

FOG OF WAR

BRITISH THEATRICAL RESPONSES TO THE 2003 INVASION OF
IRAQ IN AN "EXCEPTIONAL" POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

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ALEX WILSON

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Stay out super late tonight

Picking apples, making pies

Put a little something in our lemonade and take it with us

We're half awake in a fake empire

- Bryce D. Dessner / Matthew D. Berninger

ABSTRACT

FOG OF WAR:

British Theatrical Responses to the 2003 Invasion of Iraq in an
"Exceptional" Political Environment

ALEX WILSON

This thesis examines the "post-truth" political environment through a retroactive exploration of issues surrounding the 2003 Invasion of Iraq and how these were depicted on the British stage. By presenting "post-truth" politics as an extension of Giorgio Agamben's theories on the "State of Exception", this thesis aims to analyse how political theatremakers have attempted to depict and critique political exceptionalism on stage. A second field of enquiry is to examine how these theatremakers differentiate their representation and how they disseminate "truth" from the 'exceptional' institutions that they intend to critique. The plays specifically covered in this survey include David Hare's *Stuff Happens*, Richard Norton-Taylor's *Justifying War* and Caryl Churchill's *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?*

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INTRODUCTION

THE GULF BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION

DISHONEST POLITICIANS, THE IRAQ WAR AND THE BRITISH STAGE

Post-truth politics is an emerging concept in broader social and political discourse in the wake of Brexit and the 2016 US Presidential election. Both of these events were noted for controversial campaigns run by political actors who, in an attempt to sway potential voters, made multiple claims that “displayed substandard levels of factual accuracy” and created a culture “that distrust[s] experts and the mainstream media” (Rose 556; Schmidt 249). Mark Andrejevic argues that the political opacity shown throughout these campaigns was demonstrative of the ‘post-truth’ political era, wherein political powers do not “propose an authoritative counter-narrative” but rather use a multitude of media platforms to

engulf any dominant narrative in possible alternatives, to highlight the indeterminacy of the evidence by promulgating endless narratives of debunkery and counter-debunkery: not to “cut through the clutter” but, on the contrary, to suck critique into the clutter blender; not to “speak truth to power” but to highlight the contingency, indeterminateness, and, ultimately, the helplessness of so-called truth in the face of power. (Andrejevic 9)

Post-truth politics, therefore, render truth as a political tool, where truths can be invented despite lacking evidence, and furthermore create an environment wherein it is difficult to determine what is fact and what is fiction.

While the term 'post-truth' might be part of the contemporary zeitgeist, it originated during the George W. Bush administration, which had also been accused of a similar lack of transparency regarding truth claims. Eric Alterman coined the term in *When Presidents Lie: A History of Official Deception and its Consequences*, a 2004 analysis of Bush's foreign policy, where he described the US government as operating within a "post-truth political environment" (305). The Bush administration was criticised for its decision to initiate the Second Gulf War in 2003, a decision based on questionable claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. When these weapons were not found, the administration, instead of "providing a 'dominant' narrative of what had happened, did its best to exploit the fog of war to throw up a series of often contradictory explanations" ranging from humanitarian reasons to eliminating Al Qaeda (Andrejevic 6).

What this state of affairs illuminates is that citizens in democratic societies exist in a world of simulacra, in which it is difficult to discern between 'objective' truth and the realities concocted by their political leaders. This state of affairs led Naomi Klein to label 2003 the "Year of the Fake", as it was

a year that waged open war on truth and facts and celebrated fakes and forgeries of all kinds. This was the year when fakeness ruled: fake rationales for war, a fake President dressed as a fake soldier declaring a fake end to combat and then holding up a fake turkey. An action movie star became governor and the government started making its own action movies, casting real soldiers like

Jessica Lynch¹ as fake combat heroes and dressing up embedded journalists as fake soldiers. Saddam Hussein even got a part in the big show: He played himself being captured by American troops.

A prevailing theme of Klein's "Year of the Fake" is performance: falsities masquerading as truths, George W. Bush announcing 'Mission Accomplished' in a staged moment wearing a fighter pilot 'costume', Saddam portraying a living embodiment of the 'Axis of Evil' threatening America. Sara Brady agrees that the Bush Administration's deception of the public was created through performance. Appealing to Richard Schechner's theories on "make-belief", Brady argues that the Bush White House performed in a manner "[in] which the audience are supposed to believe that what they are seeing and hearing is real" (2).

The intermeshing of politics and performance is not only a concern for the health of democratic societies that depend on the flow of accurate and non-partisan information to function, but also "provide[s] the grounds for an extension beyond the rule bound universe" on behalf of our political leaders (Hughes *Performance in a Time of Terror* 2). The co-opting of performance as a tool for deception by political leaders allows them to behave exceptionally (fighting unjust wars) and, I contend, is also exceptional behaviour (the act of lying). The term exceptional is used in reference to Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's writings on the state of exception. Agamben states that in a state of exception the sovereign determines their own exception to the rules that traditionally dictate how democratic societies operate.

¹ Jessica Lynch was a 19-year-old private who the Bush administration declared had been rescued by American forces from an Iraqi hospital where she was being held hostage, mishandled and abused. In an interview with Diane Sawyer it became apparent that not only did her Iraqi captors not mistreat Lynch, the rescue conducted by American forces did not occur.

Using Agamben's theories on the state of exception as a conceptual framework, the question that will be addressed in this thesis is how can theatremakers critique politicians' exceptional behaviour without resorting to exceptional behaviour themselves? Theatre has always been a place of exception, albeit different to the one described by Agamben. Barbara Formis argues that theatre's "state of exception is produced on condition of isolating the stage from the surrounding world: the individuals acting on stage are supposed to comport themselves as if no one were watching" (183). For instance, Brutus can kill Caesar on stage but we know that no real crime has been committed. However, if theatre creates work that tries to break that isolation from the surrounding world, by offering counter narratives to debunk those offered by political elites, should theatremakers not ensure that their own work reveals its own constructedness and mediation? In short, if theatre is being co-opted by political actors, how does the artist ensure they are not guilty of the same manipulation of truth as the politician they are trying to hold to account? I will look at this issue by examining work of three British playwrights, namely David Hare, Richard Norton-Taylor and Caryl Churchill, and how they responded to the 'post-truth' political environment that clouded the 2003 invasion of Iraq. I will examine how these playwrights attempted to challenge duplicitous political power through their work, while also evaluating their attempts to disrupt their own work being read as a definitive rendering of the 'objective truth'. Using Agamben's theories on the state of exception as a frame, I will examine how these theatremakers critique exceptional sovereign behaviour while also examining how they diminish or reveal their own exceptional relationship to the truth.

1. Public Justifications

Before an examination of the British theatrical response to the Invasion of Iraq can occur, it is important to contextualise the invasion itself. Much has been written about the Bush administration's success in selling the public on the Iraq war (Coe 307). In preparing the public for an invasion of Iraq, the British and American governments focussed upon three key points. Firstly, to create links between the events of 9/11 and Iraq. Secondly, to implicate Iraq in the possession of weapons of mass destruction. Finally, to emphasise Saddam Hussein's human rights abuses implying that intervention was needed for humanitarian reasons (Bahador et al. 6). These divergent justifications were found in a declassified internal memo from the US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, dated 17 November 2001, nearly two years before the invasion, in which he calls for an "influence campaign" over the American public to build the "momentum for regime change" in Iraq. In a bullet-pointed list he ponders the public justification for war against Iraq:

How Start?

- Saddam move against Kurds in the North?
- US discovers Saddam connection to Sept. 11 or anthrax attacks?
- Dispute over WMD inspections?
 - Start now thinking about inspection demands. ("U.S. Department of Defense Notes from Donald Rumsfeld")

Rob Johnson argues that these divergent justifications were put forward to conceal the hidden agendas of the Western powers which he believed were: to mitigate the possibility of a follow up attack to 9/11 and to exert American supremacy, to democratise Iraq by subscribing to democratic peace theory which stipulates that democracies are less likely to pursue aggressive policies against each other, to exert American authority in the region, by making up for "unfinished business in Iraq"

and the belief that Iraq represented a significant threat to their allies and their energy reserves; the US and UK desired 'energy security' (346-347).

During the build up to the Iraq War, Johnson argues that the Bush administration managed public perception, as he states that the "Iraq War was an information war as well as a kinetic one, and the media element began long before the fighting" (342). Johnson argues that through a sophisticated handling of the media and public perception, nation states can make conflict seem inevitable or appear to fit within the concept of 'Just War Theory' through creating an illusion that military action is for the 'greater good'. This can be done in a number of ways such as promoting

selective reports [or] a number of selected experts including official spokesman who appear to be 'journalists' or independent analysts, and broadcasting de-contextualized violence by the enemy so it appears mindless or irrational and not provoked by one's own side [...] a simplification into 'them' against 'us' or 'good' versus 'evil' [Or by stressing] the inevitability of conflict or highlight[ing] the limit on the number of options left, perhaps by emphasising how little time there is remaining to secure peace. (344)

Johnson further asserts that these reports can also create "an atmosphere of fear", stoking public perception against potential targets and justifying conflict (345). In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Johnson points out that there existed a genuine sense of fear, therefore political elites did not need to create a sense of danger; they merely had to stoke it.

Johnson's argument is reinforced by claims by Nancy Snow, a former employee of the United States' Information Agency, who argued that people linked Saddam Hussein with the events of 9/11, despite evidence to the contrary, because

The American people were repeatedly told by the President and his inner circle that Saddam's evil alone was enough to be linked to 9/11 and that, given time, he would have used his weapons against us. With propaganda, you don't need facts *per se*, just the best facts put forward. If these facts make sense to people, then they don't need proof like one might need in a courtroom. (quoted in Gutierrez)

Johnson argues, "the 9/11 attacks offered the United States government [...] unequivocal justification for war" (347). This was a clear provocation for war; however, there existed a challenge as to how a nation-state could declare war against an organisation that existed without borders. Therefore, Johnson argues, the United States created a "broad and ill defined" 'War on Terror' to exert its justified military action against Iraq. The reality, Johnson claims, is that these governments are, instead, pursuing hidden agendas (344).

2. Hidden Agendas

If politicians are promoting public justifications, while pursuing hidden agendas, then it follows that these politicians are 'performing truth' and 'co-opting performance' for political ends. Theatremakers therefore find themselves in a quandary, wherein performance practices are being appropriated for nefarious means. Furthermore, this situation positions politically motivated theatremakers on the backfoot about how to respond. This assessment is supported by Susan Buck-Morss who commented that, after the 9/11 attack, "for us as practitioners of culture, business as usual has become difficult if not impossible, because the very tools of our

trade [...] are being appropriated as weapons on all sides" (63). Sara Brady makes a similar argument, suggesting that we

live in a mediatized era in which politicians are performers, and the best one wins: the one who can raise the most money, and persuade enough voters where reality lies [...] What is posturing when realities are created through the public performances of politicians and pundits?. (xii-xiii)

Brady identifies that these performances by politicians lead to a double standard, where the United States proclaims to be a democracy, while illegally detaining people in Guantanamo Bay, holding whistle-blowers like Chelsea Manning in solitary confinement and organising bombing raids in countries like Libya. These acts are only possible, Brady argues, as "the politician's performances reign supreme because they make people believe that all these acts [...] are patriotic" (xiv). This state of affairs is troubling for theatre scholars, Brady argues, as theatre's use of performance allows it to house "murder and vengeance"; however this "lies in the agreement by the audience and actor to make believe", while politicians use performance to camouflage the reality of the murder and vengeance they are committing (xiv-xv). Unlike the theatre, the political landscape has no agreement that we live in the world of make believe.

These performances by the US government will be further discussed in Chapter One, alongside an exploration of Italian Philosopher Giorgio Agamben's theories on the state of exception. Agamben contends that there exists a legal black hole in the execution of sovereign power. In a time of crisis, the sovereign can use emergency powers to operate outside their jurisdiction, free of traditional checks and balances. The legal black hole emerges when it comes to questions of who determines what is a crisis, what are the limits to these exceptional powers, and

when does a time of crisis end? For Agamben, the answer to these questions is not bound by law and is in fact in the hands of the sovereign. The sovereign is the one who determines the exception. Agamben's theories gained traction in academic discourse through his discussion of the detainees in Guantanamo Bay. He argued that in labelling detainees 'enemy combatants' Bush had created a legally unclassifiable being. While most discussion of the state of exception in the post-9/11 environment focuses on the treatment of detainees in Guantanamo Bay, this thesis uses the state of exception to discuss the manipulation of truth by politicians and how they privilege certain information over other information. It also contends that the state of exception is a performative act.

3. The Politicisation of the British Stage

It would seem by the discussion of the political context of this thesis that the area of research seems to be an entirely American phenomenon and that exploring the depiction of the truth claims surrounding the Iraq War on the *British* stage seems at odds with that assessment. However, Britain was deeply implicated from the outset in the invasion of Iraq. While the British theatres produced work that critiqued that invasion of Iraq, this politicisation was sorely lacking from American stages.

Allan Havis in his introduction to *American Political Plays After 9/11* commented that "American theatres continued to support soft-edge, social narrative over heated, political accusatory tracts", preferring to stage work that contemplates a wounded America recovering a collective trauma from the 9/11 attacks (9). Havis' survey highlights work such as *The Guys* by Anne Nelson, a fictional account of a fire captain who must compose eulogies for eight of his men who lost their lives at the

World Trade Centre, or *At the Vanishing Point* by Naomi Iizuka, the tale of a small, white, working-class town facing a changing American identity and economic uncertainty at the start of the new millennium. Havis defines this period of American political theatre as heralding “America’s perseverance, defiance and anxiety” that resists pointed political attacks or questions of truth (10).

However, across the Atlantic the decision to invade Iraq triggered a politicisation of the British stage “unparalleled since the Vietnam War” (Megson 369). According to *Guardian* theatre critic Michael Billington, political drama had previously for “all intents and purposes been dead for the past ten years” (*State of the Nation* 383). Billington uses the term ‘political’ here to describe work that focuses on processes of government and political institutions, as opposed to plays that focus on identity politics. In January 2003, Billington had admonished the British stage for not taking a political stance. The country, including its playwrights, had “sleepwalk(ed) towards a possible war with Iraq” (“Should Theatre Be More...”). Five months later he was forced to reverse his position when the stage was dominated by political material. He cited how three plays that were critical of the Iraq War, Martin Crimp’s *Advice to Iraq Women*, Caryl Churchill’s *Iraqdoc* and Justin Butcher’s *The Madness of George Dubya*, were all being performed at major London theatres at the same time, concluding “whatever the ultimate consequences of the Iraq war, it has at least shown that theatre possesses a public conscience and a social function” (“Suddenly Theatre is More Relevant...”). Chris Megson argued that the British stage was politicised in four main ways:

- (1) the proliferation of political satire
- (2) revivals and adaptations that have used Iraq as a presiding text

- (3) theatrical presentations that have been staged as part of anti-war protests and;
- (4) forensic documentary performances that have [...] drawn on transcribed verbatim testimony in order to track the political and diplomatic momentum towards war. (369)

The British stage was awash with satires (Justin Bucher's *The Madness of George Dubya*, Alistair Beaton's *Follow My Leader*, Tim Robbin's *Embedded*), politicised revivals such as Nicholas Hytner's *Henry V* which featured embedded television cameramen and a focus on televised war coverage, Simon McBurney's *Measure for Measure* which contained projected imagery from Camp Delta and David Farr's reworking of Gogol, *The UN Inspector* which drew on the Iraq conflict in its tale of a Soviet republic awaiting a UN official. However, Carol Martin argues the "most striking feature of political theatre practice in Britain over the past decade is the widespread ascendancy of verbatim theatre" (370).

4. New Wars, New Forms

This rise of verbatim theatre practice coincided with an increasing distrust of media images or the words spoken by their politicians. Theatremakers in Britain provided not only ammunition for satire but also encourage the rise of a wider form of theatre that tried to answer the questions the media could not. Megson argues that verbatim theatre was a response to the "profound anxieties not only about the Iraq conflict but the media's projection of politics in an era of infotainment" (371). There was a sense that these plays confirmed the anxiety felt by audiences that they were not receiving the 'complete truth' regarding the Iraq invasion and that these theatrical stagings allowed them "to undertake a collective act of bearing witness" (371).

But more importantly for this thesis, Megson also argued that verbatim theatre plays allowed theatremakers to expose “the *performative* processes at work in the mediation of contemporary political events” and that these plays “have set about deconstructing and debunking the careful image construction of those politicians who instituted it” (371; emphasis added). Daniel Schulze argues that “trust and the loss of trust” was a crucial feature of the post 9/11 British experience, defined by a “renewed interest in the debate of political issues and more importantly in truth [...] because of a prevailing feeling that the public had frequently been lied to” (196-197).

The British public’s distrust of truth was most palpably seen in 2003 when the UK witnessed the largest political theatrical event in its history. In February, the British ‘Stop the War Coalition’ organised a political demonstration in Hyde Park that attracted over one million people which reflected the “deep sense of popular unease about the ways in which the resources of the state were being used to make a disingenuous case for going to war” (Kerr-Ritchie 205). Jeffrey R Kerr-Ritchie points out that the cause of the event was a perception that individuals were being deceived by their politicians: “If there was ever a recent historical moment at which people saw through the lies and deceit of professional politicians — at which the emperor was stark-bollocks naked — it was in those final weeks leading up to the invasion of Iraq” (205). Celebrated British playwright Harold Pinter in accepting his Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005, addressed these feelings in an essay entitled “Art, Truth and Politics”. Criticising contemporary American foreign policy, he argued this behaviour was nothing different from the action taken earlier by the US in Nicaragua and elsewhere, where

Hundreds of thousands of deaths took place throughout these countries. Did

they take place? And are they in all cases attributable to US foreign policy? The answer is yes, they did take place and they are attributable to American foreign policy. But you wouldn't know it. It never happened. Nothing ever happened. (13)

All the while, Pinter claims, this culture of "nothing happened" has been supported by a "bleating little lamb tagging behind it on a lead, the pathetic and supine Great Britain" (14).

In light of this context, the British stage turned to documentary theatre as a method to counter politicians' claims. Stephen Bottoms argued that "mere dramatic fiction has apparently been seen as an inadequate response to the current global situation" (57). Jenny Hughes points out that theatre's pursuit of documentary theatre was due to a need

to establish authentic or reliable frames of reference for thought, feeling and action in a highly mediatised society, 'in an era ruled by theatricality, the theatre is rediscovering its true role...: exposing the truth'. When life is more theatrical than the stage – when the image and power of imagination have engulfed and destroyed the real, the theatre seems to have resorted to an empirical engagement with complexities of life and the performance of the evidential ("Theatre, Performance and the 'War on Terror'" 151-152).

Carol Martin argues that "post-9/11 documentary theatre is etched with the urgency of the struggle over the future of the past" (9). Theatremakers are struggling to recapture the 'narrative' of events from political institutions and "set the story straight" (14). Traditionally, the role of recapturing the narrative and holding political institutions to account has been the role of journalism. However, according to David Edgar, documentary theatre now must take on the role of theatre-as-

journalism because of a perception that conventional journalism failed to do its job (8). Richard Norton-Taylor and David Hare, two playwrights this thesis will examine in detail, both claimed their decision to produce verbatim theatre was influenced by funding cuts to investigative and in-depth journalism (qtd. in Hammond and Steward 121-122; 63). Billington coined the term 'Newsak' to describe the perceived quality of contemporary journalism, an informational phenomenon that had "replaced the aural wall paper of Muzak" (*State of the Nation* 384).

5. Versions of the Truth (The Plays)

It should be noted that documentary theatre has not been without criticism, focussing on how the form promises an illusory connection to the real while not acknowledging the form's mediation, if not manipulation, of testimony and fact (Bottoms; Claycomb; Gupta). The ethical issues that are found within verbatim theatre are analogous to the wider ethical issues found within the subject of this thesis: authors dismantling claims to truth while erecting truth claims of their own. A grounding of these ethical issues will be investigated in the first chapter of this thesis through a discussion of Giorgio Agamben's work on the state of exception. Agamben's work is primarily concerned with political power, wherein a sovereign can determine when laws can be broken for the great good of society; for example, when is it acceptable to mislead the public? However, this chapter makes the case that his ideas on the exception can be transferred to theatremakers. While the theatre exists in its own state of exception, the rise of this 'new journalism' has created an anomalous void, or a state of exception, where these works are situated uncomfortably between fact and fiction.

After unpacking Agamben's theory on the state of exception, the following three chapters will be devoted to work that explores the questionable truth claims surrounding the Iraq War but also works that interact with the public record. Chapter Two discusses David Hare's celebrated work *Stuff Happens* (2004), a play that looks behind closed doors at the Bush administration leading up to the invasion. Hare blurs the lines between truth and fiction in his work, blending verbatim testimony with imagined dialogue. While his play portrays how the 'Coalition of the Willing' offered contradictory and changing narratives in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq, the play's construction is also a contradiction, mixing the real with the invented. Chapter Three examines journalist Richard Norton-Taylor's *Justifying War: Scenes from the Hutton Inquiry* (2003), a play that re-enacts the inquiry into the suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of Dr David Kelly, a former UN weapons expert in Iraq. Kelly was found dead shortly after being interviewed by the BBC. The contents of that interview led to media speculation regarding the reliability of the September Dossier, a report commissioned by the British Government that claimed Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. The Hutton Inquiry also used this investigation to debate the larger context of Kelly's death, specifically, whether Iraq held weapons of mass destruction and whether the invasion of Iraq was justified. *Justifying War* was staged by London's Tricycle Theatre, which has a history of presenting 'tribunal plays' that aim to recreate tribunals that are often closed to the public. Finally, Chapter Four will examine Caryl Churchill's *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* (2006), which imagines the historical relationship between American sovereign political power and the people that are affected by their exceptional behaviour, through an abusive relationship between two lovers. Unlike the previous two texts, Churchill's work makes no truth claims, residing purely in the world of metaphor. These three texts were selected due to their divergent relationships to the

historical record, ranging from strict adherence to the forensic recreation of transcripts, in the case of *Justifying War*, to complete rejection of reality in favour of metaphor, in the case of *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?*

These three works were selected, not only because they were authored by some of the most significant British writers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, but also for their differing relationships to the record. *Stuff Happens* is a mixture of verbatim and imagined dialogue, *Justifying War* is a documentary theatre piece that follows strict adherence to the forensic recreation of transcripts to recreate as exactly as possible the tribunal that it is restaging, while *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* rejects reality entirely in favour of fantasy and metaphor, albeit in a manner that references contemporary events.

The divergent responses to the historical record of the three plays selected for this thesis allow for a wider analysis of the relationship between a play and its author in terms of Agamben's state of exception. David Hare attempts to disrupt the record's account of the decision-making process leading to the invasion of Iraq by imposing his own narrative upon the events. Hare mixes verbatim and imagined dialogue based on his independent research - the sources of which he has not revealed. *Stuff Happens* suffers from a troubling authenticity in which Hare's words carry the force of truth without being truthful. It is my contention that Hare is guilty of the same deceptive tactics as the politicians he wishes to critique and puts his audience in the position of Agamben's *homo sacer*, individuals suspended from the judicial order, lacking adequate tools to critically engage with the work. Hare attempts to use his work's divergent sources as a legitimate theatrical device to uncover clandestine political machinations, when in fact *Stuff Happens* becomes an

exercise in hypocrisy on the part of Hare in which he endows himself with an exceptional relationship to the truth.

In comparison, Norton-Taylor sheds light on how, during a state of exception, official versions of the truth can become corrupted and suspect. The strict code that Norton-Taylor has developed alongside the Tricycle Theatre, such as only using dialogue that was actually spoken during the tribunal which *Justifying War* restages, has ensured that his exceptional use of truth claims are mitigated as much as possible. Norton-Taylor does not seek to clarify the events surrounding the death of Dr David Kelly or the invasion of Iraq with *Justifying War*, but rather he invites his audience to contemplate how truth is created in places where the exception is enacted such as courts of law and government tribunals. Not only is the truth lost in the cut and thrust of the exceptional government bodies, but also the voice of Agamben's *homo sacer* is lost, barred from places of truth creation and justice. On one hand, my contention that this is a limiting factor in Norton-Taylor's work to reveal the truth behind exceptional political acts. But on the other, *Justifying War's* commitment to showing exactly what is spoken at government tribunals reveals how removed twenty-first century citizens are removed from the truth in their lives and the political powers that shape it.

Finally Churchill's rejection of realism and linearity in *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* shows her commitment to the pursuit of new forms that avoid the problems inherent in both Hare's authorship and Norton-Taylor's self-imposed inability to illuminate the path to war outside the events and words of the tribunal itself. Churchill's work functions as an analogy allowing her to simultaneously comment on the post-truth world without necessarily suggesting that what she is

saying is truthful. Furthermore this allows her play to stay relevant without being pigeon-holed as a play about Iraq while allowing her audience to critically analyse the post-truth political system.

If the post-truth environment is a result of state exceptionalism, then political theatremakers should hold political power to account. However, if in doing so these works also wilfully, or unintentionally, mislead their audiences then that creates an uneasy ethical dilemma. An environment where the historical record is slippery, and where politicians offer an increasingly dubious version of events, not only challenges the media and the legislative and judicial branches of government to provide sufficient checks and balances, but it also requires theatremakers to be vigilant that they are not guilty of abetting an environment that allows politicians to behave exceptionally.

CHAPTER

1

EXCEPTIONAL TRUTH-TELLING

GIORGIO AGAMBEN AND THE STATE OF EXCEPTION

The political machinations of the Bush and Blair governments in the run up to the invasion of Iraq were defined by Jenny Hughes as “a politics of exception [...] where] declarations of exceptions to the rule, supported the spread of war into new territories and the indefinite detention of prisoners of war held without recourse to legal representation” (*Performance in a Time of Terror 2*). While Hughes’ examples of politics of exception were carried out in the Middle East and against foreign ‘enemy combatants’ in indeterminate spaces such as Guantanamo Bay, politics of exception were also enacted closer to home. Judith Butler remarks that the twenty-first century Western political environment is coloured with “heightened nationalist discourse, extended surveillance mechanisms, suspended constitutional rights, and developed forms of explicit and implicit censorship” (xi). Arne de Boever simply comments that “the normal rule of law is under attack” (261). The exceptional political actions described here are evocative of Giorgio Agamben’s theories on the state of exception, wherein the sovereign (or political leaders and their institutions) can transcend the

rule of law, purportedly for the good of the body politic. However, instead, of these actions being used in exceptional circumstances, Agamben comments that the state of exception is now the “dominant paradigm of contemporary politics” and has “reached its maximum worldwide deployment” (*State of Exception* 2-3). This environment allows political leaders to have considerable control over their citizens and the information that they receive. This chapter examines the post-truth political environment discussed in the introduction using Agamben’s writings on the state of exception as a research lens. The analysis of Agamben’s work will focus on two major points, namely the Roman concepts of *iustitium*, a suspension of law, and *homo sacer*, an individual whom the sovereign can exclude from the judicial order. These concepts will be used to discuss how the state of exception operates, how this political environment allows the sovereign to openly deceive its citizens and how the state of exception is a theatrical phenomenon. Finally, this chapter examines how the state of exception’s performative underpinnings create ethical challenges to artists who wish to construct counter-narratives and critique official versions of the truth.

1. The State of Exception

The state of exception was first conceptualised by political philosopher Carl Schmitt. A proponent of Nazi ideology, Schmitt argued in his 1921 book *On Dictatorship* that, in exceptional circumstances, the executive branch should be freed from any legislative restraints that would normally apply. These exceptional circumstances are determined by the sovereign, a role that Schmitt defines “as he who decides on the exception” (1). To put this another way, the sovereign, in a time of crisis of their own choosing, can operate outside the law and societal norm by consolidating their own power in order to protect law and order. While the majority of Schmitt’s work was later discredited because of his links to the Nazi party,

Agamben picked up Schmitt's ideas on the state of exception in his works *Homo Sacer* (1998) and the eponymous *State of Exception* (2005).

Agamben uses Schmitt as a point of departure, insofar that while Schmitt claimed the state of exception was a necessary tool of contemporary statehood, Agamben argued that the state of exception represents a dangerous constitutional crisis. It is important to note that the state of exception is different from a state of emergency; most nation states have laws regarding what constitutes a state of emergency and what additional powers the sovereign can have in such circumstances while limiting the length of time these additional powers can be used. However, the state of exception "is not a special kind of law; rather, insofar as it is a suspension of the juridical order itself, it defines law's threshold or limit concept" (Agamben, *State of Exception* 4). A state of exception is not something that is codified by law or legalised by the judiciary; it is power taken by the sovereign and not endorsed by any other part of a democratic structure. While Schmitt could imagine the exception working within a judicial context, Agamben argues that the state of exception creates a "space without law" (*State of Exception* 51). This, Agamben claims, is "the paradox of sovereignty [which] consists in the fact the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order" (*Homo Sacer* 17). If the sovereign is the one who can proclaim the state of exception, then they exist outside the legal system. However, in functioning as an established role such as President or Prime Minister then they are still attempting to exist with the juridical order. The state of exception presents the sovereign as operating "inside the legal order and outside it, since its power remains effective even when the validity of the existing legal or constitutional norms is suspended" (Prozorov 100). The state of exception

² These issues were part of an ongoing critical dialogue between Schmitt and Walter Benjamin, a Jewish Marxist. This dialogue, Agamben addresses in Chapter 4 of *State of Exception* (52-65).

exists in an indeterminate space, which Agamben refers to as a zone of anomie (*State of Exception* 50-51), betwixt and between politics and law. The state of exception is dangerous, according to Agamben, as it allows for the creation of “judicial measures that cannot be understood in legal terms and the state of exception appears as the legal form of what cannot have legal form” (*State of Exception* 1).

Anomie & Iustitium

This creates a paradox and is why Agamben argues against Schmitt’s thesis that the state of exception can be inscribed into law. The state of exception is not a “state of law”, but rather a “space without law” (*State of Exception* 50-51). Under a state of exception the sovereign undergoes an “expansion of powers”, that cannot be restrained through legal means, which confers “on the executive the power to issue decrees that have the *force* of law” (*State of Exception* 5, emphasis added). These decrees are not law, but merely acquire the *force* of law. They are not laws as they have no bearing on the legal order but they are understood and are implemented as laws. For Agamben this reduces society to a “kenomatic state” that is defined by “an emptiness of law” (*State of Exception* 5). Within the state of exception, there is

zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other. The suspension of the normal does not mean its abolition, and the zone of anomie that it establishes is not (or at least claims not to be) unrelated to juridical order. (*State of Exception* 23).

This *anomie*, Agamben points out, is dangerous as it “threatens radically to alter – in fact, has already palpably altered – the structure and meaning of the traditional distinction between constitutional forms”; the true reach and limit of sovereign power, therefore, is mysterious and impermeable (*State of Exception* 2).

He compares the state of exception unfavourably to the Roman doctrine whereby decisions taken by the emperor have the value of law “*quod principi placuit legis habet vigorem* [because it pleased the sovereign, it has the force of law]” (*State of Exception* 38). Agamben places the cause of the state of exception in a paradigm of Roman law: the *iustitium*. Loosely translated as a “standstill or suspension of the law” (*State of Exception* 42), this term was originally used in the Roman republic as a declaration of a state of emergency by the Senate. However, by the time of the Roman Empire, *iustitium* referred to an anomic period of chaos following the death of the emperor and the inauguration of his successor. This was a hiatus of legal order, a time in which the law from the previous emperor was both applied and not applied, and a new rule of law was still being established by the incoming emperor. This state of anomie in turn became a useful tool of the emperor, a state of exceptional power which could be turned on and off at will (*State of Exception* 68). It is this state of *iustitium*, and sense of anomie that Agamben believes to be the defining governmental structure worldwide in the twenty-first Century. Stephen Humphries describes the *iustitium* as a liminal space of law, where the law and decrees that have the force of law become indistinguishable (680).

Agamben’s primary focus has been how to define the actions and the legal consequences of a sovereign during a period of *iustitium*. He asserts this is an “impossible question” to answer and that “if we wanted at all costs to put a name on human action performed under conditions of anomie, we might say that he who acts under *iustitium* neither executes nor transgresses the law, but inexecutes it” (*State of Exception* 50). In this context any actions committed by the sovereign are outside the legal order; there is no legal framework to judge the actions of the sovereign, suggesting that “the state of exception appears as the threshold of indeterminacy

between democracy and absolutism" (*State of Exception* 3). Agamben argues that the reason the state of exception is now the predominant form of order is because democratic legal systems are designed to subsume all political violence, which necessitates regular invocation of the state of exception. For Agamben, a democracy protected by emergency powers is not a true democracy and he provides the example of the Weimar Republic to support this claim, arguing that there exists a short leap from democracy to totalitarianism.

In short, sovereigns choose to behave exceptionally, but the state of exception is a political phenomena "in which all legal determinations are [...] deactivated" (Agamben, *State of Exception* 50). The state of exception exists, Agamben claims, purely to bridge the binary between *anomie* and *nomos* (law). However when the state of exception blurs these, "the juridico-political system transforms itself into a 'killing machine'" as the sovereign can commit exceptional acts of violence without obstruction or recourse (*State of Exception* 86).

The *Homo Sacer*

When Agamben refers to the political system becoming a killing machine he is citing his theory of the *homo sacer* - a human stripped of legal rights. If the sovereign operates exceptionally, the political or juridical order of society is suspended. By suspending the juridical order, individuals whose rights are transgressed by the sovereign are excluded from the law and in doing so the sovereign creates *homo sacer* or bare life. Agamben lifts the term *homo sacer* from Roman law, wherein if a Roman citizen committed crimes that affronted the gods, they were removed from civil society and could be killed by anyone without penalty. The *homo sacer* is an individual who is defined in legal terms by their

absence from the legal order; *homo sacer* are “included in the juridical order solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)” (*Homo Sacer* 8). Agamben identifies the sovereign and *homo sacer* as “the two poles of the sovereign exception” (*Homo Sacer* 110). Both are, for different reasons, outside the law and as Nicola Rogers suggests, these poles lie in ‘an unlikely symmetry’ where *homo sacer* is excluded from political life by the mechanisms which the sovereign administers to consolidate their power (163). The *homo sacer* needs to be identified and their humanity stripped, to allow the sovereign to consolidate their own power. In this instance the exceptional sovereign and the *homo sacer* are symmetrical and correlative phenomena.

Agamben classifies life into two categories: *bios*, our legitimate political life, a person with rights and protected by the law, and *zoe*, our bare life or animal life, given by God, but not protected by the legal system. *Homo sacer* is bare life that has had its *bios* removed, and is expelled from the world of men. The sovereign can strip the rights of individual citizens, exclude them from society and render them, like the sovereign, to exist in a zone that is both inside and outside the law. All life and its protection and relation to the legal order is based on the whim of the sovereign and therefore the state of exception operates as a “sphere in which [the sovereign] is permitted to kill without committing homicide” (*Homo Sacer*, 84). For Agamben, the “*zoe-bios*” distinction, is the “fundamental categorical pair of Western politics” (*Homo Sacer*, 8). Matthew G. Hannah notes that in the twenty-first century the vast majority of citizens are now potentially *homo sacer* and “the salient issue ... is the fact that a tiny, organized group may remain unexceptionable” (71 ellipses in original).

To review, the state of exception is an extension of power by a sovereign in a

time of crisis, as defined by the sovereign. The state of exception is not codified by law, so the sovereign is operating both within and outside the judicial order. The state of exception is an anomalous zone which is hard to define; consequently, it is hard to distinguish when the sovereign is operating within the norm or outside of it. Finally, the sovereign can reduce citizens to bare life, life stripped of political right, which leaves citizens both suspended inside and outside the law as well, where they can be exploited or killed. The state of exception is a useful frame in which to conceptualise the state's actions in times of self-imposed crisis.

2. The Reality-Based Community

How, then, do both the state of exception and Agamben's ideas on the *homo sacer* and *iustitium* relate to ideas of state lying and deception? During a period of *iustitium*, state power is separated from the political and judicial order allowing the sovereign to behave exceptionally, for example, in passing decrees that have the *force* of law without being law. In the same way a sovereign could behave exceptionally through making claims that have the *force* of truth which are not necessarily truthful. For example, the claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction had the *force* of truth, the case made by the British and American governments had the *force* of evidence, but the *fact* remained that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction. Following this logic an exceptional sovereign can allow notions of truth to exist in an anomic space whereby their assertions cannot be challenged or verified, and where their claims are both truth and fiction at the same time. By privileging suspect information with the force of truth, sovereigns are also, in turn, reducing their citizens to *homo sacer*. The sovereign strips their citizens of "the right to receive information" from its government unadulterated, a right that is enshrined, for example, in the first amendment of the US Constitution (Kennedy 789-790).

Legal scholar Quinta Jurecic explores the relation between truth and the state of exception in reference to the behaviour of Donald Trump, suggesting Trump's use of 'alternative facts' "places the speaker outside usual systems of evaluating truth and meaning, just like the exception places the sovereign outside the space of law... [lying] like the declaration of the state of exception, can't be verified or constrained." A sovereign's use of information can be seen to be analogous to the treatment of its citizens. Like the citizen fluctuating between a state of *zoe* and *bios*, legitimate and illegitimate life, information fluctuates between truths and falsehoods. In this case the sovereign can position themselves as a fount of truth, privileging some knowledge over other knowledge, excluding unwanted facts from discussion or ignoring facts entirely. A sovereign can give information the force of 'truth' without it actually be truthful, just as the sovereign can act with the force of law, without these actions being within the bounds of the law.

For the sovereign, being able to give information the force of truth is a powerful tool for controlling the populace while pursuing hidden agendas. In this manner, the sovereign's exceptional act of lying allows them to pursue further exceptional acts. These additional exceptional acts may be hidden from the general population or perhaps justified through information circulated by the government that has the force of truth. The Bush administration was revealed to be operating in this manner, when an unnamed official of the Bush administration, later revealed to be Senior Advisor to the White House Karl Rove, criticized renowned political journalist Ron Suskind for clinging to a "reality-based community" (Dannert). Suskind described the interaction as follows:

The aide said that guys like me were 'in what we call the reality-based community,' which he defined as people who 'believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality.' [...] 'That's not the way the world really works anymore,' he continued. 'We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors...and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do'.

Elan Abrell argues that “such creation of ‘new realities’ is the very process that drives the war of ideas – the forging of ideas into weapons with which to claim power or further entrench status positions” (222). Abrell further suggests that Bush’s opponents joked about the term ‘reality-based communities’, labelling Bush and his cabinet as

mentally deficient. These jokes, although perhaps cathartic, failed to acknowledge – while unintentionally confirming – the far more disturbing implications of the aide’s statement: that power elites do shape reality through the war of ideas; that they do deploy their ideologies strategically and consciously to achieve political-economic goals; and that a large part of their success lies in the fact that their opposition consistently fails to fully recognize this even when they explicitly affirm it. Before we can create reality-altering ideas of our own, we must fully grasp the Right’s tactics of ideological manipulation and how these tactics intermesh with larger political-economic processes, such as accumulation by dispossession. (222)

There is a discrepancy between discernable reality and the reality in which the sovereign functions.

Ole Bjerg and Thomas Presskorn-Thygesen demonstrate how the state of exception allows for favourable narratives to be promoted and unfavourable narratives to be dismissed, in what they label a “state of epistemic exception” (150).

They argue that in the case of a twenty-first century *homo sacer*, a terrorist, that

accusation and conviction seem to collapse [...] Terrorism is not merely a simple crime. It is an offence so serious that it transcends the question of guilt. A terrorist is, as it were, so evil that we cannot even determine his guilt in a court of law. In turn, he is simply detained indefinitely. (149)

Bjerg and Presskorn-Thygesen argue the state of epistemic exception is keenly seen operating in government bodies, military tribunals or commissions such as The 9/11 Commission:

Just as the purpose of military tribunals is to produce some form of quasi-legality in the treatment of terrorists, part of the purpose of these commissions is to produce the official version of an event that is subsequently meant to be recorded in the history books (149)

Bjerg and Presskorn-Thygesen’s conclusion is not that theories that contradict the sovereigns’ “are true or that the individuals detained at Guantanamo Bay are somehow all innocent”, but that legal procedures for determining the guilt of terrorists are an exception from “ordinary procedures for determining guilt” - just as the procedures which determine the veracity of claims that are against the official version of the truth, differ from how ‘ordinary’ claims are determined (150).

3. Twenty-First Century Camps and “The New Normal”

Many academics have written about the Bush administration's use of military tribunals as an example of the state of exception wherein terrorists, or ‘enemy combatants’, are held prisoner *habeas corpus*, with their rights suspended indefinitely,

and claim that the tribunals are indicative of Agamben's theory on *homo sacer* (Rogers; Humphries; Abrell). However, it is reasonable to contend that the life of the twenty-first century citizen who is wilfully misled by their sovereign, life that cannot anchor itself to a discernible reality, is also suspended life.

The suspension of life and the wider twenty-first century experience is similar to Agamben's description of a "camp" which he defines as "the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule" (*Homo Sacer* 168). In this sense he is referring to the creation of a "spatial arrangement" that remains outside the normal order, specifically referencing the camps of Auschwitz and Guantanamo. However, in defining what constitutes a camp, Agamben argues that we must look behind the acts committed in the camps to understand the political procedures that allow rights to be stripped away:

The correct question to pose concerning the horrors committed in the camps is [...] not the hypocritical one of how crimes of such atrocity could be committed against human beings. It would be more honest, and above all, more useful to investigate carefully the juridical procedures and deployments of power by which human beings could be so completely deprived of their rights and prerogatives that no act committed against them could appear any longer as a crime. (*Homo Sacer* 171)

Hannah suggests that while Guantanamo Bay "may represent a space of exception", where sovereign power is "able to dominate life within the walls of the camp" then the sovereign must have some level of dominance over "the territory outside the walls" of Guantanamo Bay (63). For Hannah, the procedures and deployments of power described by Agamben "are not merely 'juridical' in character; to an important extent, they are a matter of concrete territorial control" (63). In this respect

Hannah defines “concrete territorial control” as the ways in which the sovereign can control our lives so that they can act exceptionally (63-65). These systems of controls include border crossing and surveillance systems. I would add to that list systems that promote deception and propaganda. The inhabitants of Guantanamo and the citizens of the West are both, to different extents, *homo sacer*. I do not wish to conflate the experiences in a concentration camp and experiences in a privileged contemporary Western setting. I merely wish to suggest that the way the sovereign mediates and disseminates “truth” to a captive populace is also holding them in suspension. Those labelled terrorists are exceptional and can be freely tortured, while those who are identified as being part of the “reality-based community” can be deceived without sanction. Hannah concludes that, against this backdrop, wherein citizens are wilfully misled regarding the fact that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction, evidence is issued that has the ‘force’ of truth and a mass surveillance network of domestic citizens is created, in the twenty-first century “the vast majority of citizens already are virtual *homines sacri*” (71).

Davina Bhandar elaborates on this twenty-first century Western experience, labelling it the “new normal” of living in “Fortress North America”, wherein citizens are controlled through “anxiety, fear, and trauma”(261-263). Citizens are prepared to be subjected to this new normal “because it is anticipated that there are potentially life altering surprises or challenges hidden around the corner that require careful vigilance” (264). The experiences of a citizen in this environment lead them to think that these experiences differentiate them from the ‘other’ or, in Agambenean terms, *zoe* - the illegitimate life. A citizen, *bios*, is prepared to submit to the conditions of life dictated by the sovereign while a *zoe* is not. Hannah argues this creates a system of “differentiated” citizenship, where citizens self-police their own actions, through

subjecting themselves to background checks or microchipping, in return for greater privileges such as increased mobility at border crossings (72). Agamben's state of exception is a binary, that of legitimate life and illegitimate life, but within this system described by Hannah legitimate life exists on a spectrum, suggesting that citizenship is a tiered dynamic depending on how compliant an individual is with the exceptional actions of their sovereign. The experience of this 'new normal' further extends the state of exception, a perpetual state of emergency, symbolically legitimising the actions of the state. In this way the camp of the twenty-first century lacks corporeal form, operating on a metaphysical level and is inherently performative.

4. The State of Exception and Performance

The previous sections of this chapter have outlined what constitutes a state of exception and have illuminated, in Agamben's terms, that deception is an exceptional act while contextualising this exceptionalism and how it operates in the twenty-first century. This section describes the cross-over between the state of exception and performance, namely how the state of exception is in itself a performance, and outlines how the theatre exists in its own state of exception.

According to Hughes the state of exception is generated through practices of performance and theatre which enable the casting of grandiose imagery to legitimise and enact expansive powers ("Theatre, Performance and the 'War on Terror'" 149). This creation of grandiose imagery in turn allows for further exceptionalism and deception. She suggests that "war and terrorism make powerful interventions into our social worlds" by capturing the public's attention. She further argues that these events only become "coherent" when interpreted by the top levels of government

through “institutionalised imagination”, which in turn authorises the sovereign to justify acts of war (150). Exceptionalism rests on performance, the ability to “create threats”, “identify frailties” and invent evidence (*Performance in a Time of Terror* 2). Hughes’ lifted the phrase “institutionalised imagination” from the 9/11 Commission report which called for the American government to exercise its imagination in identifying potential threats to the nation (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States 344). Brett Nicholls agrees, arguing that

at the most mundane level, the spectacular-democratic State has become suspicious of what it cannot see and it explains this ocular obstruction in the most violent scenario it can imagine [...] This crisis potential, and the production of fear that is associated with it, has become a permanent situation. In many respects, this crisis potential engenders today’s spectacular democratic State’s increasing control over and command of contemporary subjects (3).

The sovereign state is prepared to identify and label any potential bogeymen hidden in the shadows. The identification of potential threats, in turn, endorses further exceptional behaviour, which, for Agamben, creates an environment in which “it is impossible to distinguish the transgression of the law from the execution of the law” (*Homo Sacer* 51).

Hughes argues that “performance and exception are intimately linked: a state of exception is produced by means of a performance... and thus power is both made and contested in an embodied and performative zone that is not securely definable or fixable” (“Theatre, Performance and the ‘War on Terror’”, 4-5). This description evokes Richard Schechner’s idea on the liminal space wherein a person is “betwixt and between” (66). For Schechner, performance rests on this idea of liminality which is to be inter, to exist between, on the way from something toward something else;

being “inter is exploring the liminal” (ix). The sovereign, therefore, goes through Schechner’s idea of transportation, wherein the sovereign, the performer, lives a double negative which “takes place between not me...not not me” (72). Schechner defines this as a performer is not Ophelia, but they are simultaneously not not Ophelia. Similarly the actor is not the actor, but they are not not the actor. Like the performer who is stuck between the roles of actor and Ophelia, the sovereign is stuck between democratic leader and dictator.

In a state of exception a political leader must cast themselves in the role of the sovereign, which, for Mark Salter, is inherently performative as the sovereign must simultaneously perform “as protector against the collapse of all community” while hiding “the inherent violence in this primary contract” (368). While operating within this role, José Muñoz argues that the sovereign “*stages* the state of exception to naturalize and justify unchecked and abusive manifestations of power amid a general scene of savage social asymmetry” (138; emphasis added). The exception in which the sovereign operates is also performative, insofar as an exception means to deny the fixed original identity or understanding of a role or concept and suspend a rule-bound universe, creating new identities and understandings that are unfixed and ever changing. Sovereign power is something according to Shirin M. Rai that must be “constructed and reproduced, in part, through ceremony/ritual through which new meanings of power are inscribed” (152). This according to Rai occurs in unexceptional sovereignties, for instance in the reopening of parliament after an election. These performances and rituals are “deployed both to awe and to put beyond contestation the everyday workings of institutions and in so doing secure the dominant social relations that obtain within it” (151-152). Through the generation of grand imagery described by Hughes above, following Rai’s theory, the sovereign

in turn is constructing new meaning of power, the sovereign as the protector from the powerful external forces that aim to harm everyday life, and therefore the sovereign's behaviour is unquestionable and beyond reproach.

Hughes' concludes that the state of exception's grounding in performance raises grave "ethical and political questions" for any theatrical work that wishes to respond to exceptional governmental actions ("Theatre, Performance and the 'War on Terror'", 150). The 'establishment' is co-opting the language of performance, and in doing so emphasises the exceptional nature of theatre. Barbara Formis points out that theatre exists in its own state of exception:

it is to the extent that the fictive illusion aims at exceeding the constraints of the presupposed 'reality'. A crime accomplished on stage is not immediately perceived as such. This state of exception is produced on condition of isolating the stage from the surrounding world: the individuals acting on stage are supposed to comport themselves *as if* no one were watching. (182-3).

Harold Pinter in his Nobel Prize lecture, "Art, Truth and Politics", outlines how both theatre and politics exist within a state of exception regarding each discipline's treatment of truth. Theatremakers due to the nature of the form can be less rigid with the truth. Pinter outlines that truth in art is a hazy commodity as "truth in drama is forever elusive" and we "stumble upon the truth in the dark" (3). However once you have discovered truth in drama, he argues, "sometimes you feel you have the truth of a moment in your hand, then it slips through your fingers and is lost" (4). James M. Harding outlines that, "Pinter understands his role as an artist to be that of illuminating the elusiveness of truth vis-à-vis an artistic search for it" (23). According to Pinter we understand the stage to be a place where "there are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and

what is false" (3), which evokes Schechner's ideas of the "double not", described above. Theatre, to function, depends on the audience investing in this paradox where reality and masquerade coincide.

However in politics, Pinter argues, it is unacceptable to allow the real and unreal to be blurred together; "as a citizen I must ask: What is true? What is false?" (3). For Pinter this uneasy situation allows political power to take advantage of their citizens and operate exceptionally as

the majority of politicians [...] are interested not in truth but in power and in the maintenance of that power. To maintain that power it is essential that people remain in ignorance, that they live in ignorance of the truth, even the truth of their own lives. What surrounds us therefore is a vast tapestry of lies, upon which we feed. (7)

Pinter argues that for him to hold both these theories of truth to co-exist conceptually, he must draw "a clear line between his understanding of truth as an artist and his understanding of truth as a citizen" (Harding 23). As an artist he can treat truth as an elusive and malleable substance, but as a citizen he must speak truth to power. What becomes problematic, however, is when these two realms start to co-exist, when the artist and the citizen and these two concepts of the truth begin to merge. When theatrical work starts commenting on contemporary events, offering and promising an illusory connection to the real, then theatre is, like the truth claims of the sovereign, crossing into a state of *anomie*. That theatrical work exists between fact and fiction, between theatre, a form fueled by imagination, and documentary, a form fueled by the real. Theatre practitioners operate in a world wherein their work can be read as truthful and fictional at the same time and, therefore, should foreground the exceptional truth-telling that exists in their work.

The following chapters will survey plays that have different relationships to the public record but, in their own ways, attempt to “establish a sense of stability in a highly mediatised environment that has distorted information and produced a dislocation of a sense of ‘truth’ (Hughes “Theatre, Performance and the ‘War on Terror’”, 163). These chapters will examine how these works grapple with the exceptional narratives surrounding the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and how their authors have attempted to foreground or reconcile the exceptional abilities of performance in truth-telling.

CHAPTER

2

THEATRE'S UNTIDY

DAVID HARE AND *STUFF HAPPENS* (2004)

Donald Rumsfeld, when asked by journalists about the collateral damage in the wake of a US bombing raid in Baghdad, replied in a fashion that was demonstrative of the exceptional American behaviour regarding Iraq: “stuff happens and it’s untidy, and freedom’s untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things” (qtd. in Loughlin). According to Ian Ward, this dismissive, if not callous attitude, is indicative of a theme of “self-delusion, a paralysing inability to distinguish reality from fantasy which President Bush and his advisers strove to create in the weeks and months that followed 9/11” (179). The avoidable deaths of civilians are diminished to ‘stuff’, common everyday occurrences. The delusion described by Ward may have been self-delusion but Rumsfeld's words were also intended to mislead the American public by downplaying and disrupting the nature of US foreign policy and exceptionalism. Similar behaviour was demonstrated by politicians in making a case for the invasion of Iraq as represented in David Hare’s *Stuff Happens*.

Stuff Happens opened at the National Theatre in 2004. The three-hour play is a chronological reconstruction of the diplomatic process leading to the 2003 Invasion of Iraq. Over the course of the play, an ensemble cast portrays 44 real-life political figures as well as five fictionalised characters who present 'viewpoints' from the contemporary public. The play's linear narrative is made up of many small, sharp scenes, allowing actors to play multiple parts in different locations. The main characters of *Stuff Happens* are all recognisable: George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Condoleezza Rice. According to Christopher Innes, this distinguishes *Stuff Happens* from other contemporary verbatim theatre pieces as "the major figures are named and all instantly recognisable from television and the newspapers, being represented doing the things they actually did"(441).

The play combines verbatim dialogue lifted from interviews and speeches with fictional dialogue in an attempt to demystify the political process that led to the Invasion of Iraq. For Hare, this political process was guided less by honest, candid diplomacy, and more by the Bush cabinet's underhand coercion and manipulation of the public and their opponents in the United Nations. The George W. Bush of *Stuff Happens* evokes the role of the Agamben sovereign, carrying out exceptional acts, wilfully misleading the public into believing that these very acts are in the name of freedom. The opening lines of *Stuff Happens*, spoken by an actor out of role, demonstrate Hare's belief, that hidden political machinations are responsible for forces that shape world events:

The inevitable is what will seem to happen to you purely by chance.

The Real is what will strike you as really absurd.

Unless you are certain you are dreaming, it is certainly a dream of your own.

Unless you exclaim - "there must be some mistake" - you must be mistaken.

(Hare *Stuff Happens*, 3)

Arguably Britain's most celebrated living playwright, Hare is best known for his 'state-of-the-nation' plays that debut at the publicly funded National Theatre in London. David Wiles argues that the goal of Hare's work embraces the ethos of the National Theatre; that is, to assist in the shaping of public opinion by using his work as a platform for citizens to interact and discuss ideas (211). *Stuff Happens* reflects his philosophy that the function of the theatre is to "put things under a microscope [so that] people learn for themselves" (Hare *Acting Up*, 21); this is achieved Chris Megson and Dan Rebellato argue by making "visible historical processes and social structures" (249).

Stuff Happens has been celebrated for establishing a coherent narrative on a tumultuous time in world politics while allowing its "audience to critically interrogate [the case for war] as well as the ethical probity of leading social actors" (Hughes "Theatre, Performance and the 'War on Terror'" 152). Much has been written about the exceptionalism of the politicians in *Stuff Happens* (Sirwah; Gupta; Colleran), but the primary concern of this chapter is the exceptionalism demonstrated by its author. The play is a combination of both verbatim and imagined dialogue but at no point in the play does Hare indicate clearly which parts of his play are factual and which are fictional. He has indicated that he conducted research and interviews with key sources who were close to the events of the play but does not reveal his sources. As Jay Gipson-King points out, what this means is that *Stuff Happens* is operating on three levels of reality: the first being verbatim dialogue, the second being informed speculation taken from his unnamed sources

and thirdly scenes of pure imagination, where no one knows what really happened except for the people who were there (154). The distinction between these levels of reality is not acknowledged in his work; the audience is unaware which words are verbatim and which are invented. Hare's truth claims, like that of Bush, carry the *force* of truth without being truthful. What is positioned as fact in reality could be hearsay or pure imagination.

Stuff Happens, therefore, exists in an anomic space between fact and fiction, and Hare takes on the role of the sovereign, and his misled public, the role of the *homo sacer*. By preventing his audience from critically engaging with his work's construction he enters into an exception relationship with the truth, where his verbatim dialogue, research and imagination are all treated with the same level of authenticity. Furthermore, like Agamben's sovereign who exists between the executive and the judicial branches of government, Hare blurs the edges of his own role and his relationship to his work. Is *Stuff Happens* (1) a fictional political drama by a playwright (2) a verbatim theatre work made by a documentary theatre maker (3) a piece of reportage written by a journalist or (4) a historical testimony written by a historian? It is my contention that Hare's authorial relationship with the play is somewhere between these four roles which he appears to try to take on all at once, without adequately fulfilling the responsibilities of any one role or form. In short, Hare is guilty of the same exceptional behaviour regarding his play's truth claims as the political forces he wishes to illuminate.

This chapter will examine how Hare reveals American exceptionalism in his play, before discussing how Hare's own claims about the play give its claims the *force* of truth without being truthful. This will be followed by an exploration of the

hybrid nature of *Stuff Happens* unpacking its fraught relationship with the real, a discussion on how this endows Hare's audience as *homo sacer* and finally dissecting Hare's own anomic authorial role in relation to the play.

1. Bush's Rhetoric of Exceptionalism

The behaviour of the politicians in *Stuff Happens* mimics the behaviour described by Agamben in *State of Exception*. The main dramatic thrust of the play comes from the debates between George W. Bush, who in Agambean terms, takes on the role of the sovereign, and his Secretary of State, Colin Powell, who attempts to reel in his President's exceptional behaviour. Powell is characterised as the "reluctant soldier [...] so inexorably and so comprehensively co-opted into carrying out his master's bidding" while simultaneously attempting to remind Bush that "America is a republic not an empire" (Soto-Moretini 316; Colleran 153). Powell is the citizen's proxy, aghast at how his government openly defies domestic and international law.

The play alternates between scenes where members of the Bush cabinet say one thing in a private meeting and scenes utilising verbatim testimony where the cabinet relay a different message to the public. This staging, Jeanne Colleran notes, suggests simultaneous plotting and disconnection, with Bush as a kind of wily puppet master (151). Members of Bush's cabinet place themselves outside typical government processes, with their primary concern being to engineer an acceptable reason to go to war, deceiving not only the American public but also their allies and the United Nations. The cabinet are frequently depicted as endorsing information with the *force* of truth without that information being entirely truthful, while the White House pursues hidden agendas.

For many audience members, the appeal of the play was to demystify the events leading up to the Iraq war. Hare suggests that these events were carried out by hidden political machinations unbeknownst to a duped public. Colleran points out that “Hare really wanted his audience to *listen* and to hear the rhetoric of exceptionalism” from Bush’s cabinet (152). The politicians of Hare’s play unashamedly bask in their exceptionalism. Hare’s Bush says, “I’m the commander – see, I don’t need to explain. I don’t need to explain why I say things. That’s the interesting thing about being the President”, a line that evokes Richard Nixon’s: “well, when the president does it, that means that it is not illegal” (*Stuff Happens*, 10).

The Bush portrayed in *Stuff Happens* believes that he does not need to justify his beliefs or actions to anyone; he is beyond reproach. While debating the need to go through the United Nations to make the war ‘legitimate’, Donald Rumsfeld argues with Powell about how America exists in a state of exception wherein what constitutes legitimacy to the United States is different to other world nations

RUMSFELD I’ll tell you what’s legitimate. What we do is legitimate. Read the American Constitution. It was written by Thomas Jefferson and he said - and I’ll remind you of his word - that what makes governments legitimate is the consent of the people.

[...]

We do not need lectures from Europe on how to hold our knives and forks. They pretend all the time that they’re upset because we’re not consulting. “They’re not consulting”, they say! Are you fooled by that? I’m not. Because what they really

hate, what's really bugging them, is not the *way* we do things. It's that we're the only people in the world that can do them. It's not our manner, it's our power. And all they want, all anyone wants, is to put a brake on that power. And that is the purpose of this exercise. That is the purpose of getting us snared up in yet another fucking resolution. (*Stuff Happens* 101-103)

Hare portrays the Bush cabinet as preoccupied with "their desire to remap the world, and their belief that executive power can be expanded without check"(Colleran 154).

The first target of this 'remapping' is Iraq. The cabinet ensures that its executive power can be expanded through the manipulation of 'truth' and evidence. To invade Iraq, the administration need not make the war justified but rather *appear* justified, as clearly depicted in a scene involving Rumsfeld and George Tenet, the director of the CIA, discussing inconclusive satellite imagery.

RICE Everyone see?

O'NEILL I can see. But – I'm asking: I've seen an awful lot of factories round the world that look an awful lot like this. What's the evidence, what's the evidence of what this factory's producing?

TENET Well, it's rhythm.

O'NEILL Rhythm?

TENET Rhythm of shipment. Round the clock. In and out of the plant. Trucks coming and going all night. The rhythm is consistent. Look, let's be clear: I'm not saying it is, I'm not saying they

are...

RUMSFELD You're not saying it's not.

TENET I'm not.

RUMSFELD He's not saying anything.

TENET Not quite.

RUMSFELD He's from the CIA

They all laugh. (Stuff Happens 14)

Khaled Sirwah argues that Hare's play reveals a form of "coercive diplomacy" which Bush employs to achieve "his own personal agenda", and which "has always been the US's means for (il-)legal ends" (73). Coercive democracy is defined by Alexander George as "the attempt to get a target—a state, a group (or groups) within a state, or a nonstate actor—to change its objectionable behaviour through either the threat to use force or the actual use of limited force" (4). While coercive democracy is often used as a form of foreign policy, "Bush finds himself bound to employ this strategy against all people" including the American public (Sirwah 75). Bush's threats to his own citizens are designed to coerce them into supporting Bush's policies and these threats are created through images that represent a threat to the security of the American way of life. In this sense a factory that has the appearance of manufacturing weapons of mass destruction is analogous to a case for war that appears to be justified. While, in an earlier scene, Bush is congratulated by Dick Cheney for using the term "War on Terror" as it is "suitably vague", in another scene Bush asks a journalist to use the term "regime change", instead of "removal" as it "sounds a lot more civil". This behaviour, according to Ester Žantovská, renders "truth values as unimportant" and what Hare is revealing is "the existence of key phrases, their importance for the public digestion of the

events [...] and their repetition until they have become 'reality'" (78). The rhythms are consistent with reality, even if the content is not.

2. *Stuff Happens* and the Force of Truth

The subject matter of *Stuff Happens* is not the only demonstration of the state of the exception. I contend that the play's construction is in itself an example of the state of exception and that David Hare, in his mediation of the real, inhabits *his own* state of exception. Hare attests that his fictional accounts are informed by studious research but has provided no evidence to substantiate his play's narrative. *Stuff Happens* therefore carries the *force* of truth when in fact the play's authenticity cannot be verified.

Stuff Happens is marketed as a documentary play, wherein recorded dialogue is used to "reproduce 'what really happened' for presentation in the live space of the theatre" (Martin 9). There is a presupposition that what Hare is presenting is 'truthful' (Bottoms 57-58). However, the relationship of *Stuff Happens* to the record and the strength of its claims to truth are precarious. The author's notes of *Stuff Happens* outline the troubling authenticity of his work:

The events within it have been authenticated from multiple sources, both private and public. What happened happened. Nothing in the narrative is knowingly untrue. Scenes of direct address quote people verbatim. When the doors closes on the world's leaders and on their entourages, then I have used my imagination. (Hare *Stuff Happens*, "Author's Note")

In Hare's author's note we see the same paradox regarding the state of exception, where he allows his claims regarding his work's authenticity to inhabit an anomic zone between fact and fiction, or, as he puts it, "what happened, happened and

nothing is unknowingly untrue". He positions his largely fictional work to be interpreted as a documentary, ultimately leading to the unfortunate comparison that "like the politicians he satirizes, Hare insists he is shedding light on hidden truths, but then fabricates his own evidence (Bottoms 61). Stephen Bottoms estimates that "about 80 percent" of the text is imagined (60).

What further complicates the truth claims within *Stuff Happens* is Hare's own shifting description of his play's authenticity. To begin with, his own author's note is contradictory and opaque. Jay Gipson-King points out that in Hare's author's note, Hare claims the play is not a documentary, a position "which contradicts [his] insistence upon [the play's] accuracy" (152). Sara Soncini observes that Hare's reassurance that "what happened, happened" sounds similar to the dismissive Donald Rumsfeld quote that inspired the play's title, while the disclaimer that nothing in the narrative is "knowingly untrue [...] could have come from the mouth of a Blairite spin doctor" (Soncini 101-102). Hare's reluctance to name his sources, provide any verification that they exist, or produce any evidence to bolster his claims, further complicates his work's relationship with the record. The fact that there are so many questions regarding the evidence of Hare's claims is somewhat ironic considering *Stuff Happens* concerns itself not only with manipulation of the truth but falsifying of evidence.

Hare subsequently has made differing claims regarding the play's truthfulness, saying in different interviews that the play is "three-fourths" fiction (Rawson), that his play is mere "speculation... but my speculations are very well sourced, from multiple sources" and that the events of the play "were a theory only" (Berson; "David Hare on Stuff Happens"). Gipson-King points out that these

differing accounts as to the authenticity of *Stuff Happens* reveal that Hare is stuck between “the impulse of the artist, who wants to take credit for the creative aspects of the play, and [...] the pride of the researcher, who wants his findings taken seriously” (155). If Gipson-King’s conclusion is correct and Hare desires to claim credit for both his research and his art, this still does not excuse Hare’s insistence that the play is completely truthful. For instance, when the play opened in the United States, Hare claimed that, “if you want to know what happened with Blair, and Bush and Powell and company, and you want to get it all in one evening, you have to go to the play” (qtd. in Berson). Yet, Hare’s own version of what “really happened” also changed when the play transferred from the National Theatre to Broadway. Hare altered parts of the play to reflect new evidence that came to light, while also making the figure of Colin Powell less sympathetic, having been previously criticised by British reviewers for “taking too benign a view of Powell” (Bumiller). Hare has defended his play’s truth claims, saying “nobody who was a participant in those events has ever questioned my version of them... nobody has ever stepped forward and said I’ve got it completely wrong” (qtd. in Hughes “Theatre, Performance and the ‘War on Terror” 151). But then why would they? Why would any of the players who knew the inner workings of the events depicted in *Stuff Happens*, of whom there are precious few, acknowledge a play that accuses them of deception, especially when, due to its construction, the play can so easily be dismissed as fiction? As was the case when Conservative MP Ann Widdecombe dismissed the play as propaganda, comparing it unfavourably to Leni Riefenstahl’s Nazi propaganda as art subverted for political reasons (“For or Against”).

3. *Stuff Happens* and the Real

Further complicating the truth claims of *Stuff Happens* is the hybrid nature of

the play's source material. Hare's rhetoric regarding his script means that it exists on three levels of reality: dialogue that is quoted verbatim from speeches, informed speculation taken from Hare's unnamed sources, and imagined dialogue, such as the scene depicting a conversation between Blair and Bush as they walk alone around Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas (Gipson-King 154). The distinction between these levels of reality are not revealed in his work; the audience is unaware what words are verbatim and which are invented. Hare's truth claims, like that of Bush, carry the *force* of truth, but in reality could be hearsay or pure imagination.

The blurring of these three levels of mediation is an uneasy situation, particularly because the play is concerned with how political power mediates truth and meaning. *Stuff Happens* creates an uneasy tension where "the story's 'actual' linguistic scandals become inextricably confused with Hare's own rhetorical manipulations" (Bottoms 60). Hare cannot claim "he is shedding light on hidden truths [...when he] fabricates his own evidence" (Bottoms 61). Gipson-King claims that interplay between the different sources allows Hare's work to exist in anomalous void, pointing out that "the charge of inaccuracy cannot be levelled at a play that claims to be fiction, while Hare's insistence on the use of reliable sources gives even the imaginative scenes a weight of authority" (155). By juxtaposing the meta-references of well-known speeches against invented ones, Hare authenticates his imaginings. Daniel Schulze argues that audiences are left with the notion that "I knew the speech before, so this one must be also true, I just haven't heard it" (216). Soto-Morettini observes that the verbatim dialogue in *Stuff Happens* is all lifted from public speeches which are "designed to be delivered and received as authoritative" and never seems "off the cuff" (Soto-Morettini 314). These speeches are carefully constructed by speechwriters and are merely public relations exercises. Therefore, all

of the play's dialogue is constructed and does not provide any greater access to the 'real'.

Soncini argues that the use of known characters in Hare's play also adds extra veracity to Hare's claims and that "the factual public face of the characters confers veracity on the private imagined one" (103). This credibility was emphasised in the National Theatre's staging wherein the actors who played the principal parts, Bush, Blair, Rice, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Powell, never doubled their roles. The decision to have these actors play only one character reinforces the idea that these actors are analogous to the 'real' individuals they are portraying. The use of these real people adds extra credibility to not only the words they are speaking but also to the existence of the fictional characters in the play and the opinions they possess.

Hare has five characters who provide "viewpoints", which are lengthy monologues created to allow Hare to provide commentary on events. Soncini argues that "it is not clear from the text whether these are real people whose identity is left undisclosed, or invented characters in their own right" (103). In the National Theatre production Soncini notes that there was no attempt at "differentiating these characters based on their ontological status either through style [which] remained in the mimetic register throughout" or in the mode of delivery, as "direct address was equally used by historical figures and unidentified characters" (103).

The relationship of *Stuff Happens* to the real is further complicated by its use of verbatim dialogue and appropriation of techniques from documentary theatre, a form that is not without its own troubled relationship to the real. Innes argues that "the way documentary drama—and, in particular, verbatim theatre—is promoted

and understood by its audiences, assumes that the material is factual, is treated objectively, and is represented accurately“(442). However, Suzanne Little argues that, in fact, documentary theatre exists on a continuum between the highly ethical and the highly aesthetic. She posits that this presents an issue for verbatim theatremakers, as a highly ethical production can “drain the drama from theatrical representation in attempting to perceive a perceived truth” while a highly aesthetical production can “exploit and manipulate the source material”. In a discussion of the ethical issues in documentary theatre, Bottoms refers to Jacques Derrida’s essay on Artaud, “The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation”. Derrida suggests that traditional text-based theatre is “theological” in that the god-like author is “absent and from afar is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the tie or the meaning of presentation” while perpetuating the illusion that he “creates nothing [...] because he only transcribes and makes available for reading a text [that] maintains with what is called the ‘real’ [...] an imitative and reproductive relationship (qtd. in Bottoms 59). Taking this theory of theological presence, Bottoms applies it to documentary theatre which he claims is “double illusory”, as it presents to its audience “speech of ‘actual people’ involved in ‘real events’”; however, labelling the work verbatim “obscures the world-shaping role of the writer in the editing and juxtaposing [of] the gathered materials” (59). Innes goes further, stating that the work created in documentary theatre “without exception, [...] is propagandistic: factual form serves an embedded message” (442). Soto-Morettini suggests that documentary theatre “explicitly points to itself as an act of literariness but it simultaneously positions itself [...] as non-literary with an Oz-like desire to hide the man behind the curtain” (314).

Hare’s previous documentary work, is not without its detractors. Brian

Logan, writing for *The Times*, accused Hare of “opportunism”, insofar that Hare “hijacked the bandwagon” of verbatim theatre to further Hare’s own interests, at the “expense of verbatim theatre’s hard-won authority” (14). In a short essay, that is included as commentary with the published script of Robin Soans’ *Talking to Terrorists*, Hare celebrates documentary theatre as offering

authentic news of overlooked thought and feeling [...] What a welcome corrective to the cosy art-for-art’s sake racket which theatre all too easily becomes! [...] Theatre using real people has become a fabulously rich and varied strand which, for many years, has been pumping red cells into the dramatic bloodstream. (*Talking to Terrorists* 112-113)

Despite the issues surrounding *Stuff Happens*, Hare also has a history of foregrounding his work’s constructedness. His play *Fanshen* (1975), described by Innes as prefiguring “the post-millennial documentary genre”, draws attention to how the story is being mediated from its source material (437). *Fanshen* is based on William H. Hinton’s book *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (1966), chronicling how a remote Chinese village adapts to Communist reforms. At the start of the play Yu-Lai, an ex-bandit, holds up a book and announces, “this is the book *Fanshen* by William Hinton” (Hare, *Fanshen* 6). Hare also indicates the actor should read out the publisher of the book he is holding and the current sale price. This is promptly followed by another character reminding the audience that this is a story and that these characters are still alive. In Hare’s *Absence of War* trilogy,³ which examines contemporary crises within three British institutions - the church, the judicial system and the Labour Party - he actively distinguishes his work from the real. Despite the characters of the play being based on real people who were

³ The trilogy consists of *Racing Demon* (1990), *Murmuring Judges* (1991) and *The Absence of War* (1993), all of which debuted at the National Theatre, London.

interviewed by Hare, these characters have “imaginary names and slight disguises [...] and the action is fabricated” (Innes 441). Of even more importance is that Hare published in a companion handbook, *Asking Around*, the interviews that inspired the trilogy.

However, Hare’s more explicit documentary work reveals a problematic relationship with ‘the real’. Innes, for example, identifies ethical issues with Hare’s one-man show on the Israel/Palestine conflict *Via Dolorosa* (441). Based on his fact-finding tour in Israel and Palestine, the play is performed by Hare who plays himself which, according to Innes, lends “the piece an authenticity” which distracts from the fact that the play is “subjective to an extreme that is the antithesis of documentary drama” (Innes 441). By making himself interviewer and subject, Hare’s theological presence, as Derrida puts it, is overwhelming. However, unlike *Stuff Happens*, with *Via Dolorosa* “we are never in any doubt about the impressionistic, rather than the strictly ‘historical’ nature of Hare’s very personal monologue “ (Soto-Morettini 314).

Bottoms critiques *Stuff Happens* for its lack of self-evident signifiers that reveal the play’s mediation. Comparing the play to Moisés Kaufman’s *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*, he argues that documentary plays must “acknowledge their dual identity and thus ambiguous status as both “document” and “play”; without doing so documentary theatre is in danger of becoming “a disingenuous exercise in the presentation of “truth”, failing (or refusing) to acknowledge [its] own highly selective manipulation of opinion and rhetoric” (57-58). For *Stuff Happens* to satisfy Bottom’s demand that documentary theatre acknowledge its dual identity, Hare needs to show the three levels of mediation present in his work and I contend Hare has not signified any of the three.

The scenes behind closed doors are invented by Hare, but, according to his author's note, we are assured that they carry a level of credibility and create an illusion that Hare has acquired "a certain aura of privileged information" (Bottoms, 25). However, the behind closed door scenes contain both versimiliar discussions of Powell's opposition to the war and at the same time borderline cartoonish scenes, such as George and Laura Bush putting together a jigsaw as the president's cabinet proudly look on. This creates a situation where "it is impossible to tell with any reliability where factual reportage stops and political caricature starts: under Hare's all-seeing gaze, both acquire equal status as (dramatic) truth" (Bottoms 60).

When asked by Will Hammond and Dan Steward whether he "makes any distinction" between real and imagined dialogue, Hare claimed that his mediation is self-evident, paraphrasing his own author's note that scenes of direct address quote people verbatim, while behind closed doors, the events are completely imagined (63). However, in performance, this distinction is obscured. As Soncini argues, this distinction is "limited entirely to the paratext [the script]", so in performance "the boundaries between the actually spoken and the 'not quite spoken' tend to become blurred (102). What constitutes "behind closed doors" is unclear in the performance's staging, which in the case of the National Theatre's production, constitutes a bare stage with minimal set and props, making it difficult to ascertain when the actors are in public and when they are in private. But even in the paratext it is unclear exactly what constitutes 'direct address'. There are many moments when the characters speak to the audience or break the fourth wall which are almost certainly imagined. For instance, after a meeting between Bush and Powell, in which Bush tells Powell he is proceeding with an invasion of Iraq without approval from

the United Nations:

AN ACTOR Later, Bush recalls:

BUSH It was a very cordial conversation. I would describe it as cordial. I think the log will show that it was relatively short.

AN ACTOR White House records show that the encounter lasted twelve minutes

Bush, alone, looks at us a moment.

BUSH I didn't need permission (*Stuff Happens* 92).

Instead of actively revealing his work's fictionality, Hare utilises techniques that enforce *Stuff Happens'* perceived authenticity while veiling Hare's mediation. Hare employs a technique that Innes describes as 'constant commentary' where, in Brechtian fashion, actors step out of role, to give context to proceedings, often quoting names, titles and exact dates. The act of having actors, out of role, commenting on these events creates the sense that these are true events being replayed in performance, emphasising the desired 'documentary feel' of the material and enforcing the perceived authenticity of the play.

For example at the start of the play:

Another actor steps forward:

AN ACTOR Stuff. Happens. The response of Donald Rumsfeld, the American Secretary of Defence, when asked to comment on the widespread looting and pillage that followed the American conquest of Baghdad – Friday, April 11th 2003. (*Stuff Happens*, 3)

Hare's Rumsfeld appears and proceeds to deliver his 'stuff happens' speech, a speech that is well known to the public and can also be found in the public record.

This use of narration could serve to mark what is fact over what is fiction in the play; however, Hare uses this device throughout his play, regardless of the source material. For instance, at the beginning of scene four, Bush's cabinet discuss invading Iraq for the first time, a scene surely invented by Hare.

Bush, fastidiously punctual, is already in place, sitting alone at the head of a torpedo-shaped table.

AN ACTOR The new administration hits the ground running. Ten days after his inauguration, on January 30th 2001, President Bush presides at a meeting of the National Security Council for the first time.

[...]

BUSH Now let's move on. Iraq

O'NEIL Iraq?

AN ACTOR Paul O'Neill. Secretary of the Treasury.

O'NEIL Iraq?

(Stuff Happens, 10-12)

In both instances, 'The Actor', uses precise dates and titles, the use of which, Bottoms argues, "lends a spurious aura of "verbatim" authority to the characters' subsequent words - words that Hare has presumably invented" (60).

While it could be argued that verbatim theatre achieves a new form of political efficacy, as described in Hare's essay *Talking To Terrorists*, this does not hide that "his masculinist rhetoric casually obscures the fact that realism and reality are not the same thing, and that unmediated access to "the real" is not something the theatre can ever honestly provide" (Bottoms 57). It is quite clear that Hare's role as the author of this work is particularly pronounced and his 'theological presence' is

problematic.

4. Hare's Audience as *Homo Sacer*

The various levels of reality that exist in Hare's work coupled with the lack of mediation in *Stuff Happens*, therefore creates an environment in which Hare's audience could be wilfully misled. Some commentators have argued, which will be discussed below, that Hare's interplay of these levels of reality asks his audience to "be wary of reifying material evidence as an indisputable carrier of truth" (Soncini 103). However, I contend that Hare's audience is unaware of what evidence is real and what is imagined. Agamben argues that in a state of exception there are "two poles of the sovereign exception" (*Homo Sacer* 110). If Hare is Agamben's exceptional sovereign then the other pole of exceptionalism, the *homo sacer*, is the audience. Hare's audiences are not equipped with an author's note, nor is the play's interplay of fact and fiction revealed and therefore, the audience must take Hare's truth claims at face value. Arguably, without Hare revealing how his work is mediated, his audience may interpret the entire play as entirely truthful.

Some scholars have argued that the three levels of reality in Hare's work, coupled with his seemingly disingenuous claims over the veracity of his research, point towards an artist who is asking his audience to think more critically about how truth and knowledge are disseminated. Colleran, for instance, declares that "the engine [of *Stuff Happens*] is its collage of the imagined and the seen; the tension between these invites the viewer to think critically about surface and depth" (140). Soncini suggests that the blurring of these boundaries in Hare's play, "allows for a more complex, nuanced configuration of representational modes to emerge" (103). What Hare presents is not merely truth and fiction living in a "hybrid cohabitation"

but reveals how these two domains can be reversed (Soncini 103). The verbatim authenticates the fiction, but on the other hand Hare's fictional imaginings are "granted a higher degree of truthfulness than... the public evidence quoted in the play [which] is certainly authentic but it is designed to obscure, rather than disclose the truth about Iraq" (Soncini 103). The verbatim dialogue is banal statements designed to conceal and manipulate, while Hare's imagined dialogue is "recast as 'counterfeit' dramatic dialogue".

However, for audiences to engage critically in this manner, they must be aware that they are being deceived by Hare, which, based on the reactions of the informed reviewers who attended his play, they are not. Instead of being more critically attuned to the multiple sources of contradictory information regarding the Iraq war, the play reinforces the information provided by its author as the definitive version of events. Hare does not create an engaged public sphere at the National Theatre and instead, as theatre historian David Wiles argues, creates the "instant and illusory thrill of an engaged citizenship, while not actually identifying the fundamental issues upon which a social consensus must rest prior to effective political action" (212). *Stuff Happens*, like the politicians it skewers, is ultimately attempting to enforce its own singular narrative onto a complicated, politicised series of events. The failure to foreground the level to which Hare is mediating and inventing events, seems unethical and disingenuous. This form of reflexive verbatim, which asks its audience to think critically about the dissemination of truth, through its mixture of fact and fiction does exist and has been achieved successfully. Stuart Young discusses this form of documentary theatre in his article "Playing with Documentary" highlighting Pol Heyvaert and Dimitri Verhulst's *Aalst* [2005] and Dennis Kelly's *Taking Care of Baby* [2007] as key examples of work that emphasises

“the process of writing or reporting, thereby drawing attention to the methods of construction in documentary theatre and to the problematic issues inherent in those methods” (75). However, as Young points out, both plays are self-referential; they constantly point to their own mediation to make the audience question the play’s authenticity. There are no similar devices found in *Stuff Happens*.

Without this level of self-reflexivity, many of the reviewers celebrated *Stuff Happens* for presenting what they assumed was the “truth”. John Nathan of the *Jewish Chronicle* claims that “Hare does not distort the facts in order to make a point - rather he sticks to them”, while Innes argued that *Stuff Happens* is “dealing in a hard-nosed, factual way with very recent history and the events of the day, establishing new standards of authenticity” (448). In fact, Gipson-King indicates that “over two-thirds [of reviewers] considered the play, balanced, accurate, and convincing”(153). Gipson-King also notes that those reviewers who acknowledged the play’s fictional foundations still casually referred to the events of the play as the truth due to its illusory connection to the real, arguing that *Stuff Happens* “is exactly the kind of enduring work that builds a myth over time”, and concluding that “what actually happened in the past matters far less than what people believe to have happened” (165). For instance, *The Times* reviewer Benedict Nightingale wrote that *Stuff Happens* left him “wondering [...] about the accuracy and therefore the authority of a play whose author admits he’s “used my imagination” to fill in the bits not on public record. And yet, again and again, I felt that yes, this is how it was” (23).

Hare’s own reputation further added to the perceived ‘truthfulness’ of the play. Gipson-King pointed out that “Hare had long held a reputation as an outspoken leftist [...while] his feelings about the Iraq war [were not] in any way

neutral”⁴ and this “partisan reputation actually worked in his favour to increase the overall perception of the play as fair and balanced” (153, 155). Kate Bassett, in her review for *The Independent on Sunday*, was taken aback by the play’s initial pro-war bias stating “in the early scenes you start wondering if Hare, the famous Hampstead left-winger, has decided it’s time for a swing to the right”. Billington, in his review in the *Guardian*, suggested that, Hare “cannily subverts” his own anti-war bias; “you see this most powerfully in a speech, credited to a journalist, that questions our tendency to view Iraq from a local political viewpoint” and writes one of the greatest defences of the war (“Review: Stuff Happens”). He is referring to the monologue by ‘An Angry British Journalist’, one of Hare’s invented viewpoints, which argues,

How spoiled, how indulged we are to discuss the manner – oh yes, we discuss the manner, late into the night, candles guttering, our faces sweating, reddening with wine and hatred – but the act itself – the thing done – the splendid thing done – freedom given to people who were not free – this thing is ignored, preferring as we do to fight amongst ourselves – our own disputes, our own resentment of each other elevated way above the needs of the victims (Hare, *Stuff Happens* 15).

Gipson King argues that Hare avoids caricature and “gives real teeth to Bush and his cabinet members” pointing out that Alex Jennings’ portrayal of the president “sharply contrasted” with the caricatured depictions London audiences were used to in plays such as *The Madness of George Dubya* or in parodies such as those of Will Ferrell on *Saturday Night Live* which depicted the President as an incompetent fool (156). These examples of the play’s even-handedness, however, are a straw man.

⁴ Gipson-King specifically mentions Hare’s anti-war opinion piece, entitled “Don’t Look for a Reason”, for *the Guardian* in 2003, which contains this polemic tirade about Bush: “George Bush is a born-again Christian and a recovering alcoholic. I see in him the uncontrollable anger of the alcoholic, once directed at himself, sluiced away every night into his bloodstream and out into the gutter, now, tragically, directed, via his amazingly aggressive, amazingly triumphant body language, on to whatever poor soul comes into his sights”.

While the play does contain some anti-war sentiments, these are argued less often and less fervently than the pro-war portions. In fact, the pro-war themes are found exclusively in Hare's viewpoints, small vignettes separate to the play's main storyline, while the primary thrust of the play is concerned with the depiction of the Bush cabinet as manipulative war-mongers. Gipson-King identifies that there is a dangerous contradiction in the response from a reviewer who accuses the play of being balanced while also celebrating the play's "clear anti-war message" (156).

5. Hare's Anomic Role

Stuff Happens therefore exists in an anomic space wherein it simultaneously carries the *force* of truth while being false. This anomic space exists because Hare's own role in relation to the play is unclear. Like the Agamben sovereign who exists between the executive and the judicial branches of government, this lack of definition in Hare's role means that he also exists in an anomic space, picking the forms and functions he desires for his play at will. Discussed earlier were Hare's attempts to reconcile the roles of the artist and the playwright and how that led to the uncomfortable co-existence of truth and fiction. However, further complicating the play is Hare's attempt to take on the role of the journalist and the historian.

Agamben identifies that a sovereign's exceptional behaviour is often 'legitimised' by distinguishing an 'external force' which represents a threat to citizens in the sovereign's care. One could easily make the argument that, in this vein, Hare is simply responding to the actions of the Bush and Blair governments and taking extraordinary measures regarding his play's truth claims to inform an 'at risk' public. He is taking over the role of what he sees as ineffectual investigative journalism. Hare explains in a 2008 interview:

Journalism is failing us...and is in some sort of ethical crisis about how they came to be so complicit with the regime – ‘what was the blackmail following 9/11 that made us incapable of doing reporting?’ Now the theatre rushes to fill that void because journalism isn’t doing the job (Hammond and Steward 62).

Hare’s description that contemporary media is “a rich mix of what people never meant combined artfully with what people never said”, could also be applied to the construction of his play (62). Hare’s assessment of contemporary journalism was shared by prominent newspapers like the *New York Times* which released apologies that its “reporting had not been as rigorous as it could have been” and its editorial standards which “should have been challenging reporters and pressing for more skepticism were perhaps too intent on rushing scoops into the paper” (“From the Editors”). Hare argues that journalism is failing because “it’s not adequately representing or interpreting” the complicated geopolitical events of the modern era, but fails to identify how theatre represents or interprets this more ‘adequately’ (62). Hare’s use of vague language in assuming these responsibilities is very much in line with the state of exception.

Hare wants his work to be seen as something that provides a definitive version of events by imposing “a kind of coherency and order” on what, for the audiences of the time, would have still been a “mixture of heavily controlled media images, unallocated weapons of mass destruction, ideological tales of moral warfare and the outer reaches of weblog hysteria” (Soto-Morettini 309). This kind of structuring changes Hare’s role from strictly that of a playwright, to one of reportage. However, as Soto-Morettini argues, Hare is not supplying us “eyewitness accounts” of events, so he is not a journalist; nor does he seem “to be carrying out

the larger, contextualizing task of the historian” (312). She further argues that Hare had not “achieved any kind of chronological distance from [his] subject [nor] even to be able to finish the story that they began telling” (312). If Hare’s role is to give us an accurate understanding of the invasion of Iraq, he fails to give greater context to events. Despite some references to the characters in the introduction, Hare’s play begins in 2001. But by starting his “history” here, Soto-Morettini points out that he ignores not only the first Gulf War but also the call for action against Iraq in 1998 by the Neo-Conservative think-tank Project for a New American Century (PNAC), signed by Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz (312). Hare does not give a greater understanding “to the intractable political drive behind the Bush administration’s determination to launch military action against Iraq [... the] failure to do so means that in viewing/reading either account the (highly questionable causal) link between the attack on September 11 and the war in Iraq go largely unquestioned” (313). Hare’s supposed ‘balanced’ representation of Bush’s cabinet simply characterises Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice et al as having no clear reason for their actions and simply being eager warmongers.

Hare’s superficial historical account of Iraq is exemplified in the final monologue of the play. While the entirety of *Stuff Happens* consists of predominantly white men discussing the future of a country in the Middle East, Hare decides to give the final word to an “Iraqi exile”. However, this monologue borders on cultural imperialism:

IRAQI EXILE: [...] I mean, if there is a word, Iraq has been crucified. By Saddam’s sins, by ten years of sanctions, and then this. Basically it’s a story of a nation that failed in only one thing. But it’s a big sin. It failed to take care of itself. And that means

the worst person in the country took charge. Until this nation takes charge of itself, it will continue to suffer. I mean, Iraqis say to me, "Look, tell America." I tell them: "You are putting your faith in the wrong person. Don't expect America or anybody will do it for you. If you don't do it yourself this is what you get" (120).

Firstly, it is important to recognise this monologue is completely invented by Hare - there is no evidence that this view is shared by any Iraqis. Hare is speaking on behalf of an entire nation that has been traumatised by the West, while he simultaneously reduces these experiences to a short monologue at the end of the play. Secondly, the monologue contradicts the play's central idea that history is created by political forces hidden from view. In the monologue, Hare seems to be arguing that Iraq is somewhat responsible for the state in which it finds itself. While the monologue accuses the West of ignoring the needs of Iraqi citizens, it neglects to mention how similar external forces have shaped the nation's history of instability.

Soto-Morettini points out that Hare's own research "must have led him to understand that such a relatively young nation (independent only since 1932), sitting on the world's largest unexplored oil fields would be a tantalising fat minnow in the pool of global oil sharks" (313). She points out that foreign intervention by petroleum conglomerates and various oppressive governments propped up by the US, being "seduced and abandoned" by the CIA, had created such political instability in Iraq that it is hard to see a traumatised Iraqi citizen "having any chance to 'take control' of their country" and to conclude as such is "deeply worrisome" (313). Ryan Claycomb agrees, stating that Hare's conclusion "might well have come from the diary of a Victorian imperial administrator" or from "the political machine

[Hare] seeks to condemn”(96). Ironically, had the monologue ended by revealing Iraq to be the victim of unseen political machinations, the point Hare was trying to make, it would have provided a stronger end to the play, revealing that history is out of the hands of the common man and in the hands of the politicians who dare to take more than they are allowed. Hare’s historical account is also troubled by how he reduces the story to good and evil actors. Hughes argues that the play is simply reduced to a “historical tragedy complete with fatally flawed tragic hero”, mourning “the failure of goodness” while simultaneously “affirming the British government’s liberal values” and painting the Americans as the villains of the piece. Painting the British government and Blair in this light does “not extend to questioning Blair’s good intentions critically” (*Performance in a Time of Terror* 115).

If Hare desires that his work clarifies the timeline leading to war in Iraq, there are many ethical issues with the way in which he depicts and constructs his history. Soto-Morettini by appealing to Hayden White’s *Metahistory* argues that Hare presents a romanticised version of history, reducing complicated events into “a formal coherency to which we ourselves aspire” (319). Hare gives us narrative closure on an event that was “far from being finished” (319). Hare maintains that his play is a history play, but at the same time makes no concessions to the behemoth task that is at hand, suggesting that his “drama unfolds unproblematically alongside the given world it represents but also assumes a kind of ontological authority (through both the historical facts of its characters’ existence and the simultaneous fact of the actors’ presence before an audience) that weights meaning in the representation (314). When considering the narrative of *Stuff Happens* in relation to the multitude of possible reasons and historical circumstances that led to the conflict, we are merely reminded, “of how difficult it is to encompass the massive

overdetermination of a complex moment in history without continually 'writing in the margins' or groping for a summary in the face of the 'un-sum up-able'" (Soto-Morettini 318). Many of Hare's claims have been validated with time. The findings of the Chilcot Report point to Hare's assertions regarding the manufacturing of evidence. Hare notes that "the claims the play makes were controversial at the time [...] It has now become standard history" (Foster). I contend this only betrays Hare's belief that his play should be seen as a historical document despite the play's fictionality. While some of his claims have now been verified it is hard to see this as a defence for the slippery nature of fact in his play; for instance would we have legitimised the invasion of Iraq knowing that the Bush and Blair governments were aware of the lack of weapons of mass destruction had they found a couple of vials of sarin gas by mistake? As he has still not provided any of the evidence for his claims, it is hard to see if this legitimises his work's research or is simply educated guesswork. The truth claims in *Stuff Happens*, legitimised with the passage of time, do not make his entire work truthful, just like using some verbatim dialogue does not make his entire work verbatim.

As an artist Hare arguably can write whatever he likes; as an artist he should be allowed to respond to contemporary life uninhibited. He himself describes the role of the artist as responsive: "You find the driftwood on the beach, but you carve the wood and paint it to make it art" (*Struggle, Obedience & Revolt* 12). However, when he positions his work as being representative of actual events and to be a version of the truth, Hare starts to enter the anomalous void of the state of exception. Hare utilises devices to promote his work as truthful, operating somewhere between documentary theatre maker, journalist, historian and artist. He uses his work and its truth claims to implement a problematic narrative that furthers his own interests.

Without foregrounding his “own processes of representation in order to acknowledge the problem and encourage audiences to adopt an actively critical perspective on the events depicted”, Hare grants himself special power and dissemination of the truth, making him guilty of the same crimes as those he wishes to critique (Bottoms 61).

CHAPTER

3

IMPOSITIONS OF TRUTH

RICHARD NORTON-TAYLOR AND *JUSTIFYING WAR* (2003)

Justifying War (2003) by Richard Norton-Taylor is an example of a particular form of documentary theatre, the tribunal play. These plays, closely associated with London's Tricycle Theatre, seek to "create as close a mimetic reproduction of a public judicial inquiry as possible" through the use of documentary theatre techniques and courtroom transcripts as source material (Finburgh 209). Tribunals selected for "forensic reenactment" are those that investigate "miscarriages of justice or malpractice within the British legal, judicial and political institutions" (Megson 110). Tribunal plays focus on formal tribunals of inquiry called by government institutions to investigate actions or events carried out on behalf of the government. *Justifying War* is a recreation of the Hutton Inquiry which was called by then British Prime Minister Tony Blair to investigate the death of British weapons expert Dr David Kelly. There was much public interest in this case as Dr Kelly had contributed to the controversial 'September Dossier', a report which the British and American governments used as evidence that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. Norton-Taylor believes that tribunal plays embody "how powerful and how complementary to journalism - in many ways how much more effective than

journalism - the theatre can be" insofar as it concisely allows audiences to "listen together and inwardly - indeed outwardly - digest and understand properly what all the fuss was about" (qtd. in Hammond & Steward 105; 122). Chris Megson reaffirms Norton-Taylor's claim that these plays are for the public good as they

enable their audience to undertake a collective act of bearing witness [...] In this sense, we might conceive of these tribunal simulacra as acts of reclamation - an opening up of institutional processes normally hidden from view or submerged within a deluge of newsprint. (123)

Thus one of the aims of *Justifying War* is to achieve the same aim as the tribunal it restages; that is, the forensic recreation of the events leading up to Dr Kelly's death and, in so doing, bring to light the definitive version of events.

This chapter will initially contextualise the events surrounding *Justifying War* and briefly discuss the form and function of tribunal theatre, before analysing the editorial process of the play's author, Richard Norton-Taylor; in particular, how he attempts to reduce or preface his authorial role with the text. Unlike Hare, Norton-Taylor adheres to a rigid editorial process, which he endeavours to make apparent to his audience. It is my assertion that, although this diminishes his own exceptional relationship to the truth, it nevertheless allows his audience to critically engage with his work.

I argue that Norton-Taylor's strict editorial process creates epistemological limitations in his work. His play is restricted in what it can reveal about the true state of affairs, as his work is dependent on the text available to him, which is limited to the content of the testimony delivered at the tribunal he strives to recreate. It is my argument that within a state of exception, a public tribunal is restricted in bringing

the truth to light by the very government that it is investigating. Tribunals become spaces wherein the exception is performed, endorsing the sovereign's exceptional behaviour and their singular imposition of justice, which presents epistemological limitations regarding what tribunal theatre can illuminate. Through references to Agamben's earlier work *Homo Sacer* and legal scholar Nicole Roger's work which references tribunals operating at Guantanamo Bay, I argue that institutional legal systems can authorise, and are an extension of, exceptional behaviour rather than systems that restrict sovereign power.

I further argue that Richard Norton-Taylor and the Tricycle Theatre are aware of the tribunal theatre's limitations in terms of establishing the 'true' version of events. Instead, Norton-Taylor uses *Justifying War* to bring to light these judicial failings and the wider democratic crisis stemming from the exceptional behaviour of politicians and institutional modes of establishing truth. While not illuminating the events that lead to Dr Kelly's death, *Justifying War* reminds us that that impositions of truth and the enacting of justice can be a 'performative' act and that audiences should be wary of people and institutions that promote singular impositions of the truth. Furthermore, *Justifying War* demonstrates how certain individuals' voices, in this case those of Dr Kelly and his wife, are treated as Agamben's *homo sacer* or person who is outside the law.

1. The Death of Dr Kelly

Dr David Kelly was a reputed and experienced expert in chemical and biological weaponry. He had previously worked in Iraq as a UN weapons expert at the end of the First Gulf War, and at the time of his death was the British government's chief advisor on biological warfare. Dr Kelly was consulted in the

drafting of a report, latterly referred to as the September Dossier (as it was released to the public on 24th September 2002), which contained evidence supporting the claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. This dossier was a significant part of the British Government's case for an invasion of Iraq. Dr Kelly had reservations regarding the quality of the evidence contained within the dossier, believing many of its allegations overstated the available intelligence. One of the dossier's most egregious claims, that would later saturate the front pages of the British tabloids, was found in the foreword, authored by Tony Blair, asserting that Saddam Hussein's "military planning allows for some of the WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them" ("Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction" 4).

After the invasion, Dr Kelly voiced his reservations in an off-the-record interview with Andrew Gilligan, a BBC journalist, who subsequently ran a story, on May 29th 2003, claiming that the government "probably knew that the forty-five minute figure was wrong, even before it decided to put it in" (Hutton). In ensuing reports, Gilligan claimed the evidence was 'sexed-up' and named key government officials who had knowingly embellished the dossier, chiefly the government's Director of Communications, Alastair Campbell. To further bolster his allegations, Gilligan identified his source as a government official involved in the preparation of the September Dossier. The British government responded by saying Gilligan's allegations were false and demanded a retraction from the BBC, while the British press demanded to know the source of this leak.

By July 15th 2003, it had become public knowledge that Dr Kelly was Gilligan's unnamed government source and he was called to appear before a

Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee. It was later revealed that the Ministry of Defence had leaked details regarding Dr Kelly's identity to the press, up to a point where they would not reveal his name but would confirm it to anyone who guessed correctly. Two days after appearing before the parliamentary committee, Dr Kelly, while walking alone in the woods near his home, committed suicide by slitting his wrists and consuming the painkillers that were prescribed for his wife's arthritis. It was understood that Dr Kelly was an extremely private man and he had not coped with the increased public scrutiny into his life or the questioning of his expertise by the parliamentary committee. Subsequently, Tony Blair called for a special judicial inquiry, known as the Hutton Inquiry, to investigate the circumstances and chain of events that lead to Dr Kelly's death. The Inquiry opened on August 1st 2003 and presented its findings on 28th January 2004. It completely exonerated the government of blame regarding Dr Kelly's death, and largely blamed the BBC for the events that followed Gilligan's report. The report made no mention of the legality of the Invasion of Iraq.

The events of Dr Kelly's death were surrounded by an epistemological indeterminacy regarding the legality of invasion of Iraq. The Hutton Inquiry was granted the remit to investigate only the death of Dr Kelly and was unable to investigate the legality of the Iraq war, despite the questions about the legality of the invasion and the wilful misleading of the British public being a constant spectre during the tribunal. The Hutton Inquiry's findings were subsequently

widely regarded as a whitewash, [...] no wrongdoing was found on the part of the government in putting together the dossier [of misinformation] or 'outing' Kelly [...] and that Kelly was responsible for breaking an official code of silence. (Gupta 108).

There was such scepticism regarding the death of Dr Kelly a fifth of the British public believed Dr David Kelly had not committed suicide and was in fact part of a wider government conspiracy, a theory rejected by Richard Norton-Taylor as lacking supporting evidence (“Alone in the Woods”).

2. Tribunal Theatres and the Tricycle

The Tricycle Theatre became the ostensible leader in producing tribunal theatre under the leadership of artistic director Nicholas Kent and a partnership Kent formed with *The Guardian* journalist, Richard Norton-Taylor. The purpose of both tribunal plays and the tribunals they recreate is to establish a definitive version of questionable events involving government institutions. Both tribunals and tribunal theatre exist to bring ‘truth’ to the public. Director Max Stafford-Clark argues that the witnessing of a tribunal play is important for spectators in their “search for the truth and the exposure of injustice” (qtd. in Hammond and Steward 124). This truth should then provoke discussion and enlightenment regarding the democratic process and how government functions. To encompass this theory the Tricycle Theatre decided to stage *Justifying War* immediately after the tribunal had wrapped up proceedings, but before Lord Hutton presented his findings. This broke with tradition as the Tricycle plays usually include the tribunal findings in their performances. Norton-Taylor explained that Nicholas Kent convinced him to stage the play early to sharpen the public appetite in preparation for the tribunal’s conclusions regarding a “scandal going to the heart of government” (“Courtroom Drama”).

⁵ A 2007 BBC poll indicated 22.7% of people surveyed believed Dr Stephen Kelly had not killed himself, while a further 38.5% were unsure (“Doubts Over Kelly Death says Poll”). For more on the doubts surrounding Kelly’s death see: Baker 2007, Dyer 2011.

Some of the more notable British inquiries include the Saville Inquiry, which investigated the events of Bloody Sunday, and the Chilcot Inquiry, which was called “to identify the lessons that can be learned” from the run up to Iraq (*The Iraq Inquiry*) and ran for over seven years. While these inquiries are typically open to the public, there are often only a few seats available. Before the turn of the millenia, inquiries in Britain were broadcast on public television, but there has been a subsequent trend for these events to go untelevised. Tribunal theatre then exists to bring these inquiries before the public in a more thorough way and with a higher level of verisimilitude than can be communicated through the limitations of print media.

Under the tenure of artistic director Nicholas Kent, the Tricycle Theatre has restaged inquiries investigating issues as diverse as institutional racism (*The Colour of Justice* (1999)), historical war crimes (*Nuremberg* and *Srebrenica* (both 1996)) and “The Troubles” (*Bloody Sunday* (2005)). An overwhelming number of the Tricycle’s tribunal plays have been based on inquiries into invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, including *Justifying War* (2004), and *Tactical Questioning: The Baha Mousa Inquiry* (2011) all by Richard Norton-Taylor, *Guantanamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom* by Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo, and *Chilcot* by Daisy Bowie-Sell (2016).

The Tricycle Theatre’s first foray into tribunal theatre occurred when Kent commissioned Richard Norton-Taylor, the Security Affairs editor for *The Guardian*, to edit a concise version of the testimony from the 1992 Scott Inquiry into the sale of arms to Iraq in the 1980s, which Norton-Taylor had been covering. This would become Norton-Taylor’s first play, *Half The Picture* (1994), which he later described as not being “promising material for a stage show. The story had no physical action,

no surprises, very little movement, and not much of a plot” (qtd. in Hammond and Steward 105). While lacking in dramatic action, Norton-Taylor discovered that the play instead was rife with drama regarding the actions and behaviours of the central characters; “it had dissembling, buck-passing, hiding behind euphemisms, word play, facetious use of aphorisms and, above all, the cynicism and amorality of arrogant and unaccountable officials” (106). Norton-Taylor’s discoveries provided the agenda for the Tricycle’s tribunal plays: the truth, “the search for it and the denial of it [being] constant themes” (108). This work has been motivated by a “sense of obligation” to, according to Nicholas Kent, shine a light on injustice or history that has been obscured (135).

Norton-Taylor claims that a primary function of tribunal plays is to assist traditional journalism in enlightening the wider public by “capturing a different kind of audience, or a similar audience in a different way” (“Courtroom Drama”). There is limited public access to these tribunals, and traditional journalism was seen as ineffectual in communicating the breadth of information, due to the sheer volume of testimony, evidence and the ever-changing landscapes of tribunals that can last months or even years. Norton-Taylor argues that “The perforce brutal and inconsistent editing, the constant fight for space or airtime, is one of the many problems of journalism as a medium” (qtd. in Hammond & Steward 122). For Soncini the drawn out nature of tribunals is often lost on audiences, and tribunal theatre’s ability to condense these narratives is one of its strengths. Appealing to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Soncini argues that audiences

will only grasp the organic unity of a story, and therefore its sense, if they can easily embrace its narrative arc in a single view; the material presented in dramatic form must be quantitatively compatible with the scope of their gaze

and their memory capacity [...] the tribunal playwright is [...] aimed at bringing observability into a confusing plethora of source material in order to make it intelligible to the spectator. (86)

In short, the Tricycle's tribunal plays serve a civic duty, described by Soncini as "theatrical interventions into the public sphere"; the plays are designed to inform the public, to bring to the fore obscured truths and correct a perceived democratic deficit (82).

To achieve the "unity of story" described by Soncini, Norton Taylor's role as editor is to refine the available testimony, which can cover months or years, into a three hour play that illuminates the wider story. He describes his work as "the methodical process of cutting through these layers of duplicity until an accurate, not always orderly account emerged", something Michael Billington describes as "raw information" (qtd. in Hammond and Steward 106; *State of the Nation* 384-385). Norton-Taylor admits that his plays "are not comprehensive, but they are representative", equating the veracity of the truth claims of *Justifying War* to those within traditional journalism (qtd. in Hammond and Steward 129, 131). While tribunal theatre and journalism have different styles of presentation, both are subject to editing by their authors and therefore are open to the same level of bias. In fact documentary theatre practitioners have been criticised for claiming their work's access to the real, without revealing the presence of "highly selective manipulation of opinion and rhetoric" (Bottoms 58). Norton-Taylor however argues that his tribunal plays offer greater access to the actual event than traditional journalism, commenting that "any editing is subjective, but far less so when it is for a two-hour script than for an article of a few hundred words, or a television clip of a few moments. A theatre audience thus gets a much better understanding of the issues"

("Spirit of Inquiry"). The final narrative that emerges, therefore, is an accurate reproduction but a mediated account of an event. Norton-Taylor's framing of the representational limitations of documentary theatre contrasts with Hare's description of *Stuff Happens* as the unquestionable and definitive version of events.

Unlike David Hare's problematic theological presence in *Stuff Happens* (discussed in Chapter 2) Norton-Taylor is aware of the theological presence of the author in documentary theatre and actively tries to reduce or make apparent his role in the editing and constructing of the real. He, alongside Kent, developed a rigorous editing protocol to ensure an accurate version of the words spoken is presented. This criteria includes ensuring the chronology of the events depicted is sequential and keeping the body of the testimony intact; while testimony can be shorn on either end, the body of the testimony must remain unadulterated. This unity of testimony means that Norton-Taylor is prevented from pairing one question with an answer to a different question. (Hammond and Steward 152-153). Hare's "equating truthfulness with an uncompromising adherence to the actually spoken", Soncini points out, "would place a considerable share of contemporary documentary work outside the province of verbatim" (81). Norton-Taylor provides appendices for his sources, the references for documents to which he refers, while the play text refers to the URL for the transcript to the public inquiry. Therefore, unlike *Stuff Happens*, the dialogue and events of *Justifying War* are verified with documented testimony. Also unlike *Stuff Happens*, there are no composite characters or fictional viewpoints to create narrative structure for the events.

That said, in *Justifying War* Richard Norton-Taylor did make a minor, but noteworthy, change to the chronology of the testimony presented. In the play the

final piece of testimony is delivered by Dr Kelly's wife, Janice; however, Janice Kelly actually testified two days before Dr Jones, whose testimony is performed before hers in *Justifying War*. I will discuss the larger effects of this change later, but it should be noted here that this change was added at the behest of Nicholas Kent who acknowledged that theatre audiences desired a change in tone and tempo (Hammond and Steward 125). Furthermore, Norton-Taylor alerted the audience to this alteration as each scene started with an announcement of the testimony's date of delivery. The change was further noted in the play's programme notes, and is also noted in the play text.

The dedication of *Justifying War* to faithfully recreating the Hutton Inquiry was highlighted by critics. Charles Spencer of *The Telegraph*, who had been able to attend the actual hearing "found the verisimilitude astonishing". Janelle Reinelt commented that "perhaps the most striking aspect of these productions is their un-theatrical style... all mimicking the decorum of these hearings that are held in place by the high formality and the austere authority of the presiding official" (63). Reinelt also pointed out that the set was "so precise" in *Justifying War*; that the set designers replicated the empty bookshelves of the actual hearing, making the room look similarly "bleak" (63).

Reviewers complimented the objectivity of *Justifying War*, Reinelt pointing out that the play asked "for the audience to judge events for themselves" ("*Justifying War and the Case of David Kelly*" 64). However, this even-handedness was largely criticised for its lack of political efficacy. Toby Young of *The Spectator* expected "to be outraged [...and] anticipating an eviscerating attack on the Establishment"; Nicholas de Jongh commented it lacked "narrative and dramatic thrust"; Sarah Hemming of

The Financial Times described the play as a “whodunit - but there are no dramatic entrances and exits, no cleverly worded revelations, no neat plot leading to a satisfying conclusion”. Finally, this subscription to recreating what was actually said was criticised by reviewers on the grounds that *Justifying War* did not offer any revelation, and denied the public any closer access to the the truth.

3. Tribunals and the State of Exception

The lack of revelation in *Justifying War* is a result of Norton-Taylor’s subscription to the idea that the text is a manifestation of the truth, requiring no commentary or framing devices to aid audience comprehension. His plays depict an edited version of what occurred at the tribunals and therefore the ability of any of his plays to illuminate is restricted by the content of the testimony delivered at the tribunal it recreates. There is an epistemological limitation in terms of what can be gleaned from recreating testimony and, therefore, tribunal theatre is limited in its ability to hold political power to account. Jacques Delcuvellerie, a member of the Belgian documentary theatre troupe, Groupov, admits there are limitations to the power of verbatim testimony in illuminating the truth, insofar as “testimony, whatever its quality only ever testifies to itself. It expresses what the speaker is capable of uttering about what she or he has lived, nothing more and nothing less. It establishes neither the exactitude of the facts, nor their intelligibility” (qtd. in Finburgh 122).

In trying to defend themselves from Dr Kelly’s allegations, politicians demonstrated the same broad use of language as that used in their justifications for invading Iraq. Those that testified at the Hutton Inquiry were more concerned with clearing their own involvement in the case and as Megson suggests this behaviour is

“symptomatic of the controversially limited remit of the Inquiry itself” (116). While the physical evidence for an invasion of Iraq was manipulated or created to disrupt access to the truth, in *Justifying War* access to the truth is also restricted by the individual performances of those who testify and their use of language. Norton-Taylor points out that “Not even those rehearsed for the witness box and questioned by well-prepared lawyers talk in soundbites. The language, the use of words [...] is full of subtleties and nuances as they try to protect themselves, dissemble or pass the buck [...] Few, if any, tell the full truth” (“Spirit of Enquiry”). Colleran argues that for all of its verisimilitude, rather than being “courtroom drama” designed to illuminate the true version of events, *Justifying War* has more in common with a “social drama” (147). Colleran compares Norton-Taylor to Chekhov, insofar as Norton-Taylor hears in his testimony “the note of self-revelation or self deception [...] whether it be “in repeated deferrals, a self incriminating pause, excessive self-justification”. Furthermore, like Chekhov’s characters, those who give testimony in *Justifying War* “press their own cause and underhear each other”, pointing to the fact that the speakers are “addressing a larger audience than each other, correcting narratives already presented, and asserting the value of their particular viewpoint” (147). Colleran’s assessment of the behaviour demonstrated in *Justifying War* aligns with the opinion of legal scholar Graham White who argues that when witnesses take to the stand there is a “self-conscious ‘play’ of witness performance - self presentation, demeanour and verbal and physical fluency at the site of a particular, intractable form of challenge to attempts to construct a definitive legal record” (337).

Therefore, tribunal theatre’s reliance on what is said at the tribunals they recreate restricts the potential for the theatre to be a space that holds political power to account. Soncini agrees, stating that

when dealing with the increasingly extralegal forms of warfare of the contemporary era, the revelatory power of theatre as juridical space is considerably diminished by these self-imposed dependence on the happenstance of official documents (Soncini 92).

This is because the event that tribunal theatre is staging, the tribunal, is an extension of the wider apparatus of the sovereign during a state of exception. The tribunal instead of being a place of justice becomes a space where the exception is enacted through legal performances.

4. Legal Performances

Agamben argues that the state of exception is a “space devoid of law” as a sovereign cannot be judged by a judiciary for their extra-legal activity as there is no legal framework for these actions to be judged against (51). Therefore, any judgment or inquiry into the actions of the sovereign during this time is inherently a performative form of justice.

Megson argues that tribunals can represent confused boundaries, similar to Agamben’s ideas of the anomie, between government and its institutions which should be separated to keep sovereign power in check (103). Megson points to the notions of political community and institutional structures as laid out by Kenneth Dyson in *The State Tradition in Western Europe* (1980), in which he argues societies manifest conceptual ethical “values” which should find “embodiment” in the state’s institutions (206). These apparatuses of the state should promote a “depersonalized” power that is immutable, contrasting with the ever-changing government as found in liberal democracies (206). However, as discussed earlier, during a state of exception, there is no clear separation of powers as the sovereign’s exceptional

power creates a “standstill or suspension of the law” (Agamben, *State of Exception* 42).

In Nicole Roger’s article “Terrorist v Sovereign: Legal performances in a state of exception” she argues that in a state of exception, certain legal proceedings concerning exceptional acts by the government, such as illegal detainees in Guantanamo, are reduced to a performative function, which she describes as a mutual dependency (163). These legal performances, Rogers argues, fall into one of three categories: black holes in which “the courts refuse to judge the actions of the executive”, grey holes “in which the courts conduct only a procedural review and ignore the substance of the rule of law” or a final category in which, “the courts have demonstrated an adherence to the rule of law and a resistance to the Kafka-esque qualities of the state of exception” (164). Ultimately the tribunal, like the tribunal play, is reduced to a performance, wherein we witness “justice” in action but not in effect. The rule of law is essentially diluted. For this reason David Dyzenhaus has labelled these legal grey holes the most dangerous as they “place a thin veneer of legality on the political” (50). Dyzenhaus’ comments echo Agamben’s description of law and fact:

if it has been effectively said that in a state of exception, fact is converted into law the opposite is also true, that is, that an inverse movement also acts in the state of exception, by which law is suspended and obliterated in fact. The essential point, in any case, is that a threshold of undecidability is produced at which *factum* and *ius* fade into each other. (*State of Exception* 29)

I would argue that *Justifying War* exposes the Hutton Inquiry as a legal performance operating in a legal grey hole, in which the courts conduct a review of these extralegal actions but do not pass judgement on the sovereign for their actions.

Gupta contends that the public tribunal's primary aims are geared toward satiating the public desire for performances of justice as opposed to justice itself. He argues that

much functioning of public institutions [such as tribunals] depends on meeting public demands by *presenting* a satisfying public process or display rather than *reaching* just or desired outcomes. That the process of a hearing is seen to be undertaken is arguably more socially expedient than the outcome that is reached. (118)

Reinelt argues that the public are attracted to tribunals as they offer a form of catharsis "from the performance [of justice], if not from the actual workings of justice" ("Towards a Poetics of Theatre" 80). While at least subliminally, the public are aware that they are living in "a world of simulation", Reinelt contends they want to "experience the assertion of the materiality of events, the indisputable character of the facts [and this is] one reason why trials and hearings, given force of law, have so much resonance" (81-82). Through the repetition of the 'facts' of the case, the 'truth' of the events can be obtained, due to a "deep collective urge for the link between knowledge and truth" (82). Reinelt points out that the public's desire for justice to be sated through the mere repetition of the facts is ideological. Referencing Slavoj Žižek's work on the links between ideology and truth, Reinelt points out that

audiences know that documents, facts, and evidence are always mediated when they are received; they know there is no raw truth apart from interpretation, but still, they want to experience the assertion of the materiality of events, of the indisputable character of the facts - one reason why trials and hearings, given force of law, still have so much resonance. (82)

Following Reinelt's argument, we can understand that public interest in the Hutton Inquiry was due to a larger feeling of ongoing anxiety surrounding Dr Kelly's death and overarching concerns about the legality of the Iraq war. Through the repetition of the facts the public could both understand and construct meaningful narratives about the events in question. However, the facts that are repeated are the ones deemed worthwhile by a tribunal established by the very government whose extralegal activities are the cause of the death they are investigating. At the same time the possibly illegal invasion of Iraq, by that same government, goes unjudged.

Justifying War may not have achieved Norton-Taylor's aim of "cutting through these layers of duplicity until an accurate, not always orderly account emerged" of the events that surrounded the death of Dr Kelly (qtd. in Hammond and Steward 105). However *Justifying War*, instead

puts into perspective something that was widely perceived at the time that the courtroom, the public hearing, the press conference and the official meeting are all theatre. These spaces of social reality are *used* to manage belief and disbelief in the public, just as theatre manages the belief and disbelief of audiences. (Gupta, 117)

Justifying War exposes democratic institutions that have both been corrupted by and abet exceptional behaviour. Megson argues that one of the strengths of tribunal theatre is to expose how state institutions can become complicit in the actions of government, which is part of a wider array of "confused boundaries between public, government and party interest" (112). Ultimately, according to Megson, "the Tricycle's approach [...] is to annex the resources of documentary theatre to expose the democratic deficit in the wider political culture" while also illuminating "the

effects and implications of endemic structural weaknesses within the British state” (113, 110). Furthermore, *Justifying War* highlights how sovereigns can utilise exceptional powers to give their claims the *force* of truth. Nels P. Highberg argues that “a core value of documentary theatre [...] is the extent to which it encourages audience to recognise the damaging effects of singular impositions of truth within society” (167). The Hutton Inquiry was seen as ignoring the elephant in the room: the government’s misleading of its citizens regarding its case for an invasion of Iraq. What this points to is an institution that is ineffectual in its ability to bring truth to light or, even more worryingly still, an institution that is prevented from arriving at the truth by the constraints placed upon it by an executive branch of the government. As Soncini point out one of the strengths of *Justifying War* is not to reveal truth but rather its ability to

shed light on another troubling reality emerging from the tribunal transcripts, that is to say the virtual impossibility of reconstructing top-level decision making procedures leading to Britain’s involvement in the Iraq war due to an alarming dearth of official records. (91-92)

5. Justice and the *Homo Sacer*

In highlighting the exceptional behaviour of the sovereign and the spaces wherein the exception is enacted, the play also highlights the other pole of sovereign exception: *the homo sacer*. Sovereign power is established in the state of exception by excluding bare human life. This is achieved through the judicial order withdrawing from this bare life and abandoning it (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 18). For the sovereign to behave exceptionally, bare life, or the *homo sacer*, must be abandoned by the law. The *homo sacer* is an individual or group of individuals whom the sovereign can place outside the rule of law, stripped of their legal rights. The first *homo sacer* highlighted

in *Justifying War* is the general public. I have previously described how citizens are excluded from justice insofar as journalists fail to report on government tribunals in a meaningful way and how the justice is often performative. While citizens are often physically excluded from the spaces of justice, *Justifying War* allows citizens to democratically engage with the machinations of sovereign power.

However, *Justifying War* highlights a more specific *homo sacer* that was created during the Hutton Tribunal, also physically and symbolically excluded from the space of justice: David and Janice Kelly. Agamben outlines that if law is suspended then “the state of exception is the preliminary condition for any definition of the relation that binds and, at the same time, abandons the living being to law” (*State of Exception* 1). The living being is legally recognised, however they have no legal rights. In this sense the *homo sacer* in a court of law lacks protection and a voice in which to defend itself. Both the Kellys’ voices embody the voiceless *homo sacer*; they are seen to be speaking, but their voices carry no value. Mladen Dolar argues that in a state of exception “everybody [can] hear everybody else’s voices” but the content of that voice is circumstantial (109). Colleran likens this isolation from the democratic process to characters from realist drama, wherein the Kellys seem to be from “a social drama by Henrik Ibsen or Arthur Miller, which clarifies the nature of opposing forces and focuses on the individual caught between them” (147). The state of exception realises a fictionalised democracy wherein the voice must be seen to be used, but what it expresses is unimportant. If the exceptional acts of justice are reduced to a performative function, then so is the ability of the *homo sacer* to engage in judicial process.

The *homo sacer* appeals to ancient Roman law regarding specific people who can be killed without consequence. The framing of the Hutton Inquiry highlights how, from the moment he leaked information to the BBC, Dr Kelly was deemed a sacrificial lamb for sovereign power. This fact was seized upon by Labour minister Andrew MacKinlay during the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee that Dr Kelly was called to shortly before his death. He later redelivered this exchange at the Hutton Inquiry.

MACKINLAY: I reckon you are chaff; you have been thrown up to divert our probing. Have you ever felt like a fall guy? You have been set up have you not? (Norton-Taylor *Justifying War* 58)

Mackinlay at the Hutton Inquiry clarifies what he means by chaff.

MACKINLAY: Well, chaff to a weapons expert is what is thrown out by our destroyers and from our fighter aircraft to deflect incoming -

DINGEMANS: Exocet missiles?

MACKINLAY: Absolutely. No offence was meant. Our Committee - the paradox, the irony was that my Committee did suffer from chaff because we were successively diverted. (Norton-Taylor, *Justifying War* 58)

Reinelt argues that Kelly's "suicide is tragic only insofar as it shows an individual broken by the state power whose role is to shelter and protect its citizens" (67); he was a government employee stripped of his rights to privacy, as a member of the Intelligence service, labelled a traitor to distract from the political fallout. While the Hutton Inquiry was set up to investigate the death of Dr Kelly, there was little

attempt to discuss him as human being; instead his life was reduced to being a scapegoat. However, as Reinelt identifies, “Kelly can get lost in the story of the parry and thrust of press and governmental struggles” rendering him “a casualty of political rhetoric and power scrambles” (“Justifying War and the Case of David Kelly” 64-67).

The reduction of Kelly to *homo sacer* is further seen through the appropriation of Kelly’s own voice. Through selected anecdotes and diary entries, Kelly’s words are taken out of context to scrutinize his professional standing, while the deceased Kelly is afforded no right of reply. Hughes points out that over the course of the play there is a “gradual decay and diminishment of Dr Kelly’s forensic voice” (*Performance in a Time of Terror* 103). For example in this exchange with Andrew Gilligan, a reporter for the BBC, reading from his own notes:

GILLIGAN: He said: ‘It was transformed in the week before publication’. I said: To make it sexier? And he said: Yes to make it sexier.
(Norton-Taylor *Justifying War*, 14)

The tribunal’s use of Kelly’s “forensic voice” to allow his past words to speak on his behalf, is inadequate and is more prone to being “reinvented and parodied across different speech economies” than to be a meaningful attempt to recreate his thoughts and opinions (Hughes *Performance in a Time of Terror* 103). Throughout the play there are multiple conflicting versions of Dr Kelly’s statements; Hughes points to how the media would turn his words into sound bites, while government officials “used aggressive and defensive speech patterns to strip [...] his words of their precision” (*Performance in a Time of Terror* 103-104). Reinelt also notes that Dr Kelly’s secretive nature and a “marriage of not sharing confidences” meant that his own wife’s

account of him “suffers from her lack of knowledge of his feelings or his own indisposition to speech” (Reinelt, “Justifying War and the Case of David Kelly” 67).

In *Justifying War*, just like in the Hutton Inquiry, Janice Kelly’s testimony was delivered aurally via a phone link. In the play, the actor (Sally Giles) delivered her lines into a microphone located in an upstairs changing room separate to the performance space. A large proportion of the positive critical response for *Justifying War* was reserved for Janice Kelly’s testimony (Nathan; deJongh). Paul Taylor wrote that “he would never forget the brief harrowing silence at the other end of the line before Janice Kelly, hitherto steady and stoic, confirms that the painkiller her husband used was the medication that she takes for her arthritis”. Janice Kelly’s testimony was placed at the end of the play when chronologically it occurred second to last. This choice, to reverse the chronological order of the testimony given by Janice Kelly and Dr Jones in the play, was defended by Soncini who argued that no other piece of testimony could have followed hers. It was the natural “tragic climax” of the tribunal, separated and distinguished enough from the other pieces insofar that “the dignified testimony rendered by Janice Kelly adds a moving personal note that creates a powerful contrast with the dispassionate objectivity of the inquisitorial procedure” (91). Janice Kelly’s testimony is filled with emotional anecdotal recollections of Dr Kelly, regarding how they met, their marriage, how they would spend their weekends and of course her account of their final moments together:

DINGEMANS: How would you describe him at this time?

KELLY: Oh, I just thought he had a broken heart. He looked as though he had shrunk, but I had no idea at that stage of what he might do later, absolutely no idea at all. He could

not put two sentences together. He could not talk at all
(Norton-Taylor, *Justifying War* 92).

It is a reminder that, while this was an inquiry of national interest, it centred on a personal tragedy. However, like her husband's voice, Janice Kelly's voice is diminished in its presentation and execution. While Dr Kelly's voice is diminished by others taking his words and stripping them of meaning, Janice Kelly is physically barred from the room, her voice piped through an audio link and, as in the tribunal itself, the sound quality is wavering.

Hughes argues that the Kellys' testimony is representative of the "failure of forensic voice in our time" (*Performance in a Time of Terror* 104). Taking issue with critics who "argued that the inclusion of Janice Kelly's voice as part of a public inquiry signified a hopeful and critical incarnation of democratic sphere" (96), Hughes suggests that her testimony reflects a level of "uncertainty about how to act in a complex and changing world, rather than its institution of certainty and affirmation of democracy" (*Performance in a Time of Terror* 100). Hughes argues that Janice Kelly's testimony does not symbolise a healthy participatory democracy in which the judicial system is based on a "non-coercive and regulated contest for better argument based on the best available information". But rather that Janice Kelly's testimony "demonstrates little other than an appropriation of the power of her voice in order to maintain the political of a democratic, rule-bound universe during a time of democratic crisis" (*Performance in a Time of Terror* 97). She is heard but not seen. Her voice represents a schism, Hughes argues, from the tribunal's structured proceedings; due to the technology used to deliver her testimony her voice falters and fails highlighting the lack of power that her voice has in this realm. In contrast with Dingemans, Hutton or Campbell, whose voices are powerful and

present, Janice Kelly's voice both in the play and the actual tribunal, physically excluded from the space of power, is frail and mediated which cements "a sensation of justice being done rather than justice being critically interrogated" (*Performance in a Time of Terror* 98).

Janice Kelly's voice demonstrates that in the state of exception, some voices are privileged and others are not. In this sense we could think of the state of exception as state of exclusion. Her voice is weakened and removed from the space. She is unique in that she does not represent the media, a government organisation or department; she instead represents a traumatised and distorted voice, one that does not know how to operate or to be heard in this place of exception. By positioning her testimony at the end, Norton-Taylor does not offer us a moment of democratic hope, but rather a reminder of how these voices are excluded in a state of exception and are little more than a footnote in the 'judicial process'. To emphasise the power imbalance Colleran points to the ending of the play wherein Janice Kelly "pathetically... thanks Lord Hutton for the dignity of the proceedings - though the competition of self-vindication could hardly be described as 'dignified'" (148).

Soncini argues that *Justifying War* represents "a disturbing democratic deficit [...] and the epistemological limitations of the tribunal play [...] and] the tribunal playwright's exclusive reliance on existing legal records as a guarantee of truthfulness and legitimacy ultimately works against the documentarian ambition to recover the truth" (92). Therefore, Soncini concludes, because of these limitations, *Justifying War* fails to illuminate the facts leading to the death of David Kelly. However, I would argue that *Justifying War* succeeds in demystifying the political processes and events surrounding the *tribunal*, rather than the actual events the

tribunal was trying to clarify. If we follow Megson's argument that "the achievement of tribunal theatre is to offer the audience synchronous 're-play' of forensic inquisitorial examination, the cumulative effect of which is to indict the 'rot at the top'" (123), then ultimately, *Justifying War* reveals the performative nature of the state of exception in its relation to the law. It demonstrates the legal performative role of state tribunals and the wider ineffectual nature of state institutions; the language and behaviour of the politicians demonstrates the exceptional language and behaviour used to keep the truth at bay, while the treatment and exclusion of the Kellys is exemplary of the treatment of the *homo sacer*. The Hutton Inquiry was a performance of justice, and, therefore, *Justifying War* is a performance of a performance. The play is not a signal of the triumph of democracy but rather an indication of a democratic deficit.

CHAPTER

4

I WANT YOU

CARYL CHURCHILL AND *DRUNK ENOUGH TO SAY I LOVE YOU* (2006)

The previous plays examined within this thesis have primarily focused on depicting exceptional sovereigns during the Iraq war period and how they have used the state of exception to deceive their citizens. However, neither play has represented on stage the deceived citizen, or as this thesis has labeled them, the twenty-first century *homo sacer*. The *homo sacer* is referred to by Agamben as the other pole of sovereign exception (*Homo Sacer*, 110), insofar as they are inversely effected by the sovereign's exceptional will. The life of *homo sacer* is suspended outside of the law, due to the exceptional actions of the sovereign. If most citizens are now *homo sacer*, understanding the relationship between *homo sacer* and the exceptional sovereign is key to understanding twenty-first century life.

The relationship between the sovereign and the twenty-first century *homo sacer* is represented in Caryl Churchill's *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* (2006). Opening at The Royal Court Theatre, London on 10 November 2006, the play dramatises an abusive, homosexual relationship between Guy and Sam. However, Sam is not a

man but an entire country; he is the personification of the United States, as in Uncle Sam. Sam is controlling and abusive; he demands ever more love and loyalty from Guy. Simultaneously, Sam's brazen use of power leads him to commit atrocities around the world. If Guy does not support Sam in these actions, Sam begins to threaten Guy and is emotionally withholding. Guy is initially enamoured by Sam's power and rhetoric, but by the end of the play, disgusted by Sam's violent actions, is too scared to leave him. *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* was described by Soncini as Churchill's "first post-9/11 play proper" (37). However, the play does not focus solely on exceptional actions by America post 2001. Churchill's play chronicles the wider context of American exceptionalism from the genocide of Native Americans to Abu Ghraib, through eight short scenes that simultaneously document Sam and Guy's abusive relationship. For Churchill, the invasion of Iraq was indicative of historical American foreign policy

Some people seemed surprised by the Iraq War as if it was an aberration caused by Bush and the neocons, but though it's an extreme example it's not so different from the general thrust of American policy for most of its history, and part of my point in writing the play was precisely that this was not just something that had come with Bush and would go away after him (ix-x).

While the play's historical scope is vast, the timeline is muddied, so events from the Korean, Vietnamese and both Gulf Wars occur concurrently. The larger effect of this, according to Soncini, is to stress the "substantive historical continuities between the United States steady recourse to war in order to achieve and consolidate the global supremacy of American 'democracy', and the more recent elevation of this pattern into a state of 'permanent war'" (40).

This chapter contends that Sam and Guy's relationship is an allegory for the violent and unbalanced relationship between the sovereign and their citizens whose lives are increasingly more precarious and affected by the whims of the sovereign, which in turn renders them "virtual *homines sacri*" (Hannah 71). This chapter will discuss Caryl Churchill's attempts to disrupt her plays's relationship to the real. Unlike *Stuff Happens* and *Justifying War*, which have dramatised or recreated specific historical events, *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* uses metaphor, a stylised elliptical dialogue and disrupts the play's linearity through a dual timeline system which renders Sam and Guy's relationship in a linear fashion, while the historical record occurs out of sequence. The wider effect of this is to "defamiliarize the very recognisable politics" of American exceptionalism that are discussed in the play (Adishesiah, 118). It is my assertion that the secondary function of these artistic choices made by Churchill is that they successfully demonstrate her pursuit of new forms that avoid authorial problems regarding her work's relationship to the truth. Churchill cannot be accused of misleading her public if she is so blatantly disrupting her work's links to the real. These artistic choices employed by Churchill will be also be considered with reference to Harry Derbyshire's article "Caryl Churchill's 21st Poetics" in which he argues that Churchill's work exemplifies the vision of feminist theatre described in Sue-Ellen Case's "Towards a New Poetics" (367). This chapter will also unpack how these changes not only disrupt the play's relationship to the real, but also evoke the wider context of American exceptionalism. This chapter will go on to examine Churchill's stylised dialogue and draw from Hannah Arendt's theory on the "Banality of Evil." Finally this chapter will discuss how Churchill merges the personal with the political by staging the state of exception as an abusive relationship, wherein Guy is cast as the *homo sacer* to Sam's sovereign. This relationship is analogous to Agamben's writing on "the space that is opened when

the state of exception begins to become the rule” wherein the sovereign is “able to dominate life within the walls of the camp” establishing what Bhandar calls “The New Normal”. (*Homo Sacer*, 168; Hannah 63; Bhandar 261).

1. “New Forms” of Truth

Churchill has a long history of writing politically charged work, that “frustrates attempts at critical categorisation” (Biber, 149). This is due to her subscription to the Brechtian concept of developmental theatre, wherein theatremakers should search for new theatrical forms that relate to new social conditions (149). Churchill argues that “Playwrights don’t give answers, they ask questions. We need to find new questions, which may help us answer the old ones or make unimportant, and this means new subjects and new forms” (qtd. in. Rogers xxvi). Over the past two decades, Churchill’s work has become increasingly focussed on political institutions, as opposed to her earlier work, such as *Cloud 9* (1979) and *Top Girls* (1982), which focussed on gender or sexual politics. Soncini argues that this trend in Churchill’s work has been “paralleled by [her] very active and visible role as a political campaigner in the public arena” and a concern over the “aesthetic, ethical and epistemological problems involved in the theatrical representation” of new forms of conflict and the surrounding politics on stage (29).

Derbyshire argues that Churchill’s post-2000 work focussing on political institutions, (of which *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* is a part) has brought about a discernible change in the form of theatre she is pursuing. This work, which includes *Far Away* (2000), *A Number* (2002), *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* (2006), *Seven Jewish Children* (2009), *Love and Information* (2012) and *Ding Dong the Wicked* (2013), rejects formal notions of characters, dialogue and linearity (Derbyshire 372). Unlike

the work discussed by Hare and Norton-Taylor, Churchill has distanced and disrupted the link between *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* and the real. As opposed to depicting real events, her work is an analogy, casting Sam as representative of the entirety of the American government, while the exception is dramatised through a series of dates between Sam and Guy. Churchill's decision to utilise metaphor to depict contemporary events reduces her theological presence in her work.

Derbyshire argues that Churchill's post-2000 work, is representative of the feminist theatre offered in Sue-Ellen Case's "Towards a New Poetics", wherein Case envisaged a new theatre which rejected or disrupted traditional forms of theatrical representation. Case's new form of theatre, feminist in intent, was constructed through four main tenets: breaking with realism, constructing woman as a subject, deviating from linearity and offering ambiguous endings. Observing these tenets would allow for a rise of a new poetics that would "abandon the traditional patriarchal values embedded in prior notions of form, practice and audience response in order to construct new critical models and methodologies" (Case 114-115). Derbyshire connects Case's theory to Brecht's epic theatre, insofar as Brecht and Case both argue that the real in art creates on stage the endemic inequalities of society, "reifying the familiar as seemingly inevitable" (372). The move away from realism allows the audience to interpret the play and therefore the world as they see fit, removes the playwright from their position of patriarchal authorship and "insist[s] on the active involvement of directors, performers and audiences in the interpretation and ultimately, the creation of [the play's] meaning" (Derbyshire 382). While Derbyshire acknowledges that Churchill has never formally endorsed Case's framework, it does provide a powerful tool in understanding the formal rejection of realistic tenets in Churchill's later work. Similarly, Churchill's drive towards 'new

poetics' or a new form distances her from 'patriarchal' authors such as Hare but also distances her from the exceptional truth claims of the patriarchal sovereign upon which she wishes to shine a light.

For Siân Adiseshiah, Churchill's rejections of realism leave the audience "excluded and dispersed rather than constituted as spectating subjects. The audience is therefore prevented from occupying a privileged viewing position" which she argues is the de facto position of the twenty-first century citizen (115). The staging of the play at the Royal Court heightened the exclusion of the audience. The set was contained within a proscenium covered with light bulbs that lit up between scenes, while invisible stage hands caught the props (cups, cigarettes) which Sam and Guy discarded over the side of the couch. Soncini argues this *mise en scène* gestures "self-reflexively towards the play's own aesthetic framing of the violence and brutality of war, thereby implicitly questioning the role of the position of the audience" (38). The Royal Court production's set, designed by Eugene Lee, reflected the play's inherent structural contradictions "as it contained the domestic intimacy of the sofa with the epic scale of the dialogue" (Roberts 159). We are "couch warriors" watching "sanitized and aestheticized" versions of conflict, which Soncini refers to as "atrocitainment" (38-9). The audience are separated from the atrocities that their governments are committing; this separation is only intensified when we watch it from our comfortable sofas in our safe neighbourhoods that have been provided by sovereign Uncle Sam.

Churchill also disrupts the play links to reality through her use of highly fractured and elliptical language which according to Churchill, is "a sampling of phrases from much longer conversations" (qtd. in Roberts 162), a decision made by

Churchill due to her belief that “so often dialogue works better if you take lots of it away” (qtd. in Goodman 94). This is a much more extreme version of the dialogue Churchill was experimenting with in some of her earlier work such as *A Number* (2002) and *Hotel* (1997) wherein there are no complete sentences or punctuation. The dialogue in *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* is constructed from fragmented utterances, described by Dan Rebellato as “violently incomplete”, that say very little, but at the same time hint at more violent behaviour left unsaid (33). For Adiseshiah, these disruptions in *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You* duplicate the experience of omission of twenty-first century political subjectivity (115). The words spoken by Guy and Sam are clipped so the audience catch glimpses of what the characters are discussing but the larger narrative is lost:

GUY	icecaps
SAM	who fucking care about
GUY	floods
SAM	because we'll all be dead by the time it
GUY	another hurricane moving towards
SAM	natural
GUY	but it's greater than
SAM	natural disasters
GUY	not coping very
SAM	surprise
GUY	predicted and there is an element of manmade
SAM	stop fucking going on about
GUY	carbon
SAM	junk science

(306)

This erosion of language is representative of how sovereigns use exceptional language during a state of exception, and evokes the wider destabilisation of the post-9/11 era (Adiseshiah 40), wherein the public has enough information to grasp what is being discussed but lacks the specifics to spatially coordinate themselves meaningfully in the discussion. Information exists in this anomic zone where it is simultaneously knowable but resists interpretation. Yeliz Biber argues that Churchill's use of dialogue creates an "awareness of the operation of language in mind as the audience is apparently expected to fill in the blanks through a process of mental association" (150-151). Biber further argues that this use of dialogue by Churchill "confounds the audience [...but] also position[s] the historical and current American foreign policies within a framework of terror" (151). Ian Dickinson's sound design for The Royal Court's production emphasised how citizens are often unaware of the exceptional actions undertaken by sovereigns. Dickinson interspersed the play with the cocking of guns, preparing of armaments and other "threatening sound effects and terrifying music", hinting at the violence which is discussed but never seen (Biber 151).

Aiding this framework of terror is Churchill's utilisation of a dual timeline in her work, wherein Sam and Guy's relationship unfurls in a linear manner, while the historical timeline is distorted. Churchill clarifies that "the love story is chronological and that is the story the actors play [... while the political events] can be taken from anytime but are happening now, in the moment, for the characters" (x). Each scene is dedicated to listing the historical account of a specific form of American exceptionalism including propaganda (scene two), shock and awe tactics that inadvertently kill innocent civilians (scene three), aggressive protectionism and economic exploitation of the third world (scene four) and institutionalised practices

of torture at locations such as Guantanamo Bay (scene seven). Soncini notes that as Sam and Guy's personal relationship develops over the course of the play, the historical record "rewinds and restarts from the beginning with each new conflict scenario"; the effect is to create a play which goes through "endless cycles and loops and ultimately subsumes the linear narrative of the love story within its repetitive circular motion"(41). Derbyshire argues that Churchill's compacting of her play's historical timeframe is modelled after Walter Benjamin's "Theses on Philosophy of History". Unlike a dominant historicist approach that sees history as a process of transition reflected by history's victors, Benjamin proposes a model of historical materialism which "supplies a unique experience with the past" which makes it possible to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (Benjamin 262; 255). Instead of rendering these events as occurring chronologically, the play sheds light on the historical nature of American exceptionalism; these are not one off events but inherent feature of American politics.

By rejecting realism and linearity, *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* creates a new way to frame American exceptionalism, which Adiseshiah argues counters the current subject position for twenty-first century citizens, which she describes being one of "uncertainty, bewilderment and paralysis" (112). Churchill unlike Hare does not try to unpack the conditions that allow exceptionalism to arise nor does she "provide the audience with information that might allow them to trace how one thing has led to another in conventional plot terms" (Derbyshire 378).

2. Sovereign Sam

Churchill's pursuit of non-realistic forms not only reduces her authorial claim to the truth but also augments the exceptional behaviour of Sam, ergo the United

States, that Churchill documents in *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* The non-realistic premise, that of a man falling in love with a country, and setting reaffirms that Sam and Guy are removed from reality as we know it and are instead moulding reality in a manner that suits Sam's own ends. Nicole Rogers comments "that the world [according to Sam] is processed according to American beliefs [...] there are no shades in Sam's world. He thinks globally only for the promotion of US interests" (160). Sam sees the world as it could be, not how it is, a world that is entirely subservient to US interests. These beliefs echo Karl Rove's comments to Ron Suskind, discussed in the introduction to this thesis, that the White House perceives the world in the way they wish to shape it, while everyone else is part of the 'reality based community'. We are shown a laid out plan of American exceptionalism. Sam is the "possessor of truth"; he creates the world order that Guy perceives (Soncini 45). For instance, when Guy attempts to challenge Sam's exploitation of third world economies:

GUY just trying to understand exactly

SAM essential because we consume more than half the goods in the
world so you can't

GUY ok ok and privatisation a condition

SAM because private means free

GUY ok

SAM problem with that?

GUY just low today, I can't quite

SAM better get a grip

GUY ok so it's access for our goods

SAM come on we've done debt cancellation here

GUY yes I

SAM and massive aid
GUY linked to
SAM what is the matter with you?
GUY pointing out that its 80% our own companies that benefit from
SAM generosity (286-287)

Sam equates privatisation with freedom and inequitable trade conditions as charitable. Furthermore, when in scene three Guy attempts to discuss civilian injuries during the US sponsored Iran-Iraq war during the 1980s, Sam simply replies that he is “not that interested [...] not that interested in civilians numbers [...] need to get on” (282).

The Royal Court production depicted Sam and Guy losing touch with reality when the couch they were seated on slowly rose into the air, which Roberts argues represented America as “isolated and comfortable, surveying the world as a toy to be played with, manipulated as and when, brought into line if it strays, and bent inexorably to the will of Uncle Sam” (162). Despite the couple’s discussion centring on violence and warfare, *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* keeps any visual imagery of war or exceptional acts off the stage; the play’s language makes no specific claims but allows the audience to fill in the gaps. In not showing any images of the violence that is described in the play, Soncini argues that Churchill creates a “scenic metaphor” of war which reveals how much is hidden regarding contemporary conflict and our reliance on often distorted imagery to understand it (39). Soncini further notes that the word ‘war’ never figures in their exchanges outside the titular reference to the ‘Second World War’ (40). From an Agambean perspective this highlights how exceptional actions by the sovereign are often hidden away or constructed in such a way that the truth is inaccessible. This is not a war, but an

intervention. The individual in Guantanamo Bay is not a prisoner of war but an enemy combatant or terrorist.

Churchill's dual timeline system also highlights the historical nature of American exceptionalism. While Sam and Guy's relationship plays out in a linear fashion, each scene is a compacted timeline based around a 'theme' of American exceptionalism, such as this exchange on American intervention abroad:

SAM bombing Vietnam now, bombing Grenada, bombing Korea,
 bombing Laos, bombing Guatemala, bombing Cuba, bombing El
 Salvador, bombing Iraq, bombing Somalia, bombing Lebanon

GUY but it's Israel bombing

SAM so? Bombing Bosnia, bombing Cambodia, bombing Libya,
 bombing

GUY used to be a village and now

SAM because we want it gone. (283)

Soncini argues that Churchill's compartmentalising of these forms of exceptionalism evokes "the story of America's endless wars [...] according to principles of circularity and contiguity" (40). Ultimately, it emphasises the continuity and vastness of America's exceptionalism. Regimes may change, but the American political machine stays the same. In the second scene of the play, Sam discusses the genocide of the Native American people occurring at the same time as the invasion of Iraq. Derbyshire argues that by Churchill "render[ing] Guantanamo simultaneous with Nicaragua" she connects "historically disparate events which are illustrative of arguably identical political priorities and motivations" (379). Ultimately, Churchill rendering history in the manner serves to emphasise America's legacy of

exceptionalism without endorsing “the notion that history is over or in any sense complete” (Buse qtd. in Derbyshire 379).

The play’s blurring of time and location further emphasises the sovereign’s own blurred role; Sam is not only shown to be transgressing international and domestic law but transgressing the laws of time and space as well:

SAM got to plant bombs in the hotels in Havana
GUY yes ok ok the Cuban exiles in Miami are just
SAM and get the money to Iraq
GUY done it, the Iraqi National accord have the
SAM and have they destabilised Saddam yet? No [...] desperate for
GUY mujahedeen
SAM yes yes train the
GUY so ok that’s something really
SAM stop at nothing, flaying, explosions, whole villages
GUY and here we’re getting on with the assassinations (297-298)

We never see Sam or Guy carry out any of these actions; they simply recline on a leather couch, witnessing the world being shaped by Sam’s immense power.

The fractured dialogue of *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* is suggestive of Sam’s exceptionalism; its abstruse quality evokes the opaque role and surreptitious operation of the sovereign. The elliptical language used in *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* betrays a political system that operates by purposely being opaque and surreptitious. Similar to the actions of a sovereign in a state of exception, Sam and Guy’s language is at the same time both vague and conspicuous. Despite the horrific connotations of their conversations, neither man shows any emotional or intellectual

connection to the words they are speaking; their words, to Guy and Sam at least, become empty signifiers. Amelia Howe Kritzer argues that their exchanges are merely reduced to lists and clichés and coupled with “the common place nature of their relationship [...] brings to mind Hannah Arendt’s study of Nazi leaders and observations regarding the banality of evil” (Howe Kritzer 527). Their language consists of violent acts that are stripped of any emotional connotations and simply are treated as a list of words. For example in their discussion regarding chemical weapons:

SAM five hundred pounds dioxin now on Vietnam

GUY yay

SAM napalm

GUY yay

SAM sarin on Laos

GUY yay

SAM and biological too the most advanced [...] exporting anthrax to
Iraq, botulism, histoplasma capsulatum

GUY e-coli?

SAM e-coli, DNA

GUY this stuff against Kurds or Iranian or?

SAM keep selling it because

GUY so great about chemical and biological they don’t destroy the
buildings just kill the

SAM ideal (293-294)

In their discussions of violence, Sam and Guy never take into account the human toll or trauma caused by American exceptionalism. They focus on the inherent necessity of these actions, enacting through progressively more violent actions in the name of

security and power. This is similar to Arendt's description of Eichmann's behaviour when he defended his actions in the holocaust:

What he said was always the same, expressed in the same words. The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such. (49)

This behaviour is most evident when Sam discusses the various torture methods at his disposal. He lists the various methods dispassionately and without wider context, by which Rogers argues they are "made the more terrible because clearly not the ravings of a lunatic but more like reading from a manual" (161).

SAM alone

SAM White double cable whip, iron wreath, beating the soles of the feet, put objects in the vagina, put objects in anus, put turpentine on testicles, pour water over face, play very loud Indonesian music, electric shocks to genitals, tap a dowl through the ear to the brain, throw a prisoner out of the helicopter, show the prisoner another prisoner being thrown out of a helicopter, beating obviously, rape of course, bright light, no sleep, simulate an execution so they think up to the last second they're going to die, play tape of women and children screaming in next room and tell prisoner its his wife and children, sometimes it is, hang up with hands tied behind back, pins in eyes, insecticide in hood over the head, cut off

breasts, pull out heart, slit throat and pull tongue through,
sulphuric acid, chop off. (301)

It is worth noting that the majority of Sam and Guy's discussions implicitly centre on foreign policy. Agamben argues that the sovereign's power relies on being able to identify or invent new external threats to the nation state. In doing so the sovereign can create a perpetual state of emergency. On the few occasions Guy queries why Sam is behaving in this exceptional fashion, Sam replies with pithy reasons such as "because democracy", "because our security" or even more selfishly "our economy is the priority here" (273; 274; 286). If Guy pushes Sam to explain in more detail, Sam's reasoning is proven to be out of step with reality. For instance when explaining to Guy that America must appropriate local materials from third world countries and sell them back to them at inflated prices, he explains that this is "because our expenses are so huge like eight billion dollars we spend on cosmetics [...] ten on petfood" (290). Guy registers that this is "enough to provide health, food and education for the whole of the third world".

Sam justifies his exceptional behaviour as he is protecting the economy and mitigating the ability of other nations to cause him harm. Sam's constant need for security seems to be validated in scene six, when Sam and Guy both witness 9/11:

GUY	look out we're being
SAM	no no no the towers
GUY	wow
SAM	evil
GUY	ok?
SAM	hate me because I'm so good [...] it's only evildoers who hate me

(299)

These attacks occur only after Sam has already conducted violent acts in the Middle East and elsewhere to mitigate terrorist attacks against America. This exchange also highlights Sam's unshakeable belief that those who do not love him are those that intend him harm. Yeliz Biber notes that "Sam's rhetoric throughout the play discloses an us/them dichotomy, interwoven with naive revelations of violence and a stigmatizing of different ethnic, racial and religious identities" (151).

3. Union Jack and Uncle Sam

When *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* premiered the character of Guy was originally named Jack and subsequently reviewers read the play as an allegory for the "special relationship" between the United States and the United Kingdom, assuming that Sam was coded as Uncle Sam and Jack as Union Jack (Hart; Lett; Clapp; Spencer). Subsequently these same reviewers panned the play for being simplistic and polemical. Christopher Hart of *The Sunday Times* said that "George [W. Bush] and Tony [Blair] snuggling up together like lovers" is similar to a skit you would find on shows such as *Spitting Image*. Churchill agrees that a play of this nature is simplistic commenting she "wouldn't have bothered to write the play, people have assumed I have written" (qtd. in Roberts 269). Churchill has addressed this interpretation in the preface to the published version of the play:

The other character didn't have a name [...] and when I had to come with up one I thought of Jack as an everyday name - Jack of all trades, Jack the lad. What I didn't think, stupidly, was Union Jack, which was the quite sensible conclusion, some people jumped to [...] I'd always imagined he would just be someone from whatever country the play was done in (ix).

In later editions, the character of Jack has been renamed 'Guy'. In an author's note for the 2008 edition of the script in *Plays Four*, Churchill writes that she "gave the other character the name Jack, thinking it as just a name, but some people understandably thought it referred to Union Jack and that Jack was Britain in some way" (269). Her use of the word "understandably" suggests that this was at least a valid interpretation of her play. At the time of the Royal Court production the evidence suggesting that Iraq had possession of weapons of mass destruction had been revealed to be incorrect and there was a rising body count of British soldiers and Iraqi civilians due to the conflict. Commentators therefore suggested that the one-sided relationship between the American Sam and British Jack resonated with a disconcerted British public (Soncini 37, Howe Kritzer 53). Soncini notes that after Bush's 2004 re-election campaign the US president had "come to bear an even stronger resemblance to Churchill's despotic Sam, dragging his British ally into gangrenous conflict with no evident payoff other than honouring a highly burdensome alliance (38). During the play, Jack assists with Sam's acts of violence and therefore it is understandable that Jack may have been read as being representative of Tony Blair.

However, as Churchill points out, British involvement with American exceptionalism has not always been the norm of international politics and is largely a recent political development. She says:

It doesn't work as Jack = Britain because it doesn't fit the actual politics - Britain didn't join in Vietnam, and in other ways too it would have to be different if it was meant to fit that relationship [... this] goes back over fifty years of event and is part of the point, of course - was to point out that America's been like this for a long time, not just under Bush. (qtd. in Roberts 269-270)

In an interview with Phillip Roberts she indicated this confusion could have been clarified in the author's note; she mentions she would "hate relying on anyone looking at a programme" to comprehend her work (qtd. in Roberts 269). Churchill later clarified that the actor who played Guy/Jack should be from the country in which the play is being performed, noting that

what I wanted to write was about the way most people (in Britain, or other Western countries, or anywhere, almost) are a bit in love with America, whether it's movies, ice-cream or ideals, and are then implicated in all this stuff it does. (qtd. in Roberts 269).

This explains the play's original title which was *The Man Who Fell In Love with America* (Churchill ix). When Churchill referred to "most people", she may have meant that citizens of the West see America as a symbol of freedom and democracy, unaware of the actions America commits in places such as Nicaragua or Iraq that contradict those values. While these people do not literally assist in American exceptionalism they are complicit in America's actions, in the same manner as Guy is with Sam.

4. The State of Exception as a Personal Relationship

If we read Sam and Guy's lovers' discourse as a metaphor for the sovereign and their citizen during the state of exception, then their relationship evokes Davina Bhandar writing on "the new normal". Bhandar asserts that citizens are controlled through "anxiety, fear, and trauma" which allows the sovereign to create an "alternative sets of norms, values and systems of management and control, [where] the foundational elements of the democratic society are increasingly undermined and simply do not inform basic expectations of the everyday" (263). In short, in order to still remain citizens, or in Agamben's terms *bios*, legitimate life, citizens

must subject themselves to increasingly more controlling forms of state governance “into an unremitting acceptance of a way of life that does not hold promise, but is rather continually resituated through the experience and the repetitive act of trauma or loss” (275).

In the opening dialogue, these terms of engagement, wherein Guy must subject himself to Sam’s control, are made clear. Guy and Sam are on a date having met previously in a bar. Guy is happily married with children; however, within minutes on his second date with Sam, Guy resolves to leave his wife and children. Guy asks:

GUY go where did you say you?

SAM anywhere you wouldn’t?

GUY do when we get there?

SAM things you won’t do? (272)

Sam demands total commitment from Guy, a readiness to go and do anything that Sam requires of him. Churchill’s central argument is that to be a citizen of an exceptional state is similar to being in an abusive relationship. Sam and Guy’s relationship is defined by emotional blackmail, verbal battery and an uncompromising subscription to Sam’s wants and beliefs. Sam demands Guy’s absolute loyalty implicating him in Sam’s acts of destruction. Guy is at first too fearful to protest against Sam’s actions and Guy seems unable to leave Sam.

The behaviour of Sam, or a similar sovereign, begs the question why Guy, or a similar citizen, would ‘get into bed’ with Sam to begin with. Churchill outlines this at the beginning of scene two when Guy and Sam discuss their love of American national identity which is constructed through cultural and historical references:

GUY music, I can't get enough of
 SAM country or
 GUY when I listen to Bessie Smith or
 SAM Dylan, Bing Crosby, Eminem
 GUY because what rock does
 SAM even Jingle Bells can suddenly
 GUY the snow and all
 SAM mountains like you've never
 GUY size of it all, there's so many different
 SAM sea to shining
 GUY freedom to
 SAM Ellis Island
 GUY or even just go to the movies and eat popcorn
 SAM pursuit of happiness (273)

Guy has a firm idea of what America, ergo Sam, represents - Bob Dylan, eating popcorn and listening to 'Jingle Bells' - and presumably, keeping these values safe justifies Sam's exceptionalism. More importantly, Sam is synonymous with freedom and the pursuit of happiness. It is important here to note the etymology of Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam traditionally represents the government of the United States, as seen in Montgomery Flagg's infamous army recruitment poster, while the goddess, Columbia, generally references the nation. Therefore Sam is not the embodiment of the American nation, but rather its political system and is co-opting national myths and cultural values for exceptional purposes. Guy's perception of Sam is framed by these cultural and historical references to what America represents and, initially, he is willing to condone Sam's exceptionalism and believe his fear-mongering tactics. At no point does Guy offer his own interpretation of events; rather he simply repeats

what Sam has just said. He occasionally registers when something makes him uncomfortable but even then he does not suggest why this is the case and quickly withdraws his complaints when requested. The power and security that Sam offers is also an attraction. Guy claims after assisting Sam for the first time that he has never had “so much fun in my life [...] god must have so much fun” (279). Sam reasons that this is from “being powerful and being on the side of good”. Phillip Roberts argues that Guy is “intoxicated by close proximity to power” and the benefits that it brings (158). The power is so intoxicating that Guy abandons his family, job and all his familiar surroundings to be with Sam, ignoring possible human rights abuses or signs of danger coming from Sam.

The imbalance of power is seen keenly in the conversational style of the duo. Rogers notes that “Sam does not feel the need to explain in detail what is being done in his name. Guy [...] mainly echoes or rephrases. The two are locked together in [...] a sort of linguistic dance without end” (161). As the play progresses, Guy’s identity and way of life has been subsumed by Sam to such a degree that Soncini observes that Sam and Guy require fewer and fewer words to speak as they become closer and closer to being one entity; they “come to an extreme form of stichomythia in which language is entirely divested of its relational components” (45):

GUY	carbon
SAM	can't see it in the air, so
GUY	Kyoto?
SAM	price of electricity in California
GUY	but
SAM	nuclear
GUY	danger

SAM efficient
GUY waste
SAM solution
GUY Iran? (308)

Guy is subsumed in Sam's identity, which assumes that Guy has fallen prey to the "New Normal". The men simply build "on each other's utterances, [...] speaking almost as one rather than engaging in dialogue" (Howe Kritzer 516). The relationship Guy shares with Sam becomes 'the new normal' of the state of exception, wherein the exceptional behaviour of the sovereign becomes the norm. By the end of scene three Guy has become party to this new normal declaring that "'the children dead from sanctions we don't count that because'" (283). The reasoning behind why the dead children are not counted is left hanging; Guy is never informed as to why they do not count civilian deaths, only that they do not.

As the play progresses Sam's interest in Guy wanes; he becomes less patient, less understanding. When Sam talks directly to Guy he only demands more loyalty, demonstrated through performing increasingly more extreme actions, such as exporting anthrax to Iraq. If Guy queries any exceptional act that Sam asks of him, Sam interprets this as insubordination and violently chastises him:

SAM fuck is wrong with you?
GUY trying to grasp the numbers that's all, I
SAM do things on large scale
GUY yes
SAM way of life
GUY yes
SAM you chose

GUY yes
 SAM can fuck off now if
 GUY no
 SAM yes fuck off now because
 GUY no please no
 SAM commitment (290-291)

For Sam love is synonymous with loyalty. If Guy questions Sam then it means that Guy does not love Sam. Sam is uncompromising; demanding more and more love. After stipulating that Guy must leave his wife and children for him, Sam also demands that Guy eliminate any other distractions to simply “just cut off everybody and not even speak” (285). Their relationship is not open to negotiation. Sam offers Guy a simple choice: to agree with Sam and to love Sam or to disagree and to not love Sam. Guy can break off this arrangement at any point but its insidious nature means that he will not have Sam’s power or security. Biber comments that their relationship is based upon an unsaid threat, which “obliges Guy to love and support [Sam], because if he does not, Sam will have to position Guy in the same group as ‘the evildoers who hate me’” (151). Guy briefly leaves Sam at the end of scene six. Howe Kritzer comments that, despite Guy’s best effort to “support and encourage” Sam, after seeing the ‘man behind the curtain’, Guy “cannot help being appalled and sickened” by Sam’s actions (517). However, he returns believing that life outside Sam’s protection is filled with danger and insecurity. The conditions for Sam taking him back are unclear but hint at a life of draconian rule:

SAM take you back I need to know if
 GUY try to
 SAM total commitment or there’s no

GUY I realise
SAM capable
GUY can
SAM promise
GUY love
SAM nightmare here
GUY yes
SAM not going to be happy don't
GUY no I don't expect
SAM so what you
GUY can't live
SAM no you can't, can't
GUY no I can't
SAM ok then (302)

The willingness of Guy to be subjected to an anomic life mirrors the willingness of American citizens after the terrorist attacks of September 11th to be subjected to the Patriot Act, which authorised the monitoring of phone calls, bag checks and increased domestic security. Howe Kritzer comments that "For Sam, who can command submission, Guy's capitulation means nothing unless he can demonstrate total commitment" (517).

By the play's conclusion, the slowly rising couch has reached its apex. Rogers comments that "the ending literally leaves the play in the air. Guy has left once, and returned. He can't love Sam, and can't leave Sam. And Sam demands, like a child, limitless love" (161). Sam and Guy have reached what would appear a deadlock. However, Guy has demonstrated such loyalty to Sam, his life is literally suspended

like Agamben's *homo sacer*. He can no longer determine his own destiny; he has an illusion of choice, but ultimately must subjugate himself to Sam's exceptional demands or fall from the height of the couch into the darkness below. The final line of the play is spoken by Sam who demands that Guy "love me love me, you have to love me, you" (309). Soncini likens this choice to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, especially the concluding scene of *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* where Guy has to make the choice to end the relationship or not; like Didi and Gogo, Guy wants to leave but knows that he cannot (41). The looping of Sam's final line amplifies his demanding nature and leaves open for the audience to imagine the new demands, the new normal, to which Guy must subject himself to love Sam.

Waters describes the play's ending as "a wilful submission to the dictates of 'commitment' in the Sartrean fashion" (Waters 140). Like the characters of Sartre's *No Exit*, Guy is in an inescapable hell, banal in fashion. Similarly, like Joseph Garcin in Jean-Paul Sartre's play, Guy is left with a similar thought of "Eh bien, continuons..." ["Well then, let's continue..."] (Sartre 95). The play's title then references how drunk, or how removed from reality, a twenty-first century citizen must be to continue to love their sovereign, whether that be from the deception on the sovereign's behalf or consigning themselves to a life of political insouciance. At the conclusion of the play, Guy is suspended in the air with nowhere to go, and has been plied with enough 'drink' by Sam that he is left with no option but to start pouring himself another one.

Kritzer critiques Churchill's metaphoric device of the relationship between Sam and Guy as it fails "to convey the necessity or urgency of change" (57). She argues

that the play does not invite audiences to critically reflect on their own existence as Churchill

gives Guy neither a basis for his self-annihilating behavior nor the leavening of more endearing qualities that would enable acceptance of him as an ordinary man. Furthermore, Guy excludes the audience and the rest of the world by focusing all his attention on Sam, never reflecting on or explaining his choices. (58)

I would counter this argument by suggesting that Churchill does briefly address Guy's attraction to Sam. Guy as discussed earlier is enamored with the power that Sam wields. Through Sam's co-opting of pop culture Sam is seen as an analagous with freedom, democracy and "Bob Dylan". While the play progresses, Guy is made aware of the various acts of violence his nation (Sam) conducts; however, Guy also learns that for him to stop 'loving' Sam would mean that he would no longer enjoy the security that Sam provides. Like Agamben's *homo sacer* Guy's life is literally suspended, due to the slowly rising couch he is seated upon, by the end of the play. The conditions of living in a state of exception means that the citizen is powerless to articulate the situation they find themselves in and has no legal recourse to reign in their sovereign.

The open ending of *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* is similar to the open ending of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, wherein after being released from prison Winston feels "the long-hoped-for bullet [...] entering his brain" (342). Orwell leaves this open as to whether this is a literal bullet or rather Winston achieving victory over himself, by ignoring his own critical thought and succumbing to the party's doublethink. Orwell's conclusion is that the only victory under these conditions is complete submission or death. Guy has the same choice, to reject Sam

and become part of “the evildoers who hate [Sam]” or, like Winston, to love every part of his sovereign

He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother. (Orwell 342)

Similar to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Guy's choice is simply an illusion; either choice is a form of death and the suspended nature of the couch conceivably makes leaving Sam an impossibility.

CONCLUSION

SMASH THE MIRRORS

ART, TRUTH AND POLITICS

In this post-truth world we are all vexed about how to grasp onto reality and to the truth. This thesis has traced the contemporary phenomena of post-truth politics to the political environment of 2003, which Naomi Klein termed the “Year of the Fake” due to the duplicitous nature of politicians and the tactics they used to enforce or disrupt the public record, specifically in relation to the Invasion of Iraq. This environment was unpacked using Giorgio Agamben’s theoretical framework of the State of Exception to understand how post-truth politics operates.

Agamben argues that in a State of Exception the sovereigns determine their own exception to the rules that traditionally dictate how democratic societies operate. For Agamben however this represents a constitutional crisis, as the State of Exception is not something that is codified by law or legalised by the judiciary; it is power taken by the sovereign and not endorsed by any other part of a democratic structure. This crisis creates a contradiction where the sovereign is therefore able to act in line with the judicial order by passing bills or enacting extraordinary political

powers, but is not bound by law. The actions have the force of law, but cannot be understood in legal terms. Those individuals who are negatively affected by the sovereigns exceptional actions Agamben refers to as *homo sacer*.

The State of Exception was connected to state lying and deception by arguing that, in the same way, a sovereign could behave exceptionally through making claims that have the *force* of truth which are not necessarily truthful. Like their actions, their claims to truth lie outside the usual systems for evaluating their behaviour. For the sovereign, being able to give information the force of truth is a powerful tool for controlling the populace while pursuing hidden agendas. In this manner, the sovereign's exceptional act of lying allows them to pursue further exceptional acts. Relating these ideas to Davina Bhandar's ideas on 'the new normal' in which citizens are controlled through systems of lying, fear and anxiety, this thesis established that most citizens in the twenty-first century are *homo sacer*, as being deceived by their sovereigns not only transgresses their rights but also suspends their lives, disconnected from reality.

The thesis further argued that the state of exception is an inherently performative phenomena as it relies on the generation of grand imagery, the undertaking of liminal roles (with the sovereign being betwixt and between democratic rule and autocrat), while the exception is also a liminal space allowing the sovereign to redefine others roles on a whim. This discussion further highlighted how the theatre exists in a state of exception and this theatrical exception is being co-opted by politicians. As previously discussed Brutus can kill Caesar on the stage and we simultaneously understand that the actor who plays Brutus is not guilty of any crime, but at the same time that actor is Brutus and has committed an atrocious act.

Theatre, to function, depends on the audience investing in this paradox where reality and masquerade coincide. Politicians in a post-truth world are asking the same of their citizens where doctored files can pass as evidence of mass destruction, whitewashed tribunals can be founts of truth and global atrocities can be passed off as enacting global security.

This leads to one of the primary questions of this thesis: how can playwrights critique the actions of exceptional politicians without being guilty of the same exceptional behaviour of the politicians they wish to critique? Subsequently, this framework has then been applied to three plays written during the Iraq war period: *Stuff Happens* by David Hare, *Justifying War* by Richard Norton-Taylor and *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* by Caryl Churchill. Agamben's theories on the state of exception were used to frame how these plays have depicted exceptionalism on stage and how these playwrights have foregrounded their own exceptional relationship to the truth. All three plays depict political leaders as Agambean sovereigns who deceive their citizens, who in some form or other take on the role of the *homo sacer*, the man excluded from rights. The sovereigns in these three plays are seen as operating outside the laws and rules that are meant to provide checks and balances to their power, while their citizens' rights are transgressed.

Stuff Happens executes this through revealing the backroom dealings behind the diplomatic process leading to the invasion of Iraq. Bush and his cabinet's mission is built around selling the invasion of Iraq at any cost, not revealing their hidden agendas and applying a form of coercive diplomacy to achieve the ends they need. *Justifying War* recreates a space where the exception is enforced, establishing and enforcing the narratives of the sovereign while silencing citizens' voices and

excluding them from spaces of justice. Finally, *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* depicts the sovereign as primarily focused on achieving their own objectives and security for their own end. Their behaviour is bullying and while language is veiled and obtuse which prevents direct access to the truth, everything is broken down to concepts and jargon. In exchange for their protection they demand absolute loyalty from their citizens. All three plays discussed in this thesis depict the sovereign as shaping reality as they wish it to be, not as it is, and deception and exceptional promotion of their own agendas are seen as a way of achieving these ends, whether that be manipulating the public into supporting an illegitimate war, suppressing counter narratives to the government's agenda or reframing their violent exceptional behaviour as spreading democracy to the world.

I earlier mentioned that the post-truth world is vexed by what is truth and what is reality. Theatre has attempted to fill that void and this thesis has provided three different approaches to combating this void. One way that theatre found to address these "profound anxieties" of the post-truth era was documentary theatre, which was seen as a perfect way for audience "to undertake a collective act of bearing witness" to how they were being deceived by their political elites (Megson 371). But documentary theatre has proved unreliable and this was seen with the two documentary plays examined in this thesis. *Justifying War* was hampered in terms of shining a light upon the true state of affairs as Norton-Taylor's play recreated a tribunal that was dismissed as a whitewash in the government's favour, proving that documentary theatre is only as powerful as the events that it dramatises. *Stuff Happens* attempted to become a more revelatory piece of theatre by including pieces that were part of the public record, as well as staging scenes that were entirely part of the imagination of its author, David Hare. *Stuff Happens* is an extremely

compromised piece of theatre, due to Hare creating his own “exceptions to the rules” of documentary theatre. As Little argues documentary theatre exists on a spectrum between the highly ethical and the highly aesthetic and these extremes do not seem to be a way to engage with the post-truth world. Churchill, however, provides another way of coming at this problem through her work’s very dramaturgy and unreliability. She purposefully disrupts her work’s connection to the real, which not only allows the audience to be aware of her own exceptional relationship to the truth but also depicts the wider context of exceptionalism as opposed to just focussing on singular events like Norton-Taylor and Hare. Her work can comment on reality, without having the responsibility of needing to represent reality.

In concluding this thesis, I wish to return to Harold Pinter’s Nobel Prize Lecture “Art, Truth and Politics” wherein he outlines the difference between truth in art and truth in politics. He outlines these two forms of truth using two personas that he takes on: that of the artist and that of the citizen. As an artist the truth is an unfixed commodity and malleable art is a place where “there are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false” (3). However, as a citizen he must acknowledge that there is a fixed truth, one that is hard to access due to politicians mediating the truth for their political ends (3). He warns that politicians are now using truth like an artist uses truth, where there is no such thing as one fixed truth, wherein “sometimes you feel you have the truth of a moment in your hand, then it slips through your fingers and is lost” (4). Truth in our everyday lives is becoming ever more elusive and for Pinter, the only way for citizens to reverse this trend is through “unflinching, unswerving, fierce intellectual determination, as citizens, to define the real truth of our lives” (21).

How then, does an artist oppose the post-truth environment? Pinter likens this environment to “when we look into a mirror we think the image that confronts us is accurate. But move a millimetre and the image changes. We are actually looking at a never-ending range of reflections” (20). An artist could identify what the one fixed truth, or in this case reflection, is, but how does one identify what the one fixed truth is, in such an environment? How does one determine the objective truth of reality? As seen with Hare’s *Stuff Happens*, to claim that you have privileged access to the truth is a precarious position to be in, as questions arise regarding your sources and your evidence of these claims. Pinter argues that the artist’s relationship to the truth is a “highly vulnerable, almost naked activity” and to claim otherwise is to “lie - in which case of course you have constructed your own protection and, it could be argued, become a politician” (19). Pinter’s dichotomy between the artist and the citizen strikes a chord with George Orwell’s 1948 essay *Writers and Leviathan*, in which Orwell argued that in “an age of state control” writers must balance their duties as citizens against the imagination’s natural resistance to the “invasion” of politics (407-408). Writers should not shirk their duties as citizens to be politically active, but they must distinguish between their “political and literary loyalties” (412). Orwell concedes that in ages of state tyranny it is hard for writers to keep their minds free of politics. He points out that “to yield subjectively, not merely to a party machine, but even to a group ideology, is to destroy yourself as a writer” (415).

Pinter’s solution to this hall of mirrors in which artists find themselves is simple. He argues that if an artist wishes to use their art to combat the exceptional acts of politicians, who bend and twist the truth to their will, they must “smash the mirror – for it is on the other side of that mirror that the truth stares at us” (21). Here, the truth for Pinter is not an objective truth, but rather a truth distorted by political

elites. Artists and writers should “smash the mirrors” to remind us we live in this hall of mirrors, and with each shift things look different. The audience is still left with the problem of truth, but is in a better place to seek it, wary of the exceptional linguistics of politicians.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to evaluate the political efficacy of the three plays analysed here within. The aim of this thesis has largely focused on ethics and how artists can avoid further complicating representations of reality in their work in a post-truth world. But it would seem that from an ethical perspective, the most effective ways for the theatre to combat this state of affairs is not to declare what the definitive truth is, like Hare, which is shaky ground to stand upon, but rather to point out how the truth can be a malleable and unfixed concept, a result that could be argued was achieved in both Norton-Taylor’s and Churchill’s work. In this post-truth world, as expounded by Pinter, artists should equip citizens with the clarity and tools to “define the real truth in our lives” and to restore “what is so nearly lost to us – the dignity of man” (21).

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