156.

¹⁴⁴ Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital: The Rise and Fall of Creative Britain* (London: Verso, 2014), p. 2.

For many critics, New Labour were blatantly inducing the arts, a key source of independent cultural comment, into the market place and aiming to thoroughly commodify it. Contemporary concerns about this are summarised by the cultural critic Martin Stott:

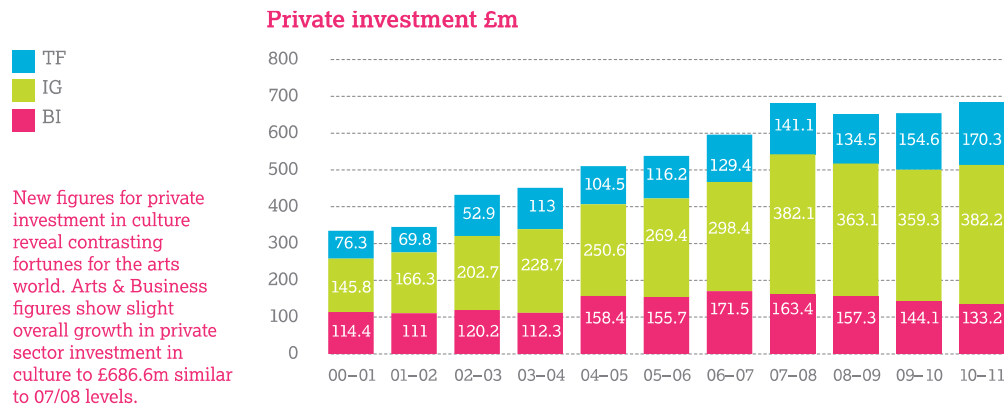
The 1997 Blair Government offered the arts a Faustian pact. In exchange for an increase [...] in the budget of the Department of Culture Media and Sport [...] the cultural sector was expected to deliver government economic and social policy agendas [...] by redefining the cultural sector as part of the 'creative industries' which consisted of commercial enterprises in a range of sectors as diverse as [...] the arts and antiques market.¹⁴⁵

New Labour's aim to absorb theatre into the market was part of a wider accommodation of neoliberalist values, which were called 'Third Way' policies. This was a Gestalt shift in the traditional nationalising focus of Labour Party strategy as the breadth of the private sector was fully embraced even in areas that were traditionally 'verboden' to the market such as health and education. New Labour attempted to bring together the private and public sectors with the aim of exploiting the benefits of both. This was managed through Private Finance Initiatives (P.F.I.s) in health, education, transport and a range of other government ministries. Under P.F.I.s, private consortia were set up to provide a building or public service and the government would repay them over a 25-30 year period. These were first introduced in 1992 by John Major's government amidst fierce protest from the Labour party who felt this was a form of privatisation by stealth.¹⁴⁶ Yet, this became a central tenet of New Labour's administration approach from 1997. Then, it appeared to achieve significant developments in the nation's infrastructure with new hospitals, transport stock and I.T. systems implemented across the Public sector, the costs of which would be repaid by the Treasury at a future date.

New Labour attempted to apply the same logic to the markedly different world of the arts. Much of which was funded by grants from the D.C.M.S.. New Labour worked hard to develop public-private sponsorship deals and was moderately successful. The charity Arts & Business, which then worked to connect business and the arts in England, shows the relative success of private funding for the arts from 2000 to the end of the New Labour period:

¹⁴⁵ Martin Stott, *Cultural capital: creative Britain in the age of New Labour*, 24 June 2015 < <http://martin-stott.com/2015/06/cultural-capital-creative-britain-in-the-age-of-new-labour/> > [accessed 5 December 2016]

¹⁴⁶ Colin Brown, 'Labour Pledge on NHS Schemes', *The Independent*, 25 February 1997 < <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/labour-pledge-on-nhs-schemes-1280518.html> > [accessed 2 January 2017]



Key: TF: Trust Funds; IG: Individual Giving; BI: Business Investment

Figure 12: Schematic representation of private Sponsorship from 200- to 2011.¹⁴⁷

The above graph shows that private funding reached a peak of £686,600,000 in 2007/8 over double the figures for the millennium and showed a consistent growth until the recession of 2008.

As a percentage of theatre revenue, corporate sponsorship remained minimal in the New Labour period but it grew in significance in London and its dominant theatres. In 2010/11 of all private investment, 71.23% was allocated to organisations in London.¹⁴⁸ Whilst regional theatres continued to be predominantly reliant on Arts Council funding, the larger theatres such as the Royal Court, Royal Shakespeare Company and The National continued their work that had been so vital under the previous Conservative governments, to develop sponsorship deals for plays or periods of time with a range of private organisations. These sponsoring organisations ranged from financial services companies such as KPMG, merchant banks such as Coutts & Co, ticketing businesses like Travelex (which still sponsors the National), to the more recent and high profile involvement of Oil companies such as BP and Shell. The latter whose sponsorship of the Royal Shakespeare Company prompted outrage from notable actors and directors such as Mark Rylance and Christopher Haydon and inspired the creation of the 'Art not Oil' Coalition in 2004. A group who felt, in language that echoed BP's environmental disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, 'that oil company logos represent a stain on our cultural institutions.'¹⁴⁹ Less newsworthy, was KPMG's planned sponsorship of Alan Bennet's *The Habit of Art* in 2009, which was swiftly cancelled when in a conservative reaction, according to *The Financial Times*, 'the firm saw the script, which was peppered with swearing and gay innuendo' and 'it pulled out'.¹⁵⁰ The aims of art and business were often hard to marry without compromise.

¹⁴⁷ Reproduced with kind permission of Arts & Business (now Business in the Community-see App. IV) Arts & Business, *Private Investment in Culture 2010/11* (London: Arts & Business, 2012), p.16. < <http://artsandbusiness.bitc.org.uk/system/files/artsandbusiness-private-investment-in-culture10-11.pdf>> [accessed 19 January 2017]

¹⁴⁸ Arts & Business, *Private Investment in Culture 2010/11* (London: Arts & Business, 2012), p.16. < <http://artsandbusiness.bitc.org.uk/system/files/artsandbusiness-private-investment-in-culture10-11.pdf>> [accessed 19 January 2017]

¹⁴⁹ Art Not Oil Coalition, 'About Us' (London: Art Not Oil. 2013) < <http://www.artnotoil.org.uk/about-us> > [accessed 4 January 2017]

¹⁵⁰ Stephen Wilmot, 'Sponsorship: hip to be arty', *The Financial Times*, 30 September 2011 < <https://www.ft.com/content/4bb31bee-e38b-11e0-8f47-00144feabdc0> > [accessed 9 January 2017]

Similar clashes were evolving at the Royal Court who, despite gaining Lottery Funding and grants in excess of £25 million for their new building work, had trouble raising the matching funding as was a condition of the grant. Due to reopen in 1998, it was delayed for over a year until the £3 million shortfall was offered by an organisation already linked to the Royal Court, the Jerwood Foundation.¹⁵¹ This was not a private company but a charitable fund created by a cultured pearl magnate: John Jerwood, upon whose death the trust fund came under the control of the lawyer Alan Grieve.¹⁵² The Jerwood Foundation's registered office is based in Liechtenstein, as with a range of other tax-sensitive major banks and corporations, but the larger complaint was that the Jerwood Foundation's deal with the Royal Court was on the condition that the two stages be renamed the Jerwood Theatre Upstairs and Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, as they remain.¹⁵³ Renaming the theatre renowned for its anti-authoritarian stance, to one connected to tax havens, was a contentious decision. Peter Hall boldly stated in *The Independent* that this was a:

Typical sign of the times [...] The Royal Court isn't the Jerwood theatre. It has 100 years of history, and Jerwood are buying those 100 years for pounds 3m [sic].¹⁵⁴

Caryl Churchill whose plays were regularly staged here argued that to have a sponsor's name on the building 'was the start of a slippery slope.'¹⁵⁵ A problem not helped when a report in *The Times* had the Jerwood Foundation's Alan Grieve stating that 'he occasionally read scripts as part of his current association' with the Royal Court.¹⁵⁶ Although the sponsorship deal went ahead, it seemed clear that via private sponsorship the theatre was edging closer to the corporate world and its market values.

Nonetheless, corporate sponsorship in the New Labour period remained fairly minimal. Arts & Business note in a representative snapshot of 2010/11 that theatre received only 7% of the total budget of private investments, significantly less than the more conservative areas of Heritage, Museums and Art Galleries as illustrated in the graph below:

¹⁵¹ Philip Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and The Modern Stage* (Cambridge: C.U.P, 1999) pp., 227-229.

¹⁵² Simon Tait, 'Taking the Stade: Jerwood Gallery Opens at Hastings', *The Critics' Circle* < <http://www.criticcircle.org.uk/visual-arts/Default.asp?ID=281&offset=10> > [accessed 4 January 2017]

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ David Lister, 'Anger as Royal Court puts sponsor's name up in lights', *The Independent*, 3 December 1998 < <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/anger-as-royal-court-puts-sponsors-name-up-in-lights-1188783.html> > [accessed 6 January 2017]

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in: Philip Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and The Modern Stage* (Cambridge: C.U.P, 1999), p. 228.

¹⁵⁶ Philip Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and The Modern Stage* (Cambridge: C.U.P, 1999), p. 228.

Cultural activity and private investment

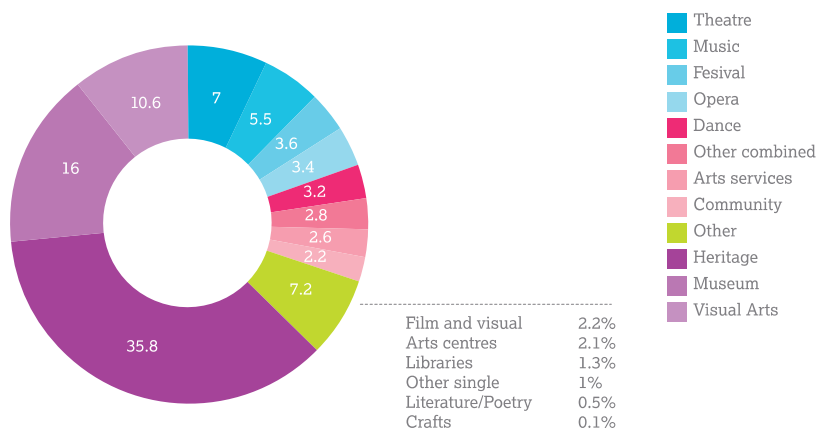


Figure 13: Schematic representation of Private Sponsorship in 2010/11 as percentage of arts sector funded.¹⁵⁷

The following graph also highlights how Heritage, Museums and Visual Arts dominated private investment and the fact that Business Investment contributed less than a third of Theatre’s Private Investment in 2010/11:

Private investment £m

¹⁵⁷ Reproduced with kind permission of Arts & Business (now Business in the Community-see App. IV) Arts & Business, *Private Investment in Culture 2010/11* (London: Arts & Business, 2012), p.29. < <http://artsandbusiness.bitc.org.uk/system/files/artsandbusiness-private-investment-in-culture10-11.pdf>> [accessed 19 January 2017]

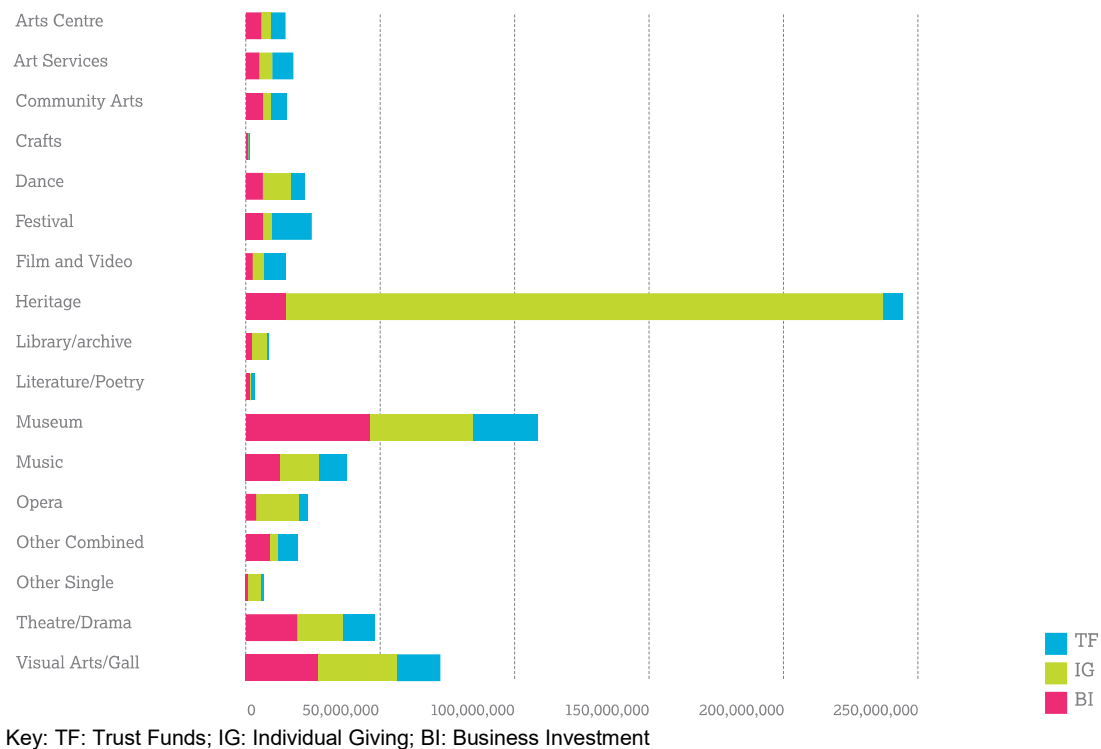


Figure 14: Schematic representation of Private Sponsorship in 2010/11 by investment type and arts organisation.¹⁵⁸

The figures on private sponsorship for a wider period are particularly difficult to obtain, as Susanna Rustin and George Arnett point out:

Details of specific deals are usually secret, because neither arts organisations nor sponsors want their rivals to know exactly what is changing hands.¹⁵⁹

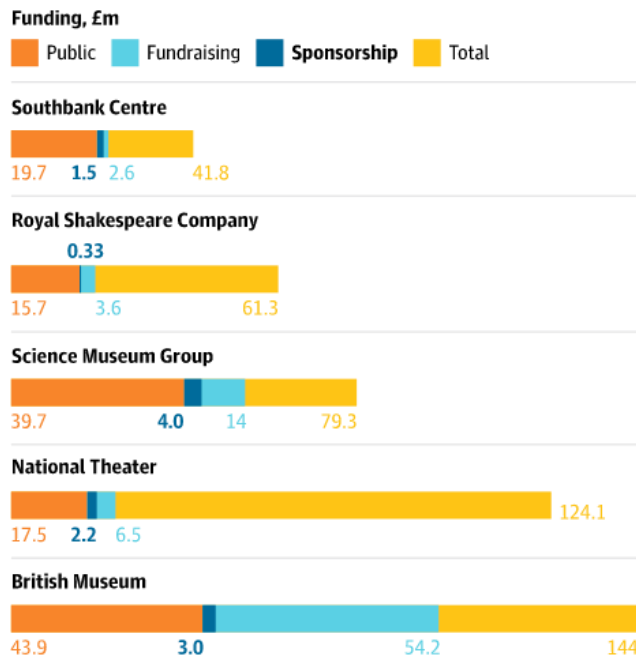
However, a recent survey by Arts & Business referenced in Rustin and Arnett, believes that private sponsorship has never achieved much dominance in the overall budgets of even large London theatres or Arts' establishments and is now 'on the wane'.¹⁶⁰ The following graph produced by research in 2015 shows that sponsorship of the National Theatre and The Royal Shakespeare company was always dwarfed by public funding and a negligible contributor to overall funding:

¹⁵⁸ Reproduced with kind permission of Arts & Business (now Business in the Community-see App. IV) Arts & Business, *Private Investment in Culture 2010/11* (London: Arts & Business, 2012), p.30. < <http://artsandbusiness.bitc.org.uk/system/files/artsandbusiness-private-investment-in-culture10-11.pdf>> [accessed 19 January 2017]

¹⁵⁹ Susanna Rustin and George Arnett, 'The Sponsorship Files: Who Funds Our Biggest Arts Institutions?', *The Guardian*, 2 March 2015 < <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/mar/02/arts-corporate-sponsorship-tate-british-museum>> [accessed 2 January 2017] [Copyright granted via Open Licence agreement: <http://syndication.theguardian.com/open-licence-terms/>]

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Cash for culture What do sponsors pay?



GUARDIAN GRAPHIC

Figure 15: Schematic representation of Cash Sources for selected arts institutions in 2015 (Reproduced with permission of Guardian News & Media Ltd – See App. IV.)¹⁶¹

Nevertheless, as the experience of the Royal Court and Jerwood Foundation shows, private organisations could achieve a significantly high-profile and some influence, for a relatively small investment.

Despite this, New Labour's approach to commodifying theatre was not fundamentally by encouraging private sector funding, but rather to attempt to implement the market by coding both its inputs: public sector financial grants and its perceived outputs: revenue, employment and social cohesion, with corporate marketing, targeting, measurement and language.

New Labour clearly came to power committed to widening the role of the arts. This had been referenced in New Labour's pre-electoral commitments and peppered their early speeches often within the larger rhetoric of 'the equal worth of all'.¹⁶² Soon after New Labour came to power they drew up plans to implement the Human Rights Act (1998) then they seemingly democratised the old cultural order of the Department of Heritage by renaming it the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. As such, it appeared that Arts' policy was being remodelled in terms of access to culture as a fundamental human right.¹⁶³ The D.C.M.S.'s First Minister, Chris Smith argued in a 1998 public speech that the renaming signalled a new era of cultural egalitarianism: New Labour:

¹⁶¹ Susanna Rustin and George Arnett, 'The Sponsorship Files: Who Funds Our Biggest Arts Institutions?', *The Guardian*, 2 March 2015 Copyright granted via Open Licence agreement: <http://syndication.theguardian.com/open-licence-terms/>

¹⁶² BBC News, 'Politics: Tony Blair's Speech in Full', *BBC Online*, 28 September 1999 < http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/460009.stm > [accessed 18 January 2017]

¹⁶³ It was of course this same commitment to justice on an international stage that Jack Straw argued justified invading Iraq. The main crime being 'Saddam's human rights abuses'. 'Full text: Jack Straw's Speech: The Foreign Secretary's speech to Chatham House, February 212003, *The*

Wanted something more forward looking a name that captured more accurately the new spirit of modern Britain that signalled the involvement of all.¹⁶⁴

Alongside the renaming, New Labour set out four targets to embody the new, democratising role of the D.C.M.S.: Access, Excellence, Education and Economic Value.

These targets were to be cascaded down from the Treasury, through the D.C.M.S., local authorities and regional boards so that each funding body or recipient received tailored targets along with the subsidy. How well these targets were met would then be measured and influence any future granting of budgets. This style of corporate accountability became popular under Margaret Thatcher and it was accentuated under New Labour. Tony Blair had warned in his 1998 *Third Way* pamphlet that 'in all areas [of Public Services] monitoring and inspection are playing a key role as an incentive to higher standards.'¹⁶⁵ This, termed 'managerialist', process of targets and measurements became one of the costs of significantly increased funding. Yet such targeting was argued as eminently justified because New Labour needed them to help establish and maintain the economic growth, social cohesion and social diversity that theatre seemed to provide. Because, New Labour saw theatre as a cultural instrument whose unexplored benefits could be both economic and socially democratic.

Chris Smith clearly expressed these ideas in terms of New Labour's concern about the:

Individual citizen [...] no matter how high or low their station having the chance to share cultural experience [...] This is a profoundly democratic agenda seeing cultural access as one of the egalitarian building blocks of society.¹⁶⁶

These were bold ambitions for a national subsidised Arts' policy whose 'largest client', funded by the Arts Council was and continues to be the Royal Opera House, receiving £26.5 million in 2014.¹⁶⁷

New Labour believed that this investment and commitment to arts and culture was also financially vindicated as various reports on the Arts' economic value argued that a little economic investment would create manifold profits and social dividends. An early report into the value of the Arts by J. Myerscough from the Policy Studies Institute in 1998, found that the Arts' sector was worth £10bn pounds to the British economy and employed approximately 500,000 people.¹⁶⁸ According to Robert Hewison this was roughly the same economic size as the motor industry.¹⁶⁹ Following this, an official D.C.M.S. 'Task Force' was set up to consider what might be included as a 'Creative

Guardian, 21/2/20018 < <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/feb/21/foreignpolicy.iraq> > [accessed 15 March 2019]

¹⁶⁴ Chris Smith, *Creative Britain* (London: Faber & Faber, 1998), p. 2.

¹⁶⁵ Tony Blair, *The Third Way: New Politics for a New Century* (London: The Fabian Society, 1998), pp.16-17.

¹⁶⁶ Chris Smith, *Creative Britain*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, p.27.

¹⁶⁸ John Myerscough, *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1998)

¹⁶⁹ Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, p.34.

Industry'. The Task Force included notable names such as Richard Branson and Lord Putnam who concluded that 'Software & Computing', 'Advertising', 'TV & Radio' and 'Performing Arts' amongst others, might be called 'Creative Industries'. Together they produced a *Creative Industries Mapping Document* that, as Hewison summarises, stated that the business sector was worth '£60 billion a year' and employed three times the number of people Myerscough had reported: '1.4 million' workers.¹⁷⁰ A 2001 update to the Mapping Document suggested these impressive figures were on the rise.¹⁷¹ As such, there was a growing confidence in the Arts and a clear statement that the government saw the 'Performing Arts' as already market-ready and appropriate to be considered in the same context as 'Computing' and 'Advertising'.

The Task Force had included the burgeoning 'Software and Computing' sector as they felt it was creative in design and production, and it is noticeable that both Mapping Documents show that the largest revenue earner and employer is 'Software and Computer Services'. This sector's inclusion skewed the figures and as Hewison notes, the 'Software & Computing' sector shrank significantly after the dotcom crash of 2001 and the overall figures became less impressive.¹⁷²

One of the key problems for New Labour was that there was very little agreed and widely researched financial data on exactly what the theatre sector brought to the British economy in terms of profits, employment and measurable value. As such, numerous efforts to establish the economic worth of theatre were initiated under New Labour and whilst underwriting the commodification of theatre at the government level, these often helped to increase funding and guide allocation. A key report that looked at the economic value of theatre alone was Dominic Shellard's 2004, *Economic Impact Study of UK Theatre*. Based on 259 venues, this made confident claims for the theatre as a stand-alone industry, stating that 'Theatre has a huge economic impact', contributing £2.6 billion pounds annually to the economy. The fact this wealth was reasonably equally split across the nation with '1.5 billion pounds' from London and '1.1 billion pounds' from the regions, ensured any future investments would reflect this balance.¹⁷³ Despite this, another of Shellard's 'Key Conclusions' observed that even though his study 'commanded significant sector support [...] The theatre sector has not yet developed a framework for establishing its impact.' He expands upon this to note the absence not only of frameworks but agreed approaches to assessing the impact of theatre generally. Shellard observes the:

Relative scarcity of economic impact studies of local, regional or national theatrical activity. The Wyndham Report [...] (1998) is the most well known, but there are only a limited number of other studies.'¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, p.42.

¹⁷¹ Hewison's conclusions seem fair but his figures are a little in excess of the figures listed in the Appendix that compares the 1998 to the 2001 *Creative Industries Mapping Document*. See comparison table in the 'Appendix' to 2001 *Creative Industries Mapping Document* (London: Government Digital Service, 2001), pp. 1-5. < https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183558/Part3-Appendix2001.pdf >[accessed 18 January 2017]

¹⁷² Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, pp.42-43.

¹⁷³ Dominic Shellard, *Economic Impact Study of UK Theatre* (London: Arts Council England, 2004), p.8.

¹⁷⁴ Dominic Shellard, *Economic Impact Study of UK Theatre* (London: Arts Council England, 2004), p.9.

Despite New Labour's claim for theatre's impact as an aspect of the 'Performing Arts' sector, there was no agreement on how it could be accurately measured. These issues are inferred in Shellard's document, where he discusses his own report's approach to the key analytical questions, such as: should figures include economic impacts at static venues? If so, what about touring and outdoor groups? How should voluntary groups and workers be expressed in statistical form? Are foyer revenues, programs and printed play texts to be included? ...¹⁷⁵

If theatre had economic impact it seemed unclear how and from where this impact was born. Yet despite a lack of clarity on fiscal worth, New Labour remained committed to the arts as an instrument of social value. The nature of their aims is evident in four of the early Arts Council England (A.C.E.) targets under New Labour: 'Taking Part in the Arts, Children and Young People, Vibrant Communities and Celebrating Diversity'.¹⁷⁶ Such general themes persisted throughout the A.C.E. targets up to 2010. The Arts Council clearly embraced their new role. In the A.C.E. annual report of 2000, it stated that A.C.E. 'No longer simply gives out money. We set national policy'.¹⁷⁷ As Liz Tomlin notes, through the use of cascading targets and measurements, the A.C.E.:

Were now committed to support government objectives in urban regeneration, reducing unemployment, juvenile crime and social delinquency, improving access for young people to culture and education, supporting diversity initiatives [...] community cohesion [...] improving equal rights for minorities and those with disabilities.¹⁷⁸

In practice, this meant that an impressive range of new initiatives were introduced across the theatrical sector, from the metropolitan theatres to the regions, with a focus on embracing diversity and inequality. Notable developments included The Royal Court who, together with The National and Soho theatres, markedly increased their focus on new writing, concentrating on work from a range of disadvantaged groups and exporting their plays and writing workshops out into the community. One significant activity undertaken by the Royal Court was the creation of the 'Unheard Voices' scheme, set up to foster the work of non-British writers and theatre practitioners, which evolved to focus exclusively on young Muslim writers. More emblematically, and not venue-specific, the Alfred Fagon award was created in 1997 for playwrights of African and Caribbean descent. Roy Williams won the award at both ends of the New Labour era, in 1997 and 2010, suggesting his significance to the period.¹⁷⁹ A sign of New Labour's achievement is shown by the fact that this is the era in which Black British and Asian writers like Roy Williams, Kwame Kwei-Armah, Tanika Gupta and Debbie Tucker Green, amongst many others, were able to establish a consistent theatrical presence in the mainstream of subsidised theatre.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp.1-21.

¹⁷⁶ John Holden, *Publicly-funded culture and the creative Industries*, DEMOS/Arts Council England (London: Arts Council England, 2007), p.2.< <https://static.a-n.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/4175586.pdf>> [accessed 17 January 2017]

¹⁷⁷ Liz Tomlin, *British Theatre Companies: 1995-2014* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.33.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ For further examples see Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing, 1997-2007: Articulating the Demos* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.17

In the community and under the targeted banner of 'Access', from 2002 the D.C.M.S. began to fund a range of theatre projects especially focused on hard to access social groups. Street art, circuses and festivals began to see funding across the regions.¹⁸⁰ Increased funding on youth projects from 2000 resulted in initiatives to bring theatrical artists into schools via a Creative Partnerships' scheme aimed at developing joint long-term projects.

Whilst working as an English/Drama teacher in Hertfordshire, from 2007-2009, with responsibility for Gifted and Talented provision, I was personally involved in Creative Partnerships: developing bespoke theatre projects and turning Manga art into performance, alongside a local theatre company and the Reading Agency respectively.¹⁸¹ In my own personal, if perhaps limited, opinion these joint projects ably agreed with the government's own findings that Creative Partnerships allowed 'Access to individual tailored support [...] external co-ordination, creative professionals and continuing professional development for teachers.'¹⁸²

By 2009 and its demise, Creative Partnerships had worked with over 2,700 schools and 900,000 young people. Following the partially successful government-sponsored Year of Diversity in 2001, the Arts Council ring-fenced £5 million for black artists and curators.¹⁸³ This helped create projects such as The Young People's Participatory Theatre Project, which in turn helped form young people's projects such as *Zoop Zoop Hackney (2007)*.¹⁸⁴ Such ideas were multiplied and replicated widely across the troubled metropolitan and regional areas of England. As importantly, the period also saw a significant expansion of disability theatre with groups such as Graeae, Theatre Workshop and newer companies such as Mind the Gap and Deafinitely Theatre receiving extra funding. Many were presented at DaDaFest, a North West festival, the first such event that worked to promote the work of disabled and deaf art from 2001.¹⁸⁵ The theatrical world at this time seemed busy and vibrant with growing access and involvement in theatre and the arts that extended far beyond its historically usual regions, classes and ages. Thus in 1996 the Chairman of the Arts Council England Sir Christopher Grayling stated: 'People keep saying that the golden age for the arts was the 1950s, but I say that it is right here, right now.'¹⁸⁶

Despite this, there was a growing trend of targets and measurements that were often characterised as unwieldy and opaque. Hewison explores this in detail and notes that,

¹⁸⁰ V. Alexander, M. Rueschemeyer, *Art and the State: The Visual Arts in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Springer, 2005), p.88.

¹⁸¹ This was in 2007-2009 under the Headmastership of Philip Bunn at Monks Walk school in Hertfordshire. Funding was made available to work with David Kendall from the Reading Agency and Ilya a Manga artist to create a narrative and script for a long-term dramatic piece.. <<http://www.davidkendall.co.uk/blog/>> Additionally, the school worked with the Trestle Theatre Company to devise and perform selected extracts from their GCSE texts (Macbeth) in contemporary language. <<https://www.trestle.org.uk/schools>>

¹⁸² House of Commons, *Creative Partnerships and The Curriculum, Eleventh Report of Session 2006-07, report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence*, Education & Skills Committee (London: House of Commons Stationery Office, 31/10/2007), p.27.

¹⁸³ Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, p.86

¹⁸⁴ Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing, 1997-2007: Articulating the Demos* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p27.

¹⁸⁵ Liz Tomlin, *British Theatre Companies*, p.35.

¹⁸⁶ Stuart Jeffries, 'Arts & Craft', *The Guardian*, 22 July 2006 <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/jul/22/arts.visualarts>> [16 January 2017]

for 2001-04 the A.C.E. had four strategic priorities, six objectives and six targets; by 2005 these had grown to four targets and twenty-three indicators.¹⁸⁷ Although not as clearly demarked as Hewison suggests, the Arts Council report of 2005 details a plethora of measurements that seem difficult to clearly classify as one of: objective, target or indicator.¹⁸⁸ However, most of these seem highly laudable, if difficult to define or measure. For example, from the 2005 report, A.C.E. lists 'ambitions' on page one that seem hard to build targets around that are later termed 'strategic objectives' on page 169. These are:

- Supporting the artist
- Enabling organisations to thrive not just survive
- Championing cultural diversity
- Offering opportunities for young people
- Encouraging growth
- Living up to our values ¹⁸⁹

Despite this, other more statistically-friendly targets exist in the report that seem to sit below this level, termed 'official commitments'. These include numerical requirements for:

- Arts Participation (by under represented groups)
- Grants for the Arts
- Creative Partnerships
- Regularly Funded Organisation Activity
- Evaluation and customer satisfaction¹⁹⁰

However, these targets in turn seem distinct, neither dominant or nested, from a range of other targets (over fourteen) relating to the 'National Lottery' and a further list of separate aims around the A.C.E.'s regional reorganisation. Such targets suggest a dedicated commitment to the arts without much supporting lucidity. These targets continued to proliferate up to and beyond 2007. James Purnell, who became Secretary of State for Culture in 2007, commented that New Labour 'Spread targets on public services like a child sprinkles hundreds and thousands'.¹⁹¹

In everyday application, these targets meant a significant growth in paperwork and justification for the smallest request for funding. Maggie Inchley notes that at the level of community theatre, A.C.E. targets might mean that in order to receive a 'grant of up to £10,000', it was necessary to complete a tranche of corporate-styled forms and to develop a watertight statement of intention that would meet criteria such as 'championing cultural diversity'.¹⁹² Whilst it seems only fair that subsidised theatres justify their funding, the system was clearly muddy and overly bureaucratic. Moreover, by nature of the arcane procedures of documentation, bidding and criteria justification,

¹⁸⁷ Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, pp. 122-125.

¹⁸⁸ Arts Council England Annual Review 2005', *Arts Council England* (London: Arts Council, 2005) < https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/235128/0555.pdf > [accessed 17 January 2017]

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p2 & 169.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ James Purnell, 'Politics', *Prospect Magazine*, February 2011 (London: Prospect Publishing, 2011), p.10 < <https://reader.exacteditions.com/issues/8218/page/12> > [accessed 16 January 2017]

¹⁹² Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing*, p. 27.

the funding system tended to work against new applicants rather than established funding recipients familiar with the process. David Hare made this point in 2005. When discussing the growth of the Arts Council, Hare observed 'insane levels of bureaucracy' and a system designed to 'support a theatre gentocracy'.¹⁹³ Whilst the market language and procedures began to dominate the processes of Arts' funding, even members of New Labour questioned their actual utility. Although primarily referring to her experience at Education, Estelle Morris spoke candidly at the Cheltenham Literary Festival in 2003 that:

Target Performance indicators, value added, evidence bases [...] all [...] language we've developed to prove our ability to manage [...] but I don't always know how to manage or describe it.¹⁹⁴

If some New Labour targets seemed ill-conceived and tokenistic then so were some of its Arts' buildings. In the article mentioned above, David Hare criticised the Arts Council for pursuing 'madcap schemes'.¹⁹⁵ He was probably referring to the problems of the then homeless Royal Shakespeare Company but could equally have been commenting on the Millennium Dome or the problems surrounding the West Bromwich Arts Complex, 'The Public'.

West Bromwich was an area that suffered significant deprivation and social unrest in the 1980s despite the work of a community theatre group called Jubilee Arts, which had been operating out of a double-decker bus for many years.¹⁹⁶ It was felt by the local and Arts council that a new Arts complex was an excellent tool to help build social cohesion and so meet the then D.C.M.S. directive 'to recognise sustaining cultural diversity and using the arts to combat social exclusion and promote community development'.¹⁹⁷ A community theatre group came up with a multi-purpose, multi-technology, black-box design in conjunction with the Arts Council, the National Lottery, and the 'radical' architect, Will Alsop. Yet, this plan had serious flaws as regards what it might actually provide when completed, together with significant problems of cost, design and likely revenue generation. Despite costs spiralling, the architect and the theatre group going into administration, the Arts Council were determined to make The Public work and paid the unplanned and extra building costs, finally ending up contributing £31 million pounds up to partial completion in 2008. Then providing a further £600,000 annual grant to keep The Public running.¹⁹⁸ However, with continuing problems of function

¹⁹³ Chris Hastings, 'Sir David Hare Condemns the Arts Council for 'insane levels of bureaucracy and madcap schemes'', *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 February 2005 < <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1483927/Sir-David-Hare-condemns-the-Arts-Council-for-insane-levels-of-bureaucracy-and-madcap-schemes.html> > [accessed 18 February 2017]

¹⁹⁴ Estelle Morris, October 2003 Speech to Cheltenham Literary Festival, quoted in Muira Miza, ed., *Culture Vultures: Is UK Arts Policy Damaging the Arts?* (London: Policy Exchange, 2006), p. 42.

¹⁹⁵ Chris Hastings, 'Sir David Hare Condemns the Arts Council'

¹⁹⁶ Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, p. 87.

¹⁹⁷ Chris Smith, 'Policy Action Team 10: A Report to the Social Exclusion Unit', *D.C.M.S.*, p. 61. < http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/social_exclusion_task_force/assets/publications_1997_to_2006/pat_report_10.pdf? [accessed 18 January 2017]

¹⁹⁸ Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, pp. 88-91.

and revenue, in 2013 The Public closed and the building became primarily a sixth-form college, which it remains.¹⁹⁹ Oliver Wainwright sees The Public:

As a monument to an ill-conceived vision – the Black Country's great black elephant. "In summary," concluded a damning A.C.E. report in 2011, 'Arts Council England agreed to fund a building that was not fit for purpose.'²⁰⁰

The author of the A.C.E. report on The Public, Anthony Blackstock, blamed the A.C.E. target culture claiming 'the council was seeking too far to fulfil the social agenda of the Government of the day.'²⁰¹

An optimistic reading of The Public saga is perhaps that New Labour saw the social value of art and its perceived role as an instrument for urban regeneration, as far more important than the economic value. From this perspective, we might argue that looking to publicise the economic value of the arts generally was really only a tactical method to justify the increases in the Arts' subsidy to a House of Commons and media that was inclined to see the arts as a fiscal drain on resources and rarely as a long-term investment in social stability. By working to make a case for a growing financial return in the Arts, a subsidy could not only be justified but also perhaps even embedded into the Treasury's budget under future governments. This is Eleonora Belfiore's suggestion that under New Labour, theatre strived to 'demonstrate its usefulness in socio-economic terms, seeing in its claim for impact a route to secure better funding levels.'²⁰²

However, an alternative view is perhaps more compelling. The Public was part of a larger urban development at the time, which now sees the building next-door to a 'vast Primark [...] and the largest Tesco in Britain.'²⁰³ The narrative of The Public is perhaps one of a government inexpertly trying to make economic profit from a committed community of local artists already focused on social cohesion. Like The Public and Primark, the arts and the market were always envisioned in close proximity.

Many critics discuss the arts and subsidised theatre of the New Labour period as being increasingly subject to the influence of the market and the structures of commodification. Jen Harvie argues that the New Labour period was a 'crucial paradigm shift' moving from talking about culture as art to marketing it as 'creative industries'. In her article 'Nationalizing the Creative Industries', Harvie notes how after 1997, the British Council looked to package and export theatre and its writers abroad as a cultural arm of international trade. She discusses one example that concerned 'Promoting the translated works of Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill to Russia, Brazil, Palestine and Uganda.' She also notes how the work exported is often 'creative, culturally diverse', but sometimes it is accompanied by 'Shakespeare, Benny Hill and Mr Bean'. She argues these latter exports can be seen to foster many typical concerns that surround commodification of the Arts. Harvie notes the export of 'cultural production

¹⁹⁹ Oliver Wainwright, 'The Public: an inevitable end for the misguided arts centre', *The Guardian*, 14 August 2013

< <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2013/aug/14/public-inevitable-end-arts-centre-architecture> > [accessed 16 January 2017]

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Quoted in Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, p.87.

²⁰² Eleonora Belfiore, 'Defensive instrumentalism' and the legacy of New Labour's cultural policies', *Cultural Trends*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (London: Routledge, June 2012), p.104

²⁰³ Oliver Wainwright, 'The Public'

characterized by homogeneity, and elitism and [...] neo-imperialism.’²⁰⁴ This began from 1997 and the speed and slickness of this marketising of British theatre and culture suggest a business-like commitment to profiting from a resurgent ‘Cool Britannia’ that was innate to New Labour. In his critique of 1990’s theatre, Aleks Sierz analyses theatre’s commodification expressing similar concerns to Harvie:

By the end of the decade, following twenty years of glorifying the market [...] the entire funding system had been thoroughly commercialised so that even subsidised companies were under pressure to be successful businesses. The outward signs of this were everywhere: theatres rebranded themselves, acquired logos, learnt to use niche marketing, made sponsorship deals, redesigned their foyers and expanded their bar activities. Audiences became customers and shows became product.²⁰⁵

Sierz argument has much validity. As discussed above, private sponsorship did grow and caused some unpopular rebranding; the funding process and target culture enforced by the Treasury onto the Arts council and onwards to individual theatres seemed to add a layer of managerialism that was derived from the mechanics of the market. Similarly, ‘niche marketing’ began to infiltrate the publicising of theatre. Sierz here perhaps refers to Mark Ravenhill’s infamous 1996 play *Shopping and F***ing*, whose complete title when advertised broke the Indecent Advertisements Act of 1889 and caused the play, in Sierz words, to mark the play’s content like the marketing as an ‘asterisk-fest’.²⁰⁶ Its infamous title seemed to attract media attention through shock value, in the manner of the *Sex Pistols* album ‘Never Mind The Bollocks’. Ravenhill’s play was often characterised as titillating graphic theatre, whose ironic form was aided by the actors selling branded merchandise from the stage. Aleks Sierz notes that in the 2016 anniversary production that every item of clothing had a neon price tag and that the production was ‘overtly ironic’ in selling ‘badges’ and upgrades for the audience to ‘premium seating’ from the start.²⁰⁷ Nonetheless, such audience involvement supports the play’s dominating theme, which is as a wholehearted critique of the way in which all forms of desire are hollowed down to a financial value and economic exchange. The characters Robbie and Lulu are ‘owned’ by Heroin addict Mark. After Mark leaves, they turn to selling ecstasy pills but, not yet fully subsumed by the market, they give the narcotics away and are forced to sell themselves on a phone-sex line to repay the debts. Later Mark returns and buys, then violently abuses a young boy Gary. In the play all forms of desire are corrupted down to a financial transaction, as evident in this thematic piece of dialogue spoken by the character of a bullying businessmen, Brian: ‘Money is civilisation. And civilisation is [...] SAY IT/Money.’²⁰⁸ As such, Ravenhill’s on-stage merchandising seemed an immersive experiment in the audience’s blind acceptance of commodification. Conversely, the play’s approach to the market is itself perhaps uneasy. While on the one hand the play despairs at the pervasiveness of consumer culture, it also perhaps uncomfortably seems to accept it through the marketing of its theatrical form, as Baz Kershaw argues:

²⁰⁴ Jen Harvie, ‘Nationalizing the ‘Creative Industries’’, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Volume 13, No. 1 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), p. 23.

²⁰⁵ Aleks Sierz, *Modern British Playwriting: the 1990s* (London: Methuen, 2012), p. 37.

²⁰⁶ Aleks Sierz, ‘Shopping and F***ing: Lyric, Hammersmith’, *theartsdesk* (London: Kevin Madden, 2016) <http://www.theartsdesk.com/theatre/shopping-and-fing-lyric-hammersmith> [accessed 16 January 2017]

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Mark Ravenhill, ‘Shopping & Fucking’, *Plays: 1*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), p. 76.

In their enjoyment of the display that turns the sexual subject into a commodity, the audience participates through the machinery of theatre as a disciplinary system in a process of consumption that does exactly the same to them.²⁰⁹

Despite this, it is hard to see the plays of the New Labour period in terms of an assembly line of commodified packages in the sense of Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of mass entertainment as a 'factory producing standardized cultural goods.'²¹⁰ Even though the period did experience numerous revivals of Shakespeare, Anton Chekhov and Noel Coward plays – the less innovative of which might be seen purely in marketing terms as homogeneous experiments in commerce. Yet, most plays and particularly new plays from subsidized theatres tended to innovatively explode, and rarely flatten, cultural and political tensions. This is evident in plays such as Kwame Kwei-Armah's, *Elmina's Kitchen*, Roy Williams' *Fallout*; also in the more postmodern theatre of Martin Crimp, Caryl Churchill and Tim Crouch. All of these together with newly popular forms such as Verbatim theatre, seen in directly political plays such as *Justifying War* and *Stuff Happens*, suggest that antagonism to the cultural and political establishment was a key source of new theatre. Maggie Inchley believes that 'in this period new writing was commonly associated with challenge and scrutiny'.²¹¹ Rather than folding towards a common experience of capitalism, these plays formed a wide-ranging critique of the cultural climate that, if they can be characterised, seemed more concerned about issues of social and political authenticity rather than economic value.

Yet, despite this, Sierz argues that the market was working in other more insidious forms. He contends one example is that commodification added 'commercial pressures that undermined the traditional relationship between directors and theatrical institutions.'²¹² Billington expands on this, seeing theatre as evolving into a corporate, almost freelance, culture of Marketing and Public Relations under New Labour:

Where in the past it had been companies and buildings that possessed a defining aesthetic, now that was something imported by individual directors who came bearing their own brand and style.²¹³

For Billington and Sierz, there was a growing awareness of an actor or director's brand value and their economic significance within theatre that compromised the previous relations of production. It is a view pointedly made by the playwright Edward Bond in one of his published letters, written soon after the New Labour period in 2012, to his agent Tom Erhardt. In it Bond asks 'what's happening to UK theatre' and answers his own question:

²⁰⁹ Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 55.

²¹⁰ Quoted in Peter Baofu, *The Future of Post Human Mass Media: A Preface to a New Theory of Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), p. 184.

²¹¹ Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing*, p19.

²¹² Aleks Sierz, *Modern British Playwriting*, p. 37.

²¹³ Michael Billington, *State of the Nation: British Theatre since 1945* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 348.

The Royal Court stages the sort of plays it was founded to abolish [...] It's not that directors don't know how to stage my plays but that they no longer know how the stage itself works and how plays use it. The basic reason for this is the "commodification" of theatre.²¹⁴

For Bond, as with Sierz and Billington, the New Labour years began to change the focus of the theatre away from the exploration of social and cultural ideas and instead towards seeing the theatrical stage as a raw material contributing to an economic exchange.

In Dollimore & Sinfield's 1980s expression of Cultural Materialism they argued that their 'Materialism insists culture does not (cannot) transcend the material forces and relations of production.'²¹⁵ Such statements implicitly suggest their analysis finds a significant gap between culture and the means of production that their theories are working to connect. By the end of the New Labour period it seems the gap was almost imperceptible: in many critic's view theatre was fully enmeshed within the material metrics and language of an economic mode of production.

Despite the many ways in which theatre became more imbued with neoliberalism under New Labour, Hewison contends that 'even though culture was an industry, and its products a commodity [...] as a means of production it proved difficult to manage'.²¹⁶ In spite of its attempts to publicise the benefits of theatre and the Arts, New Labour never managed to convince the Treasury, let alone the Conservative and Liberal Parties that theatre was worth the investment. As soon as the financial crash of 2008 began to impact the British economy, funding to the Arts was swiftly reduced. The dip in subsidy began from 2008 and gained momentum through to the incoming Conservative and Liberal coalition in 2010, and beyond. A recent 2016 report by the New Local Government Network and Arts Council England found there to have been a 17%, or £230 million, reduction in Arts Council funding since the end of New Labour.²¹⁷ Whilst theatre may have adopted and adapted to the practices of the market economy, the Coalition and ensuing Conservative government were not themselves convinced by the economic benefits of theatre or the arts generally. As such, New Labour was perhaps not a 'golden era' of theatre, simply a 'golden hiatus' to a trend of minimal theatre funding that swung-open the theatre doors to the market.

However, such perspectives obscure the fact that New Labour undoubtedly made a significant and constructive difference to British theatre. Large swathes of the ageing infrastructure were refreshed and new money encouraged challenging and often subversively engaging new dramatic forms, new writing and new participants. Perhaps, most important of all was the focus on extending the range of theatre so that funding was focused on the young, the disadvantaged and the culturally diverse in a manner that had never before, or since, been undertaken. Certainly, never with the same level of political and economic commitment. Thus the theatre of the Iraq war was dominated by

²¹⁴ Edward Bond, 'Letters: On the State of British Theatre', *Edward Bond Dramatist*, (Edward Bond, 2012) < <http://www.edwardbond.org/Letters/letters.html> > [accessed 15 January 2017]

²¹⁵ J. Dollimore & A. Sinfield, (1985) *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. vii.

²¹⁶ Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital*, p. 6.

²¹⁷ Artlyst, 'Arts Council England Reports £230m Decline in Arts Funding Since 2010', *Artlyst* (London: Artlyst, 2016) <http://www.artlyst.com/news/arts-council-england-reports-230m-decline-in-arts-funding-since-2010/> [accessed 15 January 2017]

playwrights, directors and dramaturgs who were from significantly more culturally diverse backgrounds because of the Labour government's focus on new writing and diversity. It is perhaps significant that it is these individuals who helped expand the dramatic frames used within the Iraq war plays that begun to focus on black and working-class soldiers, wrongly imprisoned British BAME civilians and tortured Iraqi civilians, amongst other diverse subjects and characters.

Maggie Inchley summarising the period in 2014 and alluding to the Iraq War, summarises the contradictory feeling about the New Labour period that while it is difficult to get beyond the 'perception of the Blair decade as an extended con', we may have forgotten the force of that late 1990s sense of:

Political optimism, the feeling that a new era of 'Cool Britannia' was dawning and a sense of 'freshness' of the times'.²¹⁸

Inchley goes on to highlight what she believes was so progressive about the time:

In the cultural sphere, self-expression seemed to provide opportunity for the empowerment and 'self-actualisation' of previously marginalised or unassimilated groups.²¹⁹

Such sanguine recollections contrast markedly with the dominating legacy of Tony Blair in the public's mind-set, according to Andrew Langley. In *Blair, Bush, and Iraq*, Langley discusses the successes of Blair's New Labour era: independent parliaments, the Good Friday agreement, the minimum wage and public funding, amongst others. Yet, Langley ultimately believes that 'However, he will be mainly remembered for his decision to join Bush's invasion in Iraq.'²²⁰

Nevertheless, when contrasted with the Coalition and Conservative period of recent years that have been characterised by a climate of austerity and a political shrinking from the perceived threats of foreign culture, Blair perhaps has a more nuanced legacy.²²¹ Indeed, the recent experience of government withdrawal from theatre funding and a committed focus on social diversity perhaps sets New Labour's mixed impact on theatre and the arts in a warmer, nostalgic light. Regardless, with its mixture of money and the market, as Eleonora Belfiore objectively concludes, New Labour undoubtedly:

Brought about a dramatic and radical change to the established relationship between government and the business of supporting the arts.²²²

It was with British theatre now significantly enhanced and in its most financially buoyant and reinvigorated state for some years; at a time when new plays and writing, as Inchley suggests was defined by 'challenge and scrutiny', that Tony Blair prepared the

²¹⁸ Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing*, p.15.

²¹⁹ Ibid., p.27.

²²⁰ Andrew Langley, *Blair, Bush, and Iraq* (Oxford: Raintree, 2014), p. 49.

²²¹ Ibid., p.138.

²²² Eleonora Belfiore, 'Defensive instrumentalism" and the legacy of New Labour's cultural policies', *Cultural Trends*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (London: Routledge, June 2012), p.105.

nation to invade Iraq. With the benefit of New Labour's support, British theatre was fully enabled to respond.²²³

Appendix II. Transcript of Telephone Conversation with playwright Richard Norton-Taylor on 29/03/17 at 15:00 – Questions emailed in advance

R – Richard Norton-Taylor, L – Larry Cotterell

(Other Phone Conversation in the background) (1:30)

R – Sorry that would happen at just the same time ... OK

L – No trouble at all. I was just flicking through your plays today ... and I was thinking they're landmarks of human rights abuses in my lifetime. I am 50 ... and in that sense they're fabulous.

R – So you're a mature student?

L – I went to Greenwich in ... 1990-1993 and I left just as the ... Stephen Lawrence murder took place.

R – Oh right.

L – The whole thing was, you know, shocking ... and I became a teacher and I taught it as part of the Diversity lessons I did ...and then life being what it was ... we had to move from St Albans to the West Country and I have now just taken time to do a doctorate...

R – That was It [*The Colour of Justice*] was on a text... a text book immediately after ...when it was published ... the text of the play ... at the police college at Hendon ... I'm not sure if it is now ... but ... probably isn't but it maybe ... and it was also bought by a lot of schoolchildren ... maybe at your school as well as a text ... and actually that play apart from being quite a success ... (he says modestly) ... did strike chords – and so on – and also I think the first time a lot of young, pretty young, black kids went to the theatre for the first time in their lives, you know, because ... different kind of thing to the normal expensive comedies or Alan Ayckbourn, or whatever.

L – Absolutely and the bits that ... I read through were very, very powerful and weirdly I know at least one of them has now become a – kinda - professional actor and taken it with him. It's a lovely little cycle, isn't it. And just to say ... with that in mind ... what do you think the Theatre ...

R – I haven't got your questions in front of me exactly .. partly because .. I mean do you mind doing it this way? It's quicker for me.

L – No ... of course ...

R – Ok... Continue ... Sorry ...

L – No. I think Tribunal plays are fabulous and ... but I am just interested in ... what is it that theatre can allow you to do that maybe long-form journalism doesn't?

R – Can I just say at the very beginning that I don't know what you have read and what you haven't ... Oberon Press has published a collection ... yes but ... also a book called *Verbatim*, *Verbatim* (L-that I haven't read ... I've got the Tricycle collected Tribunal plays but) *Verbatim*, *Verbatim* also published by Oberon books ... *Verbatim*, *Verbatim* contemporary documentary theatre (L - great) created by Will Hammond and Dan Stewart and it's got interviews with me and Robin Soans, David Hare ... Max Stafford Clarke ... Alecky Blythe and Nicholas Kent so ... it's quite a useful book actually because they say why ... Robin Soans in particular .. what I say in answer to your question is ... it's a kind of extension of journalism... I thought in answer to your question I mean ... journalism ...is ... it's not a platform for journalism really because you're writing a long ... your writing about an enquiry say ... an enquiry say Stephen Lawrence enquiry say - lasting quite a few months ... the Bloody Sunday enquiry 10 years you know ... and Nuremberg - which is slightly different – but erm and people didn't ... you know as a journalist

²²³ Maggie Inchley, *Voices and New Writing*, p19.

you get 200 words, maybe 300 words ... maybe 1000 words if you are lucky and from time to time ... maybe writing about this long running saga or particular ... same story really ... subject to a public inquiry or a trial or whatever erm and erm ... maybe 2 minutes on the radio or an occasional little flashes on the television. But ... The audience you know is ... is confused... doesn't follow it ... you know .. a middle-class audience I mean you know ... I don't want to be patronizing about it ... any audience doesn't really ... because of all sorts of physical reasons ... the way that the media is sort of broken up and treats running stories and the butterfly mindedness ...that's my word of/for err news editors and so on you know ... 'Oh my God not another story about this we've had' ... and court trials now for example ... even worse now ... because ... in a big state terror trial it's a slightly different point ... but it's the same point about journalism .. erm you know you may get a story... of the first Day of a big trial and then the summing up at the very end but nothing in between so ... going back to Tribunal plays the audience have got a thirst for this knowledge ... what was it all about? ... you know ...there's a beginning an explaining, the disputes ... the arguments ... the cut and thrust ...anecdotes ... particular incidents .. and then the conclusion, as it were. You know ... so all my stuff by definition ... happened after ...well actually ... *The Colour of Justice* we wrote .. and *Chilcot* my last thing I did before the actual enquiry ... but it doesn't matter ... because the evidence itself is so important ...

L – Absolutely ... and I'm just in the middle of writing and reading about *Tactical Questioning* and I picked up bits from the media at the time and .. but I didn't pick up the whole thing and quite shocking really .. the bits that I didn't pick up... personally I totally bear out what you say. Did ... is there any ... Actually I'll ask the questions as I put them ... but thank you for that erm ... Do you think because I'm doing basically doing an English degree I have to ask these artsy questions ... so I'm sorry. The view is that we live in this kinda of postmodern world of 'radical doubt' where, you know, we don't believe in you know any ideologies really and would it be fair to say that Tribunal plays in a way come from that sense of ... doubting ... doubting authority .

R – Well I don't know because ... you know there's two elements of radical doubt isn't there .. one is that this is evidence, i.e. it's not fake news or whatever ... radical doubt in the sense of ... in the philosophical sense or whatever ... because it's actually what was said about what happened ... so it's explaining the truth if you like ...or ... evidence of what actually had happened ... now the interaction of these things is because there's radical doubt about mainstream er/or journalism .. Certainly those sort of two threads really come together ... or parallel aren't they ... one is ... people want to know ... what you are writing about what actually happened ... (L – Yes) people want to know that ... Why .. that particularly people want to know that because of doubting err ... the media ... you know the established media

L – So ... You would say that it's perhaps more ...the doubt of ... of ... the different versions of the media necessarily than the authorities themselves?

R – Well it's both. I mean it depends who is doing the authority ...I mean it depends on the subject matter ... if you get ...you know *The Colour of Justice* ... you get ... you doubt The Police ...

(L – Yes) the authorities and you doubt them well you doubt them ... because the evidence is ... you're not doubting them for any philosophical reason because we are in the age of 'radical doubt' or what you call it ... because we see before our eyes ... their incompetence, racism, whatever you want to call it. You know and inefficiency 8:35 in.. in the ...my first thing the *Half The Picture* about the Scott Arms to Iraq enquiry ... there you've got officials who are lying through their teeth ... well they're not ... they're lying in a very sophisticated way actually they're dissembling ..you know... and therefore these officials .. and minis... especially officials who are not used to talking in public erm.. you know (L – Sort of stitch themselves up...yes) yuh .. almost unintentionally you know. (L- Absolutely, Which is one of the ... sorry after you) no, no .. but they're all different in a way . *Bloody Sunday* is .. you know we all know what happened then.. you know... how the soldiers denied things ... by saying 'I can't recall... I can't recall' ... you know and they almost make things up. Talk about radical doubt ... one guy (having soldiers?) from memory ... said he ... one used one bullet or one bullet went through the same exact hole 12 times or something ... you know ... that's absolutely extraordinary (9:26) realistic ... you know ... clearly ... but he'd obviously lied .. he was told ... he was instructed to say by his boss or the

Ministry of Defence ... you know ... (L- Yeah) who were sort of cuddling them as it were ... minding them to say that you can't 'I cannot recall, I cannot recall' ... and anyway ...

L- Thank you ... That's excellent ... and ... err ... the next one ... this guy Dan Rebellato suggests that one of the difficulties with Verbatim and the Tribunal plays ... not specifically . I that the political meaning overpowers the aesthetic meaning... and his argument is ... its kinda theatre ... so ... so ...do you think that's fair?

R -Well some people say it wasn't theatre ... David Hare wrote a thing ... that's another thing actually ... David Hare wrote a ... praising *The Colour of Justice* actually saying it ought to have been given ... a theatre award ... He wrote a book called ... David Hare ... *Obedience, Struggle and Revolt* (L-Yes) I don't know if you have seen that ... David Hare book published Faber Book (L - OK yeah that's smashing) he's got a whole chapter in there about why *The Colour of Justice* was actually a play even though ... the Evening Standard should have give it play of the year or something ... that's one of his takes (L- well) It's called *Obedience, Struggle and Revolt* David Hare (L- Smashing and well certainly... go on, after you) no in it he says ... talking about this point ... is it a play or not ... I mean I don't know what your guy says but it is err... it is err... it is it is ...is it a play or is it not a play ... basically ... I say I'm not a playwright ... Your editing... I'm editing something ... (L - Absolutely but I ...) but not a single word is my word .. Nicholas Kent who was ...is very keen on .. verisimilitude ... (11:07) very keen on you know not adding words or keeping even the chronology of the thing in a very kind of austere (L-Yes) way ... the verbatim ... You know David Hare makes it up ... Stuff Happens sometimes speeches, sometimes his own words anyway

L- They are yeah ... they sort of merge so its sometimes not quite clear which is which (R- Exactly) but I ... obviously .. they are undoubtedly plays ... undoubtedly plays that work at a slightly different level because they are authentic and that in itself is the problem ... I think (R- they are different, they are different aren't they erm. anyway but)

R- Its (unclear) political theatre in a way I'm using ... I am using the theatre not in a classical way although (L- No) even playwrights ... different playwrights use the theatre in a different way .. anyway yuh ...

L- I do think though there is quite a classical edge to it ... and I can't remember who I was just reading but errr. about the Sophoclean way in which

R - Michael Billington ... Certainly other people have said ... comparing the Tribunal plays with ancient Greek theatre you know errr and even with the Ores ... Oresteia you know what I'm saying ... Michael Billington you know because and the chorus ... the audience is ... the audience is the chorus if you like. Here's?/Hare's What (stuff?) Happens says Yah booh sucks or whatever (laughs)

L- Yeah ... and it works because often the information or ... the full horror is slowly disclosed (R- exactly) and what I particularly like is also the detail - the little aspects of 'Could you speak up please' ... 'Could you slow down the translator can't keep up' . Give you that real sense of ... it was there. Absolutely, which I think is fabulous really. The other thing that got me ... struck me ... was that these are all sort of individuals ... everyman or families perhaps sacrificed in that Greek way... tragedies of real life ... (R- exactly) and fabulous for it really. Ermm.. what was the other thing I was going to say...

R- Billington actually ... sorry to interrupt ... Billington actually compared them to Ibsen ... too some of the plays anyway to (13:31) Ibsen actually

L- In a way I guess what I'm saying is that they are bit underrated not only for their political power but also for their theatrical power ... which is hopefully something I will say. I also would just kind of .. the bit I'm interested in which is not in my Phd ... is I wonder if they sort of pre-empt today .. 'cos I was just thinking you know ... because the Iraq was about .. when we decided to go with America and not Europe ...and does the sort of loss of faith in authority ... that sort of runs through it, I wonder if you though there was any validity in that?

R- In what ... Today meaning what

L - I'm sorry Today meaning ... today meaning Brexit particularly today (Day of Article 50 signing) (14:06)

R - I don't know really because I mean. I mean Brexit ... you could argue Brexit ... special relationship with America or whatever you know umm... which actually sort of I don't know if

that is what you mean except the majority of people seem to think ... now I can't remember what the polls say ... the invasion of Iraq was a great mistake (L- Absolutely) and it led to what is happening now at the moment in Syria Iraq and stuff. Now I don't know if people ... what the polls and if people think like that ... I don't know what the punter thinks about ... about that now ...because ... it seems to me ... I don't know if it is a contradiction or what ... I mean ... special relationship with America and all that stuff we're gonna be ... are we going to be closer to America than we are with Europe as Brexit happens ... But uh ... you knowerrr I can't quite you know work out the kind of how that echo from the invasion of Iraq . Except the British Prime Minister of course ... I.e., Blair then was told at the time I said what was the reason why Blair went along with Bush ... well partly because every British Prime Minister is told to ...u,,, to keep em ... hug 'em close, as they say. and that special relationship where we need American intelligence and American cheap Trident missiles ... all that stuff ... erm and so we turn our back on Europe then...

L- And ... umm... err. I know it seems a bit strong but it just seems to me that ... that was the first point where we thought well actually when push comes to shove we can do without them because we're nearer America than we are Europe ...

R- Well maybe I just don't know how many people ... punters out there actually think like that actually ... but certainly MPs... certainly Conservative MPs... the only example where people say ... well the interesting example... the two examples ... of when we haven't basically we haven't gone along with er.. Washington . One is when ... Harold Wilson said no to sending troops to Vietnam (L- Yeah Absolutely) we gave some intelligence I think it was Hong Kong, GCHQ stations and various things like that. The Australians (16:25) weren't ... and secondly Edward Heath the great European had furious rows with Kissinger and ... just something for example ... I dunno ...GCHQ whose Cyprus station was in the Yom Kippur War 1973. The umm when those ground stations mattered more than they do now ... with the growth of satellites and stuff ... anyway ... umm .. there was a furious row between Kissinger and Heath... Heath being the Pro-European. They're the only two examples where...

L – It is quite interesting ... reading *Tactical Questioning* that ...that Edward Heath comes up again kinda the Five Tech...

R- Five Techniques ... well Heath one of the things with Heath ... and the European thing .. fighting against the European Convention of Human ... not the EU ... the Convention of Human Rights ... found illegal on an IRA ... initially on an IRA case yuh.

L – If I remember rightly the Irish Republic took Britain to court and then they all sort of agreed

R – Yeh ... They did yeah the Castlereagh so called tortures anyway interrogation centre ... anyway .. the Northern Ireland or ... the IRA ... Sinn Feinn ... or their lawyers went to Strasbourg ... the European Court saying these Five Techniques are unlawful under the European Convention yuh ...

L- Another thing that comes through for me really is tat there is a sort of echo from Iraq to Northern Ireland ... from Northern Ireland to Iraq ...in some ways ... that some of the rules and some of the situations and some of the procedures ... hadn't changed.

R- Hadn't changed and also they weren't prepared ... there's all sorts of analogies you could make there ... Chilcot through ... is that the British were just very arrogant about Iraq – for example – they would say we've told the Americans all about the counter- insurgency (18:13) because of our experience in Northern Ireland because of course we had snatch ... so called Snatch Land-Rovers you know ...which are thin-skinned things you know ... and we'd ... take those all the way to Iraq and of course they we're very vulnerable to unexploded ... or er ... mines and err roadside bombs and so on ..

L- And the Ian Cobain book I remember and what happened is that it just made the IRA much more aggressive over ... uhh ..as a response .. you know ...counterproductive

R – Also ineffective in Iraq ... I mean ineffective and British soldiers were unnecessary ... unnecessarily killed ... because of the arrogance of the British ... or err the ignorance of the British ... at one point I know ... because I went to Iraq ...there were furious arguments between British Commanders in Basra with America ... ahhh 'we know about all this stuff ... counter-insurgency in Malay'... and of course they didn't ...(19:09) of course actually ... ironically the Americans who drew up new guidelines on counter-insurgency . Petraeus was good then, bad

afterwards ... well anyway ... was head of training and they came up with a manual published by Chicago University Press as it happens... so Americans learnt more quickly than the British ... but they did learn.

L – It does kinda in that sense it draws us back to ...the kinda World War One generals ... which the sense that you sometimes get despite what Mr Gove says ...

R – Fighting the last war

L – Absolutely ... if I may just ... I've forgotten to ask you ... umm this guy Stephen Bottoms a theatre critic says that he thinks that Verbatim would be better if it were more ...with its production ... that it would express that this is theatrical and this is someone's perspective and ...because of the radical self-doubt thing ... 'cos to highlight its artifice ... you know ... do you ...think that's fair or ... or

R- He wants what ... he wants (20:10) what someone to explain what

L – To draw, to foreground the artificiality of the play ... if you see what I mean ...

R – By doing what?

L – I notice if I remember rightly I notice in *Justifying War* that the different times of who's speaking and when were kind of ... made sure that everyone knew this wasn't necessarily consecutive.

R- I think it was consecutive wasn't it I think there was only one ...

L - I think it was only Mrs Kelly that wasn't ... if I'm right

R – With one exception and that was her ... yuh exactly ...

L – I was just

R – I 'm not sure if there were one or two others ... but we explain that . Nick Kent .. I can't remember to be honest

L- I think you did

R – Nick Kent was extremely careful to say ... I .. to make sure the chronology was absolutely right ... I think we did change one or two and of course Mrs Kelly had a special ... yuh ...

L – Which I have to say is one of the most moving bits I think but ...

R – But ... however ... I don't think *Justifying War* was particularly that successful but anyway ... (21:13) umm ... as a play because it was very difficult because err ... the nitty gritty of stuff ... but anyway ...

L- And it was very complicated ... really

R- Yes ... it was quite complicated ... quite detailed stuff

L – But still a fabulous story and my ... supervisor thinks ... the greatest injustice of his generation ... the Mrs Kelly ... but so yeh... the other thing I was going to say to you was that I was quite interested about the Phil Shiner thing ... because I was trying to look at ... look at what exactly were British troops guilty of and of course the Phil Shiner thing means that we will never know.

R- Well... Phil Shiner made his ... Phil Shiner you know did good stuff at the beginning I mean he pushed himself out at risk ... or whatever he did what other lawyers didn't do, i.e., under the European Court of ...you know convention of Human Rights ... you know ... all that kinda stuff .. by British law if there is err... plausible, prima facie case where agents of the state ... or what they call them ... in this case British soldiers ... did naughty things .. you know killed or whatever ... or abused ... or whatever ... Iraqi detainees in this case . Now in the first case the Baha Moussa case of course ... quite clear this guy was killed ... and we had the breadbasket case and one or two other cases ... British soldiers ... because I say they were ill equipped ... were just undertrained and weren't told by their commanders ... my view ... now there's a second thing and that's why Phil Shiner got dumped in the end ... now bankrupt and everything else ... I had furious rows with Shiner it went to his head all this stuff. (L- OK) He was trumpeted by the Civil Liberties (23:01) quite rightly in my view (Lordly ? and all that stuff) and give awards and so on but then he went too far ... now what happened was in the Al-Sweady case if you know (L – Yes I do the nine accused) .Yeh the murder then OK now he did something naughty ... he was ambulance chasing whatever you want to call it. But my point really is that the Ministry of Defence were wrong ... that need not have happened ... the enquiry ... if the Ministry of Defence had open ... it was exceptional circumstances ... the want to get the dead Iraqis from the battlefield ... take them to the camp ... and the wounded away ... thinking that one of them was

the head of the mob that killed ... the Military police a year before nearby ... Redcaps I think 6 Redcaps were murdered ... that was the reason they said they ... unusual not leaving dead and wounded having won the battle as it were ... they checked/took the bodies back ... the wounded and the dead to the British camp ... and the families pick them up the next day ... the families of course say you ... they murdered them because ... maybe generally ... or maybe because they were whipped up into saying this ... (L – and they said they only took them for identification purposes) Yuh ... exactly. No.. now and the soldiers didn't know that ... (Unclear) Now some of the soldiers of the Princess of Wales Royal regiment and another said 'look we've gotta um explain ... why ... what happened there' ... because rumours came round ... I remember writing the first story with someone in *The Guardian* ... about a month afterwards ... about how the rumours ... allegations all that... you know just as a journalist saying there's ... clearly going to be a big story ... allegations flying around everywhere ... with terrible thing that murdering these guys as well as abusing them and all that and ermm .. the British and some British Military Policeman ... and other British soldiers who had err ... to say we should admit ... explain what happened ... then there need not have been ... a public enquiry. Moreover, I remember (25:02) going up before the actual enquiry ... Phil Shiner and others pushed me up ... to the High Court .. saying there must be a ... enquiry ... The High Court not exactly full of lefty judges ... criticized the MoD for what they called a lamentable failure to disclose information and then there must be ... they said ... the High Court ... there must be an Independent Enquiry. There need not have been that ... if the MoD had been open about it then ... it maybe difficult ... but these were exceptional circumstances.. you know .. war and all that ... and they need not have had that ... that all led to Shiner exaggerating and all that stuff... and sending out people to get ... or encouraging too much Iraqis to say all these allegations and all this kind of stuff and he dropped them you know and he was unprofessional you know ... it all went to his head and everything else ...

L – And that comes through as one of the themes of your plays is the sort of ... everyday incompetence of some of the authorities ... which isn't necessarily culpable it's just ... just bizarre
 R- It's a mind-set or you know ... people are unaccountable or being protected ... my own view ... whether its the police in the *Colour of Justice* or ... in the military ... the ministry ... The Ministry of Defence is so protected and it's never been ... it's not challenged properly yet ... they are allowed to get away with I was going to say ... even murder ... sometimes... but certainly with a kind of inefficiency, incompetence ... they are always protected because they always say its national security ...you know ... most defence correspondents are extraordinarily protective ... very close to the defence lobby and ... (26:42) (Unclear) write about soldiers doing X, Y & Z.
 L – When I first left University I went to work at Whitehall ... installing a system called Chots for a company called ICL and I spent about a year at Whitehall and honestly it's the most bizarre place I've ever been to in my life. Kafka-esque all the way through. I don't know how many floors under the ground there are you know.

R – True, yeah..

L- But it didn't seem to follow the standard norms of other places of work.

R – Protected all the time can't talk about defence ... national security ... war ..

L- Yeah ... Absolutely bizarre and of course now ... the end of it is ... that I note IHAT say we did have 3000 allegations and now we are down to about 20.

R – The trouble with IHAT and all that stuff ... they went to the other extreme ... because they were set up ... look we can't be accused of doing this anymore ... let's set up this thing ... and it was really jobs for the boys ... it was a pretty inefficient (L- Cushy number) ... as you ... cushy number ... and they did appalling things ... but you know they knocked on the door of soldiers in mi ... without any warning and stuff ... maybe because they were thinking of ... of getting away with it ... or 'cos they were told to by the MoD management to say you know we can't be accused ... they went to the other extreme if you like... we must not be accused of covering up.

L- And the final kind of big scene is now ... it all gets taken in house to the Royal Navy ... just

R – Yuh ... but also it allows the umm ... Ministry of Defence ... the ministers of government to say we're going to derogate .. you know from the European Convention on Human Rights ... so soldiers won't be ... and operations abroad won't be covered by the Human Rights Act.
 ...(unclear) human rights obligations

L- Which I think is the big horror that has not really been discussed is the loss of the Human Rights Act. ..you know what that's going to mean and the implications and the big break with the kind of post war kinda settlement...Anyway. Thank you ever so much...

R – Which is a nice link to Brexit too/2?, of course (28:57) (L- Well absolutely) in a broad sense you know. So email me again (L - Thank you) if you've got a particular question (L- Smashing. May I thank you ever so much for your time and thank you for the plays and the work you have done. Take care) that book if you can find it (L- Verbatim, Verbatim?) yeh (L- And Obedience, Structure and Revolt) yeah that's the Hare book . But ermm Soans is particularly good I think. on ermm relationship. He wrote a thing called Terrorism didn't he and just quoting him for example. He says that ermmm well he says very quickly. In Burnley college ... The normal challenge of reportage is when we expect some degree of responsibility and truth are no longer reliable. He says 'Only in the arts is the study of the human condition considered more important than ambition or money. So its left to artists to ask the relevant questions.' Maybe that's pushing it a bit but (L- That's Fantastic what a great quote. Thanks ever so much. Thank you for your time. Bye) Bye.

Appendix III - Transcript of Interview with Khayaal Theatre Company's Luqman Ali and Director Eleanor Martin about the Prevent strategy recommended play *Hearts & Minds* – 20th September 2017 at Wardown House, Luton. 11:15 am

LA – Luqman Ali; EM – Eleanor Martin; LC - Laurence Cotterell

LC (Fumbling with recording device) ... I'll just stick it there and try not to touch it ever again ... so hi I'm Laurence Cotterell. I'm from Gloucester University and my doctoral research is 'Theatre's Response to the Iraq War' and I've been looking at erm mostly Verbatim Theatre because that seemed to me to be most of the theatre that occurred ... and I'm coming towards the close of Verbatim and am more interested now in how did, how did theatre change in response to the Iraq War - as one of the ways it changed was to be instrumental and one of the great things, in my view, about the Labour government was that they involved people in theatre to a level where I'd never seen it ... people involved before, but they also used it to drive political purposes, which now have become slightly questionable; but I don't think they were quite so much at the time ... They seemed to be a force for good so that's really where I'm coming from. My idea is to probably set the other Prevent strategy plays and your play against plays that question the role of theatre so there are some plays like *Far Away* that seem to think theatre is complicit in capitalism and like 'doing bad things'. 1:16 so I'm trying to get some balance between the two and the other thing is I've gone through about 25 plays right and I can't count how many plays there are without a Muslim voice in them ... I was thinking *Richard III: An Arab Tragedy* and Dina Mousawi's *The Return...* very, very few and that doesn't seem to be very good that's something I also want to flag ... you know how can you provide a balanced perspective when you only listen to one point ... I'm a liberal with a limited understanding of the facts despite my research. That's where I'm coming from. Luqman very kindly sent me *Hearts & Minds* and I was saying just now how good it is, how sensitive it is to the problems inherent in it. I'll get going and shut up. It's quite an achievement though ...

LA -Eleanor was the director in that ... I wrote it mostly but she directed it.

LC - When I was doing my research *Hearts & Minds* appears on all the recommended lists ... it's absolutely everywhere and that's quite an achievement.

LA - OK ... yes we, I think it's one of those situation where you ... you were perhaps in the right place at the right time 2:46 doing the right thing and then sometimes there was an intersection between government policy at the time and our willingness to contribute to the discourse around extremism ... Mainly because we felt that having seen some of the contributions, theatrical contributions, to the issue we felt there was a very shallow, superficial treatment of the issues and they lacked wholeness, they lacked originality and nuance ... Especially when you are working with young audiences ... because this play was targeted really at secondary schools and above, secondary schools and colleges ... so we thought it was really ... and also none of the plays, as you rightly say, certainly that we were aware of that were actually touring schools, that were actually going to the community ... some plays that were in commercial theatre spaces ... playing to a national audience and then you had those like ours which were more ... out on the road in communities, theatres and schools and so forth, so we didn't really see anything that was being sufficiently, in terms of their means, being sufficiently .. profound in its exploration of 4:03 humanitarian ... And nor did we see very much that had.. that came from a place of knowledge as relates to Islam and Muslim culture... So I think ... there were a number of factors that came together to make *Hearts & Minds* work. *Hearts & Minds* was originally commissioned by Luton Borough Council and Berkshire Forum Against Extremism... They were the two commissioning partners who came in and got it off the ground (LC - Was that before *Pathfinder* or was that part of *Pathfinder* funding?) So where Berkshire Forum Against Extremism and Luton Borough Council were getting their money from at the time ... now what exact programme

there was I'm not sure. 5:01 It could well have been *Pathfinder* ... So we initially created a play to tour a few Luton schools and some Berkshire schools and colleges ... it was quite a limited first run. I can't remember exactly how many schools it was in that first run, but then what happened was Labour had launched a Community Co... (LC -Contest? Contest was 2003) No...we're now talking about 2007/8. 2007 was when we first ... we began work on *Hearts and Minds* and we staged a first run in Luton and Berkshire 6:00 then the Department of Communities .. so we had some money from the Home Office ... then in 2008 the Department for Communities and Local Government launched the Community Leadership fund and we had a delegation from the Department of Communities ... Home Office officials ... both of those departments came up to Luton, to our offices and we had to give a presentation to them .. and they had also seen *Hearts & Minds*. And I think we managed to connect with a couple of people who I think understood where we were coming from as individuals and had sufficient influence at the time to say this is good work and so they said we were successful in our application for three years of funding to roll this out (LC – Was it enough funding to cover all your costs or was it support funding?) 7:00 We had ... we averaged about a 100,000 a year for 3 years, maybe a little bit less, 90,000. It was good funding for what we were doing but what they were asking for in terms of delivery was huge, I mean, we ended up doing 300, 200-300 performances over 3 years. So we were on the road non-stop. So relative to what we delivered was not quite (LC – No ... Exactly, 2/3 performances per week if my maths is any good) yes. We reached about 25,000 ... mostly young people ... also a lot of civil servants, a lot of police, a lot of teachers, a lot of local authority officials, so we staged this play in 4 types of settings and we actually took it and we staged it at DCMG and ... you know so we got a lot of buy in, at that time, from the LG's [Local Govt. depts..] [unclear] from the association of police officers, from the Department of Education and, like I said, it was basically endorsed and pushed out there as being [unclear] I'd say about half a dozen interventions if you like (LC – Did they give you any kind of line, authorial line, that you had to kind of follow?) No 9:00 I think had they done that we would have been (LC – stepped out) We were free to, to address the issues as we felt ... as was going to be most honest, most authentic: in terms of our understanding of the issues... and what was going to be most effective in terms of working with young people. I mean we didn't want something that was going to be busy [?] we wanted something that was actually going to address grievances, address issues of disaffection. Be quite courageous and bold ... because we felt that ... that is what would earn us ... respect amongst younger people (LC – Absolutely ... you just can't get away with anything with young people can you? They'll see through it immediately ... whereas, I'll put up with anything) I mean, the overwhelming response from young people was 'Wow'... this is honest ... this is hard-hitting but at the same time this is deep and thought-provoking and I think it... it touched something in young people that they didn't [unclear] in terms of spirituality, aspiration ... angst (LC – absolutely) ... marginalisation with ... big global issues. And I think that really struck a chord.

LC – One of the things I particularly liked about it was the use of the youth language that is now lost on me, you know 'buff, sick' but also the sketch style format to begin with. I thought that was very clever. So it for me it had the like structure of one of those sketch comedy shows but there wasn't you know comedy 11:00 very god, very bite-size. Especially, the little sounds at the end, which I thought was so brilliant that I didn't notice it ... such a part of my culture ... I've seen so many comedy sketch ... very clever... in case I forget I really loved the Brechtian gestus ... the flags... pulling between the flags as a symbol of all the points that you were making. I thought that was really good that you were making (LA – Yeah). You make the point you make it snappy and exciting and then you express the point visually as well ... that's like really great theatre.

LA – I mean a lot of teachers commented on those very same issues ... we took it to some very private schools as well as you ... you know we worked with some ... Hammersmith and Godolphin School, for instance, was one of the (LC – quite) lead schools and stuff like that. So we worked with some ... a really wide range 12:00 of audiences both in terms of youth audiences and in terms of adult audiences and you know it was ... well received.

LC – I think its superb and I'll come onto discuss the play if that's ok ... but were you inspired by any particular play or playwrights or ...

EM - I ... remember discussing the plays that were ... at the time ... I remember just the story, just the story we were talking ... do you remember?...

LA – Yeah ... initially there were three of us who were like the writers on this ... I was the lead writer and Eleanor and another colleague ... who's now abroad but ... I mean ... we were all coming from a place of having been involved in theatre for quite a while so ... I think ... I think our research informed a lot of it ... because we carried out quite extensive research from Luton schools with young people... asking them about their aspirations, their fears, their interests and so forth and we really allowed the voices coming through in that research to inform the storyline; alongside our knowledge and our understanding of the issues. Because we had previously toured a ... Eleanor actually had toured a one-woman play called *Sun and Wind*, which was also addressing extremism ... and I think it was almost ... if not the first reflection on extremism following 7/7 ... it was done earlier ... in 2005... so we had already, by then, done a lot of thinking around how, how do you address this issue in a way which is going to have tract... gain traction, engage receptivity with young people.

EM – I think ...about ... really the human issues of what extremism is, what is it when you when you boil it down .. it's more about ... it's a human issue.. it's not about, you know, there were certain people that come onto the planet that have a, you know, likely to be more extreme ... its just within every human being, it's just like you watch any drama you see ... you watch Macbeth ...you know, the murder is there within all of us ... so *Sun & Wind* ... a lot of time to do a lot of that thinking about what is extremism in the human psyche ... what makes ... what [unclear] us ... these extreme behaviours ...

LC – Did you come up with any kind of views of what ... what is it - is it a level of alienation?...

EM – It was disconnection ... about disconnection about not ... not seeing the whole ... and seeing yourself, yourself separated from humanity 15:00 from seeing the 'Other' ... from seeing the difference .. by being extreme ... from running through trauma ... running, you know, from one point to the next and not seeing the whole ... the spectrum (LC – Fundamentally it's social? As opposed to cultural as opposed to family? or all and any?)

LA – That was our point. Is ... Our point was that we cannot look at the social without looking at the individual, without looking at the educational, without looking at the spiritual... the whole point was we saw a lot of interventions... were they plays... workshops and stuff focusing on one angle ... We felt it was important to come in at ... from many different angles ... because a human being is by definition complex, by definition paradoxical so we were coming from, if you like, I would say a psycho-spiritual place ... a psycho-spiritual-cultural place and so we felt we needed to ... not be so simplistic in the way in which we treated the issues. I think... I think when it came down to it, as Eleanor was saying, was the whole idea of internal conflict (LC – Uh huh) driven by a number of different factors which were different according to different people and that being un-reconciled ... in oneself ... so you know ... yeah I think that's, that's where we were coming from ... certainly we were wanting to get away from this idea that, you know, that some plays were trying to say... is: you have Muslims here that are extreme and you have the Far Right who are extreme and there's this war, this conflict between, you know, right-wing extremism and Muslim extremism and it's that simplistic – black and white, kind of things. And we thought that was just very dangerous. And actually the very thing that we predicted would happen ... is happening ... you have, you had an MP killed in broad daylight (LC – Jo Cox) by now ... you have these two opposing forces on both sides now (LC - getting wider and wider) getting broader and broader in terms of influence and in terms of their..

LC – and getting more entrenched. And you know political things like Brexit – hate to say the name – just entrenches them ... and, you know, suddenly it's further and further back that you have to go in order to bridge the... but interestingly one of the great things about your play is that it's one of the few that I've seen that brings up faith and brings up faith as integral to the human ... to the society and to the culture .. and you know it strikes me that, you know , there's lots of people who say they're humanist, they're agnostics but there is a role for faith ... surely there is a viable role for faith in not just getting people but making people feel some sense of purpose and I don't see it in any other plays ... and that worries me ... I mean there is a reason that humans have had it for the last how ever many thousand years ...

LA – that's again another thing that we saw missing 18:20 We felt, we felt ... we felt we had, we had to make a contribution because we thought the only way that Muslims and Islam were being represented on stage were in these very .. how would you say it (LC – tepid?) tepid? ... crude ways .. stereotypical ... stereotypes ... very shallow stereotypes of ... and caricatures ... they were almost caricaturing of Muslims ... focusing on one particular thing and blowing it up ... and there was very little humanity in any of it ... so we felt that umm that we needed to, we needed to bring that faith dimension, that spiritual dimension in and it ... needs to be very central to so...

LC – But it just surprises me that at some level the issue has to do with certain sorts of faith and cultural belief but they are not in any plays ... it's like ... consequently there is no empathy and the empathy is not in any plays ... it's just horrifying ... and what I am really looking at myself is how is theatre ... how is that a thermometer of society and ... because I think theatre is the first line of response to a society in trouble or doing well, you know ...

LA – Yeah, I mean very much, I mean I couldn't agree more and that's why, you know, we continue to work, you know, in this area and continue... now we've just come from a Primary School very nearby where we ... Eleanor was performing stories of wisdom from 4 different faiths: Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism and Islam ... (LC – Fabulous) showing the children the common threads that go through these faiths ... in a very fun and enjoyable way.

EM – And also making sure that ... and also pointing out that this could be that wisdom that is enjoyed ... even by people of no particular faith (LC – Exactly these are important stories) yeah.

LA – So you know that that lived faith as opposed to doctrinal and dogmatic faith that's where we are really coming from and that's what we are trying to advocate certainly in Luton, which is our home base, is we don't need ... it's less effective sitting round and talking about what you believe and what I believe and how they differ 21:00 it's much more effective to take the stories from the Christian tradition and the Muslim tradition, which are about lived faith ... and I would describe it as being ... because when you have a discourse of ... not ideals attained but ideals pursued, which is a very different dialogue ... because then if you are talking about ideals pursued then .. everybody is on a level (LC – Absolutely) whereas if you are talking about ideals attained everybody's on their high-horse, you know, and it's a sort of adversarial ... competitive type of situation ... so I think the discourse on story and dream within our plays is what needs to be brought to the fore ... leave all that other stuff behind ... until, until we've humanised the arena ... once we've humanised the arena then we'll have the maturity ... and we've the humility to start talking about perhaps, differences. So, that's really where we are coming from when it comes to faith and theatre [?] and story-telling and so forth and that is just as true for how we approach our work with Muslim audiences as well as with wider society ... um and increasingly we are finding ... we are finding a lot of receptivity to that because I don't think it's really been done, like you say, (LC – it's sort of horrifying ... that ... I come from a Jewish faith ... my Dad was a freemason and I went to a Catholic school ... so I'm all over the place) you really need to come and see the stories

LC – what always amazed me ... I had a friend who was Turkish when I was young and my Dad's Masonic faith has an overlap with certain aspects of the Islamic faith ... they all meet in various different oddball ways ... I think it's fascinating, you know, you are not really allowed to ask comfortably but ... I guess I ought to get to the big questions. One of the things I like about your play was there was a focus on speech ... the choice of language and the use of language and the weight of language, which I also like because that's sort of ignored as well... what do these words mean ... what do these terms mean. Jenny Hughes, I notice said, 'engage creatively with speech acts' ... the significance of language ... and I guess what I'm saying is did you feel that language was misused politically at the time?

LA – Yeah ... it was very much part of ... you know the choice of, the choice of the word Prevent (laughs) you know, I mean the choice of the words and you know, our point for young people ... it was the whole thing of you are the story you tell yourself and you make yourself with your words because your words are a manifestation of your thinking. When we would do workshops after *Hearts & Mind* ... the interesting part of it ... the gratifying part of it we would explore that ... and we would unpack that, you know, that whole maxim about 'be careful of your thoughts because your thoughts become your words and your words become your deeds and your deeds become your habits and your...' going up to character and so that was the arc that we were exploring with young people.

EM - Yeah [unclear] ... I'm just trying to remember ... it's strange trying to recall some of those thoughts ... where, where it came from. Yes ... this way that this language of the time the culture of language at the time was ... and still is ... was being subverted and it's like clay ... what, what everything was everything was losing meaning (LC – Substance) substance and meaning for them ... wanted to ... tried to find a way to bring youngsters back to ... finding a meaning ... a sense of place ... it's all to do with ... if you are going to dissolve language then ..

LC – That is interesting because nearly all the plays that I look at some level seem to question the ability of language to do the job ... There's a real gap between the words and what those words mean ... and now in the world of fake news you can kind of see it starting ... rolling up around this time ... perhaps language just being a ... a weapon (LA – A commodity) Absolutely ... which gets me to the next point. What I really liked as an old leftie is the choice for Asif is kind of between on some level ... some form of religious extremism or what seemed to me capitalist extremism (EM – You're his friend now ... he likes this one... he's always going on ...)

LA – That was very much what we intended really ... there were so many layers to the play, you know, we were layering things and using motifs and and devices to talk about much deeper issues ... yeah I mean, you know, capitalism ... what is causing the greatest damage in this world by far is capitalist extremism (laughs) you know so ... and for the past few centuries so you know, I mean, why don't ... if we are really concerned about extremism ... again language, you know ..why is, why is extremism exclusively (LC – faith based) applied to ... applicable to faith why isn't it applicable to how we do everything [anything?] which is, which is how we first came into to it with *Sun & Wind.. Sun & Wind*. First understand the extremist 27:10 tendencies within all of us ... the tendencies towards excess (LC – Absolutely) when we understand that ... then perhaps we will be able to, will be able to address these sort of particulars ... let's have a sort of general understanding of it, so that, that's where we were coming from.

LC – I notice with Asif, you know you, don't just ... he is not just tempted to become a drug-dealer but he is also, putting the ... giving the money to his Mum and that's one of the problems with capitalism it's kind of all mixed in ... it's necessary, it's kind, it's generous ... it's also nasty ... it's hard to unpick

LA – You know what we were commenting on then is the fact that what is the figure for ... 46% of Muslims live in the bottom 10 areas of multiple deprivation so half of Muslims live in poverty ... basically or, you know, and so the drive ... [see <https://www.mcb.org.uk/wp->

[content/uploads/2015/02/MCBCensusReport 2015.pdf](#) for MCB report] preoccupation with criminality[?] [unclear] is often a last resort ... as a result of being excluded in modern life ... Now the figures are even more frightening .. If you look at the recent figures came out of the social mobility .. the first report on Muslim Communities and social mobility ... the figures I mean basically ... let it be said that Muslims are being failed completely on social mobility, on the promise of social mobility and equality because they are excelling from primary school up to to the employment market but when they get here ... they are cut down literally (LC – And it's all by the back door isn't it, so there's nothing .. you can't take anyone to court on) yeah so we were coming to it from the fact that if there is a lack of opportunities, if there's a lack of significance umm and that's really the critical one ... that's where I agree with the anthropologist Scott Atran, if you are familiar with him (LC – Shakes head) Scott Atran gave a brilliant presentation on extremism to the Security Council of the UN a couple of years ago and, you know, he says the significance deficit when a person has been made to feel as if they are insignificant ... they will grab anything of significance [?] that's why gangs (LC – that how they) that's how they work. so what we were trying to do with the Asif character was to show that not only is he trying to, you know, fend for his family and provide for his family and he has resorted to criminality to do it but he is also seeking some significance, he is seeking meaning, he is seeking purpose, seeking a dream ... and we actually use dream in it quite strongly 30:00 .

LC – The only kind of role models that our culture gives you is like hard-nosed capitalist Alan Sugar types you know – (EM – Substance-less) Absolutely. And that is not particularly healthy in any way. My nephew he is 25 now and he has given up all his poetry and all the fun thing he wants to be a salesman... he wants to make big money .. he wants to get that money ... he wants the BMW, which he's got ... but it all seems a bit built on sand, though I'm sure that I was the same at that age and you grow out of it. But what it isn't... it doesn't have legs ... it doesn't give you a sense of meaning. I was probably much the same at that age. And the other thing I particularly like is ... I'm sport mad ... is the role of sport ... particularly boxing and football .. and I had my Muhammad Ali poster up when I was young ... it was definitely the first kind of Muslim hero that I definitely had... that's why I loved that it was set around the Olympics ... even though I thought it was going to be a disaster ... it was possibly one of the greatest things I have ever seen on telly ... it was just a wonderful thing ...

LA – Yuh, we really, really wanted to hang it on something ... epic. We wanted something that was pedestrian ... meaning something epic ... And again ... if you look through the play, the structure of the play, for me it was all about umm these polarities ... and showing meeting points ... where these, where they met and helping people, basically helping young people to find a centre because ultimately that's the only, the only way you stop, you stop any sort of extremism ... is that you empower people to be centred ... because when you are centred you are able to make the right choices. (LC – Absolutely) You are not deceived by false choices ... and so Ms Hussain the teacher is trying to call up her students to, to finding a centre for themselves.32:30 Trying ... to find an inner significance themselves through the power of imagination ... through the power of dream and so that was, that was really where ... where we were coming from ...with the play and so much ... I think the play is actually quite simple but the layering of it (LC - goes on and on) was something that struck the kids ... we wanted, we went to some schools which were hardcore ... I mean almost like fortresses ..., you know, East London ... Walthamstow ... Newham, stuff like that. To get in those schools alone was a huge challenge and these kids who are, you know ... you could see the impact on them of actually being confronted ... encountering something which drew them into themselves as well as providing them with a reflection on ... almost ... so many issues at once (LC – Absolutely) And I mean, I must send you some of the, the feedback from the young people, in terms of ... I think I have got on these things that we have sort of consolidated in a representative way ... and you can tell from the comments the depth of the thinking that it provoked.

LC – I used to teach Diversity in Welwyn Garden City, which is not the world's toughest area (Laughs) (LA – Very close to where we are now). They really, really got it. Apparently they

totally got everything that was going on. I taught a module on Stephen Lawrence... when I went to University Stephen Lawrence was murdered then ... it had a big impact on me ... and they totally got it ... that the police – they are doing a good job ... but they can't always be trusted, you know ... they got nuance that I didn't necessarily get at their age. And certainly they get honesty and difficulty but also what surprised me how racist the average middle-class white kid is ... especially now I have moved to Cheltenham. Schooling/galling?

LA – I think one of the most negative feedback ... negative responses that we got was ... we were playing in ... near Reading ... Bracknell 35:00 and it was one of these colleges which feeds the Armed Forces so these are ... you know, (LC – Yes) Cadets or whatever and they were unbelievable, I mean ...

EM – There was somebody who literally cr... there was a point when you see Asif after the flags, that he sort of crumbles ... there was literally somebody in the audience who cried 'oh at least there's another one gone.' You know.. (LC – That's terrifying)

LA – Well you know...

LC – There are certain parts of the country that are, you know, need a lot more saving than the others.

LA – You know, even... we worked not so long ago we were working in Bourton-on-the-Water (LC – That's very near ...) and we had a great time in the school... and, you know, so many times you, you know work in white, middle-class schools there's just a lack of exposure (LC – Absolutely) when you give them, you know, the opportunity to comment from a humanitarian perspective... to a [unclear] cultural ... there is a willingness

LC – Absolutely. It just requires familiarity ...being comfortable ... I'll tell you a story ...my friend Faruk ... was a Turkish Muslim who moved into Potters Bar, which was where I grew up .. he joined in the 6th form and said come round on a Friday night after school ... he had a big beautiful box of cigarettes ... I thought this was heaven and he said ... these are for you and you must have coffee 'where are your parents' they work and they don't get home until 8'. There was mass of cultural difference and the thing was all of it was good. There was more generosity... there was more kindness and I learnt that in about 15 minutes ... It just seems to me to be familiarity ... exposure .. to different cultures but anyway enough of me ... Of course the big question is really do you really think that the Prevent strategy was a good idea

LA – Honestly, I accept that something had to be done and something, you know, and you have four, you know the four things that they (LC – I've written them down because I couldn't remember them) Pursue, Protect, Prevent (LC - Pursue, Protect, Prevent ... Prepare) yeah, so I mean, you know, I think I think, each of those levels of incidence [?] had its own particular ... my issue with it was ... you, you choose the path, path of maximum - what you call it -... resistance ... rather than of minimum resistance. By making a big hoo-ha that ... and they are stigmatising communities by, from the beginning focusing on these communities and associating them with terrorism ... to the degree that when a man murders an MP in broad daylight, you can't find a way of describing the guy as a terrorist. You can't, you can't, you've suddenly forgot that the word terrorist existed in your vocabulary. (LC – As soon as that report came out. I'm sure that there were loads of people saying 'he shouted Britain First' ... 'you know he shouted Britain First don't you?' Then suddenly 'we're not sure ...') I mean ... for me ... that stinks of, you know, ... I come from the U.S. and I remember point a Pro [?] and I remember all the sort of counter black liberation movements, counter ... civil rights movements ... against the government ... that reminded me of that basically .. that type of that type of behaviour. So what, what I think is so ... I don't agree with how it was done . I personally believe ... on the one hand you are talking about this being a challenge of our generation ... this particular generation [?] on the other hand 39:00

what you are dealing with is in a piecemeal ... transient way um ... so many things don't match up ... right ... you could have ... we know as an Arts organisation, which is now 20 years old ... we started in 1997 ... we were... we were actually seeking to pre-empt a lot of this stuff because we could see this stuff, you know (LC – Coming) becoming eventualities ... And what we found was ... we found complete unwillingness on the part of ... the Arts council in particular ... but the cultural sector in this country ... to want to engage in a positive way to, to addressing issues of umm disaffection, isolation ... cultural isolation. 40:00 separatism, whatever you want to call it and stuff like that...and complete shutdown and exclusion... so we knew by the time of [unclear] that your exclusionary practices um have created people who are very ... who don't have any sense of belonging who have no reason to feel belonging to the country because you have isolated them... excluded them and now you have stigmatised them, and so forth. So of course they are going to be vulnerable to these types of narratives um. So, so, yes, while I agree that there was something that needed to be done, the way it was done I completely disagree with. I think it should have been um, it should have been a cross-departmental acceptance and acknowledgement that there is inequality, that there is um marginalisation and exclusion; and we need to deal with those issues across the board whether it is within health, whether it is in education, whether it is in culture ... and then you would have ... without all the hooahaa, and all the hysteria and all the stigma there was... you would have basically pulled the cover [?]... from underneath the extremists and made it much more difficult for them to, to influence anyone. Instead of what you did, was you basically blew them up .. and you made them (LC – Isolating) a counter-cultural – I don't know what you want to call it – (LC – You gave them the weapons in advance, as you say [in the play] 'negative implication that all young Muslims are potential terrorists') Yeah, you empower them, you empower them so that you know they are ... they have much more [muffled] credibility and credence than they deserve, and by so doing you facilitate and enabled them.

LC – And they didn't pick on any extreme right organisations (LA – The BNP) And even now the proscribed list has 71 Islamic organisations and one: National Action... you know, you think someone would go 'to be honest we have got to fix that' ... I don't know.

LA – Yeah, you know. Like I say, I say to people who I know, I know in the home office land [?] [unclear] you know, you're not, you are not stopping the flow . Basically what's happened since is the latest ... this Tory government has pretty much stopped all the upstream work and is just focusing on midstream, downstream 42:30, which means that upstream you are still having people drawn in because you cut the youth stuff, you cut the community stuff, you aren't addressing inequality um and you are omitting [?] that all these reports. So, as far as I am concerned you still have huge swathes of Muslim communities ... but not just Muslim communities, white w... white communities as well who are (LC – disaffected and a problem) and vulnerable, and susceptible and you really are not addressing those, those underlying issues, those underlying factors that you are not addressing, which means we are going to get continual flow.

LC – And you now even in my idea of heaven and Corbyn walks in tomorrow, the problems are so I (laughter) – I don't think he'll be that good really – the problems are so ingrained that, you know, even with goodwill and the best faith ... it's a generation away.

LA – You see this is why we were so upset. Here we are we've taken, you know, we've been ten years working already by then. We had basically, we had a privileged relationship with Muslim communities. We took that privileged relationship to work with government despite our misgivings because we felt that there needed to be representation of a holistic, humanitarian cultural perspective [institutions ?] We generate all this momentum across the country um I would say critical mass really ... you know in terms of 25,000 young people – almost a hundred partners, across health, across education, across law enforcement, across local government and then you basically pulled the plug right ... (LC – When ... was ... the funding pulled) basically ... the funding package was 2008, three years, 2008-2011. So when the coalition government came

in 2011 they just threw out everything, well you know most things, except – from my perception, I may be wrong – but they threw out everything which was, they associated with the Labour government. Now ... I thought this was beyond party politics. This issue. You call... you said it was for a generation ... no political parties are going to remain in there for a generation (laughs). It has to be a cross-party thing. So they threw out all Labour's stuff. The only people they continued to fund were people who, you know, who they had relationships with... the Tory party had relationships with... Lib Dems at the time, because it was the coalition government. And anything that had been distinctively cultivated under Labour they treated it with great, you know, circumspection. 45:00 And so very little ... things passed, you know, made the transition through, and obviously we were dropped, we were just dropped basically.

LC – And it was the same for all the Prevent theatre groups as well, wasn't it?

LA – No (& EM – No) there were, there were other groups which made the transition (LC – Oh OK) under the new [?] government, um some of the ones which were covered ... at least a couple of the ones which were covered in the Jenny Hughes .. there were a couple of them who did make it through (LC – *Not in My Name* was one of the ... I can't remember the others) I can't ... so, so, so yeah, the conversations I had were because, you know, we were moving now from violent extremism to non-violent extremism ... so somebody, somewhere within the coalition, or somewhere, didn't like *Hearts & Minds* or had some issue with *Hearts & Minds* so they sort of mooted the idea that we might be prepared to work with you, if you basically allow us to censor 46:00 (shocked laugh) and we, you know, that wasn't ... we were just not interested (LC – You can only lose can't you) yeah, once you've done that what's the point? I mean you might as well ... and by that time also the whole [unclear Prevent?] situation got ... became so fugitive ... (LC?) toxic in Muslim communities um and wider and so we tho .. we can, we can work better outside the auspices and this type of thing and, and continue the work we have been doing even before government, you know, because, in terms of, in terms of dealing with the underlying issues we have working on Prevent - before the government even acknowledged that there were any issues (LC – And you would get funding from schools or local authorities or Arts Council or? ...) [general laughter] LA - our pockets (LC – That's the danger)

LA – You know we were ... we would work on ... it was very ad hoc ... where we were getting funding from .. It was basically ... we were excluded from cultural, you know, statutory arts funding, you know Arts Council, for reasons better known to themselves, um so we had to 47:00 make do with income generation from ... a few grants here and there ... a few donations here and there ... so it was very ad hoc but um so that's basically what err

LC – And does it look like it is going to stay that way? There's no central government money coming.

LA – No. we don't receive any government money ... and we haven't since 2011. Except for some work that I did ... that we did in Sudan with the Foreign Office which, you know we had these British Sudanese medics ... who went to Sudan to train, then they went all off to Da'esh, off to Syria and Iraq [see - <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/01/british-students-killed-in-iraq-after-joining-isis>] I was contacted to do some work around conceiving of a cultural approach to dealing with polarisation and extremism (LC – Wow.) That wasn't, that wasn't like grant funding, that was, that was a commission, you know, more like services provision. But in terms of, in terms of government subsidy ... funding we haven't seen anything since 2011.

LC – Which strikes me as a terrible thing. I mean, really I can't think of a much better thing that one could do with young people than to set them on the straight and narrow. It's more important than giving them GCSE Maths...

LA – Yeah, but I think, I mean, we are ... we are part of ... you know ... you've got all these things coming together ... you've got austerity... austerity a diff ... a Tory Prevent agenda (LC – Yeah,

Which is about Duty) which is different from the Labour one .. not that I say the Labour one was great at all, by any stretch ... but all these things collided with us in 2011, which meant that we were left out in the cold really.

LC – The new Prevent requires schools to, to sort of Monitor ‘At risk’ kids and to report on ‘At Risk’ kids which ... such is really dodgy ... I don’t want to be doing that

LA – Right out of, out of East German Secret Service

LC – Doesn’t it. The Stasi ...

LA – Really, if history has taught you anything ... human beings don’t respond well to this type of thing... and actually what human beings do is they find ways in which to (LC - subvert) subvert or ways in which to conceal and, you know ...

LC – What they are doing is setting up an environment ... in which to create more skilled extremists but er, a general question if I may I assume ... and I’m sure we all assume that theatre has the ability to change people ... do you really think from your experience theatre is the thing ...

LA – I’m only sitting here talking to you because theatre changed me. 50:15 (LC – OK) as, as a 15 year old I was involved ... I played this central role in a High-school play, which fundamentally changed me because it ... it introduced me to one of ... a sort of theatrical way of looking at the world with all the underlying philosophy of what theatre is ... and it planted a seed ... - course it didn’t happen right away -... it planted a seed which led to ... led to ... what we do now because I recognize, you know the power of this medium. The power of storytelling, the power of stagecraft, the power of the conceptual that is sort of the nature in which theatre is created. 51:00 There’s no doubt because we have had many experiences over these twenty years where people, I mean, even before the grant we had a young man who was well on the path towards, you know, extremism and God knows what could have happened, and he came to see our debut production and by his own admission and his words later, turned him 180 degrees to becoming a teacher and actually someone who was actually working to, you know, to, to build resilience in young people. ... So we have seen many examples of the ways in which theatre changes people

EM – But the problem of course is that soft power is the most ... is the greatest power. It’s the one that, you know, cannot validate next week ... they are going to watch this and then I am going to see the results and I can tick them off and put it into a nice number for the government ... because ... then of course that is all they want ... they want to see ... they want to see the results in a nice little

LC – Absolutely ... in a spreadsheet. And that was probably one of the problems with Prevent, that you know ... you can’t prove how many people you stopped becoming ... extreme .. an extremist or a terrorist...

EM – But well we can ... as I say ... we can certainly come with these examples ... we know people who have literally, you know come ...

LA – But these are things before the time, these ... you and we know and we ... we by no means .. we talk about a few examples ... but I would think that ... we ... there are two examples that we quote about the change it has made to people’s lives ... will only amount to about 10% of the people who have been changed. Not everyone comes back to you and tells you a story or anything ... I mean I still meet people twenty years later who came to our first production and who were changed by that first production and who are now in influential places and who have ... were convinced by that experience to want to support theatre whether they are businessmen 53:00 or whether they are people who are, you know, running [unclear – trust?] information and so forth ... so cumulatively over a twenty year period we have seen people from many different

walks of life who have been influenced and changed ... so there is no doubt and I don't know if you saw George Monbiot wrote a brilliant piece in *The Guardian*. (LC - I read him every now and then) ... when he wrote about story and he talks about how story can do what nothing else can do and he's saying that we need ... without, without a story for our society we will not be able to undo, you know, the sort of destructive (LC – Climate Change) trajectory that we are in, so...

LC - I think that's true and I remember when I was trying to be a teacher many years ago I was very worried the week before I was supposed to become a teacher and I really was worried (laughs) . I thought I don't think I can do this and someone said to me that the problem is that you haven't visualized or seen yourself in that role... you haven't visualised what it might be like ... you might be quite good at it ... there may be challenges but you will face them and you haven't told the story to yourself that it's going to be alright and certainly not in a convincing way and you know I totally buy that ... until you see that ... you need a kind of map before you set out and it is so obvious ... it's almost invisible ... kind of true. [unclear] But it's not clear where we go ... where do we go now.

LA – Another good one I Thought was Sam Wells thought for the Day, was it yesterday? [Rev Dr Sam Well Radio 4 – *Two Stories* 19 Sept] Or was it the day before? He's very much into story. He talks about ... he talks about the Story of Freedom, the Story of Slavery 55:00 and he talks about the third story ... he's sort of advocating this third story ... which is really about um it's really about virtue really ... about, you know, humanitarian virtue ... higher, higher humanitarian values and I think that was that was very much what *Hearts & Minds* was about ... There is a third story ... you have the capitalistic slavery story ... either enslave-d or be a slave, you have the sort of ... the story of individualism if you like and then you have the third story which is about accepting that there is something bigger than you yourself, you know: grander than yourself which can elevate you and ennoble you and give you confidence and perspective and, you know, that's really what ...

LC – And it's sort of like I guess you are saying the virtue aspects of faith don't always require faith to still be true and that again is something that is pretty, pretty straightforward but quite hard to express.

LA – Yeh, something I said to Muslims, you know in Islam we have a ... we also have a, have a deterioration in the relationship between faith and virtue and, you know, I am always at pains with my audience to say, actually the prophet Mohammed before ... before he publicized his mission as a prophet, he was concerned with the virtue in society and that society was by and large not a faith society. It was an idolatrous, idolatrous society, you know, they were worshipping stone idols and wooden idols, you know, and so if he, if he appreciated that virtue was as important in a faithless environment from his perspective 57:00 and he was actually part of a league ... it was sort of like a society in Mecca at the time and he was a contributing member of that. So um he understood that human beings um have a ... can be receptive to virtue and can be virtue-oriented without necessarily being of the Muslim [? background noise very loud] faith ... we don't ... we don't want to call them virtues... we want to call them values

LC – Absolutely – but I think, you know, if you take away the faith it is quite hard to express the values in a comfortable way, you know. I was brought up by Catholics, Jews and Freemasons and the faiths were inbuilt ... the values were inbuilt into the faith and so to take them out and sell them, I think...

LA – Yeah, well that's, that is the exact challenge that we are in, you know ... I think humanists ... you know humanists come in many shades ... I think, there is an attempt by humanists, you know I was justup on/part [?] of a panel discussing this very issue at the National theatre a couple ... a couple of ... two weeks ago ...and we had a we had a Cathol ... a C of E vicar, a Humanist, a Buddhist and myself. And I think, you know, some humanists are attempting to do

that but when you ... when everything is purely subjective then things become over relativized (LC – Absolutely grey) and that is the problem... you know ... and that is why we are now talking about values because we don't want to acknowledge an absolute in anything ... we don't want to acknowledge a transcendent ... we want everything on a horizontal plane and not ... not to accept any verticality .. and that, that's why ... you know we are ultimately at odds with the very nature that we live in ... you know the very nature of the environment. We sort of exceptionalise ourselves rather than see ourselves as part of the moment [?]

LC – Because when you do that ... when you take the values out of the faith ... you lose community (LA – Yeah) and that's you know... and again community is vitally important for everything else ... but anyway ... it is easy to say but, you know, I'm sure there will be a rebirth of faith at some point because you can't really exist without it.

LA – I, I believe the same and tha .. this experience that we are having at the moment is very interesting ... all these multi-faith stories because I think it's sending a very um, for want of a better term... a revolutionary message to faith observance here in this/each town [?] who um have not looked at faith through the lens of ... this discourse of ideals pursued or this discourse of story and dream. They have only been looking it at through the lens of doctrine and dogma, which is obviously, by necess... necessarily exclusive. So I think there is a way to um to positively influence both faith adherence and non-faith adherence by ... through an emphasis on the discourse of story and dream across the plays as a, as a sort of kickstarter to a, if you like to this 'third story' ... to a new vision (LC – of a faith?) of faith in whatever manifestations it takes. And I think that's that's were we're really passionate about ...

LC – I do, you know, worry about the Science narratives that go on ... they're wonderful things and, you know, I want a scientist when I'm ill ... don't get me wrong ... but it isn't the whole story ... there's more to being a human being...

LA – Well I actually used Science when I was sitting on this panel at the National. I used Science to make my point ... I said look science has proven to us a story: that our knowledge ... our knowledge is only um encompasses 4% of the perceivable cosmos, I mean that's what it amounts to ... so 95% 96% of the dark matter, the dark energy and everything which we have no knowledge (LC – Is disappearing somewhere in there) so what are we ... with this Science which is based on the, you know, the objective analysis of only visible (LC – Observable) observable facts – what does it really amount to ... I mean how helpful is it really in grasping the complexities of our existence and so, from that point of view Science itself has admitted its limitations ...

LC – Every time there is something they don't understand, they insert a little God don't they like 'Dark Matter' ... we don't understand that so that's a 'Black Hole'. No...But when you talk to them it's not a belief no, no ... and it kind of is there you go ... I better ask you anything I've got left ... I think you've answered everything thank you very much ... thank you I think you've answered everything that I need. 1:02:29. Ends

[Here Recording Breaks. Short post interview discussion added here[05:27]

LC – This is quite good I will have to do this again ...

LA – Where... I mean how you can have a [unclear] what is this all about you're not prepared to ... you're not even you know Sykes-Picot this is the hundred ... centenary of Sykes-Picot (LC – Absolutely 1917[act. 1916]) and you, you divided these countries up and you arbitrarily drew borders separating (LC – Despite promising them in advance that 'don't worry we're going to set up an independent Arab state ... it'll be fine', and then they get found with a map ... cutting it up and, you know, and ...) what is surprising is when you consider this ... you have some knowledge of anthropology ... what is surprising is that we don't have a worse ... I mean if you consider,

you know, Sykes-Picot, you consider partition of India, you consider the DRC, I mean .. and I could go on ...

LC – And that ignores native Americans and Australians ...

LA – Everything... I mean ... if anything ... more of these dehumanised people have not erupted into an army of zombies and come and pulled your society down. I think, I think that's a credit to the magnanimity of the human spirit (LC – Yeah, yeah) that we don't have more ... carnage basically.

LC – John Simpson in his report said despite everything as year on year goes by, there's ... it's a bit safer ... despite everything there's a few less [murders] each year and I think that's important if you think that there's a few less deaths a few less, you know, murderous revolutions each year ... but yes, but Iraq is just such a great case in point because Sykes-Picot and then when Britain moved in there were these Kurds there and they said 'You ought to protect them because ... they don't get on' and they said 'yeah we'll do that later', you know, ... It's Britain's fault that the Kurds weren't given their own nation and weren't looked after at any level. You know, the Yazidis, they didn't worry too much about them either because they weren't profitable, you know, it's like ... and then England [Britain ?] withdrew and just decided to steal the Oil company and they thought 'we don't need to be there ... 'cos we only want their oil anyway... who cares what they do', you know. It's a great summary...

LA – And they created more terrorists where they were vulnerable ... by you know the barbarous .. barbarous behaviour of Abu Ghraib and places like that ..

LC _ Oh yeah ... that is my biggest chapter in my Phd, you know (LA – What?) Abu Ghraib and Moussa Begg [means. Baha Mousa]

LA - And that's where Da'esh come from, where Da'esh come from ... that sort of

LC – it's a factory for ... it's an ISIS factory ... There was that one lad whose who and I can't remember his name ... Ron Fiddler ... Ron Fiddler who was just taken on holiday and stuck in Guantanamo for years on end ... changed his name became extreme ... blew someone up ... blew himself up within 5 years of leaving Guantanamo. ... like, you know, you don't need anymore evidence than that ...

[Muffled and loud background noise]

LA – Those policy makers don't even have an appreciation that your very media coverage is sufficient to radicalise someone ... someone who doesn't have who ... for whatever reasons is emotionally stunted, emotionally repressed or psychologically compromised ... your very media coverage, day after day is enough to radicalise them. They don't, they don't need someone, you know, from Syria to radicalise them you are radicalising them every day by the fact that you're (LC – Picking...) your double-standards, the lack of balance. All of these things actually, if you think about it in pretty humanitarian terms, are enough to push a person over into, into radi... (LC – Absolutely) but they want to talk about oh how some radicalised on the internet ...

LC – I do remember, you know, twenty years ago as a young man ... the IRA and Northern Ireland was kicking off, you know, everyone was saying 'we can't do anything about it ... it's not going to end.' And what happened was that people sat down around a table and talked and it got better. And despite whatever anyone says people will have to sit round a table and talk. And it doesn't matter how 'Extreme' you are and eventually that will happen and people will sit round a table and talk.

Cotterell_L_S1506012_Suspect Device

LA – Well my view ... in why they ended up to sit round a table is because they knew that they couldn't afford to have the IRA operating (EM – [unclear then] In stages) when they were opening up a new front with, you know ... and they, they did their risk assessments and said what would happen if the IRA were to get common cause with Al Qaeda or something

LC – (Laughs) Well, there was that time wasn't there when the IRA, the PLO, the Basque Separatists ... I don't know so we'll leave it on an optimistic level it will all be alright but not in my lifetime ...

[recording breaks]

Appendix IV. Analysis of *Stovepipe* by Adam Brace (2008)

I went 'cos it's better goin for money than for a bunch of ungrateful swine who think, once you're in a body bag, you asked for it by, joining up.¹

One of the most significant differences about the British military involvement in Iraq, as opposed to previous conflicts with British involvement such as the Balkans, Falklands or Northern Ireland was in the increasing use of private military and security companies, known as PMSCs.²

A 2010 BBC report considered the continuing growth of this 'business' sector and quoted the Director General of the British Association of Private Security Companies, Andy Bearpark, who noted that this sector began to grow significantly from the start of the conflict in 'Iraq in 2003', where:

"Money was basically free [...] That meant contracts were being let for ridiculous amounts of money. The industry exploded in terms of the volume of business on the back of Iraq."³

Although many were employed in logistics work at the height of the coalition's occupation of Iraq around '60 British companies' and '100,000' security personnel were employed. This meant, in terms of organised manpower, 'the industry' was 'second only to the U.S. on the global stage.'⁴

According to the anti-poverty charity group *War on Want*, it was 'UK firms like Aegis Defence Services, ArmorGroup (now a subsidiary of G4S), Control Risks and Olive Group' who 'snapped up' some of the largest contracts. However, in Iraq this new business sector was dominated by the American company Blackwater.⁵ These security contracts seemed relatively un-contentious and focused on delivering support tasks such as guarding military locations or securing the specific tasks involved in rebuilding a crumbling infrastructure; these were never contracts to engage in conflict. Of course, as many Western companies were involved in a great deal of the rebuilding work, it seemed only fair that these private firms fund their security requirements from their own profits.⁶ Nevertheless, Solomon Hughes in a powerful critique of the use of the private sector, and particularly private soldiers, in Iraq argues that:

Every element of the failure of Operation Iraqi Freedom can be traced partly to the involvement of the private security industry. The private firms added much to

¹ Adam Brace, *Stovepipe* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 75.

² Although the U.S. used logistics companies like Halliburton (through subsidiary Brown & Root) during the Kuwait and Balkans conflicts, as detailed in Robert Young Pelton, *Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006), p. 101.

³ Edwin Lane, 'The Rise of the UK's Private Security Companies', BBC News, 2 November 2010 < <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11521579> > [accessed 20 September 2017]

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Dr Sam Raphael, 'Mercenaries Unleashed: The Brave New World of Private Military and Security Companies', *War on Want* (London: War on Want, Jan 2016), p. 4.

⁶ This handing out of rebuilding contracts to Western companies remains a massively divisive issue see Mehrdad Vahabi, *The Political Economy of Predation: Manhunting and the Economies of Escape* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2015), pp. 156-197.

the confrontation with Iraqis after the war and their disillusionment with the occupiers as well as to the fragmentation of the Iraqi state.⁷

Hughes argues that sidelining native companies and labour was a decision that was instrumental in the failure of the occupation and in the proper restoration of Iraq's infrastructure. Hughes argument is one of the most strident but many other critics have commented on the ethical issues to do with responsibility and accountability when outsourced employees function as private soldiers.⁸

Such dangers were most infamously highlighted by the American corporate giant Blackwater's involvement in the 2007 massacre at Nissour Square in Baghdad.⁹ Here four private employees were tasked with providing personnel protection to an unnamed occupant in an Armoured Car; presumably perceiving a threat, they opened fire on a civilian crowd with 'machine guns and grenade launchers' killing 14 people and injuring 17. The US government noted at the later trial, "None of the victims was an insurgent, or posed any threat". A retired US Colonel at the trial also argued that such events naturally made "our relationship with the Iraqis in general more strained."¹⁰ Other difficulties with other companies are explored in Hughes' and other texts.¹¹

It is perhaps surprising that such a pivotal shift in the mode of production of contemporary war should not constitute a dominating theme in the theatre of the period but there seem to be few published works that consider the dramatic rise of PMSCs. However, one notable exception is Adam Brace's debut play *Stovepipe*. This play was first produced as part of the Hightide Festival, in collaboration with the National and Bush theatre, in Suffolk 2008. It then transferred to a Shepherd's Bush shopping centre (West 12) as a promenade piece. The play is inspired by a number of private security employees that Brace interviewed whilst in Jordan as well as some American soldiers Brace played soccer with, who aspired to join the apparently lucrative corporate military sector.¹²

The play concerns three ex- paratroopers who appear to have been lured by the money to become private contractors in Iraq: Alan, Eddy and Griff. Brace points out early on that these three are not mercenaries as their job is not to do battle but to 'avoid fights' and provide armed security for the rebuilding operations in Iraq.¹³ They seem to be relatively well paid, six hundred dollars a day is quoted, yet their experience is shown as

⁷ Solomon Hughes, *War on Terror, Inc* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 138.

⁸ See as examples, David Isenberg, *Shadow Force: Private Security Contractors in Iraq* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009) and Sean McFate, *The Modern Mercenary: Private Armies and What They Mean for World Order* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2017)

⁹ For an excellent exploration of Blackwater see, Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: the Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2008)

¹⁰ Nicky Woolf, Four Blackwater guards sentenced for massacre of unarmed Iraqi civilians', *The Guardian*, 14 April 2015 < <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/apr/13/former-blackwater-guards-sentencing-baghdad-massacre> > [accessed 9 September 2017]

¹¹ Solomon Hughes, *War on Terror, Inc* & as examples see, David Isenberg, *Shadow Force: Private Security Contractors in Iraq* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009) & Robert Young Pelton, *Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006)

¹² Anon., What's On Stage Editorial, 'The Big Interview: Adam Brace', *What's On Stage*, 26 February 2009 < http://www.whatsonstage.com/off-west-end-theatre/news/02-2009/the-big-interview-adam-brace_17578.html > [accessed 9 September 2017]

¹³ *Stovepipe*, p. 39.

significantly more hazardous than joining a national army.¹⁴ Brace makes this clear when chief protagonist Alan signs a contract with a security company run by a South African 'soldier of fortune', called Andre.¹⁵ Alan's contract seems unsuitable to his occupation as it states Alan cannot claim against his employing company in the event of 'injury, dismemberment or emotional distress caused by terrorists or insurgents.'¹⁶ In an interview with Aleks Sierz, Brace noted that this was based on a 'real contract' used for security staff in Iraq.¹⁷

Following the signing of the contract, the play portrays the three ex-paratrooper's initial operation in Iraq. The job is to escort a truck full of building supplies for a new Police station in Baghdad along the Baghdad Airport Road, nicknamed 'Route Irish' by the Americans.¹⁸ Unlike in their formal military role, the three security contractors are not provided with armed backup, a radio to communicate with the Iraqi truck driver or a translator. As a consequence of this, when the guarded truck stops unexpectedly, Eddy and Alan have to get out of their armoured vehicle and talk to the Iraqi truck driver in person. It is at this point that contractor Griff, alone in the exposed support vehicle, is murdered and his death and the culture of unprotected danger overshadows the play.

Aleks Sierz in reviewing the play noted that the promenade staging at the West 12 Shopping Centre basement, (a disused car park) repeatedly opened out to new areas of the location and provided a 'spooky quality' that added to the 'sense of danger.'¹⁹

The play's narrative moves between active service in Iraq and a decamp location in Amman, Jordan. In Amman, Eddy and Alan meet an international cast of workers employed in various ways to profit from the Iraqi reconstruction: Canadian security workers; Saad: a translator from Iraq and Masha: a sex-worker from Russia. It is in Amman, seemingly disillusioned by Griff's death, that Eddy goes missing and the play becomes a quest, as Alan attempts to find out whether Eddy has been taken by insurgents or just 'cut and run' out of his contract.²⁰ Despite his search, Alan is contractually obliged to work as a personal bodyguard for his South African boss whilst Andre is speaking at a conference entitled 'Project Rebuild Iraq'. Brace's most political comments occur at this point in the work. The play is set soon after the 2008 financial crash and the Exhibitors at the conference market Iraq's collapse in terms of offering a 'cash cow' for the struggling Western speculator:

Exhibitor C: Even in these difficult times for investors, Iraq's reconstruction market refuses to be anything less than robust.

¹⁴ *Stovepipe*, p. 17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁷ Aleks Sierz, 'Playwright Adam Brace on Stovepipe', *TheatreVoice*, 13 March 2009 < <http://www.theatrevoice.com/audio/playwright-adam-brace-on-stovepipe/> > [accessed 9 September 2017] 13:27- 14:07.

¹⁸ Adam Brace notes that the Americans named Iraq's roads after American 'college football' and basketball teams. See, Aleks Sierz, 'Playwright Adam Brace on Stovepipe', *TheatreVoice*, 13 March 2009 < <http://www.theatrevoice.com/audio/playwright-adam-brace-on-stovepipe/> > [accessed 9 September 2017], 01:12-01:45. 'Route Irish' is the name of an excellent Ken Loach film on a very similar subject released in 2011. Ken Loach & Paul Laverty, *Route Irish* (London: Artificial Eye, 2011) [DVD]

¹⁹ Aleks Sierz, 'About Stovepipe', *Aleks Sierz: New Writing for the British Stage*, 11 March 2009 < <http://www.sierz.co.uk/blog/stovepipe/> > [accessed 12 September 2017]

²⁰ *Stovepipe*, p. 62.

Exhibitor B: Entrepreneurship and ethical considerations go hand in hand at Project Rebuild Iraq [...] fresh markets like Iraq are gold dust.²¹

In this context, Andre's 'mercenary' company bids for new contracts in a sales speech that uses the veiled lexis of neo-capitalism: Andre's PMSC are selling 'site-risk management consultancy', which is 'committed to strict industry accountability and regulation.'²² Brace ensures that even in this dialogue the missing noun 'government' has been outsourced to the word 'industry'.

To further highlight the irony that mercenaries are working to stabilise a crumbling nation, Alan is forced to man an exhibition stand and market his company's security services to wealthy Middle Easterners and profiteering company executives. In so doing, Alan is required to lie to prospective customers that he has never had any problems with his employees or his equipment, despite having lost his best friend Griff due to the latter. Under such strain, Alan breaks down and tells one customer about the fact that although his colleague Griff once fired into a crowd of innocent Iraqi civilians, this is better than the 'cowboys' who instead 'kill everybody in a twenty mile radius'.²³ Alan maniacally assures one CEO his company is more professional because:

We don't have any cowboys on our staff, we're mostly pros and psychopaths.²⁴

To maintain the cowboy theme, Eddy returns to the play, storms the conference and tries to shoot Andre for causing Griff's death for want of 'necessary equipment'. Alan the bodyguard tries to stop Eddy with words but Andre simply shoots Eddy through the head. The play ends by backtracking to Griff's funeral in Wales and Alan's eulogy that reminds the audience of the many decent British and other employees who died rebuilding Iraq. Brace attempts to close the play with a sense of balance between the soldiers and security staff risking their lives to rebuild Iraq, amidst a critique of the corporate cowboys profiting from the lawlessness and chaos.

One of the strengths of the play is the even-handedness with which Brace approaches the issue of PMSCs in Iraq. The play is sensitive to the arguments for private security companies who in varying forms have been a consistent feature of Western history, now given fresh impetus by neo-capitalism's triumphing of private industry. Andre's wife's explains PMSCs are 'Nothing new at all. We're the natural extension of the outsourcing sector [...] We also keep what little that functions in the country, functioning'.²⁵ Nonetheless, it is the almost choral refrain from Masha the Russian sex-worker that lingers:

When a person die, many people make money [...] when a country die, also many people make money [...] cannot escape funeral business.²⁶

Stovepipe is a lively and thoughtful thriller. Although at times, the sense of Iraq as a new form of 'Wild West' sometimes undermines the play's political and emotional currency.

²¹ *Stovepipe*, p. 69.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-76.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

Phillip Fisher believes the play, 'May not quite be *Black Watch* and can verge on melodrama'.²⁷ Nevertheless, as Michael Billington argues *Stovepipe* is an important work that 'Reminds us that, even if private companies are profiting from the Iraq war, their exploited employees deserve dramatic attention.'²⁸

Stovepipe offers us a rare glimpse into the world of the private military contractor, a phenomenon that seems pivotal in understanding why the Iraq war is a different (even postmodern in Jameson's terms) form of conflict partly because of its capitulation to the dictates of the market. Despite this, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri see Iraq's use of private companies and soldiers as ultimately a modern re-iteration of classical Empire-building: where Imperial rulers often grew reluctant to risk unpopularity by sacrificing the lives of their own citizens and so employed readily expendable, blameable, and usually foreign, mercenaries.²⁹ Hardt and Negri point out that the Roman Empire evolved to almost consistently employ foreign troops, as paid 'proxies' to manage the expansion and control of their colonies. They note, similarly 'in postmodern warfare, as in ancient Roman times, *mercenary armies* [sic] tend to become the primary combat forces.'³⁰

Consequently, there is significant historical precedent for dramatizing private armies and with a more significant number of other plays on a similar theme, this area of the Iraq war would demand significant academic research. The growing significance of PMSCs in modern conflicts is implied in the above quote and is noted by the campaigning charity *War on Want* in a January 2016 article. The campaign group also echo Brace's point that modern private military and security companies are currently not bound by any internationally-binding codes and only subject to 'self-regulation'. The British government itself is a 'key buyer of PMSC services', and thus is doubly implicated (as corporate overseer and customer) in PMSC's lack of regulation.³¹ This seems politically risky because as *War on Want* notes:

PMSCs have a track record of profiting from war and conflict. Despite facing numerous accusations of human rights abuses in conflict situations around the world, they remain unaccountable and unregulated.³²

Exploring such issues of neoliberal ideology and violence is perhaps the stock-in-trade of a centrally-funded theatre.

²⁷ Philip Fisher, 'Stovepipe', *British Theatre Guide*, March 2009 < <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/stovepipe-rev> > [accessed 9 September 2017]

²⁸ Michael Billington, 'Stovepipe', *The Guardian*, 10 March 2009 < <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/mar/10/theatre> > [accessed 9 September 2017]

²⁹ Blackwater's owner Eric Prince similarly argues that the American Revolution would have 'failed without private militias' see Robert Young Pelton, *Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006), p. 3.

³⁰ Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 46-47.

³¹ Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Promoting High Standards in the UK PMSC Sector, *Gov.UK*, 21 June 2011 < <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/promoting-high-standards-in-the-uk-pmsc-industry> > [accessed 9 September 2017]

³² Dr Sam Raphael, 'Mercenaries Unleashed: The Brave New World of Private Military and Security Companies', *War on Want* (London: War on Want, Jan 2016), p. 15.

Appendix V. Evidence of permissions to publish interviews and images

A. Richard Norton-Taylor Permission to Transcribe Interview

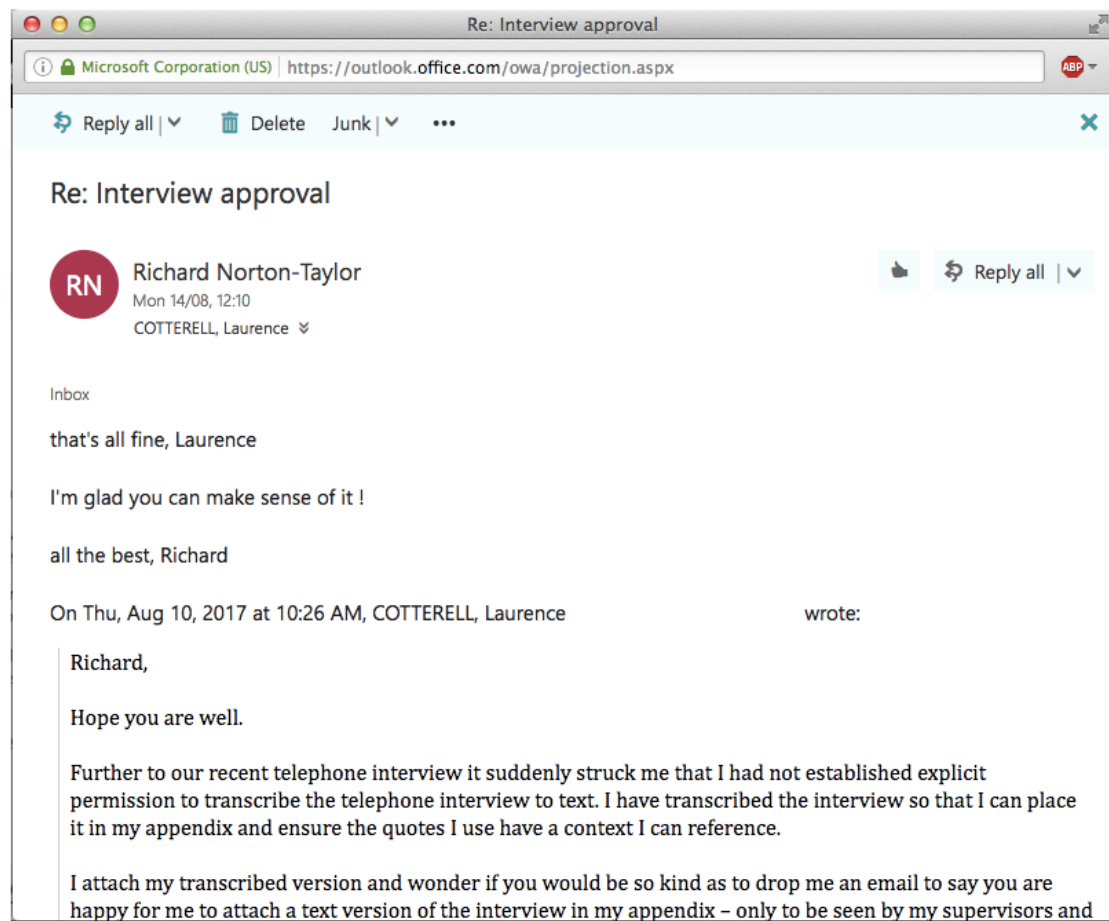


Figure 16. Screen Shot of e-mail permission to publish transcribed interview from R.Norton-Taylor

that's all fine, Laurence

I'm glad you can make sense of it !

all the best, Richard

On Thu, Aug 10, 2017 at 10:26 AM, COTTERELL, Laurence
Richard,

wrote:

Hope you are well.

Further to our recent telephone interview it suddenly struck me that I had not established explicit permission to transcribe the telephone interview to text. I have transcribed the interview so that I can place it in my appendix and ensure the quotes I use have a context I can reference.

I attach my transcribed version and wonder if you would be so kind as to drop me an email to say you are happy for me to attach a text version of the interview in my appendix – only to be seen by my supervisors and examiner? As mentioned, should I ever get published I will request permission to reproduce your quotes and the interview beforehand.

Kind regards and thanks again for what is undoubtedly the best bit of original research I have achieved so far.

Laurence Cotterell
Phd – Politics and Drama
University of Gloucestershire

--

Richard Norton-Taylor

Writer on Defence and Security

Mobile:

Twitter: @NortonTaylor

The Tricycle: Collected Tribunal Plays 1994-2012 <https://www.oberonbooks.com/tricycle-collection.html>

Chilcot, the play, published by <https://www.oberonbooks.com>

Smashing. I'll call the land line at 3pm.

Kind Regards,

Laurence Cotterell

From: Richard Norton-Taylor
Sent: 29 March 2017 10:59
To: COTTERELL, Laurence
Subject: Re: Verbatim request
good - would 3pm be ok ? you could phone me then on my mobile -

On Wed, Mar 29, 2017 at 10:01 AM, COTTERELL, Laurence wrote:

Dear Mr Norton-Taylor,

Right I have installed TapeaCall on the Iphone and am all set up. Please let me know what time is OK to ring you and what the number is.

My number is

Kind Regards,

Laurence Cotterell

B – Luqman Ali Permission to Transcribe Interview

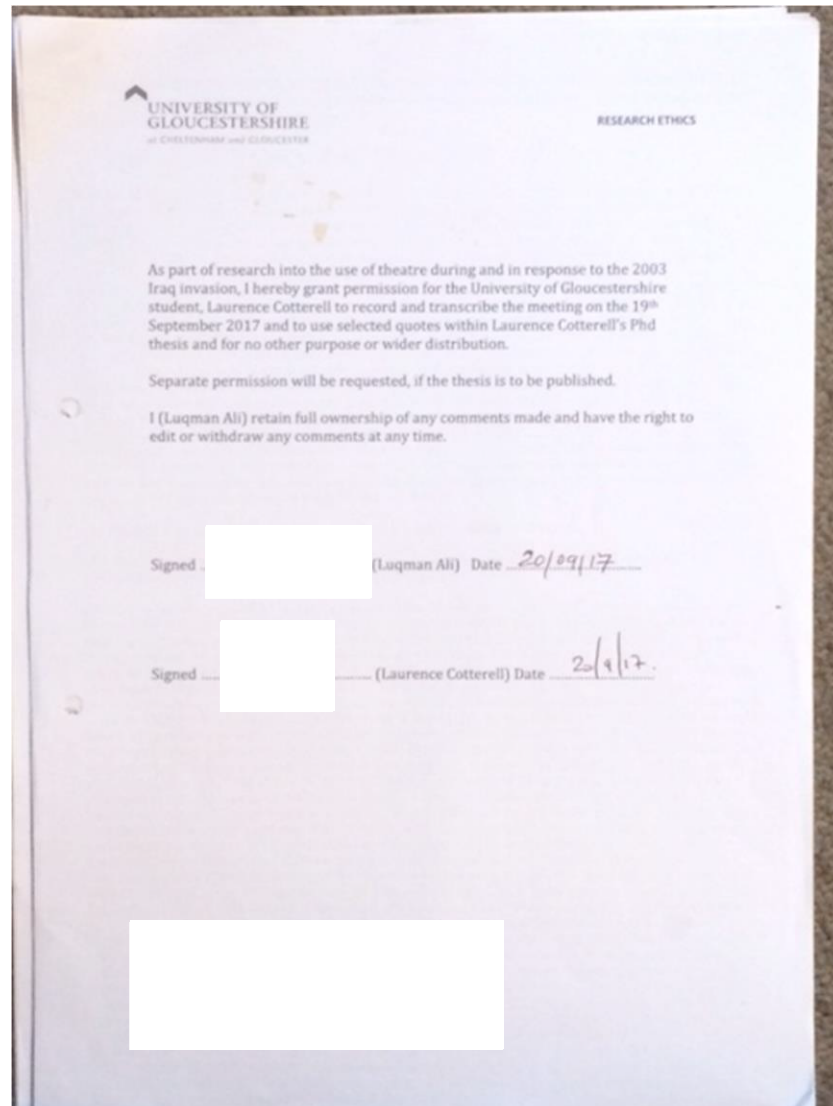


Figure 17. Screen Shot of permission to publish transcribed interview from Luqman Ali

C. Polly Sullivan, Stage Designer *Tactical Questioning*, Email conversation

Hi Laurence!

We used screens (one on stage behind witness, and others in the auditorium)

Polly

Sent from my iPhone

> On 5 Apr 2017, at 09:15, COTTERELL, Laurence

wrote:

>

> Polly,

>
> Many thanks. I am using the first one of the wide pan:
> /gt1iomdz3m9hp2cae7gknizjdrtocq and it will be fully acknowledged.
>
> Can I just push my luck and ask - did you indicate a change of speakers and dates with
> a sign/powerpoint, verbally or otherwise?
>
> Many thanks and excellent work. Love all the files, chipboard desks and that
> stenographer.
>
> Kind Regards,
>
> Laurence Cotterell
>
>
> _____
> From: Polly Sullivan
> Sent: 04 April 2017 17:11
> To: COTTERELL, Laurence
> Subject: Re: Can I use a photo please
>
> Sure thing, Laurence. Good luck with it!
>
> Sent from my iPhone
>
>> On 4 Apr 2017, at 16:31, COTTERELL, Laurence wrote:
>>
>> Dear Polly,
>>
>> I am writing about Tactical Questioning in a doctoral thesis. Which sounds quite
>> excellent and I wish I had seen it.
>>
>> I am trying to explain how the set was exactly like the trial and to what detail you all
>> went to to ensure the play had exhaustive 'verisimilitude'.
>>
>> I have spoken to Richard Norton-Taylor and got some excellent quotes and
>> information.
>>
>> I wonder if I could use one of your photographs from the website. One that shows the
>> level of detail. Only one and it would be fully acknowledged and not published.
>>
>> Please let me know if that would be OK.
>>
>> Kind Regards,
>>
>> Laurence Cotterell
>> Phd Drama & Politics
>> University of Gloucestershire
>>
>> -

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> Committed to sustainability: please think before printing this email.

> -

D. Permission to use Arts Funding graph in Funding Chapter from *The Guardian*

From: on behalf of
Permissions Syndication
Sent: 12 January 2017 16:01
To: COTTERELL, Laurence
Subject: Fwd: Copyright permission

Hi Laurence,

This looks like it would be covered under our Open Licence terms<<http://syndication.theguardian.com/open-licence-terms/>> - should you wish to use the content beyond those terms, please get back in touch and we can discuss.

Kind regards,

Nick.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: COTTERELL, Laurence <mailto:

Date: 12 January 2017 at 15:26

Subject: Copyright permission

To: " <mailto:

" <mailto: >,

" mailto: "

< <mailto:

Hello,

I am seeking permission to use a copy of your graph on Arts Funding in my doctoral

research on Theatre and New Labour. The graph is from your article on Corporate sponsorship, linked below. The figures and information are so much better than anything I could come up with it would be great if I could include them in my research. My aim is simply to show that corporate/private sponsorship never amounted to a great deal in comparison to Public subsidy but still carried enough ideological weight to upset lots of arts people.

I will ensure ownership and credit is given to the writers.

Please let me know if it is simply not acceptable as I am rather new to this.

Kind Regards,

Laurence Cotterell

University of Gloucestershire

Phd Drama & Politics

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/mar/02/arts-corporate-sponsorship-tate-british-museum>

-

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E. Permission to use Arts Funding graph s/Tables in Funding Chapter from *Arts in Business now Business in the Community*

From: Nuno Menezes

Sent: 30 January 2018 16:02

To: COTTERELL, Laurence

Subject: RE: Confirmation of permission

Hi Laurence

Hope you're well and it's no trouble at all! It's actually great to see the report and information in it used in another context; feel free to use those graphs in your thesis.

Good luck with your project – hope it goes well and if you need anything else get in touch.

All the best.

Cotterell_L_S1506012_Suspect Device

Nuno Menezes

Programme Manager, Enterprise & Culture Campaign

@BITCEnterprise & @BITC_arc

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From: COTTERELL, Laurence

Sent: 29 January 2018 20:24

To: Amanda Manor

; Nuno Menezes

Subject: Confirmation of permission

Hello and sorry to trouble you,

I spoke to Ann Drew on the some time ago to ask for permission to use three graphs (those relating to theatre) from 'Private Investment in Culture 2010/11' (2012) for my thesis on theatre funding under New Labour, as per my initial email below.

She very kindly granted me permission over the phone.

I wonder if you would be so kind as to confirm I can use them over email - as my Phd supervisor is concerned about copyright.

The three graphs are only those on p16, p. 29 & p. 30, which are excellent illustrations, with clear data that is extremely useful to my research. The document link is:

<http://artsandbusiness.bitc.org.uk/system/files/artsandbusiness-private-investment-in-culture10-11.pdf>

I am happy to provide any more information as required
Many thanks for your all your help so far

Kind Regards,

Laurence C.N. Cotterell
University of Gloucestershire
Phd Drama & Politics

From: COTTERELL, Laurence
Sent: 12 January 2017 16:51
To:
Subject: Copyright around using your graphs

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am in the middle of writing a doctorate on British theatre under New Labour and I have been heavily reliant on your excellent data on private sponsorship.

This is only a tangential section of my research but is quite vital in showing that private investment did not dramatically change over the period. To support this, I would like to display 3 of your graphs (those relating to theatre) from 'Private Investment in Culture 2010/11' which are excellent at showing the relationship of theatre to the other art forms.

As such, I am herewith seeking permission to use them in my research document and for them to be wholly acknowledged and referenced as your work. Even if I tried to display the information in my own form, it would not have the same graphic or thematic impact.

Kind Regards,

Laurence Cotterell
University of Gloucestershire
Phd Drama & Politics

F. Permission to use E-mail conversation with Clare Short

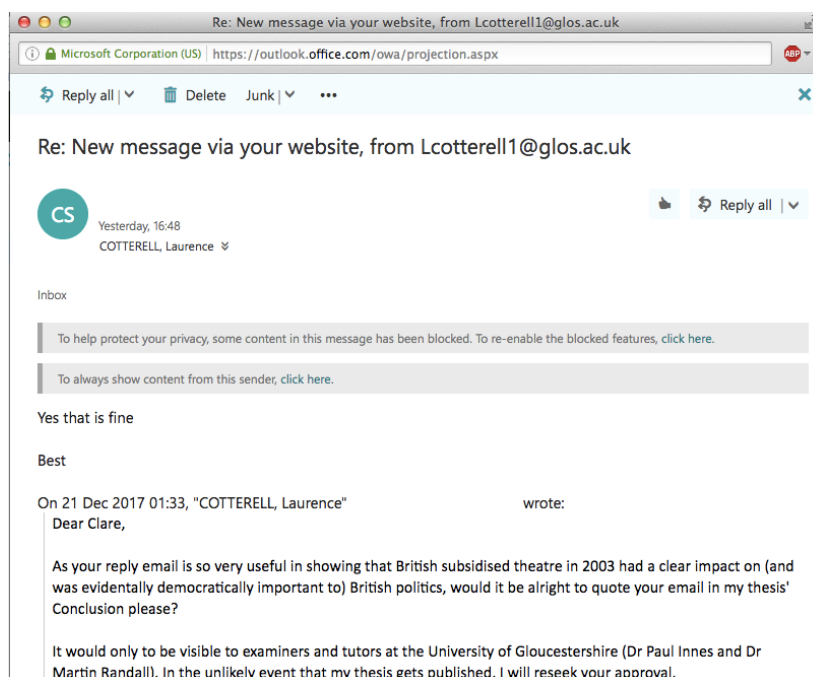


Figure 18. Screen Shot of e-mail permission to publish transcribed interview from Clare Short

Yes that is fine

Best

On 21 Dec 2017 01:33, "COTTERELL, Laurence"

wrote:

Dear Clare,

As your reply email is so very useful in showing that British subsidised theatre in 2003 had a clear impact on (and was evidently democratically important to) British politics, would it be alright to quote your email in my thesis' Conclusion please?

It would only to be visible to examiners and tutors at the University of Gloucestershire (Dr Paul Innes and Dr Martin Randall). In the unlikely event that my thesis gets published, I will reseek your approval.

Kind Regards and Happy Christmas,

Laurence Cotterell

Phd - British Subsidised Theatre and the Iraq Invasion

University of Gloucestershire

From: Clare Short

Sent: 17 December 2017 15:31

To: COTTERELL, Laurence

Subject: Re: New message via your website, from

Dear Laurence

I went to a couple of the plays at the Tricycle, I'm not sure if I saw others.

Andrew Mckinley who was a member of the Select Committee that interrogated Dr Kelly was at that Verbatim play.

Others may have gone but almost certainly not the leaders still defending the policy. But I'm not sure that is a good question. The contest is for a wider public opinion

Best

Clare Short

On 14 December 2017 at 18:42,

wrote:

- **You have a new message:**
- Via: <http://www.clareshort.co.uk/>
- **Message Details:**
 - - **Name** Laurence Cotterell
 - **Email**
 - **Subject** Iraq recollections
 - **Message** Dear Clare. Firstly thank you for all your great work. I have a question that perhaps only you can answer! I am a PhD student preparing for my verbal exam on my thesis about british subsidised theatre's response to the iraq war. My tutor asked me 'do you think the Labour Goverment cabinet ministers saw any of these plays (such as RN Taylor's tribunal plays - About DR Kelly etc..) or heard of them - how do you think they reacted?' Do you perchance know - and would you be willing to impart - whether any of these angry plays were seen (or heard of) by any minsters and whether they were riled or intriqued? Bit cheeky to ask, but I can only guess. I won't quote anything without consent other than to tutor/examiner verbally. Thanks for reading. Larry Cotterell phd student Gloucester Uni. Long-term but lapsed party member-Stroud.
- **Sent on:** 14 December, 2017
- Thank you!

Appendix VI - Selected Dramatic works about the Afghanistan Invasion

- Adam, Henry, *The People Next Door* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2003)
- Burstein, Keith, *Manifest Destiny* (2004 opera at Tricycle about Al-Qaeda - To be published)
- Churchill, Caryl 'Far Away' & 'Drunk enough To Say I Love You', *Plays: 4* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2009)
- Edgar, David, *Black Tulips in The Great Game: Afghanistan* (London: Oberon, 2009)
- Hudes, Quiara Alegria, *Water by the Spoonful* (La Vergne: Ingram Publishers, 2012)
- Kelly, Dennis, 'Osama The Hero', *Plays One* (London: Oberon, 2008)
- Kushner, Tony, *Homebody/Kabul* (New York: Theatre Comms. Group, 2005)
- Lustgarten, Anders, *Enduring Freedom* (New York: Giant Steps, 2008)
- McBurney, Simon 2004 production of Shakespeare's, *Measure for Measure* (London: Penguin, 2015)
- Moore, D.C., *The Empire* (London: Methuen, 2010)
- Motion, Andrew, *Incoming* (2011, play – to be published)
- Page, Sarah, *The Sweethearts* (London: Oberon, 2015)
- Pinter, Harold, 'Mountain Language' & 'The New World Order', *Pinter: Plays 4* (London: Faber & Faber, 2012)
- Rogers, J.T., *Blood and Gifts* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2010)
- Sheers, Owen, *Pink Mist* (London: Faber and Faber, 2013)
- Slovo, Gillian & Brittain, Victoria, 'Guantanamo', *The Tricycle Collected Tribunal Plays: 1994 - 2012* (London: Oberon Books, 2014)
- Stephens, Simon, 'A Canopy of Stars', *Acts of War: Iraq and Afghanistan in Seven Plays* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 2011)
- Various (Simon Stephens, Colin Teeven, Abi Morgan, David Edgar, David Greig, Richard Bean, etc.) *The Great Game: Afghanistan* (London: Oberon, 2009)
- Various, *Acts of War: Iraq and Afghanistan in Seven Plays* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 2011)

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