

Exhibit A: An Application of Verbatim Theatre Dramaturgy

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ABSTRACT

This research-creation thesis describes and analyzes the dramaturgical methodologies of verbatim theatre – a form of documentary theatre that uses transcripts as the dominant source of its dialogue – through the practical exercise of play writing. This paper marks the theoretical component of my thesis, which analyzes both the dramaturgical process and the historical context of my play *Exhibit A*. Using verbatim transcripts from legal evidence for its dialogue, the play examines the psychology of two teenage boys responsible for the brutal rape and murder of an 18-year-old Canadian woman in 2010. As documentary theatre emphasizes socio-political themes, this thesis considers the dramaturgical, aesthetic, and ethical considerations of verbatim theatre through my experience as a playwright and researcher.

Acknowledging both the historical antecedents of documentary theatre and its contemporary examples, this thesis will define an original typology of verbatim theatre entitled the “Subcategories of Verbatim Theatre”. These subcategories are identified as Tribunal, Literary, Historical Drama, Expository and Participatory. Each privileges different types and usages of documents, which are further defined as being primarily related to “text” or “aural” based testimony. The thesis relates the dramaturgical principles of each subcategory to artistic choices made in *Exhibit A*.

A description of the various incarnations of verbatim and documentary theatre, as well as an analysis of my experience as a documentary playwright examines the dramatic representation of reality as highly constructed in this form of theatre where the selection and editing of a documentary play's archive is a creative process that is not dissimilar from the creation of fictional drama. In that sense, the documentary genre can be said to present a dramatic

representation of the playwright's subjective version of the truth. *Exhibit A* thus stands as my creative reconstruction of the evidence presented in the Kimberly Proctor murder trial.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The play *Exhibit A* is based on documented events surrounding the Kimberly Proctor murder investigation and trial. It was created from materials in the public domain, which included transcripts from the Supreme Court of British Columbia and news articles. The play is a creative treatment of these public documents. I did not conduct interviews with any persons related to the tragedy. Though I took great care not to invent or manipulate the details of the case and crime itself, the dialogue has been edited in the interest of theatricality and should not be interpreted as a definitive statement of the facts.

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To honour the Proctor family's wishes, *Exhibit A* is not published alongside the theoretical component of this thesis. Special requests to read the play can be made through 411 dramaturgy co. at 411dramaturgy.com.

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PROLOGUE

In April of 2011, a publication ban was lifted on the names of two teenage boys responsible for the brutal rape and murder of 18 year old Kimberly Proctor that took place in March 2010 in Victoria, British Columbia. The boys, whose identities were initially protected under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, were revealed to be Kimberly's friends and classmates, Kruse Wellwood and Cameron Moffat – who were ages 16 and 17 at the time of the crime. The boys were given the maximum sentence for youths in the adult justice system: life in prison with no chance of parole for ten years (Dickson, “Proctor Killers Given Life Terms” A1). The crime was unique for a number of reasons: the perpetrators were young, the crime was brutal, but most importantly, there was a lack of any discernible motive behind it. In the face of such complexities all that remained was a simple question: why?

Shortly after the lifting of the publication ban, case evidence was released to the general public. Through a long and thorough investigation, the RCMP amassed a multitude of evidence against the boys that included wiretap intercepts of their conversations in a police van, wiretap intercepts of conversations between the boys and their parents at the youth detention centre, videos of the boys' interrogations, and a plethora of internet chat conversations between the boys, Kim, and their online friends. This information was released with the support of the Proctor family. In a media statement, family spokesperson Jo-Anne Landolt (Proctor's aunt) explained their position: “It is completely unfair that [Wellwood and Moffat] have been protected under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Kim wasn't able to be protected in life or death. The general public has a right to know who these two monsters are” (qtd. in Derosa, “Proctor case evidence” A3).

Drawn to the unusual nature of the case, I read transcripts, watched video, and listened to audio recordings of the released evidence. The transcripts depicted the full extent of the very puzzling banality with which this heinous crime was treated by its perpetrators. The nonchalant tone of the

interrogation of Cameron Moffat could be attributed to the “soft persuasive” tactic used by investigators in order to glean answers from the accused (Derosa and Kines, “Biggest adrenalin rush” A1). But what about the seemingly careless nature of the boys' interactions in police vans? That conversation was secretly recorded, and it marked the first time the boys had interacted since their arrest. Far from discussing any feelings of guilt, culpability, or concern for their future, their discussion revolved around their boredom and the wealth of media coverage of the case. They joked about members of the investigative team, the food they received in their holding cells, and the hostility of their cellblock guards. Their lighthearted chat was unsettling to me in light of the severity of their crime.

I read the evidence hoping that it would lead to the revelation of a definitive motive, only to reveal more questions. The crime was likely what is colloquially described as a “thrill killing”, a murder perpetrated for no other reason but the experience of murder itself – a conclusion drawn from the evidence found in the boys' online chat transcripts to friends and to each other, in which they fantasize about murder and describe their desire to kill “for giggles” (Clarke S3). Yet the boys were so evasive during questioning that it was difficult to differentiate posturing from true motive. If this was a so-called “thrill killing”, the question remained: what provokes an individual – and in this extraordinary case, “youths” under the legal definition – to commit such brutality?

It became more apparent that, at least through their words and actions, the boys demonstrated little remorse. In the second police van intercept transcript, Kruse commented on the question he was frequently asked by the investigators:

They're like, remorse. Do you feel any remorse? Any, any regrets? Any, anything inside of you, any remorse or regrets, any of, remorse, any remorse? Remorse? Remorse. Do you feel remorse? I couldn't help thinking of this funny comic I saw. It was like um, it was called Mo, and it's about this stupid guy named Mo, and there's this guy named like,

Sand-, Ce- Cement Bag Head, or something like that. And he ends up taking the fall for a, a murder that Mo does. And then the, the guy's at the court, and, and he's like I didn't do it. And the judge is like, yes, it's very interesting, but do you feel any remorse, any regrets? Are you remorseful about it? And the guy's like, but I didn't do – And he's like, remorse? Any remorse? Remorse at all? He, he said yes, I do. And then, *[laughs]* and the judge is like, let him go. And then there's like streamers and stuff everywhere, and the guy like, just walks out. (Supreme Court of British Columbia 22-23)

This quote was striking. It never appeared in the media reports, and yet it provided a telling insight into how important it is for criminals to exhibit remorse in a rehabilitative justice system. Dr. Robert Hare, a leading psychopathy researcher, estimates that 20% of offenders in the prison system for committing serious crimes possess psychopathic traits. Current studies also suggest that rehabilitation of psychopaths is nearly impossible – complicated by the fact that there are no psychotropic medications currently on the market that can instill empathy (Pitchford). I was curious about the two boys, who purportedly exhibited no remorse for their heinous actions. Would they factor as part of the aforementioned twenty percent?

Admittedly, some of my interest in reading the transcripts was based on my interest and research in verbatim theatre. There has been a noted resurgence in this type of theatre in the last twenty years, suggesting a renewed dramatic interest in stories based on real events. Theatre scholars such as Carol Martin link the upsurge of recent documentary works to a post-9/11 distrust in mainstream media, government spin, and status quo. Martin (2006) states that “it is no accident that this kind of theatre has reemerged during a period of international crises of war, religion, government, truth, and information. Governments 'spin' the facts in order to tell stories. Theatre spins them right back in order to tell different stories” (14).

The opportunity for an audience to engage in a communal examination of facts is perhaps what

makes documentary theatre so appealing to its practitioners. Audience members are given agency in documentary theatre by holding the power to validate or contest the truth value of the document in question (Reinelt 7-11). Documentary Theatre upholds the Brechtian values of theatre as “social experience of documentary inquiry and critique” and for the potential for public events to be “examined and reconsidered communally” (Reinelt 11-12).¹ In documentary theatre, the stage acts as a Petri dish for the examination of societal issues.

In its dramaturgical conception, a “documentary” theatre play is one which involves the use of documents as source material for its play text. A documentary play can involve documents that are non-textual such as photographs or art work.² It can be based on research of real subjects and/or events, and have a play-text that is not verbatim.³ Lastly, a documentary play can use archival transcripts as the source of its dialogue, in which case one could also term such a play “verbatim”. Alternatively, this thesis defines a “verbatim” theatre play as one which includes dialogue that can be traced to existent archival transcripts, either in the public domain (e.g., court records, television interviews, print media) or in the theatre makers' own archives (e.g., recorded personal interviews). As transcripts are a form of document, a verbatim play can be termed “documentary”, but a “documentary” is not necessarily verbatim – unless it utilizes a traceable text for at least part of its dialogue. Verbatim “is understood as a theatre whose practitioners, if called to account, could provide interviewed sources for its dialogue, in the manner that a journalist must, according to the code of ethics, have sources for a story” (Luckhurst 201).

Enriched by this knowledge, I decided to compose a play in the genre of documentary theatre

¹ This is not only a scholarly position. Documentary playwright David Hare agrees: “Audiences at this time of global unease want the facts, but also they want the chance to look at facts together, and in some depth” (qtd. in Luckhurst 210).

² For example, Boca Del Lupo's *PHOTOGRAPH* (2010) utilizes war photography for the basis of its play text.

³ Also termed “docudrama”, this type of documentary is popular in Canadian theatre. Theatre Passe Muraille's *The Farm Show* (1970) could fall under such a definition, as it was created in a process of collective creation. More recently, Architect Theatre's *Highway 63: The Fort Mac Show* (2010) was created with a similar methodology.

that could help me, and potentially my audience, to shed light on this horrific story, to better understand the reasons why these boys do not feel remorse, and to better understand the role empathy plays in our human condition. With this in mind, I conceived and created my play entitled *Exhibit A*. The play uses court transcripts and media articles found in the public record for its dialogue, and thus I define it as a verbatim play. It marks the result of my research, and presents edited transcripts from the Proctor trial evidence in a non-linear structure. Its characters include the perpetrators of the crime, Cameron and Kruse, and a Chorus. In addition to being the narrative voice of the play, the Chorus assumes the roles of the rest of the cast: Proctor family members, Kruse and Cameron's parents, RCMP investigators, and various experts (including psychiatrists, criminologists and lawyers).

The play begins with the Chorus' presentation of the preliminary facts of the case to the audience. The play takes place after the trial is completed, but it attempts to recall the hearing before final sentencing that took place on March 29, 2011. At this hearing, Kimberly's family members present Victim Impact Statements that describe the impact of their daughter's death. The court hears its Statement of Facts, and considers evidence (transcripts from the interrogations, psychiatric evaluations, and other expert testimony) in order to assess the defendants' degree of guilt. The play is not a strict representation of the court's proceedings: it is predominately a memory play that re-assesses all of the evidence that led to conviction. It presents the criminals by reconstructing the process of their interrogation, their psychiatric evaluations, their relationship with their parents, and their conversations with each other after their initial arrest. For this, it uses the available transcripts. The play attempts to present the point of view of Kimberly's family members, through their Victim Impact Statements presented to the courts before final sentencing. It also presents the point of view of several experts. These quotes were available through media sources. Throughout the play, the Chorus' speech that is constructed from the factual material is juxtaposed with verbatim quotes from the transcripts, comments from the Proctor family and various experts. Though the scenes are presented in a non-linear

structure, there are several key scene types that share a common thread.

Cameron's interrogations, split into five separate sections, form the first set of key scenes of the play. In these scenes, two RCMP officers named Martin and Davids question Cameron in order to determine his role in the four charges against him: murder, sexual assault, unlawful confinement, and indignity to the body. These sections are comprised of edited verbatim transcripts that depict the RCMP's "soft persuasive" technique of interrogation, in which the interrogators attempt to build trust with the suspect in order to glean information (Derosa and Kines, "Biggest adrenalin rush" A1). This non-confrontational style of interrogation proves successful, and becomes a defining feature of the scenes. At first, the officers have difficulty interrogating Cameron. He is stubborn, antagonistic, threatening, and manipulative. However, the officers are persistent in their questioning; though at first, Cameron attempts to minimize his involvement, he gradually (and unwittingly) reveals information that implicates him as a more active participant in the crime.

The second key scenes, which I have termed "The Van Scenes", are transcripts of wiretaps recorded by the RCMP as Cameron Moffat and Kruse Wellwood travelled: (i) from questioning to their initial hearing and (ii) from their initial hearing to the Youth Criminal Justice Centre. In their conversation, Moffat and Wellwood glibly discuss their arrests, interrogations, and hearings, and the conditions of their custody. These scenes are significant because they mark the only occasion where the audience witnesses an interaction between Moffat and Wellwood. The boys expose characteristics to the audience that make their involvement in the murder of Proctor a believable proposition. They are depicted as callous and glib, and very competitive – especially when comparing accounts of their experiences with the justice system. In my assessment, both van scenes are essential to the play as they offer an unparalleled glimpse into the sadism that underlies the boys' co-dependent relationship.

The third set of key scenes involves family members of the victim and the perpetrators. Kimberly's family is depicted through victim impact statements – emotional monologues presented to

the court before sentencing that elaborate on the personal effect of Kimberly's murder. Moffat and Wellwood's families are presented through transcripts of wiretap recordings of their visits with their sons in the Youth Criminal Justice Centre. These scenes depict the boys' very different family lives, which allows the audience to speculate on the role of the home environment in their development.

The fourth set of key scenes belongs to the Chorus. The Chorus sections are narrations which weave facts from the case and observations with quotes from experts, family members, Wellwood and Moffat, and media. The Chorus is used to introduce scenes by drawing attention to its proceeding themes and subjects.

The play concludes with the court's statement of fact, which details the charges against the boys and the specifics of the crime deemed conclusive in the trial. It is the culmination of the audience's examination of Kruse and Cameron – and it reveals that the true details of the crime are more gruesome than the boys' version of events (according to their interrogations). The last scene of the play returns to Kruse's online chat conversation with Kimberly the night before her murder, when he lures her to her death.⁴

The scenes of *Exhibit A* are presented in an order which places them in contrast with one another. For instance, the emotional monologues of Kimberly's family members are juxtaposed with the glibness of the boys' scenes, heightening the boys' lack of empathy. The action of the play proceeds rapidly and with detachment. It employs devices of montage to produce estrangement in an audience. It aspires to primarily engage an audience's critical faculties as opposed to inciting a particular emotional response.

In creating *Exhibit A*, I was curious about the theatricality of “ordinary” speech and language. This has been a focal point of verbatim theatre – a form of documentary theatre that uses transcripts as the dominant source of its dialogue. The transcripts of the Kimberly Proctor trial were rife with such

⁴ Kimberly's lines appear as projections.

language, and most interestingly, the majority of the words in the transcripts were spoken by the crime's young perpetrators. When I began to synthesize a play based on these transcripts, my research question was: can a verbatim play be made that would use these transcripts as a means of focusing spectators' attention to an atrocious lack of remorse in some of our youngest citizens? This was the inception of my play *Exhibit A*. In this thesis I strove to examine the potential and limits of verbatim theatre as it applies to my own creative project, asking the question whether a theatre play can add anything significant to a social study of psychopathy.

Exhibit A was influenced by many contemporary documentary and verbatim plays. In order to specifically identify these influences, this thesis acknowledges that each contemporary example is indebted to historical dramatic traditions that also sought a theatrical examination of real events. As such, this thesis will begin with an overview of the dramatic lineage of the contemporary documentary genre in Western theatre: from Naturalism in the 19th Century, to Piscator and Brecht's Political Theatre, and later, to Peter Weiss and his verbatim play *The Investigation* (1964).

After summarizing the historical antecedents of contemporary documentary and verbatim theatres in Chapter One, this thesis will draw a typology of contemporary verbatim theatre. Chapter Two presents and examines this typology, which I entitle the "Subcategories of Verbatim Theatre". The categories are identified as: Tribunal, Literary, Historical Drama, Expository and Participatory verbatim theatres. Each of these categories is examined through the introduction and analysis of a contemporary dramatic example. Each category proposes and answers different questions with respect to dramaturgy, aesthetics, and ethics in documentary theatre. The creation of this typology was useful in the development of *Exhibit A*, as each subcategory offered dramaturgical tools useful to my play's development. Thus, Chapter Two also demonstrates to what degree the subcategories of verbatim theatre can be found in the final form of *Exhibit A*:

- *Exhibit A* dramatizes legal transcripts, as exemplified by *Tribunal* verbatim theatre.
- *Exhibit A* dramatizes private written documents, as exemplified by *Literary* verbatim theatre.
- *Exhibit A* juxtaposes verbatim dialogue with fictionalized dialogue that is based on contextual research, as exemplified by *Historical Drama* verbatim theatre.
- *Exhibit A* attempts to objectively frame its argument with verbatim dialogue, as exemplified by *Expository* verbatim theatre.
- *Exhibit A* features a Chorus, which not only represents the voice of the playwright, but acts as a significant structural device as exemplified by *Participatory* verbatim theatre.

The historical and contemporary overview in the first two chapters will serve to highlight how various playwrights have chosen to depict real life on stage. Each new generation of documentary playwrights proposed a different framework for an artistic demonstration of reality, and I have borrowed solutions from all of them in *Exhibit A*. For example, as the source text for *Tribunal* verbatim theatre originates in court documents, it could be said that *Exhibit A* closely resembles a contemporary *Tribunal* verbatim play. But *Exhibit A* goes beyond aspects that typify the tribunal genre through the use of a narrative chorus and the presentation of evidential material that initially occurred in private rather than courtroom settings – namely, wiretap intercepts, which comprise the bulk of *Exhibit A*'s verbatim material. What, then, could we call *Exhibit A*? And what are the dramaturgical, aesthetic, and ethical considerations of such a genre?

To answer these questions, Chapter Three analyzes the dramaturgical construction of *Exhibit A* and discusses the ethical and moral questions raised by the project. I also look at the questions pertaining to the dramaturgy of documentary theatre, such as:

- How is suspense created in documentary theatre?
- Is it possible for a playwright working in the genre of documentary theatre to achieve objectivity?

- Can a playwright present his/her ideological statement while still allowing the audience to draw their own conclusions?
- What are the limits of the documents? Does a documentary playwright have a right to manipulate documents in order to meet his/her artistic interests?

The examination of the various incarnations of verbatim and documentary theatre, as well as an analysis of my experience as a documentary playwright, serves to argue that any dramatic representation of truth is highly constructed; the selection and editing of a documentary play's archive is a creative process that is not dissimilar from the creation of fictional drama.⁵ As such, the documentary genre presents a dramatic representation of the playwright's subjective version of the truth. Thus, *Exhibit A* marks a creative reconstruction of the evidence presented in the Kimberly Proctor murder trial – to explain such horror to the audience from my point of view as a researcher.

⁵ This thesis expands upon what Carol Martin deems “creative” documentary archival selection in her article “Bodies of Evidence”. See also Bottoms and Upton.

CHAPTER I: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF DOCUMENTARY/VERBATIM THEATRE

Realism and Naturalism in Theatre

A dramatic and literary obsession with reality emerged in the late 19th century with experiments in Realism and Naturalism in literature and drama.⁶ European writers, specifically Émile Zola, were offended by “the falsity of the theatre” and set out to produce works that resembled, as closely as possible, an interpretation of ordinary life (Braun 24). Inspired by Zola and other new dramatists, the French theatre director André Antoine founded the Théâtre Libre in 1887 with the expressed interest of performing new works, many of which were written in a naturalistic style (Braun 35).

As an artistic movement, Naturalism reflected significant advancements in scientific research and development, including (but not limited to) the emergence of psychology as a scientific field and Darwin's theories of evolution. Reflecting the new scientific age, Naturalism presented its protagonists as studies in psychology and sociology (Innes, *Naturalist Theatre* 7). New theories in evolution and psychology formed a general assumption that one's “character and personality are formed by a combination of heredity and their social environment, plus the value placed on the individual” within one's family or society (Innes, *Naturalist Theatre* 6).

My play also focuses on the psychology of its characters. *Exhibit A* presents its audience with profoundly disturbed teenagers. Through the presentation of court-ordered psychiatric assessments and the dramatic representation of wiretap intercepts used in evidence to determine the perpetrators' guilt and moral culpability, the play suggests that the boys' resultant psychopathy stems from a combination of genetic and environmental factors.

For Naturalism, the representation of psychologically complex, realistic characters required a

⁶ Christopher Innes defines the distinction between Naturalism and Realism in this way: “It would seem more helpful – as well as being truer to the historical facts – to understand both 'Naturalism' and 'Realism' as applying to the movement as a whole. At the same time, taking advantage of the subtle distinction between the two words for greater critical precision, it would be logical to use 'Naturalism' to refer to the theoretical basis [philosophy] shared by all the dramatists who formed the movement, and their approach to representing the world. 'Realism' could then apply to the intended effect, and the stage techniques associated with it [theatrical style]” (*Naturalist Theatre* 6).

significant change from the dominant acting styles of the 19th century. Naturalism rejected outmoded gestures and the oft-histrionic theatrical voice normally utilized by actors of its day to convey emotion.⁷ Zola suggested that an actor's "truthful inflection gives spoken words the exact value they should have" (366). He believed that in order to inspire actors to produce more truthful performances, playwrights had the responsibility to create more realistic dialogue in their plays (Zola 367).

One could argue that contemporary documentary theatre is an extension of Zola's desire to present language as realistically as possible on the stage. Modern recording techniques have enabled the exact words (originally spoken by ordinary real-life subjects) to be recorded and then utilized in a dramatic context. To this end, *Exhibit A* uses transcripts for its dialogue as a means of grounding the performance in the real events which inspired it.

Yet as much as Naturalist works were inspired by reality in terms of dramatic theme, content, and language as well as set and aesthetic design, they were still predominately works of fiction. Dramatists such as Ibsen and Chekhov were propelled by "an underlying poetic vision in their Naturalistic plays, while Shaw referred to the 'mystic' qualities of [his drama] – qualities which are the antithesis of docudrama" (Innes, *Naturalist Theatre* 17). Still, documentary remains a relative of Naturalism insofar as it also attempts an artistic depiction of reality. Christopher Innes suggests that documentary differs in that it focuses on a plurality of characters rather than a few protagonists, making "society itself or historical processes the active agent" (Innes, *Naturalist Theatre* 17). This is especially evident in the next chronological progression in the history of documentary theatre, the Political Theatre of Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht.

Piscator and Brecht's Political Theatre

Piscator

In Erwin Piscator's critical examination of his work entitled *The Political Theatre* (1929), he

⁷ See Innes, *Naturalist Theatre* 11 and Zola 366.

cites his production *In Spite of Everything* (Gross Schauspielhaus, 1925) as the first play in which “the text and staging were based solely on political documents” (91).⁸ The play incorporated many of the production aesthetics that would become Piscator's signature style, including the use of documentary film juxtaposed with live performance, the use of still projections, and the use of stage machinery. Piscator's aesthetic principles “emphasized the economic and political background of the action” (Innes, *Political Theatre* 69). These principles were extended to performance, so much so that actors in Piscator's plays have been referred to as “cogs in the machine”, in stark contrast to character-driven Naturalist drama (Paget, “Broken Tradition” 229). Piscator's most relevant contribution to the development of documentary theatre was the emphasis on communicating facts to elucidate “the actuality of the day” (Innes, *Political Theatre* 74). Though Naturalism could also be said to be grounded in representations of reality, Piscator's theatre differed in that it utilized documentary materials in performance – a sort of theatrical journalism. For instance, in Piscator's productions, staged scenes of war would be juxtaposed with actual war footage (Piscator 92).

Piscator's style of documentary plays develop his desire to engage audiences to reflect on socio-political issues and spur them to collective action. Piscator recognized that such a goal was idealistic, but not outside the realm of possibility: “That we could not stop fascism with our theatre was abundantly clear from the outset. What our theatre was supposed to do was communicate critical response, which translated into practical politics, might possibly have stopped fascism” (Piscator vii). Similarly, the intention of *Exhibit A* was to initiate dialogue about psychopathy and the Canadian Youth Criminal Justice system. It does not propose a solution, but rather attempts to inspire a collective discussion about its presented issues through the use of documentary materials in performance. Though Piscator's documents were mostly comprised of images, *Exhibit A* uses verbatim text as a means of

⁸ The play depicted the “revolutionary highlights of the history of mankind from the Spartacus rebellion to the Russian Revolution” (Piscator 91).

linking the performance to reality in order to engage its audience; it is a creative project that uses verbatim material towards a sociological intention.

Brecht

Piscator worked extensively with Bertolt Brecht, and it was from this working relationship that they both developed their own concepts of Political Theatre. Brecht's notes to his 1930 opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* entitled "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre" can be considered an early documentary theatre manifesto. The most crucial aspect of this work is Brecht's table that contrasts Dramatic Theatre with Epic Theatre.⁹ According to John J. White, Brecht's itemized points which describe Epic Theatre can be organized into two main groups: "(i) the fact that Epic Theatre is an anti-empathic theatre of aesthetic distance and (ii) the importance of an alternative kind of discontinuous structure for the right audience response" (72). The following paragraphs will detail how these two Brechtian ideals are shared with *Exhibit A*.

"An Anti-empathic Theatre of Aesthetic Distance"

Brecht was known for approving of an acting style that was more emblematic than representational, which he termed the "alienation effect". For Brecht, the actor represented the "central agent" of transmitting an alienation effect to the audience (Von Held 16). The alienation effect was achieved in actors through a process of technique which focused on the actor's gesture, gaze, and "self-observation" (Von Held 46). As a condition of alienation, an actor's gaze involved direct eye-contact with the audience which "incite[d] an evaluating attitude, soliciting reactions of agreement as well as criticism" (Von Held 47). "Self-observation" implied that the actor was constantly aware of the fact that he was performing for an audience. This enabled the actor to "check the truth" of his performance "from the outside" (Brecht, "Alienation Effect" 457). Brecht's alienation effect strove to "lift the art of

⁹ Source: Brecht, Bertolt. "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre". 1930. *Brecht on Theatre*. Ed. and Trans. John Willet. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964. Rpt. in *Theatre/Theory/Theatre: The Major Critical Texts from Aristotle and Zeami to Soyinka and Havel*. Ed. Daniel Gerould. New York: Applause, 2000. 449.

performance from the sub-conscious to the conscious level” which “signifie[d] being in rational control of the performance, having a technically-minded attitude, and activating the capacity to memorize and anticipate the creative challenges of being on stage” (Von Held 39). The intention of Brecht's alienation effect was not to produce a lack of emotion in an audience, but rather “different emotions from those being experienced by the characters on stage” (Eddershaw 16). To Brecht, sympathy was an acceptable response to his theatre, but he consciously avoided any dramatic techniques aimed at instilling empathy in his audience. This was because Brecht believed that empathy caused the “audience [to be] disempowered from analysing clearly the social and political forces at work in the fictional world of that character” (Eddershaw 16).

Although it is mostly a matter of *mise en scène*, I imagine that a similar performance effect to Brecht's alienation effect would be utilized by the Chorus in *Exhibit A*. The Chorus, as it is written, can be said to maintain a Brecht-like distance as it uses direct address to the audience, which calls on spectators to maintain a similar scrutinizing gaze on the more voyeuristic scenes of the play (specifically, those originating from wiretap transcripts). The Chorus in *Exhibit A* is responsible for transmitting the facts of the case to the audience. The Chorus transmits these facts not only through narration, but also by performing a multitude of characters, including family members, RCMP investigators, and experts in psychology and Youth Criminal Justice. Casting the Chorus in multiple roles should theoretically prevent an audience from conflating an actor with a given character. The intention behind this decision was to highlight the actors in *Exhibit A* as mediators of the verbatim dialogue.

Discontinuous Structure/Montage

Brecht's desired alienation effect in his work was inextricably tied to a dramatic structure which privileged montage, collage, and discontinuity. Brechtian montage stripped characters of a narrative through-line characteristic of naturalism, which forced Brechtian actors not only to act “each scene for

itself” but to “comprehend the character from the complexities of the whole temporal trajectory spanning the plot” (Von Held 40). Similarly, contemporary documentary theatre has been termed a “theatre of interruption” as it too incorporates montage and non-linear structure as a means of conveying artistic argument (Paget, “Broken Tradition” 229). *Exhibit A* is not an exception – it also maintains a non-linear structure and utilizes montage. Involving these dramatic devices in *Exhibit A* proved to be not only an aesthetic choice, but a matter of thematic necessity. In order to write *Exhibit A*, I had to select the most relevant and interesting scenes from my archive. When I began to organize my selected scenes, I soon realized that even if I were to present my chosen selections in chronological order, each scene would still be “for itself” as each belonged to a unique context. Furthermore, as the play concerns the aftermath of a crime, rather than the crime itself, it seemed to be more interesting for the play to follow a thesis rather than some semblance of chronological plot – much like a Brechtian drama. Therefore, the scenes progress in a manner that asserts the boys' guilt in undeniable detail, in such a way that the devastating nature of the crime becomes more apparent and complicated. The play begins with a summary of the crime, its superficial details, and gradually expands its scope to a very complete and three-dimensional picture of the crime. It details the extent of the boys' manipulation and psychopathy, but also includes aspects that make them very human: the different ways in which they interact with each other, with their families, with investigators, and with their lawyers.

The Chorus scenes in particular uphold the Brechtian Epic ideals of montage to incorporate as many relevant viewpoints and facts as possible in a given introductory scene. Verbatim quotes were pulled from many different sources such as newspaper articles, transcripts, and television reports. Many of the “characters” these quotes are attributed to did not interact with each other. Quotes from the experts in the play, for example, are always taken from conversations with the media. I did not wish to edit such quotes into a forced context, but it seemed reasonable to include quotes from varying contexts in a montage if they were related by a particular theme. For instance, the court's statement of fact at the

end of the play includes various quotes that assign guilt to the boys. I inserted these quotes into the court's statement of fact to support certain details. When the Chorus asserts that the boys admitted the crimes to friends over the internet, the Chorus' statement is followed by two quotes from the boys' online chats:

CHORUS. They admitted these crimes to their friends, both in person and over the internet.

KRUSE. I've dreamed about killing someone ever since I was young. It didn't feel like I thought it would.

CAMERON. I feel bad that I am going to get caught, but not for Kim or her family.

(114)

These quotes were made public in newspaper reports, but they were not provided as parts of complete transcripts. However, they were important quotes, so they were included in a relevant montage. This style of montage occurs frequently in *Exhibit A*, and is symbiotic with its already discontinuous structure.

Peter Weiss and Documentary/Verbatim Theatre

As *Exhibit A* uses court documents for its dialogue, Peter Weiss' "oratorio" *The Investigation* (1965) could be said to be a historical antecedent to contemporary verbatim theatre. Weiss' play was one of the earliest experimentations in verbatim theatre, as it used transcripts from the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials (1963-65) for its dialogue.¹⁰ Weiss' play posits that even the most atrocious events in human history deserve artistic exploration.¹¹ It is no surprise that Weiss' artistic treatment of the Auschwitz trials had its detractors. It was criticized as being devoid of character and emotion, and for

¹⁰ Interestingly, the first performance of *The Investigation* was directed by Piscator (Weiss, "The Material" 44).

¹¹ Subsequent to the play's success, Weiss wrote a paper entitled "The Material and the Models: Fourteen Propositions for a Documentary Theatre" (1968). Alan Filewod has argued that this paper marks one of the earliest works in defence of a "pure form of verbatim theatre" ("Documentary Body" 61). The paper, initially presented at the Brecht-Dialogue at the Berliner Ensemble in East Berlin, was translated into English and published in *New Theatre Quarterly* with the title "The Material and the Models: Notes Towards a Definition of Documentary Theatre" in 1971.

focusing on the most horrific details of the Holocaust (Cohen 46-53). Robert Cohen argues that it is exactly Weiss' rejection of a sentimental treatment of the trial that forces audiences to be confronted with the horrors of Auschwitz – a distancing effect not dissimilar from Brechtian ideals (50). By including many of the horrific details mentioned in the trials, Cohen argues that Weiss' play “leaves us no choice but to try and understand a sphere inaccessible to most of us” (48). *Exhibit A* shares this artistic intention.

Weiss argued that juxtaposition is an essential dramaturgical device to documentary theatre, in that it highlights conflicts of opinion to make “suggestion for a solution, or an appeal, or ask basic questions” (“The Material” 42). Jürgen Schlunk proposed that juxtaposition used in *The Investigation* served to present the defendants' attempt in the Auschwitz trials to justify their horrific actions, “thus challenging the victims' right to life and moral superiority all over” (22). The defendants in *Exhibit A* also attempt to justify their horrific actions, especially in the scenes of Cameron's interrogation. In his testimony, Cameron attempts to minimize his involvement and suggests that he was coerced by his best friend, Kruse, to act as co-participant in Kimberly's murder. *Exhibit A* also employs juxtaposition, but it is between the perpetrators and their auxiliary victims (which include family members). This is a technique used to highlight the boys' anti-empathic behaviour, in contrast to the strong emotional response from family members, and to a lesser extent, the investigators and the experts. Chorus scenes which describe the boys' history of violence, disobedience, and previous psychological diagnoses emphasize the many warning signs in the boys' antisocial behaviour that were ignored by their families, educators, and peers, as well as by the Youth Criminal Justice System.

Peter Weiss defined documentary theatre as a “branch of the theatre of actuality”, which also includes Agit-Prop, the experiments of Piscator and Brecht, political theatre, and protest theatre. Documentary is set apart from these forms, as it is “exclusively concerned with documenting an event”. Weiss described documentary theatre as “a theatre of reportage”, as it uses source material that

would be available in fields of journalism. Documentary theatre asks critical questions directed towards a biased mass media. Mass media dominates public discourse, keeping the general population “in a state of stupefaction and bewilderment”. As the general public often feels inferior to this larger network of powers, documentary theatre “demand[s] explanations” on the public's behalf (Weiss, “The Material” 41).

Likewise, *Exhibit A* was informed by a wealth of journalistic research – of documents that were released by the media. They were available for the public to read online in their entirety, yet, the public was more likely to be exposed to selected facts and quotes from the documents in short news articles. Therefore, *Exhibit A* marks an intention to share these documents with the public, in a greater scope than was initially quoted in the media.

Weiss described a “tribunal” verbatim theatre as an effective way to communicate facts from legal proceedings that may have been manipulated by a biased mass media to a critical audience. Editing legal transcripts allows “all non-essentials, all digressions [to be] eliminated to lay bare the basic problem”. Tribunal documentary theatre asserts that “reality, however opaque it may appear, can be explained in every detail”. This “reality” is presented through the filter of a documentary theatre practitioner who is well-educated, scientifically-minded, and is able to support their investigation with “comprehensive articles”. A skillful practitioner of tribunal documentary theatre will be able to create a play that engages spectators in a way that is impossible in a courtroom: “the spectator can be put into the place of the accused or of the accuser; he can become a member of a committee of enquiry; he can contribute to the understanding of a complex situation or provoke opposition” (Weiss, “The Material” 43).

Through his support of tribunal verbatim theatre, Weiss “reifies paperwork as the catalyst of revelation, the means through which truth-claims are not only identified but materialized in performance” (Megson 199). Similarly, “paperwork” documents mark the basis of *Exhibit A*, which

also utilizes court transcripts as the basis for its source text. Weiss' reification of the textual document is problematic in that it implies objectivity on the part of the documentary playwright. In his paper "The Material and The Models" (1971), Weiss concluded that, as documentary theatre uses "authentic material ... [it] refrains from all invention" (43). I disagree with this statement, as the very fact that verbatim theatre undergoes a selective editing process indicates that it is ultimately a creative process. Although *The Investigation* contains verbatim text, it is Weiss' dramatic structuring of the trials that renders it his interpretation of the legal proceedings. Thus, *The Investigation* is an aesthetic object. To suggest otherwise is to reject dramatic construction as a creative process, and also to deny that Weiss' structuring of the verbatim testimonial "oratorio" was influenced by passion plays and the work of Dante (Schlunk 25).

Exhibit A was influenced by *The Investigation*, its antecedents rooted in Piscator and Brecht's political theatre and Naturalism. Experiments in Naturalism privileged ordinary protagonists and a scientifically-based examination of characters in realistic (but fictional) scenarios on stage. Piscator utilized documents to create an expressly political theatre. Brecht laid the foundations of documentary theatre by proposing his Epic Theatre: a form of didactic entertainment, propelled by reason and critical thinking rather than pure emotion, that addressed an intelligent, reflective audience. Weiss, drawing on Brecht's ideology as inspiration, created a documentary theatre committed to exposing various sides of an argument through the exclusive use of transcripts for its dialogue.

In a short essay about documentary theatre entitled "...on factual theatre" (2005), playwright David Hare wrote: "All revolutions in art are a return to realism" (112). Sharing this belief, it was important for me to contextualize my play with its historical antecedents, as they all have created plays under the pretence that the truth is stranger than fiction. This was certainly my reaction to the transcripts of the Kimberly Proctor murder trial: I felt strongly that this was a story that needed to be told as truthfully as possible – that no entirely fictional representation of what happened could suffice

to explain its complexities, irrationalities, and devastation better than the evidence itself. Likewise, Weiss understood that the most startling depiction of the true horror of Auschwitz was the real words spoken by the perpetrators of the Holocaust as they attempted to defend their heinous actions before a tribunal. Piscator could no better depict “the horror of war” than to background his stage action with documentary film footage (Piscator 94). For Brecht, there could be no better way to engage audiences to think about the critical issues depicted on stage than to reveal the theatre's artifice. For Naturalists such as Émile Zola, social issues were best represented through the life story of the common man. Though the means of relating art to truth are varied and subjective, documentary theatre and its historical antecedents share in the belief of the socio-political power of theatre; that the theatre can and should be about more than 'art-for-art's sake'.

CHAPTER II: THE SUBCATEGORIES OF CONTEMPORARY VERBATIM THEATRE

Many theoreticians cite verbatim theatre's re-emergence as a type of political theatre, similar to Brecht's and Piscator's, and the living newspapers of the 1930s USA.¹² I suggest another similarity among these forms of verbatim: they all employ the methods of counterfactual thinking as described by Lubomír Doležel. As Doležel says, through "ascribing causality, evaluating historical figures' actions, and judging the importance of historical events" (115), documentary theatre proposes counterfactual questions of the audience thus engaging them to actively reflect on what they are being presented. For example, the contemporary verbatim plays examined in this chapter each pose a counterfactual question. Could Stephen Lawrence's murderers have been prosecuted were it not for the institutionalized racism of the Metropolitan Police? What propelled Rachel Corrie to stand in front of the Caterpillar D-9 Bulldozer on that fateful day? Was the United States' decision to invade Iraq a ploy to assert dominance? Did the decision to privatize British Rail lead to the murder of innocent passengers? Does a belief in fate change one's perspective of the stories that shape one's life? I can continue the list of these counterfactual questions, this time looking at my own play: did Kruse Wellwood and Cameron Moffat fall through the cracks of the Youth Criminal Justice system before murdering Kimberly Proctor? Verbatim theatre asks its audience to face these counterfactual questions and seek answers to them as intensely as the authors of the plays.

A number of documentary theatre scholars including Stephen Bottoms, Carol Martin, and Janelle Reinelt take issue with the term "verbatim", as they believe it "over-extend[s] the archive" and suggests an unfiltered authenticity that primes verbatim pieces for "documentary failure" under scrutiny (Reinelt 13). At the same time, documentary playwrights such as David Hare have argued that "the fact that [verbatim theatre] incorporates real words spoken by real people also lends it a particular gravitas, and demonstrates a uniquely effective interrogative mechanism" (qtd. in Luckhurst 209).

¹² See Luckhurst 201; Paget, "Broken Tradition" 232; Filewod, "Documentary Body" and *Committing Theatre*.

Hence, David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (2004) is often cited as a verbatim play, despite the fact that most of the dialogue is, admittedly, imagined by the playwright (Luckhurst 200). As most definitions of verbatim rely on “aural testimony”¹³ and the pretence of a traceable, contextual interview, a play such as *My Name Is Rachel Corrie* (2005) that uses the written word for source material cannot fit such narrow definitions, despite leading documentary scholar Derek Paget's assertion that it is a “true verbatim play” (“Broken Tradition” 233).

Verbatim theatre, then, is left with two options. One is to deny the value of its archive and lump all theatre that professes to rely on some manner of documentary material under the umbrella term “Documentary Theatre”. The other is to develop subcategories that take into account a variety of verbatim theatre types, similar to what currently exists in the field of documentary film theory. This chapter will create a preliminary scale of verbatim forms through existing dramatic examples, and classify its subcategories as: **Historical Drama, Tribunal, Literary, Expository, and Participatory verbatim theatres**. These subcategories are based on archives that privilege either “text” or the “aural” testimony. The first three subcategories (Historical Drama, Tribunal, and Literary) are text-based on an increasing scale, as sources used in these forms are generally received by the playwright as a textual secondary source (i.e. court transcripts, manuscripts, and other historical documents). The latter subcategories, Expository and Participatory, are aurally based – meaning that the playwright or collective has sourced, performed, recorded, and ultimately transcribed interviews for its play dialogue.

The examples used in this chapter will demonstrate the increased variety of verbatim theatre that has arisen over the last twenty years. Each example is representative of my proposed typology for demonstrating how variants of verbatim text are used to create theatrical dialogue. In addition, this chapter will examine the dramaturgical, aesthetic, and ethical considerations of each subcategory. Each subcategory will be also related to dramaturgical choices used in *Exhibit A*.

¹³ See Luckhurst 201; Paget, “Broken Tradition” 227-33; and Paget, “Verbatim Theatre” 317.

The narrative voice of *Exhibit A*, though research-based, is not strictly verbatim, as it is my creation. The use of the chorus creatively frames the transcripts and serves to acknowledge to an audience that I have edited the archival material for the purposes of dramatic suspense and illusion. Additionally, the chorus provides an emotional insight to make *Exhibit A* more accessible to audiences that are not familiar with the crime in question. In this sense, it can be said that *Exhibit A* attempts to blend Brechtian thesis documentary drama with many contemporary verbatim forms.

Tribunal

Dramatic Example: *The Colour of Justice* by Richard Norton-Taylor (1999)

Tribunal Verbatim plays are edited from existing legal transcripts or documents. These legal documents originate either as written statements or as courtroom transcripts. Though this would suggest that many words in Tribunal verbatim are initially of aural origin, the author will likely cite the court or evidential transcripts as a secondary source; therefore Tribunal verbatim is primarily text-based.

The themes of Tribunal plays tend to be distinctly socio-political in nature. Theatre scholar Chris Megson refers to Tribunal verbatim as “the meticulous re-enactment of edited transcripts of state-sanctioned inquiries that address perceived miscarriages of justice and flaws in the operations and accountability of public institutions” (195). Janelle Reinelt interprets Tribunal plays as a palatable artistic condensation of legal facts, a means of “sort[ing] through the evidence and clarify[ing] it for public consumption” (16). Whatever the definition, one must not forget that Tribunal verbatim plays represent the “truth” of a legal case as interpreted by a given playwright. Playwrights of Tribunal verbatim plays apply their own editorial filters in the adaptation of legal transcripts and documents for a theatrical production.

The Colour of Justice by Richard Norton-Taylor is a Tribunal verbatim play developed from the

transcripts of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.¹⁴ The play is one of many Tribunal verbatim pieces written by Norton-Taylor. A journalist for the British newspaper *The Guardian* since 1975, Norton-Taylor prefers to credit himself as an editor rather than a playwright of his plays (Luckhurst 206). *The Colour of Justice* proved remarkably successful when it was released in the United Kingdom in 1999, perhaps as it coincided with the release of the inquiry report, itself the product of 69 days of public hearings (Reinelt 14). From the more than 11,000 pages of the inquiry report, Norton-Taylor produced a 100-page play that he hopes, as he writes in his introduction to *The Colour of Justice*, presents “as fair, balanced and as rounded a picture as possible” (6). By creating this play Norton-Taylor hoped to disseminate information from the inquiry to as wide an audience as possible, as a “vast majority of people [were] not going to read the inquiry report”; media coverage of inquiries is limited and “occur[s] over days, weeks, and even months” (Norton-Taylor qtd. in Luckhurst 209).

In *The Colour of Justice*, Norton-Taylor includes the edited testimony of 17 different individuals: two bystanders, the parents of Stephen Lawrence, his friend Duwayne Brooks (a witness to Stephen's murder), and various members of the Metropolitan police force.¹⁵ The testimonies proceed in chronological order, with one exception: the testimony of Detective Holden (from 5 May 1998) precedes the statement of Duwayne Brooks (from 1 May 1998) – likely because her testimony proves a clever and natural transition into an intermission. Before intermission, Holden is questioned about whether or not she gave Imran Khan, the Lawrence family's lawyer, her cell phone number. She is handed the original note, and insists that although it is her handwriting, it is not her mobile phone number (Norton-Taylor 88-9). The chairman of the inquiry, MacPherson, suggests a break and reminds

¹⁴ In 1993, a black teenager named Stephen Lawrence was stabbed to death in an unprovoked attack, purportedly by a gang of white youths in London. *The Colour of Justice* is based on a 1998 inquiry of the crime, which concluded that the failures in the handling of the case (including its lack of legal convictions, improper collection of evidence, and late response time to the scene of the attack) were due to institutionalized racism in the Metropolitan justice system. Two of the five men originally suspected of killing Lawrence were sentenced in 2012 after a lengthy cold case review (“Stephen Lawrence: Gary Dobson and David Norris get life”, bbc.co.uk).

¹⁵ All of the testimonies are dated in the published text of the play.

the council (and in effect, the audience): “Do not, of course, talk about the evidence” (Norton-Taylor 89). The second act begins with Holden stating that: “I had time to reflect that I have actually changed my mobile phone number so that is the correct number” (Norton-Taylor 90). For “editors” such as Norton-Taylor, a convention of Tribunal verbatim plays is that they must strictly adhere to original transcripts, even when introducing an intermission.

Yet the dramaturgical filter of the playwright's intention inevitably shapes a Tribunal verbatim production. Part of this filter exists to shift focus from judicial process to content, whereby “adversarial narratives conveniently provide stronger and more coherent dramatic material” (Upton 190). In his introduction to *The Colour of Justice*, Norton-Taylor admits an expressed purpose to include “exchanges which reflect the personal tensions between the police and the Lawrence family” (6). In fact, exchanges that explicitly reference these tensions comprise 37 pages: roughly one-third of the play. This indicates that such tensions were a point of focus in Norton-Taylor's narrative, which highlights Tribunal editing as an ultimately creative (and thus, partial) process.

The testimony which is privileged is that which is deemed by the playwright to be of the greatest dramatic interest. According to Nicolas Kent, the director of another of Norton-Taylor Tribunal plays entitled *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* (2005), this often requires shifting narrative focus to lesser-known subjects in public inquiries. The Saville Inquiry, featured in Norton-Taylor's *Bloody Sunday*, involved testimony from former British Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Sir Edward Heath among others, but no high-ranking government or military officials appear on stage in Norton-Taylor's treatment (Upton 187). On this matter, director Nicolas Kent stated: “The big hitters weren't very dramatic in their testimony. It's those people who have personal stories to tell who are enormously important” (qtd. in Upton 187). Carole-Anne Upton argued that Norton-Taylor's privileging of civilian testimony in *Bloody Sunday* “conflate[d] the dramatic with the important” through “opt[ing] for a sympathetic portrayal of victims of injustice rather than an interrogation of

judicial responsibility” (187). Indeed, the inclusion of such officials on stage could have created an interesting juxtaposition between the testimony of civilians and members of government in the inquiry, as was the case in *The Colour of Justice*. In many ways, the courtroom already provides a dramatic arena, and Tribunal verbatim can use this feature to “draw attention to the evasive circumlocutions, sophistic indirections and rhetorical gymnastics of politicians and other public officials” (Megson 196).

What is the purpose of Tribunal verbatim plays? Inquiries are not a product of justice so much as a reflection of injustice, and in this case, Tribunal plays are an artistic act of remembering injustices. Optimistically, Tribunal verbatim dramas produce a lasting effect in the audiences that witness them. Perhaps the plays may even be able to reach people in the system that matter and can actually effect change. In the case of *The Colour of Justice* which “moved to the West End, toured nationally, was performed at the National Theatre, and [was] made into a television drama”, it achieved the goal of producing dialogue about the issue of racism amongst a wide audience (Luckhurst 205).

Exhibit A shares an obvious link with Tribunal verbatim theatre as it too dramatizes legal documents. Similar to the intentions of Norton-Taylor, I also desired to disseminate the information from the Proctor case to a larger audience – in a more condensed manner that gave the case focus and dignity that was lacking in its media coverage. Of course, editing legal transcripts into a work that is not only dramatically interesting but also accessible for an audience is the first challenge of this type of theatre. The play must be truthful, but it also must hold attention. Whereas court proceedings can be lengthy, plays are truly restricted by time, so the editing of legal transcripts must occur to condense information for the audience. Therefore, the selection of the material must be what is most relevant in the communicating the facts of the case – but this in itself is a subjective process. What is demonstrated in *Exhibit A* is my interpretation of the Kimberly Proctor case, just as Richard Norton-Taylor offers his version of inquiries in the United Kingdom.

A very significant way in which *Exhibit A* differs from typical Tribunal plays is that, though

there are some quotes that are specifically from judicial hearings, most of the transcripts used were wiretap intercepts that were not spoken in court, but rather presented in court as evidence. Unlike in a courtroom setting, most of the transcripts in *Exhibit A* originate in private, before ultimately being presented as a legal document. This gives the play a very voyeuristic tone, as most of these words do not have their initial presentation in public, unlike the tribunal dramas of Richard Norton-Taylor. One of the strengths of *Exhibit A* is that it gives access to the characters of the play as they exist in their private world. This is necessarily absent in Norton-Taylor's plays: as each of his “characters” is tasked with the very stressful situation of having to appear before the court, the characters are playing the roles of witnesses, experts, or lawyers rather than their true selves. As civilians have less experience in a courtroom setting, this is likely why Norton-Taylor often focuses on their testimony. Though *Exhibit A* involves many scenes that existed outside of the courtroom, it is inextricably tied to the judicial system, as its source text is derived from legal evidence in the manner of a Tribunal verbatim play.

Literary

Dramatic Example: *My Name Is Rachel Corrie* by Rachel Corrie, eds. Alan Rickman and Katherine Viner (2006)

Literary verbatim plays develop a play-text from the documented writings of a subject in question. The writings are creatively edited to develop narrative structure, but are predominantly the “exact words” of their original author. As the words in question are of written origin, Literary verbatim is the most text-based of the verbatim subcategories. Alan Rickman and Katherine Viner's *My Name is Rachel Corrie* was developed from 184 pages of American activist Rachel Corrie's unpublished writing, including diaries and e-mails, that were given with her parent's permission (Corrie 54). Like Norton-Taylor, both Alan Rickman and Katherine Viner credit themselves not as authors of this text, but editors. Similar to *The Colour of Justice*, *My Name is Rachel Corrie* focuses on an individual who has made more of a “mark” on the collective conscience posthumously than while alive: Corrie was

killed in the Gaza Strip by an Israeli defence bulldozer, purportedly as she attempted to prevent destruction of a Palestinian family's home.

The main distinguishing factor between Tribunal verbatim plays and Literary verbatim plays is that where Tribunal plays often originate from transcripts (of *aural* origin, similar to most forms of verbatim), Literary plays originate from the written word (in sharp contrast to all other forms of verbatim). Often, Literary verbatim is used when its original author has passed away.¹⁶ Some verbatim forms rely on the interview process: for Katherine Viner, “there could be no re-interviewing to fill in the gaps. We had a finite amount of material to work with, as Rachel was dead” (Corrie 56). Along with an oft-limited amount of archival material, the other dramaturgical challenge for literary verbatim becomes how to make the written word theatrical. As Katherine Viner notes in her Afterword to the play, “There was no point creating scenes that read well on the page . . . if the actor could not perform them” (Corrie 57).

The effectiveness of Literary verbatim is heightened by the physical absence of the author. Stephen Bottoms notes that in verbatim theatre “we can be given unmediated access to the words of the originary speaker, and by extension to that speaker’s authentic, uncensored thoughts and feelings” (59). This is magnified in Literary verbatim when a subject is presented posthumously: the words, in effect, are given new life through the mediation of the actor. The foremost ethical issue concerning Literary verbatim becomes the issue of consent. As many forms of verbatim rely on a process of interviews (which imply consent on behalf of the interviewees), what is the risk of presenting a personage when they are unable to give their consent?

There is also a danger that Literary verbatim pieces border on the polemical – becoming a venue for editors to present their own views and values through creative editing of the words of the deceased.

¹⁶ Examples include Moises Kaufman's *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* (1997) and Linda Griffiths' *Alien Creature* (2000).

Paget states that verbatim interviews are “done in the context of research into a particular region, subject area, issue, event, or combination of these things” (“Verbatim Theatre” 317). For the editors of Literary verbatim, a context must inevitably be created. The works, thus, are not reflective of their status as documentary, since they were not originally intended to be documentaries. This is perhaps what Paget implies when he states that *My Name is Rachel Corrie* is a “true verbatim play” (“Broken Tradition” 233). Yet one should always be wary of forced contexts in the case of Literary verbatim, as what is shown is ultimately at the discretion of the playwrights.

As many of them originated in private, *Exhibit A*'s transcripts shares more in common with Literary verbatim, which uses personal written documents as its source (e.g. journal entries, letters). *Exhibit A* could not be termed a true Literary verbatim, as most of the evidence presented in *Exhibit A* originates from wiretap transcripts or testimony provided to the courts or media. However, the last scene of the play – the online chat between Kruse and Kim as he convinces her to meet him on the day of her murder – completely originates in the written word, much as in a piece of Literary verbatim.

The challenge became how to dramatize the text in such a way that it was clear that the conversation between Kruse and Kim originated as text messages. This was made possible through explicitly framing it as an online chat in the scene, with the additional aesthetic of having Kimberly's lines appear as projections. The textual-based scene served a very important purpose in relation to the progression of the play. Throughout the play, the facts of Kruse's life are slowly revealed to the audience in such a manner that an audience may feel sympathy towards him. He had a troubled family – his father is a convicted murderer who has been serving a life sentence for the better part of Kruse's young life, and his relationship with his mother is especially strained (Derosa, “Teen killer's father a killer” A3). The second-last scene of the play features Kruse's final statement at his trial. In his statement, he publicly apologizes for his role in Kimberly's murder, and expresses remorse for his crime to her family. His online chat with Kimberly follows immediately after this scene to suggest that

his final statement had manipulative intentions.¹⁷ Thus, the inclusion of the text-based online chat at the end of the play, returns the audience's attention to the initiation of the crime itself – re-establishing the moment leading to Kimberly's death and Kruse's subsequent life imprisonment as a *fait accompli* – through the utilization of text that originated in the written word.

Historical Drama

Dramatic Example: *Stuff Happens* by David Hare (2004)

Historical Drama Verbatim plays utilize verbatim quotes from known historical figures. Documented verbatim speeches are often used in juxtaposition with imagined fictional scenes. As this material will likely exist in secondary sources, this form of verbatim is primarily text based.

Perhaps no play has been so contested as to its verbatim status than David Hare's *Stuff Happens*. In the 2006 edition of *The Drama Review* (50.3) dedicated exclusively to documentary theatre (ed. Carol Martin), Stephen Bottoms wrote a particularly scathing “*J'accuse*” of David Hare entitled “Putting the Document into Documentary” (56-68). It not only called into question *Stuff Happens*, but all of David Hare's verbatim works by describing them as: “disingenuous exercises in the presentation of “truth,” [by] failing (or refusing?) to acknowledge their own highly selective manipulation of opinion and rhetoric” (Bottoms 57-58).¹⁸

Bottoms' article is guilty of a few generalizations – especially in his assertion that audiences are susceptible to manipulation by rhetoric because they are “gullible” (57). In a particularly telling passage, Bottoms notes that plays such as *Stuff Happens*: “need to foreground their own processes of representation in order to acknowledge the problem and encourage audiences to adopt an actively critical perspective on the events depicted” (61). I would argue that critical perspective is unavoidable

¹⁷ Audience members paying particular attention may rightly interpret Kruse's final statement as an echo of his earlier monologue on remorse that occurs in the police van. In that monologue, Kruse describes reading a comic where its subject is released from court upon insincerely expressing remorse to satisfy the judge (105).

¹⁸ In contrast to Hare's plays, Bottoms suggests the works of Tectonic Theater Project's Moises Kaufman (*The Laramie Project*, *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*) as exemplary of the reflexivity that is necessary to the documentary genre (54).

when the characters that the audience are witnessing on stage are based on real-life historical figures that are part of the collective consciousness; especially, with concern to Hare's *Stuff Happens*, when the depicted characters were well-known officials of an historically recent American government. In an essay that proposes a phenomenology of documentary film experience, Vivian Sobchak argues that “the specific information in each [documentary] image is retained and integrated with subsequent images to form our cumulative knowledge of that general reality we know exists or has existed 'elsewhere' in our life-world” (250). When an audience witnesses a film or a play, their pre-existing cultural knowledge does not suddenly become disembodied. A given audience member's knowledge, bias, and personal experience will affect their criticism of the documentary (Sobchak 242). Therefore, an audience member necessarily criticizes a documentary's treatment of subject based on their perception of reality. For example, just as one audience member could accept Hare's depiction of Bush based on their assertions, another could categorically reject Hare's version of events based on a differing – though perhaps equally grounded – assessment. This occurs especially when the events featured in documentary are based on those that are widely reported in the media, as in *Stuff Happens*. To insult a documentary audience as “gullible” and “easily manipulated” (57), Bottoms must believe the modern theatre-going audience exists in a cultural vacuum.

In addition to undervaluing the intelligence of Hare's audience, Bottoms assumes David Hare's intentions are expressly manipulative. There is no denying that aspects of *Stuff Happens* are fictional. In fact, Hare mentions this in the Author's Note of the published edition of the play (2004). Yet, Bottoms perverts a particular line in Hare's Author's Note – Hare's assertion that “what happened, happened”. Bottoms writes: “There is nothing wrong, of course, with a writer presenting history as imaginative fiction, but the claim that 'what happened happened', that the events depicted are all 'true', is surely questionable when upwards of 80 percent of *Stuff Happens* takes place 'behind closed doors' – that is, on the stage of Hare's mind, in a series of conventionally realistic scenes depicting re-imagined

meetings” (60). With this, Bottoms misses the clever allusion to the title in Hare's Author's Note. Hare is not asserting that his imagined scenes behind closed doors were exactly what happened, but rather, that the invasion of Iraq and its complications and repercussions are historical fact. When artists take real events of history and fictionalize them, as Hare does in *Stuff Happens*, one terms it historical drama. Indeed, Hare himself notes in the introduction: “This is surely a play, not a documentary, and driven, I hope, by its themes as much as by its characters and story” (Author's Note). In that same note, Hare affirms that much of his invented dialogue was grounded in research, with the particular aid of Dr. Christopher Turner (Author's Note). Therefore, though Historical Drama verbatim plays such as *Stuff Happens* will use contextual research for their dialogue, they also involve the least amount of verbatim material of the five subcategories.

Yet there is enough verbatim material incorporated in the dialogue of *Stuff Happens* to include it as a type of verbatim play. How does David Hare weave elements of verbatim into his historical fiction? If we take Hare's author's note to heart, and assume that “scenes of direct address quote people verbatim”, then the proportion of verbatim work is about twenty percent.¹⁹ Though this may seem a minor percentage, this verbatim material occurs in nearly every scene in the play.²⁰ The verbatim scenes of direct address are generally introduced by the character named “An Actor”. When the characters are “behind closed doors” as Hare calls it, these scenes, which include meetings in the Oval Office and at Camp David, are obviously a matter of imaginative construction. However, it can be argued that the delineation between real and imagined is much clearer in the first act of *Stuff Happens*. Whereas in the first act the scenes involving both verbatim and imagined events are clearly demarcated based on Hare's “behind closed doors” rule, the second act involves an increased blending of the two forms. This is especially evident in Scene 14, where verbatim quotes intermingle with “closed door”

¹⁹ Based on my own calculations of the number of pages devoted to what I can trace as verbatim to quotes found in public record.

²⁰ Verbatim material in *Stuff Happens* appears in scenes 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21-23.

scenes, and the convention of An Actor introducing verbatim quotes becomes indistinguishable from the rest of the dialogue. The Actor introduces a verbatim quote from George Bush:

AN ACTOR. In his hand, George Bush had the bitterly contested text of what some say will be the most important speech of his life.

BUSH. You know, you've got to remember, every speech is now 'the speech of my life'. I've had about six of those from my trusted advisers. So I'm immune to the 'speech of your life' stuff. (60)

Immediately following this verbatim quote, An Actor introduces Colin Powell:

AN ACTOR. In the dog days of August, members of his administration have been on a linguistic offensive which seems to Colin Powell seriously at odds with what has been agreed –

POWELL. We had an agreement! I thought we had an agreement! (60)

Here, Hare is closely juxtaposing fact with his own narrative. Critics of Hare, such as Bottoms, would find this problematic. However, in Lubomír Doležel's words, only “naive readers fall for this bait” in works of historical fiction (124). Verbatim in historical drama is utilized in a similar manner as arguments in an essay – to support what *could* be true with “real facts”.

By terming David Hare's *Stuff Happens* a “Historical Drama verbatim” it is possible to please all sides of the argument. In doing this, one does not deny the veracity of the verbatim archive while confirming that the surrounding narrative has been fictionalized to an extent. Thus, Historical Drama verbatim examines how the verbatim informs the fictionalized scenes, and vice versa. The audience should be conscious of the fact that this dialectic between non-fiction and fiction is consistent in all forms of documentary.

A defining feature of historical drama verbatim is the intersection of verbatim texts with invented dialogue based on research. I imagine that most invention in historical drama verbatim arises

from the limitations of the archive. In the case of Hare, he was likely limited to the facts known to the public about the events surrounding the Iraq war: therefore, he undertook additional research to inspire an imaginative narrative of “closed door events” (Hare, *Stuff Happens* Author's Note).

Documentary playwrights are still playwrights, and I believe they reserve the right to manipulate the archive for artistic interests so long as such manipulations are grounded in research, as in Historical Drama verbatim. Writing of his own Historical Drama verbatim play based on the prolific life of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, *I Am My Own Wife* (2003), playwright Doug Wright explains that in spite of possessing a significant research archive, he took “the customary liberties of the dramatist” (Wright xxiv). These “liberties” included the necessary edits to over 500 pages of transcripts, the “condensation” of certain characters, and the introduction of archetypal characters (Wright xxiv). Wright also admits that he has “imagined certain scenes while wholly inventing others for narrative clarity and in pursuit of my own dramatic purpose” (Wright xxiv). Wright's admission marks an interesting delineation of artistic licence in documentary theatre: the term “imagined” suggests that such scenes were interpretations of von Mahlsdorf's anecdotes that could be traced to archival interviews. The idea of “wholly inventing” scenes suggests just that – a complete fabrication. Nevertheless, Wright states: “While I hope the text does justice to the fundamental truths of Charlotte's singular life, it is not intended as a definitive biography” (xxiv) – which rightly represents his treatment as truthful, but not absolutely so. Playwrights such as Wright who reserve the right to manipulate archives would agree with Bottoms' assertion that “realism and reality are not the same thing, and unmediated access to 'the real' is not something the theatre can ever honestly provide” (57). Indeed, documentary plays inhabit their own theatrical world when presented on stage – that world may be tied to reality, but it is nevertheless primarily of the stage, at the very least in terms of the necessary theatrical constraints of time and space. The minute that documentary material is put on stage, it becomes a play – constitutive of reality perhaps, but never “reality” in the truest sense of the word as it

is ultimately an aesthetic object.

There is no doubt that adding invented inserts into verbatim lines is problematic for those concerned with truth as an absolute. However, scholars such as Nels P. Highberg have argued that “a core value of documentary theatre in general . . . is the extent to which it encourages audiences to recognize the damaging effects of singular impositions of truth in society” (167). If we reject binary interpretations of truth, perceiving truth instead as a spectrum encompassing multiple perspectives, then a playwright's “organization of material into a script” can become an alternate perspective of truth (Highberg 171). Carol Martin echoes Highberg, positing that “representation creates multiple truths for its own survival; oral, textual, and performed stories invite repetition, revision, and configuration” (14). Documentary theatre explores truth, and invites criticism about its claims to truth. These scholars realize that truth in verbatim theatre is already filtered by a playwright: I wrote *Exhibit A* under the premise that there is no such thing as an absolutely truthful documentary, and that documentary plays are just as informed by dramaturgical principles as fictional theatre.

Though certain dialogue has been created in *Exhibit A*, I made all possible attempts to stay truthful to my archive. Every single line of text in *Exhibit A*, whether “invented” or “verbatim”, can be sourced to a transcript or media report. I am of the opinion that it would be tedious to constantly reference sources in a play, as it would continually pull the theatre viewer out of the action. Instead, I have cited dates and locations of certain transcripts for the chorus to introduce certain scenes; if called upon, I could produce a completely annotated version of the script.²¹ I strongly believe that all edits have been made in the best interest of the play, and are grounded in sufficient and thoughtful research. With this in mind, I decided to insert invented lines into the verbatim texts so long as they were grounded in research and supported by the play-world – and such inserts only occurred in scenes where I was limited by the verbatim text. The limitations of the archive that I encountered were as following:

²¹ This paper includes a bibliography of all sources consulted specifically for the play for this reason.

1. Entire interrogation transcript excerpts were available for Cameron, but not for Kruse.
2. Television journalism played excerpts of audio transcripts between the boys and their parents, but did not give the public access to their complete transcripts.
3. Quotes from the Proctor family were limited to official media statements and quotes from court hearings where the media was present.

Hence, I added dialogue to the scenes between the boys and their parents, to Kruse's initial interrogation scene, and to the victim impact monologues, as I only had parts of these transcripts (as they appeared as quotes) in media sources.

My manipulations included certain scenes which are amalgamations of transcripts and quoted lines, with invented lines used as a bridging device. This is especially true of the scenes between the boys and their parents and Kruse's interrogation – I had many quotes, but not enough to make a complete scene. For Cameron's meeting with his parents, I amalgamated quotes from two meetings with his parents (Cordasco and Puri). For Kruse's interrogation, I added dialogue based on quotes from that specific interrogation that were released in news articles (Lindsay). For Kruse's meeting with his mother, Nadine, I added information that had been described in other media reports – for example, the age of Kruse's girlfriend at the time of the crime, and the fact that a man approached Nadine's house with a baseball bat (Derosa, “Man charged”). The victim impact statements amalgamated the Proctor family's quotes from their victim impact statements with quotes they had made in other media statements (Dickson, “Proctor's slayers likely to kill, rape again” A1).

However, *Exhibit A* remains a mostly verbatim play – in contrast to Hare's *Stuff Happens*. *Exhibit A* is 48 pages in total and contains 16,494 words. The Chorus parts, which are invented but grounded in research, comprise 3 1/2 pages and 1,505 words (roughly 9% of the script total). The additions to character lines in the aforementioned scenes comprise 5 pages and 1,792 words (roughly

10% of the script total). Therefore, it can be said that the ratio of verbatim text to invented lines in *Exhibit A* is 80/20. In my estimation, the most impactful moments of text have no need for invention; for instance, when Kimberly's mother Lucia recounts seeing her daughter in dreams and recalls that “she tells me to get over it and stop crying, but I just can't” (112). Likewise, my invention could not improve upon the strangest moments of verbatim material, such as Kruse blaming Kimberly's murder on “Juggalos”²² in an initial interrogation (82), or George Moffat comparing his son Cameron's imprisonment to that of Nelson Mandela (98).

Expository

Dramatic Example: *The Permanent Way* by David Hare (2003)

Expository verbatim plays are constructed from recorded interviews done by the playwright or collective. It is an expressly aurally-based form of verbatim. Its authors creatively edit aural transcripts of the interviews to create the play-text. In contrast to Participatory verbatim, the original interviewees are not featured as characters in the script.

The term “Expository” documentary is borrowed from documentary film theorist Bill Nichols. Nichols defines an Expository documentary film as one in which the director will edit the documented scenes to support their point of view or argument, but will not foreground themselves as a physical presence in the documentary itself. In the theatre, this requires performers to portray their interviewees verbatim. It is this Expository mode that Paget and others describe in their formal definitions of verbatim which focus on its aural origins, broken structure, and (in the absence of a narrator figure), seemingly objective framing.²³

Nichols highlights that “the expository mode addresses the viewer directly, with titles or voices that propose a perspective, advance an argument, or recount history” (105). This was certainly David

²² A nickname attributed to the most devoted fans of the controversial Rap/Horror musical group Insane Clown Posse.

²³ See Bottoms 57-61; Filewod, *Collective Encounters* 4-17; Paget, “Broken Tradition” 229-34, “Verbatim Theatre” 324, *True Stories?*; Weiss “The Material” 41-43.

Hare's intention in *The Permanent Way*, which focuses on verbatim testimony of the furor surrounding a spate of fatal railway crashes in the United Kingdom in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In this play, Hare proposes that the privatization of the British railway system was made at the expense of human lives, and supports this argument using verbatim testimony of real-life characters. This is in tune with Nichols' philosophy that the expository mode “rel[ies] heavily on an informing logic carried by the spoken word” (107). The overall goal of the expository mode is the appearance of an objective conclusion (Nichols 107). The primary use of verbatim quotations in the absence of a narrator figure aids in the appearance of such objectivity.

How does an Expository verbatim author create an argumentative through-line with an incredible amount of testimony from various sources? As Nichols points out, “editing in the expository mode generally serves less to establish a rhythm or formal pattern . . . than to maintain the continuity of spoken argument or perspective” (107). This is what Paget is referring to when he says that “documentary theatre is a theatre of interruption” (“Broken Tradition” 229). Generally, the argumentative through-line in Expository verbatim supersedes any attempt at narrative through-line. In *The Permanent Way*, the argument is expressed from its opening line, when Passenger 1 states: “Britain, yeah, beautiful country, shame we can't run a railway” (Hare 3). The prologue speeds through various unnamed characters speaking about the ineffectiveness of the railway system. When the rest of the play (marked in the text as “The Story”) starts on page 10, the audience is introduced to several bankers and industry professionals who explain why privatization seemed like the only feasible option for the failing British Rail. On page 24, a British Transport policeman introduces the first of many crashes. Throughout the text, the audience is introduced to victims, bereaved parents, widows, and others who enter their complaints about the system. The play ultimately depicts railway organizations failing at all levels.

In his paper “The 'Broken Tradition of Documentary Theatre' and Its Continued Powers of

Endurance” Derek Paget defines verbatim plays as those which comprise “edited . . . interviews with individuals. Sometimes these interviews are taped and transcribed, sometimes actors work directly with the tapes themselves. Whatever the variants, aural testimony constitutes the basis for theatrical representation” (233-34). One can further divide his definition of verbatim into the subcategories of Expository and Participatory. Aurally-based verbatim subcategories such as Expository and Participatory are markedly different from Tribunal, Literary, and Historical Drama verbatims because the actors often act as researchers in the creation process. For this reason, editing transcripts becomes a simpler task than in Tribunal plays, as the authors are familiar with a subject's speech patterns. Often these interviews are consolidated by a single author or dramaturgical team, whose role is to piece everything together (Paget, “Broken Tradition” 230).

It is difficult to confirm the veracity of verbatim content in Expository plays. Whereas an audience member could easily gain access to the source texts of Literary, Tribunal, and Historical Drama verbatim, the content of Expository plays (and by extension, Participatory plays) mostly involves private interviews done between subjects and independent researchers who have a vested interest in the final theatrical product. As the authors of this form of documentary “freely admit” (Reinelt 13) to adjusting some of these verbatim statements, it is difficult to place this form on the scale of verbatim. In these plays, it is important for the audience to consider how an author may have manipulated the verbatim material to serve their argument long before the editing process – for instance, in an initial interview itself. As Expository verbatim theatre focuses solely on a subject's edited answers in its verbatim dialogue, one cannot accurately assess the intentions of the interviewer.

The most important defining feature of expository verbatim theatre is the arrangement of scenes to enhance argument and create a frame that appears as objective as possible. In *Exhibit A*, it was decided to utilize a non-linear structure that incorporated the main transcripts, the chorus' facts, the smaller transcripts (online conversations and conversations between the boys and their parents), as

well as the victim impact statements. It was hoped that such a structure would create more of a distancing effect for the audience, and more tension and rhythm in the play itself. It would also pull focus from the events of the crime to the psychology of the characters, which is the focus of the piece.

I approached the first draft with seventeen scenes for arrangement. I grouped the scenes into five categories based on their content: the boys' van scenes, Cameron's interrogation scenes (which had split into four distinct sections for Draft 1), the victim impact statements, the chorus/fact scenes, and what I labelled "small but important scenes" which included the boys' conversations with their parents, the final online chat between Kruse and Kim, and Kruse's statement before sentencing. I printed out the scenes and colour-coded them to define the scene type (based on their aforementioned content). The scenes were arranged in multiple ways, before I elected the options that brought about the most contrast and juxtaposition. This creates dissonance; the opportunity to see many sides of the issue in order for the audience to reflect and create an informed argument, as is characteristic of Expository verbatim. The boys' verbatim transcripts are always preceded and succeeded by scenes that involve family members touched by the crime. This juxtaposition serves to emphasize the callousness of the boys' behaviour with the emotional testimony of the family members – another Brechtian technique to attempt to create a "shock-effect" (Weiss, "The Material" 43).

Framing is the simplest way to know that a documentary is first and foremost a manipulation. Selection of the archive, and arrangement of said material, is a very subjective process that owes as much to an artist's' predilections as to any rule of dramaturgy. The way that I have juxtaposed scenes in *Exhibit A* makes obvious the fact that I am trying to draw the audience's focus to the boys' unusual behaviour: placing emotional scenes from family members or empathetic scenes from experts immediately after the boys' scenes draws attention to their emotionlessness and lack of remorse. This is a tool that is especially noticeable in Expository verbatim plays, where in the absence of narration, scene arrangement becomes crucial to the communication of the playwright's argument.

Participatory

Dramatic Example: *KISMET one to one hundred* by Emelia Symington Fedy, Daryl King, Anita Rochon and Hazel Venzon (2010)

Similar to Expository verbatim plays, Participatory verbatim plays are also constructed from audio recorded interviews, making it an aurally-based subcategory. The term “Participatory” derives from Bill Nichols' definitions of modes of documentary films, whereby the documentary's author foregrounds themselves as participator/subject in the documentary. Therefore, in contrast to Expository verbatim, the actors/performers/collaborators will foreground themselves as scripted characters in the performance. As such, actors will portray both interviewers and interviewees in a Participatory verbatim play.

Nichols likens the participatory mode of documentary film to anthropological fieldwork, which involves “living among the people” before remarking on observations (115). This is the process of Participatory verbatim theatre, where the actors are foreground as characters in the play. The Chop Theatre's *KISMET one to one hundred* chronicles the journey of four actors who interview 100 people from the ages of 1 through 100 on the subject of fate, destiny, and belief. The actors actively participated in the communities where they conducted their interviews, and in their play they recount their experiences at an 80th birthday party in Bella Coola, BC and Roughriders games in Saskatchewan, for example. Contrary to the verbatim plays previously cited in this chapter, the truth in *KISMET one to one hundred* “hinge[s] on the nature and quality of the encounter” between the theatre practitioner and their subject (Nichols 116). The interview and editing process is identical to Expository verbatim plays, with the exception that the actors/creators are continuously featured as characters in the script. As the process of interview is constantly on display, the “interviewer” characters are imbued with the “possibilities of serving as mentor, critic, interrogator, collaborator, or provocateur” (Nichols 116).

In the presence of actors as characters, “we are constantly being reminded that this

story is being mediated; that what is being presented is not simple truth” (Bottoms 62). This is similar to the concept of *cinéma vérité* in film: the truth that is being presented is framed more as the truth of an encounter than of a given subject (Nichols 118). As interviews offer “a distinct form of social encounter”, interviewees divulge information with the knowledge that whatever they say may be inevitably performed (Nichols 121).²⁴ To Bottoms, framing interviews “invites audiences to question the role and assumptions of the interviewer-actors and writer-director in making the piece, just as they are asked to scrutinize the words of their interviewees” (65). This is exposed in *KISMET* through the willingness of its participants to divulge information of personal experiences that they perhaps would not otherwise share.

Exhibit A relates to Participatory verbatim in its use of The Chorus. The Chorus is a creation, and in *Exhibit A*, it certainly marks the voice of the playwright. The Chorus has the appearance of objectivity, but it is still the playwright's voice, which makes it not unlike a Participatory verbatim play (which features its playwrights/researchers as characters). That the Chorus is my invention should be obvious to the reader, although the objectivity it assumes could be problematic for some audience members in that the Chorus in *Exhibit A* does imbue itself with factual authority. However, the Chorus' facts, and the verbatim quotes interspersed with its sections, can be easily sourced to the archive – though its dialogue may be invented, its content has been thoroughly researched.

The Chorus is another Brechtian device common to contemporary documentary that attempts to focus spectator attention towards detail, speculation, and the unfolding of events through narration.²⁵ The Chorus was an important function of *Exhibit A* from as early as the ten-minute version of the play. That specific Chorus was heavily influenced by the modern choruses of choreographer Sidi Larbi

²⁴ See also Luckhurst 214.

²⁵ Moises Kaufman's *The Laramie Project* (1999), Peter Weiss' *The Investigation* (1964), and Richard Norton-Taylor's tribunal plays (such as *The Colour of Justice* and *Called to Account*) are but a few of many contemporary documentary plays that use this device.

Cherkaoui, which spoke in unison imitating very natural sounding speech patterns of a singular person, speaking as a very personal “I”, and using gestures not dissimilar to that of the average “hand-talker”. The Chorus in the full-length version of *Exhibit A* is written in a manner that gives the director freedom in how to present it. In staged readings of the play, moments of unison were used, as well as “solos” for individual actors. This is left up to the directors because the most important function of the chorus of *Exhibit A* is to act as narrator – presenting facts of the case, as well as quotes from family members and experts – to guide the audience through the transcripts.

In later drafts, the chorus was framed in a manner that gave it a greater appearance of objectivity – in contrast to the very subjective “I” often characteristic of participatory verbatim plays. The Chorus in *Exhibit A* initially spoke in the first person in earlier drafts, but this was later removed. It was decided that the chorus speaks of certain facts, while quoting others, and avoids editorialization in order to present more ambiguity to the audience. The chorus does not try to give an explanation for why the boys committed the crime, and the answers are left for the audience to make for themselves – a process that can become obfuscated in very personal Participatory verbatim plays such as *KISMET one to one hundred*.

Conclusion

This is by no means an exhaustive list, and further subcategories will be necessary as verbatim theatre evolves. I acknowledge that certain verbatim plays exist that employ more than one of these subcategories. For instance, Moises Kaufman's *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* employs tribunal, literary, and participatory elements as it transitions between scenes of Oscar Wilde's trials, his correspondence, and the acting company's contemporary interview with a living Oscar Wilde expert, respectively.

Based on the analysis of these subcategories, I cannot agree with Stephen Bottoms' assertion that: “if Hare’s recent plays can be said to privilege (the illusion of) direct speech, then Kaufman’s,

conversely, can be said to foreground writing, both as text and as process” (67). It is evident that subcategories such as Historical Drama and Literary emphasize text, whereas Tribunal, Expository, and Participatory emphasize speech and the aural. In terms of foregrounding writing or speech and the aural, *Exhibit A* occupies a middle ground. Its transcripts are derived from conversation, but it also features sections originating in the written word: transcripts from online chat conversations, prepared written statements later read in court, and of course, those sections which include text that I wrote specifically for the play. The next question becomes: how does one select, manipulate, and organize the archive in order to create a coherent drama? In the following chapter, I will describe and analyze the methodology used to create *Exhibit A*, and examine its dramaturgical, aesthetic, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER III: THE DEVELOPMENT OF *EXHIBIT A* – AN EXPERIMENT IN VERBATIM THEATRE DRAMATURGY

Introduction

I started work on *Exhibit A* in the spring of 2011. I edited the wiretap transcript of Kruse and Cameron's journey in a police van from their first hearing to the Youth Justice Centre to 14 pages (from 30). I decided that it might make an interesting short play. In this initial draft, there was no rearrangement of the verbatim text – the edits were primarily line cuts that eliminated superfluous details, stammers, or pauses. At the time I had completed this initial edit of the transcript, I was given the opportunity to present a ten minute play in Vancouver with my theatre company, 411 dramaturgy co., as part of a site-specific festival called *Bridge Mix*.²⁶ I decided to present this edited transcript as a short play, entitled *road*. I started having reservations about presenting the van scene, as I was concerned that it would not be accessible to an audience unless I provided context for it. In a twist of fate, one of my actors was offered a part in a national tour of a popular Canadian play that conflicted with *Bridge Mix*. He accepted the touring role, and I made new draft, almost unrecognizable from the initial van scene, that could be performed by a man and a woman. The new draft incorporated key verbatim quotes from the transcripts and media coverage with a chorus that not only provided context but commented on the material. The short version of *Exhibit A* was commended by peers and critics, and I was encouraged to expand it to a full-length play.

In the fall of 2011, I was given the opportunity to develop a full-length version of *Exhibit A* under the guidance of Professor Yana Meerzon. I accepted the challenge, as I felt strongly that the themes and issues presented in my short version of the play would be better examined in a longer production. *Exhibit A* arose from the desire to highlight behavioural differences between the boys and

²⁶ *Bridge Mix* was co-produced by Enlightenment Theatre and ITSAZOO Productions. It took place in May 2010 and June 2011 on several floors of a privately owned parking garage in Vancouver's business district at the intersection of West Pender and Thurlow streets.

the general public that I perceived in reading the evidential transcripts. I was disturbed by the fact that youths that could be capable of such brutality. The transcripts demonstrated all of the uncomfortable subtleties of psychopathic behaviour – callousness, superficiality, attempts to distance themselves from their crime. I wanted to give an audience the opportunity to compare and contrast such behaviour to that of the average person – to be shocked by not only the slight differences but also the similarities.

Indeed, the final cause of documentary and verbatim theatres is to present an argument about a documented event. In the case of verbatim theatre, verbatim material is selected and used to augment the argument of the documentary playwright. Scholars such as Carol Martin and Derek Paget have itemized lists outlining their perceived goals of documentary theatre, common to which is the idea of argument. Carol Martin lists six purposes of documentary theatre:

1. To reopen trials in order to critique justice.
2. To create additional historical accounts.
3. To reconstruct an event.
4. To intermingle autobiography with history.
5. To critique the operations of both documentary and fiction.
6. To elaborate the oral culture of theatre in which gestures, mannerisms, and attitudes are passed and replicated via technology. (12-13)

Similarly, Derek Paget offers his list of five purposes of documentary theatre:

1. They *reassess* international/national/local histories.
2. They *celebrate* repressed or marginalized communities and groups, bringing to light their histories and aspirations.
3. They *investigate* contentious events and issues in local, national, and international contexts.
4. They *disseminate* information, employing an operational concept of 'pleasurable

learning' – the idea that the didactic is not, in itself, necessarily inimical to entertainment.

5. They can *interrogate* the very notion *documentary*. (“Broken Tradition” 227-28, his italics)

Central to all of these lists is argument, which is presented by the playwright through many manners of structural configuration that use different mediums of documents. Implicit in this concept is the playwright's impulse that something in the archive is missing. The act of writing a documentary play is to complete the archive that the playwright perceives to be lacking a particular perspective or analysis.

The playwright sees a societal benefit in the presentation of their subject and argument to the audience – to use documentary theatre as a means to witness and examine facts and events in communion (Luckhurst 210). For instance, Tribunal verbatim playwright Richard Norton-Taylor believes that “a dramatization of [trial] proceedings [...] provide[s] a more effective focus for public engagement with the issues than coverage in the press. He can, in the way he shapes his plays, make more of a polemical intervention than he is able to do with his journalism” (Luckhurst 209). Certainly, theatre is not journalism, and the purpose and meaning of art is a question that causes a great epistemological divide amongst scholars, theatre artists, and theatregoers.

In order to present their argument artistically, a documentary playwright must tackle three considerations in the creation of their play. Firstly, the playwright must have a complete understanding of their archive. What materials are they using to create their text? How is this archive organized? What is the means of selection? Associated with the last question is the second consideration: that of the playwright's position with their chosen material. Are they able to present their argument objectively? If not, are they able to at least substantiate their viewpoint? Thirdly, the first two considerations will inform the playwright's poetics. How is the archival material dramatically structured? What is the style of their play? If it is a verbatim play, how do they dramatize the verbatim language? How do they

maintain suspense when the subject is a known event? This chapter will examine the considerations of working with archives, objectivity, and poetics through the analysis of my experience as the playwright of *Exhibit A*.

Working with Archives

The material in a documentary archive will draw from multiple sources. As such, the contents and organization of a documentary archive will necessarily change from play to play. The full-length version of *Exhibit A* required a more organized, detailed, and extensive research archive than what was utilized for its short-form incarnation. The documents in my archive are grouped under three tiers: verbatim transcripts, newspaper articles, and tertiary research (i.e. research on psychology, online forums, opinion columns, magazine articles).

The first part of the archive was comprised of the raw transcripts that were released in near-entirety by the media.²⁷ These transcripts included:

1. wiretap conversation of Wellwood and Moffat in the police van from their holding cell to the courtroom for their first hearing (Recorded 21 June 2010, 29 pages).
2. wiretap conversation of Wellwood and Moffat in the police van that transported them from their initial court hearing to the Youth Custody Centre (Recorded 21 June 2010, 30 pages).
3. MSN chat excerpts between Moffat and Proctor, seized from Proctor's computer (dated from 5 May 2009 to 17 November 2009, 8 pages).
4. MSN chat excerpts between Wellwood and Proctor, seized from Proctor's

²⁷ “Raw” transcripts indicate that the transcripts were provided exactly as in case evidence. These transcripts were released by CBC online in PDF format. Occasionally, pages were omitted and third-party names were censored at the discretion of the media organization that released the files. I obtained transcripts that from the local CBC affiliate in Victoria, as they released the most evidence online (all raw transcripts labelled 1-6 in the above list). Other media organizations (including the Vancouver Sun, the Victoria Times Colonist, and CTV affiliates) released certain parts of the cited transcripts, at their discretion, online. See: “Evidence in Proctor murder released” by CBC.

- computer (dated from 14 August 2009 to 24 November 2009, 8 pages).
5. MSN chat between Wellwood and Proctor on the day of Proctor's murder, seized from Proctor's computer (18 March 2010, 3 pages).
 6. Excerpted transcript of Moffat's interrogation with RCMP investigators (20 June 2010, 77 pages total)

The excerpted transcript of Moffat's interrogation was part of a 422 page index of evidence against Moffat that the RCMP presented to the Supreme Court of British Columbia. The index had 13 sections (labelled "Tabs").²⁸ Tabs 1 through 6 were entitled "Excerpts of Warned Police Statement" (referring to Moffat's interrogation). The excerpts of the interrogation that were released and subsequently utilized in *Exhibit A* were from section 2 of the Warned Police Statement. The statement itself was limited to six excerpts upon release by the media:

- 6 a. Pages 144-155/422 (concerning the possibility of the boys' necrophilia)
- 6 b. Pages 197-201/422 (assessing guilt as to the burning of Proctor's body)
- 6 c. Pages 250-297/422 (ascertaining which items of evidence or parts of Proctor's body Moffat's DNA could be found on)
- 6 d. Pages 290-308/422 (detailing how the physical attack was initiated and Moffat's level of involvement in Proctor's sexual assault)
- 6 e. Pages 312-314/422 (asking Moffat why he feels uncomfortable discussing details of the crime)
- 6 f. Page 331/422 (asking Moffat to remain focused in the interrogation)

In addition to this wealth of transcript material, video recordings of Moffat's interrogation and audio recordings of the van wiretap transcripts were released to the public in raw format. Though the

²⁸ Other "tabs" included the two van wiretaps with Wellwood from 21 June 2010, three telephone conversations from the Youth Custody Centre between Moffat and his parents, and two intercepts from a Youth Custody Centre meeting room, one of which was an in-person meeting with Moffat's parents on 26 June 2010 (Cordasco and Puri).

transcripts made up the primary source of the text used for the play, the recordings proved useful in that they captured the cadence of the subjects' speech and the tone of the conversations. These recordings gave information and insight which later proved indispensable to editing decisions pertaining to character.

Not all verbatim material was released in its entirety. For reasons I cannot ascertain, Wellwood's interrogation was not released by the media to the public. Occasionally, media sources quoted evidence, but did not release the full transcripts of the quotes in context. For example, audio records of the intercepted phone conversations and meetings at the Youth Custody Centre between the boys and their parents were excerpted and used in a television media report on CBC and CTV News British Columbia (CTVBC).²⁹ Neither organization released the raw transcripts or audio of these conversations. However, I found these conversations intriguing and, as such, I transcribed quotes from the audio used in these television media reports and in print articles to use in the play.

Likewise, an article entitled “‘I did not see any form of regret,’ inmate says of killer” (Lindsay), used quotes presumably from other transcripts contained in evidence but not released to the public. Among those speakers quoted were Wellwood's former girlfriend³⁰, unnamed Youth Custody Centre inmates³¹, two online friends who played World of Warcraft with Wellwood and Moffat³², and Wellwood in his first interrogation with the RCMP in April 2010 (where he flatly denied involvement in Proctor's murder). Interestingly, CTVBC (Vancouver) and A Channel News³³ (Victoria) were the only media organizations that commented on the aspects of evidence cited above.³⁴ This suggests is

²⁹ See “Proctor's teen killer clashed with mother” (Cordasco and Puri).

³⁰ From an RCMP interview dated 14 October 2010 as stated in the article (Lindsay).

³¹ According to the report, at least five inmates approached the RCMP to report that Wellwood had confessed details of the murder to themselves or other inmates in the unit. The quotes used in the article are from undated interviews (Lindsay).

³² Wellwood and Moffat confessed their involvement in the crime over World of Warcraft as they “mistakenly believed that the company behind the popular role-playing game would [not] give police access to its chat logs” (Lindsay).

³³ “A Channel” no longer exists as a local television station in Victoria, BC. It was rebranded by its parent company, Bell Media, in 2011 and is now known as CTV Vancouver Island.

³⁴ The CTV article cited above was released in conjunction with a video as aired on television, available for streaming

that the media were given access to the court evidence in its entirety, but chose only to disclose certain elements to the public. This complicates my version of events in *Exhibit A*: I acknowledge that I am only able to communicate the facts of the story as presented through the media. However, this is likely for the best – the material utilized in *Exhibit A* is already sufficiently disturbing in its details for an audience.

In addition to the transcripts, the second aspect of my archive involved collecting every article published by Canadian newspapers to provide context for the verbatim transcripts. I avoided duplicate articles that were printed across wire service, as most articles originated from the *Victoria Times Colonist*. The three main newspaper sources used were the *Victoria Times Colonist* (81 pages of articles), the *Vancouver Sun* (20 pages of unique articles), and *The Globe and Mail* (19 pages of articles). As mentioned in the previous section, local television news affiliates (A Channel, CTVBC) were also consulted as media sources.

After I collected this material, I realized that most of the articles would contain similar information. To filter the data, I created a system of highlighting. I read the articles in chronological order and only highlighted the information (i.e. details and quotes) that was appearing for the first time. To do this effectively required a mindset that simultaneously ignored all previous research and recalled it in detail. If one were to read only the highlighted material in the binder, one would read about the case in chronology with no redundancies. This system was useful in that one can now turn to any page in the binder and find the information that is unique to every article. This allowed me to create a chronological plot from which to pull my eventual non-linear structure. The best analogy for this dramaturgical device is to compare it to the creation of a puzzle: one starts with a complete picture before the puzzle's pieces are made and rearranged for someone else to piece together.

The third phase of research was less structured; I would read anything and everything that I

could find that would help inform my view of the subject. It was my hope that any additional research would help to fill any gaps in information I had about the crime's events, characters, and locations. These additional documents included photographs of the boys and Kimberly that were posted in official media but also on various social media websites. I read through an entire comment thread on a forum website called Topix. Certain quotes were from people stating to be members of the Wellwood and Moffat families, but because I had no way of verifying this, I did not include them as quotes in *Exhibit A*. What was most interesting about the comment boards were the statements of the perpetrators' and victim's classmates; they highlighted the online rumour mill and initial speculation that marked the beginning of the case.³⁵ Not all of this online information was relevant to the crime, but it helped me to understand who these people were and the world in which they lived.³⁶

The most important tertiary article I encountered was an article published in an online edition of American magazine *Vanity Fair*, entitled “Murder, They Messaged” (27 October 2011). The author, David Kushner, interviewed Kimberly's friends and families on much more intimate terms than had existed in mainstream Canadian media. This article provided invaluable insight to Kimberly's family, her friends, her personal life, as well as the boys' personal lives. It took the angle of presenting the case as extraordinary because the pre-meditation of the murder took place entirely online between teenagers. The article questioned the double existence that teens lead online and in real life.

Taking all aspects of the archive into account, I created detailed dramatic biographies of each of the characters in the play focusing specifically on Cameron, Kruse, and Kim. Part of this included the creation of Johari windows for the boys, a useful dramaturgical exercise found in Leroy Clark's book *Practical Playwriting* used to determine a character's psychological characteristics.³⁷ A Johari window

³⁵ It was also probably the most disturbing aspect of my research. The website is unmoderated and anonymous; there were comments that were particularly nasty and demeaning; and much of the abuse was directed towards the victim.

³⁶ This research informed part of Melissa's monologue in *Exhibit A*.

³⁷ Clark's Johari window was adapted from a psychological tool invented by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingram (Clark 117).

considers personality at four aspects of “self”: a Public Self known to Self and Others, a Secret Self known to Self but not Others, a Blind Self known to Others but unknown to Self, and an Unconscious Self unknown to Self and Others (Clark 117). I also created a detailed timeline of the murder, the investigation leading up to the arrest, and the trial.

For *Exhibit A*, it was useful to have a three-tiered archive that involved transcripts, news articles, and background information. Most of the play's content utilized the transcripts, but the news articles and additional research provided reasoning for edits and selection and no doubt coloured my interpretation of the transcripts. This background research proved invaluable in the selection and editing of the verbatim material for its use in a stage presentation.

My methodology in my writing is stricter than something like David Hare's *Stuff Happens*, in which much of the play rests in Hare's own imagination. Although I am not literally presenting a physical copy of the documents, like in Moises Kaufman's *Gross Indecency*, I am taking care to cite my information within my text as much as possible, without greatly interrupting the rhythm of the piece.

In terms of manipulating the archive:

1. I have trimmed verbatim quotes to clarify the language.
i.e. “And um, uh, to get a, so you understand that you’ll, no matter what I tell you from like, when I tell you the whole big thing, that no matter what, you have some key points that I cannot change. That I cannot dis-involve myself from – ” becomes “*So you understand that no matter what I tell you, no matter what, there are some key points I cannot change. That I cannot dis-involve myself from.*”
2. I have selected quotes that I find more dramatically interesting: that are more revealing of

Clark considers it a useful dramaturgical exercise in that it makes “apparent that much of what goes on inside one character's head is not known by the other” (117).

character or that explore tension or conflict between characters.

3. I have selected quotes that are more pertinent to the play's thesis.
4. The archive is not presented chronologically, and I have shifted quotes within the transcript scenes to make the scene more dramatic. For instance, in the second Van scene Kruse's confrontation with Cameron about trust comes at the end of the scene, to carry out the dramatic tension as long as possible.
5. Certain scenes are an amalgamation of transcripts and quoted lines, with invented lines used as a bridging device.

These manipulations occur because, from my own perspective, it is more important to stay true to your goal as a playwright. This does not mean a complete dismissal of, or freedom with, the documents in question. The documentary playwriting process exists under a tension between creativity and respect of facts, within which each playwright creates their own boundaries. When I created *Exhibit A*, I made a conscious decision to be creative with language and structure but not with context. Even the scenes that contain more invented dialogue than quotes are based on documented events for which there is, unfortunately, no verbatim script. Fortunately, these facts can be traced to the archive. For instance, the transcript of Kruse's RCMP interrogation was incomplete. I created an interrogation scene based on the few quotes from that transcript that were available, and completed it with known facts of the case as reported in various media sources. This was a personal and ethical choice: I am sensitive to the fact that this play involves real people – but because I ultimately have news sources to reference for facts, I feel comfortable knowing that I have not created anything without context. Some documentary playwrights may feel differently, but my attitude is this: in the same way an academic should never fabricate citations, a playwright has a certain responsibility to stay true to the archive out of respect to the event or subject in question. However, in the constraints of time, playwrights need to be selective about what aspects of the archive they choose to examine, and this is why the goal of the playwright is more

essential than the archive itself. Similar to the way an academic chooses citations to augment an argument, “documentary theatre emphasizes certain kinds of memory and buries others” (Martin 11). This remains the most contentious aspect of documentary theatre (Bottoms 57-8).³⁸ However, in the same way the strength of scholarship depends on peer review, the most successful documentary plays contain arguments that hold up under public scrutiny.

It would be speculative to conclude what is more important to other documentary theatre artists. At least in the interviews I have read or conducted, there seems to be a general consensus that what the playwright ultimately constructs in verbatim theatre stays as true to the original text as possible. Artists have cited the “puritan” and “scrupulous” work paid to honouring their archives in performance (Honer and Cheeseman, respectively, qtd. in Paget “Verbatim Theatre” 318-20). While I have no doubt that their methodology is indeed scrupulous, it is possible for playwrights to be blind to their own subjectivity, to believe their argument to be the absolute truth. Ultimately, the success of documentary is determined by an informed and attentive audience. Documentaries are only effective if the audience finds the argument to be truthful, and this also tends to be a subjective process: “although we in the audience recognize that the scene before our eyes is a rehearsed re-enactment of reality, we can accept it as authentic providing we agree with its editorial stance” (Filewod, *Collective Encounters* 17). Thus, in their own critical evaluation of a documentary play, the audience should not forget that the “edit[ing] [of] archival materials relies on the formal qualities of fiction as much as on archival evidence” (Martin 11). Furthermore, the audience should also be aware of their own cultural or ideological biases that could affect their critical opinion of a given documentary production.

Objectivity

Thus, is it possible to present an argument objectively? Is it possible to present an argument that maintains the integrity of the document? If a guiding principle of documentary theatre is argument,

³⁸ See also Martin 19.

how is this accomplished?

Firstly, I define documentary objectivity in the journalistic sense of the term. Consider the wealth of evidence that journalists had at their disposal in the Proctor case. Though many news organizations chose to release transcripts in raw format, quotes needed to be selected for any given article due to length constraints. Is that process of selection truly objective? What informed the journalist's selection of a given quote for a given article? And yet, when one reads a newspaper article there is an accepted tone of objectivity – for example, the article is written in the third person, and sources are quoted. Qualifying words that suggest any sort of value judgement are generally omitted by most respectable news organizations. These articles are occasionally published alongside Op-Ed pieces in the same paper, the juxtaposition of which heightens the objective tone of the former. Though language in journalism can be strictly objective, what is chosen to be reported is often a very subjective matter.

Likewise, in documentary theatre, it is possible to imbue the play with an objective tone, but the process of archival selection for presentation can never be truly objective. This is certainly at work in *Exhibit A*, which has a journalistic style. But to call this work objective would be to deny my hand in the processing and selecting of the archive as it appears in the play, and that would be a dishonest statement. For this reason, I refuse to credit myself as the “editor” of *Exhibit A* rather than the playwright – despite the fact that many of its words are verbatim – as I do not wish to overestimate the factual legitimacy of the piece when I am ultimately responsible for its aesthetic treatment.

My intention with *Exhibit A* was to take a very tragic and unique situation and highlight the questions it raises in the fields of justice and psychology. I question our current perceptions of psychopathy, which are often limited to unbelievable caricatures of axe-wielding “bad guys” in film and literature. The boys in question are very much villains, but the transcripts give an unprecedented look into the behaviour of youths that exhibit psychopathic tendencies. There is very little

understanding of the causes of psychopathy at the research level. Even UBC Professor Emeritus Dr. Robert Hare, a leading researcher of psychopathy admits: “every time we [as researchers] think we come up with a profile, it changes” (Bolan A8).³⁹ This confusion extends to a degree, to the layman – our society is so inundated with stereotypes of a “psycho”, the public has little understanding of the types of behaviours psychopaths generally exhibit. Indeed, the boys were able to function in society up until the murder, but there were extensive warning signs. *Exhibit A* reflects my belief that further investigation into the specifics of psychopathy is warranted.

The play raises many unanswerable, but necessary, questions about empathy and humanity, meant to provoke discussion. It does not, and cannot, draw concrete conclusions, and I concede that this is a tenuous aspect not only of my artistic project but also this accompanying theoretical examination. Psychopathy is an extremely complex issue that would be difficult to describe in sufficient detail in a thesis concerning dramaturgy. Any attempt to answer questions about the root causes of psychopathy in a theatre thesis or a play would be not only superficial, but disrespectful to members of the psychology academy that have devoted their lives to researching this subject. Thus, I intentionally left the examination of psychopathy within the bounds of my creative project. And when selecting sociologists/psychologists to feature in the play, I limited my quotes to opinions from experts that were asked to comment on the Proctor case to the media for added relevancy. Fortunately, such experts included esteemed individuals such as SFU criminologist and Youth Crime specialist Raymond Corrado, and Dr. Hare. Hare's most significant contribution to the field was the development of the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) and its derivatives (PCL-YV and PCL-SV), a widely-used diagnostic tool that allows for uniformity in the assessment of the degree of psychopathic behaviour in individuals (*Psychopath*). Hare's checklist was utilized in Moffat and Wellwood's psychiatric evaluations, which is why his research is used as a point of reference in the play (Dickson,

³⁹ This becomes a line used, by Hare, in *Exhibit A* (67).

“Proctor's slayers likely to kill, rape again” A1).

The term “psychopathy” itself is tenuous in the psychology academy, as it is perceived by some as pejorative (Salekin and Lynam 1). It is likely for this reason that psychopathy falls under the heading of the more vague “Antisocial Personality Disorder” (ASPD) in the widely-used psychological diagnostic manual, the DSM. I chose to use the term psychopathy both in my thesis and in my play not only because Wellwood and Moffat were diagnosed as psychopaths through Hare's PCL, but also for the fact that Hare has made a convincing argument for the need to distinguish between ASPD and Psychopathy through his research. As Hare has noted throughout his career, the symptoms of Antisocial Personality Disorder such as disobeying law, lying, and aggressive behaviour (as outlined under the current DSM) are non-specific, and could be attributed to any individual charged with a criminal offence. However, in rigorous studies on prison populations, Hare believes that only 20% of violent offenders in the prison system have explicitly psychopathic traits. Further, whereas criminal behaviour is an essential component of an ASPD diagnosis, it is not for psychopathy. In fact, Hare believes that roughly one percent of the adult population is psychopathic, and that most psychopaths are non-criminal, highly-functioning individuals that thrive in competitive industries – business, justice, politics – even academia (*Psychopath*).

Hare's work is indebted to early researches of psychopathy, such as Hervey Cleckley, whose monograph inspired the diagnostic items of Hare's Checklist. The title of Cleckley's monograph, “The Mask of Sanity” is particularly apt in that it encapsulates Cleckley's opinion that psychopathy is a hidden pathology, “masked” by externalizing behaviours that give a typical psychopathic individual an appearance of well-adjusted psychology, or “sanity”. This metaphor is explored in *Exhibit A*: it is only through knowing the offenders extraordinarily devious past actions that an audience can assess Wellwood and Moffat as glib, callous, and remorseless in their most manipulative moments. Thus, the play is a social, creative and cursory – not clinical and exacting – examination of psychopathy,

disseminated by way of dramatizing the verbatim transcripts of young psychopaths before an audience.

Some documentary plays are more objective than others, whereas others are unabashedly personal and make their biases known at the beginning of the play.⁴⁰ There exists a scale of objectivity in documentary theatre that can be easily measured through devices of writing and process of selection (much as one can assess bias in journalism). In the case of *Exhibit A*, probably the most significant pieces of evidence excluded are the online chats between the boys and Kim in the year leading up to her murder. These chats are still alluded to in the play, as is the fact that both of the boys made sexual advances towards her in the year leading up to her murder, and that she subsequently rejected both of them. One of the online chats remains at the end of the play: the chat between Kruse and Kim, in which he convinces her to meet with him on the day of her murder. I privileged this chat above the others as it was the catalyst to the crime, and it depicts Kruse at his most manipulative. It felt too significant to leave out, despite the fact that it presents a theatrical problem: Kim does not exist as a character on stage, so a director would have to determine how to present her text in the most effective way (I suggest the use of projections). Artistically, the main reason that I purposefully excluded most of the chats between the boys and Kim was that I did not want to have multiple scenes that resembled the ending. I wanted the ending to stand on its own, and for the projection of Kim's words to appear only once to (potentially) increase its dramatic impact.

There are other subjective reasons why I excluded most of the chat scenes. Firstly, the chat transcripts were already excerpted by the RCMP, meaning that they had already passed through a (likely subjective) editorial filter. I was skeptical of the fact that most of the excerpts included in the evidence were flirtatious chats between the boys and Kim that happened long before her murder. I am sure that the RCMP included this as evidence in part to establish that the victim and her murderers had

⁴⁰ For example, in Kaufman's *The Laramie Project*, the actor-characters reveal that they are homosexual in the play's introduction. They share a general concern that this might negatively influence their analysis of certain homophobic citizens from Laramie, WY.

a pre-existing relationship. However, I felt that to include these transcripts in my play would be to risk suggesting that by occasionally engaging in flirtatious behaviour and by later rejecting the boys' more serious advances, that Kimberly provoked these boys in some way. Such assertions are completely absurd but unfortunately commonplace in a society where issues of rape and consent have become intensely politicized. I recognize that I excluded this material because I am a feminist and, as such, I cannot ignore the misogyny inherent to this crime. For instance, Cameron described Kimberly as an “easy target” to a friend (Dickson, “Sentence hearing” A3). There is no mention of him providing any sort of rationale for this label, but it barely requires description. Kimberly was targeted not only because of her reportedly trusting nature, but because she was a woman. At a height of 154 cm and weighing 50 kg, Kimberly was easily overcome by the two, much larger, boys (Derosa and Kines, “Police hunt for killer” A1). She was targeted sexually, and in the process was completely degraded and objectified in her last moments in order to fulfill the twisted fantasies of her aggressive perpetrators. It is unfortunate that, for every woman, dying in such a manner is not an impossible scenario. It is even more unfortunate for that rape against women is often framed as something that the woman can avoid – through modest dress, through learning self-defence, through associating with the right people – despite the fact that more than two-thirds of reported rapes are committed by someone known to the victim, as was the case with Kimberly (RAINN). As a feminist, I could not in good conscience include any evidence that could be misinterpreted as “victim-blaming” – the most toxic attribute of rape culture so deeply rooted in patriarchy – that is not only insulting to women, but also to men (by insinuating that they are not in control of their behaviour).

My feminism also led to another important manipulation of the material – in *Exhibit A*, one of the original RCMP investigators (named “Davids” in the play), becomes a female character (Supreme Court of British Columbia 149). Ideologically, as the crime concerned the brutal sexual assault and murder of a woman, I felt it important for Cameron's testimony to be examined by a woman – even if

this was not the case in reality. In the world of theatre, where characters are constantly cross-cast, I do not consider this to be a harmful manipulation. Additionally, it is the intention of the play that the chorus be played by a man and a woman. Therefore, in a cast of four actors, a woman would inevitably play one of the investigators.

Invariably, certain information is always excluded in the presentation of argument, and *Exhibit A* is no exception to the rule. Some of the choices a playwright has to make in this regard can be purely subjective, others are made in the interest of artistic integrity. This is problematic, as an audience is therefore only privy to information that the playwright deems is most pertinent – this occurs double-fold in *Exhibit A*, where I was already limited by the information available to the archive. Therefore, I concede that *Exhibit A* presents what, in my own estimation, are the important points of the evidential transcripts.

Poetics

In Elinor Fuchs' essay “Visits to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play”, she proposes a set of questions aimed to concretize a vision for the “world” of a given play. The questions are related – but not limited to – Aristotelian notions of Poetics including use and shape of characters, plot, action, theme, time, setting and space. Fuchs considers her essay a “template for the critical imagination”, rather than a “system” (5). For the playwright, Fuchs' line of questioning is a useful dramaturgical tool in that it asserts dramaturgical decision-making as a process of maintaining a relationship to (and adhering to the limitations of) the play's world.

The questions proposed in Fuchs' essay pose a distinct challenge to documentary and verbatim theatre makers in that the material presented in the documentary genre always bears some resemblance to reality (in essence, “our world”). One could reject Fuchs' questions and assert that the play exists in a world exactly like ours, but this is impossible.

Asserting the documentary play's world ensures that dramaturgical choices can be readily made

and defended. The world of a documentary play is not entirely invented, because the documents themselves are from reality. Thus, the “world” will be based on the documentary playwright's research of their subject. This “world” involves the playwright's interpretation of the documentary material, and perhaps the feelings and emotions conjured by the archive. The world of the documentary play is realistic and does bear a resemblance to “our world”, but also exists in its own theatrical reality.

In order to create edits that adhered to the world of *Exhibit A*, I had to envision the contents of the archive as part of a play world. Firstly, I considered the space of the world, which always had the feeling of restriction. The entire play is set indoors, in man-made structures generally related to the legal system: an interrogation room, a court room, a youth-detention centre, and a police van. These spaces are cold, imposing, stark, and restrictive not only in terms of sheer design but also functionality.

In *Exhibit A*, the courtroom is a space that is both literal and figurative. Literally, it is in the courtroom that the audience hears the victim impact statements, the court's statement of facts, as well as Kruse's final statement before sentencing. But there is also a figurative court where the Chorus exists, examining facts and presenting the narrative to the audience, who implicitly act as judge and jury. This figurative courtroom is unique to every audience member, constrained by the given audience member's personal experiences, culture, and/or ideology.

Time in *Exhibit A* is non-linear. This is a structural component common to most documentary plays, but it also serves an aesthetic function: it mimics thought. It spirals and branches, just as memories. It is haunting, inescapable, and primarily of the mind. The play is cyclical: it returns to its beginning at its end. This non-linear time creates a distancing and estrangement effect that is at once sombre, cerebral, and manipulated by language.

In this play, no character says what they truly mean. The investigators use language to manipulate the boys into giving information. The boys manipulate investigators, each other, and Kim to serve themselves. Even the boys' family members and Kim's family are restrained by necessity, as their

words are appearing in public. The audience never sees the full extent of grief, only glimpses. The chorus is the only reliable narrator, because their narrative is grounded in fact-telling.

Documentary characters have been cited as being emblematic and two-dimensional (Paget, “Broken Tradition” 229). This is not the case for all forms of documentary theatre. One could argue that “ordinary language” is already imbued with subtext and depth. In the case of historical or known figures, the actors, directors, and playwrights have a responsibility to research each of these real-life characters. To generalize all documentary performance as two-dimensional rejects the fact that documentary characters are based on real-life persons. If a playwright chooses to only document one particular side of that character, then certainly the performance will be “emblematic”. Sometimes, this decision is made in the interest of efficiency, for example in those documentaries which present a multitude of characters (i.e. Theatre Passe Muraille's *The Farm Show* and The Chop Theatre's *KISMET one to one hundred*). Yet, such documentaries are not so interested in character as they are in a particular society or culture, so it follows that they present characters as pieces of the examined whole. In *Exhibit A*, where the driving focus of the documentary is character, the characters are accordingly multi-dimensional. The same can be said for documentaries such as Rickman and Viner's *My Name is Rachel Corrie* (2005) and Doug Wright's *I Am My Own Wife* (2003).

With the world of the play in mind, the next poetic consideration became how to maintain suspense in *Exhibit A*. It was always the intention to start the play with a simplified version of the facts of the crime. This is a play about the aftermath of the crime – it is not a detective story. The perpetrators are known, and the horror and suspense of the play is in the details of the crime. These details are not only limited to the specifics of what happened to Ms. Proctor, but also the characteristics of the perpetrators who committed such a heinous crime.

In *Exhibit A*, the layers of discovery provide suspense and interest for the audience. The ideal spectator would have to be interested in psychodrama, character, and criminology. The ideal audience

member is constantly questioning and examining the material in order to develop conclusions at the end of the play. For my ideal spectator, the most striking discovery would be hearing the boys speak in their own words. In criminal cases, one is often so bombarded with media reports detailing the gory aspects of the crime that it is hard to imagine a criminal as a participant in ordinary life. After staged readings of this play, certain audience members confided that they felt particularly manipulated by Moffat's interrogation. As he minimized his involvement, they sympathized, only to be confronted with the revelation that he was as much a willing participant in the murder and sexual assault as Kruse (as detailed in the court's statement of facts). This leads me to conclude that it is the slow revelation of detail and insight into criminal psychology which gives *Exhibit A* its greatest moments of suspense.

In addition to the consideration of plot, theme, characters, setting, and suspense, a documentary play must consider its use of language. "Ordinary" language is a characteristic feature of verbatim theatre. Though earlier verbatim projects focused on the use of vernacular to celebrate local communities (Paget, "Verbatim Theatre 317), I hypothesize that the use of ordinary language is celebrated in contemporary documentary theatre for its relationship to reality. However, the use of language ultimately rests with the playwright. In the case of *Exhibit A*, I felt it responsible to clarify the verbatim text as much as possible for the audience. Language is a very important component of character, however, so I attempted to keep certain catch phrases or patterns intact. For instance, Cameron's oft-repeated phrase "et cetera et cetera et cetera" comes from the transcripts and appears when he is most nervous. Davids always returns to the phrase "I don't want to put words in your mouth" in her interrogation of Cameron. Kruse's vocabulary is noticeably more extensive than Cameron's, as he is often cited as the more intelligent of the perpetrators.

Yet it was important for the language to maintain clarity. In *Exhibit A*, navigating language proved to be the most significant challenge in editing the verbatim transcripts. The transcripts were the result of a court-ordered transcription of recorded audio – the words were recorded exactly as they were

spoken on audio tape. Natural speech tends to be anti-theatrical. It is improvisational and casual, so it tends to involve a lot of stammering and circumlocution. For example, here is a verbatim quote as it appears in the court transcript:

MARTIN. ... yeah, and because I'm, I'm going to say this as part of evidence. And, I, I was, y'know, getting to that because, Cam, um, evidence shows and I think we've talked about this with Mark and I could be wrong that, your DNA was found inside of Kim. So when you tell me that, right, it brings a sense of relief to me, because the evidence indicates, with your DNA ...- (Supreme Court of British Columbia, 149-150)

The former verbatim quote was adapted as such in *Exhibit A*:

MARTIN. Cam, evidence shows that your DNA was found inside Kim. So when you tell me that, it brings a sense of relief to me because the evidence indicates, with your DNA – (74)

These edits were made in the interest of clarity and efficiency. Dialogue is stripped of unnecessary interruptions characteristic of verbatim speech that could produce confusion in an audience. However, the edited speech still sounds “natural”, and adds to the aspect of realism that is characteristic of the verbatim genre.

Conclusion

I do question the ownership of what I have created. After consideration, I believe that I own the play *Exhibit A* as an aesthetic object, not unlike a visual artist who works in collage or a musician that creates remixes. But the original content that informs the work is not my creation. *Exhibit A* is mine, but the words belong to the archive. The organization of the archive belongs to me, but the archive itself belongs to the public and the Supreme Court. The people involved in *Exhibit A* exist in a play world as characters, but simultaneously exist as themselves in the real world. I hope that this is clear to

an audience, but especially in the case of the latter statement, I recognize that the play exists in a precarious relationship to reality.

No one commissioned this play. I created *Exhibit A* out of interest in the subject matter and documentary theatre. I attempted to write about a very difficult subject – about an event that was so reprehensible, that even experts could not account for its occurrence. However, the very fact that it did occur – that violent, premeditated murder committed by youths is rare but not unprecedented – fuelled my desire to explore this very issue. What propels such evil in humanity at so young an age? Is there a way, through advancements in the studies of mental health, that society can prevent it? In an interview about the Proctor murder, Dr. Robert Hare told the *Vancouver Sun* that society should be more vigilant in trying to “increase pro-social behaviour” (Bolan A8). Exactly what this encouragement entails is a mystery.

On this matter, I defer to the experts. I admit that I am not well-versed in psychology. I am a theatre artist, and so I chose to examine this situation and the questions it raises in the arena of theatre. I trust that I have created something that is dramatically interesting, that demonstrates my understanding of the dramaturgy of verbatim and documentary theatre, and that provokes discussion amongst its readers and viewers. I cannot assess whether or not this work will do more harm than good in the grand scheme of things. As an artist, it is a profoundly terrifying prospect and I recognize that it could pose a significant risk to my reputation.

ITSAZOO Productions in Vancouver asked to produce *Exhibit A* in Spring/Summer 2013. Part of their conditions of production involve producing an annotated script that details how the verbatim material was edited. On the company's board are several lawyers who have been consulted about the legal and ethical issues surrounding the play. As the materials used in *Exhibit A* are considered secondary sources available in the public record, there are no copyright issues. However, the verbatim archive has been selected and edited, so it is therefore manipulated in the interest of artistic licence. I

believe that I have done my best to provide as much context as possible for the verbatim material, and that I have presented the material in a creative manner that should refute any accusations that it poses as absolute truth. According to legal counsel, it could be that one or more persons involved perceives my edits as defamation. I hope that, given their support for the release of these documents in the first place, the Proctor family supports my desire to show this material to a wider audience. However, should a person referenced in this script choose to take legal recourse, I decided that I would not fight it. This may be my play, but it is most certainly not my story. This play was never made with the intention to disrespect anyone involved in this crime. I would not feel comfortable going forward with an artistic project that would cause undue harm.

In the very least (and this is in no way meant to trivialize the situation that inspired the play), the creation of *Exhibit A* was a useful artistic exercise. Through Professor Meerzon's guidance, I learned how to work effectively with a dramaturg. Through various staged readings, I learned the value of listening to an audience. Through a solid grounding in aesthetic practices of verbatim theatre and through developing my own critical opinions as an artist and an academic, I concretized a filtering system through which to accept and reject criticisms of my work – a very useful skill for an artist in this country, where so many new plays, in my opinion, fall victim to a staggering number of editorial voices in workshop environments at early stages of development. Finally, after this experiment, I can confidently corroborate Janelle Reinelt's assertion that “arguments about the purity or contamination of the document/ary have since needlessly obfuscated the recognition that an examination of reality and a dramatization of its results is in touch with the real but not a copy of it” (8). *Exhibit A* is of the real, but it is in no way an exacting representation of reality.

That said, I do not treat my artistic responsibility lightly. I do not regret my treatment of the play and, in so doing, acknowledge that the facts as presented are my interpretation. Whether or not this endeavour was successful ultimately rests with the audience. After all, a play may be verbatim, but it is

still a play. Playwrights owe it to their audience to make something with the verbatim material that is dramatically interesting and that has some semblance of structure. One cannot simply rely on “real” words and true stories to hold interest. If this were true, a playwright could put any assortment of words on stage and all plays would be good – and we know that this is simply not the case. I have created a play based on a controversial issue, and I can only hope that people evaluate the play on its strengths as an aesthetic object.

EPILOGUE

When Chelsea Haberlin of ITSAZOO Productions contacted me about producing *Exhibit A* in early 2012, I was buoyed by their enthusiasm and respect for the project, as well as the unwavering support of their Board of Directors. Chelsea, the Board, and I recognized that this would be an incredibly difficult production to mount in light of its obvious ethical concerns, and for that reason we were very careful in our approach. We had been assured by several lawyers that, as the source of the documents in *Exhibit A* was public record, it was unlikely that we would face any legal repercussions for the use of the material. However, out of principle, we had decided that it was important for the production to gain support from the Proctor family. The Board felt that the best way to approach the family would be through some sort of intermediary individual or group. Robin Wilson, the Chair of ITSAZOO's Board of Directors, is involved in many charitable and advocacy organizations, especially various women's rights groups. She was able to put the company in contact with Tracy Porteous, Executive Director of the Ending Violence Association in Vancouver. Chelsea had felt that perhaps Tracy would be able to advise us on the best way to contact the Proctor family.

Chelsea met with Tracy in November 2012 to discuss the project. Tracy said that while our proposal was not uncommon, we should be very clear with the family on the purposes of the project. It would be important to emphasize the benefits of community education, and to allow the family some input as to how to best serve such a goal. Jo-Anne Landolt, Kimberly's aunt, had been advocating for teen safety programs, as well as an amendment to the Youth Criminal Justice Act called Kimberly's Law – a bill that proposes mandatory counselling for youths exhibiting violent behaviour. We concurred that if the family so desired, we would allow them to use the play as a platform for their political pursuits in the form of program notes, a lobby display, or a pre-show speech.

Tracy was impressed with our preparation. We had a script that had been in development for over a year, we had funding support from the province of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver,

and we had sought as much professional advice on the nature of the play as possible. In her estimation, ITSAZOO had the best of intentions for such a project. Tracy revealed to Chelsea that she had a pre-established relationship with the Proctor family, particularly with Kimberly's Aunt Jo-Anne. Tracy said that she would be more than happy to contact the family on our behalf, vouch for our legitimacy, and field any potential concerns about the production.

Jo-Anne called to speak to Chelsea later that week. In their telephone conversation, Jo-Anne revealed that a theatre company in Victoria had also recently approached the family directly about developing a project based on Kimberly's murder. The family had felt that the company in question was extraordinarily rude, disrespectful, and inconsiderate of their grief. Jo-Anne commended Chelsea for the respect that she and ITSAZOO had shown the Proctor family, and especially for the decision to initially contact the family through Tracy Porteous. However, the bad experience with the theatre company in Victoria had left the family feeling very vulnerable, and as such, Jo-Anne stated that she could not in good conscience support our project at this time.

Chelsea did not attempt any negotiation, as Jo-Anne made it very clear that there was to be no further discussion on the matter. She did not wish to read the script. Jo-Anne said that it was likely difficult for outsiders to understand that, while the crime occurred nearly three years ago, it was still very fresh in the minds of Kimberly's family. She said that she would not discount the possibility of mounting our project in the future, as she does feel strongly that there is societal benefit in discussing Kimberly's story. However, she could not speak for the wishes of Kimberly's parents. For them, she conceded, there may never be the "right timing" for such an endeavour.

We agreed to honour the family's wishes and not move forward with *Exhibit A*. In accordance with our word to the Proctor family, the play *Exhibit A* is not available in the online publication of this thesis. So, I grieve the loss of my play while the Proctor family grieves the incomprehensible loss of their daughter. My grief feels insignificant and shallow by comparison.

I have been thinking about the comments Ms. Landolt made to Chelsea with respect to grief and time. Perhaps grief freezes time. Moments of trauma are irrevocably marked on us, and certain triggers make us vulnerable to the recollection and re-experiencing of anguish. Upon consideration, I realize that Kimberly's story struck a chord with me for deeply personal reasons. As a child, my friend and her brother were murdered by their father. It was an act which defied comprehension, and which I still struggle to understand. When the evidence in Kimberly's murder case was released, featuring a wealth of verbatim testimony from her murderers, I must have felt that somehow the transcripts would be a revelation. Finally, I could understand how certain people could be capable of such great evil. I soon realized that the matter of whether monsters are born or created does not negate the fact that some remain monsters all the same – and any attempt to justify heinous behaviour always fails to justify the heinous act itself.

In this light, I have to recognize that for the Proctor family there is likely nothing to understand about their daughter's murder. Kimberly is gone forever, and no amount of rationalizing or analysis can undo that fact. Along with that, I must make the realization that just as I may still be the precocious nine-year-old trying to determine what happened to her friend, perhaps the Proctor family will always be uncomfortably close to the moment their daughter's murder received widespread attention for its incomprehensible brutality.

I have to admit disappointment that *Exhibit A* will likely never be produced. That said, I will never regret such an invaluable learning experience. If the research into Kimberly's murder and the creation of *Exhibit A* has taught me anything, it is that empathy is one of mankind's greatest gifts – and to lose empathy is to lose what is central to our humanity.

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