



uOttawa

L'Université canadienne
Canada's university

**FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES SUPÉRIEURES
ET POSTDOCTORALES**



**FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES**

Laurie Fyffe

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE / AUTHOR OF THESIS

M.A. (Theatre)

GRADE / DEGREE

Department of Theatre

FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

**Political Theatre Post 9/11 : The Age of Verbatim, of Testimony, & of Learning from Fictional
Worlds**

TITRE DE LA THÈSE / TITLE OF THESIS

Yana Meerzon

DIRECTEUR (DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS SUPERVISOR

CO-DIRECTEUR (CO-DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS CO-SUPERVISOR

Micheline Lessard

Daniel Mroz

Gary W. Slater

Le Doyen de la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales / Dean of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

Political Theatre Post 9/11:

*The Age of Verbatim, of Testimony, & of Learning from
Fictional Worlds*

By Laurie Fyffe

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

Master of Arts (MA) in Theatre Theory & Dramaturgy

Faculty of Arts
Department of Theatre
University of Ottawa

© by Laurie Fyffe, Ottawa, Canada,
November, 2010



Library and Archives
Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-74175-7
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-74175-7

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

ABSTRACT:

Political Theatre Post 9/11:

The Age of Verbatim, of Testimony, & of Learning from Fictional Worlds

By Laurie Fyffe

Thesis supervisor: Doctor Yana Meerzon

Department of Theatre

Faculty of Arts

University of Ottawa

The first decade of the 21st century has been marked by a surge of political writing for the stage. Plays written in response to the events surrounding September 11, 2001 reveal an unprecedented level of theatrical experimentation directed specifically at describing the social, religious, and political forces that continue to transform our post 9/11 world.

These experiments have encompassed verbatim theatre; theatre based on real events and people, transcripts, speeches, and photographic evidence. They encompass the theatre of testimony where verbatim techniques are combined with first person narratives based on personal experience. These innovations also include theatre that employs fictionality to create possible worlds where transformations occur, and where the playwright has created a unique site for problem solving.

Through text analysis of David Hare's *Stuff Happens*, Judith Thompson's *Palace of the End*, Heather Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire*, and Tony Kushner's *Homebody Kabul*, this study will chart the course of these experiments, highlight the innovations, and assess their implications for political theatre.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my thesis supervisor **Associate Professor, Doctor Yana Meerzon** without whose guidance, oversight, and diligence this work would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank **Emeritus Professor Tibor Egervari, Associate Professor Daniel Morz, Phd, Assistant Professor Kathryn Prince, Phd**, of the Department of Theatre, and **Assistant Professor Micheline Lessard, Phd**, of the History Department, for advice and encouragement in my studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Thesis Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of contents	iv
INTRODUCTION	
Post 9/11: an incendiary decade	1
A theatre where action meets truth	5
Political theatre & ethical dramaturgy	7
Awakening the astonished eye	15
Searching for an aesthetics of the exact	19
CHAPTER ONE: <i>Stuff Happens</i> by David Hare	23
Play synopsis	23
Intro: contesting history	23
Is <i>Stuff Happens</i> verbatim theatre	28
Plot in verbatim theatre	28
Character: the soul of verbatim	31
The pattern of characters	36
Is a play a narrative	38
Truth & the historical narrative	44
Time, space & truth	50
Chapter conclusions	54
CHAPTER TWO: <i>Palace of the End</i> by Judith Thompson & <i>9 Parts of Desire</i> by Heather Raffo	56
Play synopsis: <i>Palace of the End</i>	56
Play synopsis: <i>9 Parts of Desire</i>	57
Introduction: history & testimony	57
Plot: a view from the panopticon	61
Letting the characters have their say	66
Testimony & resolution	68
Testimony & experience	69
Testimony & fiction	71
The monologue	78
Time & space: the chronotope of testimony	82
Chapter conclusions: pathos	85
CHAPTER THREE: <i>Homebody/Kabul</i> by Tony Kushner	89
Play synopsis.....	89
Intro: the modern morality play.....	89
Does the political trump the fantastical	92
Plot: digressions & intersections	94
Real politics meets fictional world	100
Time & space: elements of the fantastic	103
Character in the mysterium	106
The poetics of the mysterium	109
Conclusion: a final view of the periplum	117
CONCLUSIONS: the age of juxtaposition.....	120
ENDNOTES	127
WORKS CITED	131

INTRODUCTION:

Post 9/11: an incendiary decade

There has never been a more exciting time to take a look at political theatre. Since September 11, 2001, the first decade of the 21st century has been marked by an explosion of political writing for the stage. These texts reveal an unprecedented level of experimentation in the creation of political theatre that has resulted in a revitalized engagement between playwrights and a global audience.

Is the above statement hyperbolic, wishful thinking, or does it contain some measure of truth? In the months and years following the September 11, 2001 attacks in the U.S., now known simply as 9/11, our world became dominated by the "emotionally charged rhetoric" that described a "War on Terror" (Aslan 93). We lived with heightened concerns over airline security and the fear of sabotage from within. In the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq by the U.S. and Britain in March of 2003, it seemed to many, that "two unseen forces - "Islam" and "the West" - were hurtling toward each other in a catastrophic yet inevitable collision" (Aslan 158).

Today, the legacy of 9/11 is still very much with us. It challenges us as we try to integrate different religions and cultures into the mosaic of a multicultural society. It is evident in the debate over increased surveillance of the individual and racial profiling of selected groups. The 9/11 attacks led to the continued U.S. occupation of Iraq, an exacerbated level of political destabilization in much of the Middle East, and Canada's mission in Afghanistan. To date, Canada's military role in that country has resulted in the deaths of 152 Canadian military and civilian personnel (CBC *Afghanistan*). Further, the events of 9/11 have drawn the world deep into a conflict religious scholar Reza Aslan has labeled a "cosmic war" (xix).

A cosmic war is a religious war. It is a conflict in which God is believed to be directly engaged on one side over the other. Unlike a holy war - an earthly battle between rival religious groups - a cosmic war is like a ritual drama in which participants act out on earth a battle they believe is actually taking place in the heavens. (Aslan 5)

In response to these events, we have seen a surge of political plays directed specifically at describing this incendiary past decade. The results have been gratifying, partly because more than describing what happened, more than protesting the profound changes inflicted on individuals and nations, these plays have instigated original and exciting theatrical experiments. These experiments encompass verbatim theatre, theatre based on real events and people, using transcripts, speeches, and photographic evidence. They encompass the theatre of testimony where verbatim reportage is combined with the testimony to create first person narratives based on personal experience. These experiments also include theatre that employs fictionality to create worlds where transformations occur and where the playwright has created a unique site for problem solving. Through text analysis, this study will chart the course of these experiments, highlight the innovations and attempt to understand their implications for political theatre.

Four plays have been selected for this study. British playwright David Hare's *Stuff Happens* is a re-telling of the Bush administration's determination to invade Iraq in 2003. Canadian Judith Thompson's *Palace of the End* focuses on three individuals whose fate was decided by that invasion, and by Iraq's violent history since the 1950s. Iraqi-American Heather Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire* views the conflicts in Iraq through the eyes of the women who live within and beyond that country's borders, while American Tony

Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul*, written shortly before 9/11, depicts an Afghanistan tumbling into chaos.

All the plays chosen for this study have enjoyed an impressive production history and a positive reception by audiences and critics. After its premiere at the National Theatre of Britain in September of 2004, David Hare's *Stuff Happens* went on to productions in the U.S., Australia, Poland, and Canada. The cast of the Public Theatre's production of the play in New York received the 2004-2005 51st Drama Desk Awards for Outstanding Ensemble. In Canada, after an initial production by Studio 108 at Toronto's Berkley Street Theatre at Toronto's CanStage, *Stuff Happens* was re-mounted by Mirvish Productions at the Princess of Wales Theatre in the fall of 2009. *Palace of the End* won Thompson Canada's first prestigious Susan Smith Blackburn Award in 2007-08.¹ The play was also a finalist in the 2008 Governor General's Literary Awards and received the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award in 2009. Raffo first performed *9 Parts of Desire* as a solo show at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. The production moved to the Bush Theatre in London where it was selected "First Choice/The Best Shows in London" by The Times. Raffo also received a Susan Smith Blackburn Special Commendation. From its first full production at the Chelsea Theatre Centre in London in July, 1999, to productions across the United States including the New York Theatre Workshop, the Berkeley Repertory Theatre in California, and Steppenwolf Theatre, Chicago, *Homebody/Kabul* won Tony Kushner the 2002 Off-Broadway, Village Voice, Obie Award for Playwriting.

Such success is a marker of excellence and an acknowledgement that these plays have reached an audience, but this study will be primarily concerned with whether these dramatic texts have initiated what might accurately be described as anything historically unprecedented in the development of political theatre. In order to address

this question as it applies to each of the chosen plays, this study will be divided into three chapters. In each chapter the discussion and text analysis will focus on *form* and *aesthetics*.

In chapter one I will examine David Hare's *Stuff Happens* in the context of the verbatim theatre. While Hare's play uses many of verbatim's methodologies, excerpts from speeches, interviews, photographs, and news reports, *Stuff Happens* also exhibits important variations on the form such as the plot which conforms to an Aristotelian design. We may define the Aristotelian plot in a play, succinctly, as a "Whole action ...which has a beginning, a middle and a conclusion" (Aristotle 10). Aspects of *Stuff Happens* are also reminiscent of Shakespeare's history play, *Henry V*, and Dominic Dromgoole, Artistic Director of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, found *Stuff Happens* so original that he credited the playwright with inventing "a new theatrical form" (Dromgoole 2004).

In chapter two I will address Judith Thompson's *Palace of the End* and Heather Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire*. Both these plays depict real people as fictional characters and both employ monologic speech delivered in direct address to the listener. An emphasis on the individual's personal account and experience of world events is the raw material each playwright has used to fashion characters who exhibit varying degrees of fictionality. But, monologic speech and personal accounts are also the raw material of testimony, and it is pertinent to ask whether both Raffo and Thompson are breaking new ground in refining the "literature of testimony" (Felman 114) for the theatre.

In chapter three I will look at Tony Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul* through the lens of Lubomír Doležel's fictional worlds theory. Once I have established some of the devices at work in Kushner's fictional world of the play, I will address whether *Homebody/Kabul* belongs to a category Eleanor Fuchs labels the "modern mystery"(Fuchs 36). The

modern *mysterium* is Fuchs' contemporary label for dramatic texts she believes exhibit similarities to Medieval mystery plays. The metaphysical elements in *Homebody/Kabul* have raised the question of whether Kushner can be properly categorized as a political playwright. But, my contention is that Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul* is undeniably political precisely *because* of its similarity to the Medieval morality plays that inspire Fuchs' '*mysterium*'.

In each chapter I will organize my discussion around the playwrights' approach to the key elements of *plot* and *character* and the presentation of *time and space*. But overall, I will be concerned with how the play functions as an example of political theatre, whether its purpose "is not only to entertain, but also to produce a response to the urgent concerns of the day" (Turner & Behrndt 47). I will also consider whether these plays can stand as historical monuments, defining the historical moment they portray in a permanent form that illuminates, if not the factual depiction of events, then certainly truths about our ethical behaviour. Finally, I will address whether these dramatic texts are legitimate historical narratives that reveal who we were and what we became during a time of global crisis.

A theatre where action meets truth

Political theatre is my passion. For as long as I have been involved in the theatre, I have been interested in the dramatic text and performance as a means of setting the record straight, of telling stories that might otherwise remain unheard. Further, I believe that more than journalism, theatre has the unique capacity to bring individual stories to life, and it is individuals that shape broader political events. The real story of 'what happened' can be more deeply understood through theatre's capacity to illuminate the behaviour and actions of the people involved. If one were to stage any of these plays in decades to come, I believe each would function as a time capsule that

would bring to life not only the facts of our post 9/11 world but the subsequent transformation of our contemporary political, religious, and social sphere.

In 1928, Wilhelm Michel issued a call for a theatre that would address contemporary issues. Michel's manifesto, "Physiognomie der Zeit und Theatre der Zeit", called for a "drama [that] would show 'the 'thing' itself, life itself, the authentic object. [because] Illusion is no longer acceptable" (Carlson 351). Michel believed that "A 'problematic' era required a 'direct theatre' a 'theatre of real action' (Carlson 351). Michel's drama that shows the 'thing' itself certainly describes some aspects of verbatim theatre. But, at the same time Michel was calling for a "direct theatre", playwrights and theorists were also waving the banners of symbolism and theatre of the absurd, creating new aesthetic territories that would have their own lasting influence.

As Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson note in their introduction to *Get Real*, a collection of essays about the rise of verbatim theatre in particular, the purpose of "scholarly engagement" is to ask whether the "upsurge" in a form that may attract "a voluminous amount of coverage in the arts pages of newspapers and websites..."(1) constitutes new experimentation, or instead allows us to trace and understand the resilience of old forms as they are applied to a contemporary landscape.

In this study, while I am looking for evidence that playwrights are experimenting with new forms, I am also interested in how they are re-visiting old ones; for as often as the practitioner announces the arrival of the new, the careful observer perceives in that fresh label some shadow of the past.

In times of crisis, artists respond to calamitous events. Just as the First World War gave birth to new artistic experiments, 9/11 has also spurred artists to forge ahead in search of new forms. The explanation for this phenomena is summarized in Derek Paget's dry assertion "That the verbatim and tribunal plays of the past 15 or so

years...serve an oppositional politics in a time of upheaval and change is so obvious it hardly needs stating..." (Paget 2009 234).

The point is clear, a new era requires, and usually elicits, a fresh response.

Political theatre & ethical dramaturgy

According to Patrice Pavis, "Etymologically speaking, all theatre is political, as it presents protagonists within a town or group" (Pavis, 227). In her 1969 essay *Personal is Political*, Carol Hanisch appears to support this definition when she asserts "that even the most personal situations...show how society is organized in ways that disempower women" (qdt. in Schechner 158). Hanisch argues that the personal sphere and the larger political spheres of economic and national issues should not be viewed as isolated. Thus, political theatre is theatre that addresses women's rights, gay rights, breast cancer, and employment equity; anything that affects how people function within the power structures that control them.

However, I would like to begin my examination of political theatre well before the 20th century with a look at the life and dramaturgy of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729 to 1781). A playwright and theatre manager, Lessing is a figure of note in the evolution of the intellectual contract between stage and audience - the contract to inform and tell the truth.

What a dramaturge is or does is best defined by appreciating the job Lessing created for himself in 1776. In May of that year he began writing his *Hamburgische Didaskalien*, a book of 104 essays detailing the creation process and the production history of the Hamburg National Theatre. Lessing's *Hamburg Dramaturgy* was written "...according to a common plan for the public good" (1). Further, Lessing pledged that the public "...shall never be contemptuously ignored" (2). His goal was simply to "form a critical index of all the plays performed" and of "every step made here

either by the art of the poet or the actor..."(3), all undertaken in the interest of Hamburg's "wealth and its freedom: for it [Hamburg] deserves to be thus happy!" (1).

What makes Lessing unique, is that he clearly articulated a dramaturgical approach that saw theatre as a place where we see enacted our ethical behaviour; in Lessing's theatre plays would portray the possibilities for changing the way society conducted itself. This is what makes an examination of Lessing writing about theatre in the 18th century essential to our understanding of political theatre in our time. Lessing was pointing the way forward to an ethical dramaturgy that in some respects foreshadowed the work of Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht, two practitioners and theatre theorists who would transform the landscape of political theatre in the 20th century.

As Hannah Arendt notes in her foreword to Lessing's play *Nathan The Wise*, Lessing's life "was a magnificent sketch of what future intellectuals would do" (xiv). What Lessing did was to find the theatrical innovations that would allow him to demonstrate on the stage how friendship can function as the corner stone of our humanity. As Arendt concludes "...any doctrine that in principle barred the possibility of friendship between two human beings would have been rejected by his untrammelled and unerring conscience" (xvii).

Thus we may define the core theme of Lessing's dramaturgy as a site for problem solving, a place where moral issues are raised and where the audience is witness to how we resolve moral dilemmas:

'How shall I act?' is one succinct way of posing the question of ethics. It is also...a theatrical question. (Ridout 5)

This desire to report on theatre in a way that involves the public in its processes depicts a relationship that attempts to elevate the writing and producing of plays to a social discourse between its creators and intended audience. Lessing's writings about

his work at the Hamburg National Theatre revealed a profound commitment to "humanizing the world by incessant and continual discourse about its affairs and the things in it" (Demetz *Intro*). This commitment to "humanize" the public realm through an engagement in a theatrical discourse, establishes theatre as a site of provocation, debate and discussion, making Lessing's dramaturgy political to the core.

Well over a century after Lessing, we arrive at the political theatre of Erwin Piscator, a playwright, producer and dramaturge who wanted to bring the history of the German Revolution to the theatre, staging conflicts concerning oil companies, inflation, abortion laws, and such previously seldom dramatized subjects as the wages of Chinese textile workers. Piscator's early writings take the form of a manifesto and reveal a desire to change the world through theatre. Piscator's response to the cataclysmic Great War also echoes the shock many felt after the attacks of 9/11:

My calendar begins on August 4, 1914.

From that day the barometer rose:

13 million dead.

11 million maimed. (Piscator 7)

Piscator's goal was to create a political theatre that addressed events of world-wide significance, beginning with a theatre that would responded directly to the devastation of the Great War. For this purpose he envisioned the *Volksbühne*, "a stage for the people" (30). Piscator envisioned "an independent peoples' theatre...which would not offer merely trivial entertainment and flabby drawing-room wit, but which would serve art in its quest for truth" (31). From theatre director and manager Erwin Piscator to playwright Harold Pinter, discovering the truth lies at the heart of what makes theatre political:

Truth in drama is forever elusive. You never quite find it but the search for it is compulsive. The search is clearly what drives the endeavour. The search is your task. (Pinter, Nobel Address, 2005)

It is important to note that Pinter considers truth "forever elusive", something that must be searched out. This notion of a truth attainable by debate, by showing the clash of opposing ideas, is key to theatre's ability to address political issues. Firstly, the devices of dramatic writing such as monologic speech and dialogue make the play uniquely suited to turning the stage into to a site of contestation. In addition, there is much more going on during a theatrical production than the spoken word. Manfred Pfister has identified a complex "repertoire of codes and channels" (7), the visual, acoustic, olfactory, haptic and gustatory, that may all be activated to enhance the meaning of a play (8).

As mentioned, the two men who experimented most freely and productively with the aesthetics of political theatre in the 20th century, infusing it with a social and intellectual purpose were Piscator and Brecht. Similar to Lessing, we see in their work evidence of an ethical and enlightened dramaturgy. We can also chart the progression of this enlightened and ethical political dramaturgy from Lessing, to Piscator and Brecht and then to the plays under discussion in this study. For all these theatre practitioners and theorists theatre was - and remains - nothing less than a revolution onstage and off. The playwrights in this study view their work as no less important or essential.

In *Theatre & Ethics*, Ridout suggests that the question 'How should I act?', is both ethical and theatrical. Because theatre is the actions of characters in a place where we the audience become, literally, 'character witnesses' (Ridout 9). Not surprisingly, in this melding of ethics and the theatre, Ridout too acknowledges the historical contribution of Lessing:

Rather than a community united in a common fear produced by witnessing the calamities that befall heroes, Lessing is seeking to produce, though bourgeois tragedy, a public that will learn from the theatre how to feel compassion for their fellow humans. (Ridout 40)

Lessing's dramaturgical experiment at the Hamburg Theatre was short lived, from 1767 to 1769, "yet few would now dispute that these writings rank amongst the more important theoretical documents of eighteenth-century drama " (Luckhurst 24). But the challenge to transform the public's view of theatre, and teach them how "to feel compassion for their fellow humans" (Ridout 40), was as great a one for Piscator as it had been in the past for Lessing. Piscator needed "to find the new forms which would still contain this material [political] within the theatre" (Willett 108). In his search for these new forms, Piscator created the "epic dramaturgy", a style suited to placing 20th century political man and his struggles centrestage.

But first, Piscator faced a significant obstacle in the dominant dramaturgy of the traditional *well made play*: the "name given in the nineteenth century to a play characterized by the perfectly logical arrangement of its action" (Pavis 438.) According to this dramaturgy, the stage is a place of action that will sweep the audience up in its seductive embrace of *inciting incidents*", that person or event that disturbs the state of equilibrium and forces the agent of action to begin to take steps to achieve a goal" (Rush 283). The inciting incidents are usually followed by carefully orchestrated events in the form of the *rising action* "...a series of crises that build tension as they move towards the climax" (Rush 285). The climax of a play is the catharsis, a 'cleansing' or 'purgation' of emotional tension as theorized by Aristotle:

The potentialities of the human emotions that are in us become more violent if they are hemmed in on every side. But if they are briefly put into activity, and

brought to the point of due proportion, they give delight in moderation, are satisfied and, purified by this means ... " (Aristotle 59)

In order to achieve these goals, naturalistic theatre must preserve the illusion that the audience is watching real people enacting real events. Contrary to this, epic theatre tells the audience what is going to happen in advance of its taking place. Actors stand 'outside' their characters, a technique of performance that undermines the impulse for the audience to become emotionally involved. Rather the spectator is encouraged to question and be critical of the characters' actions, and of what is about to take place. Further undermining the tendency to be 'swept away' scenes may be given titles that are announced, or these titles may appear on a screen. For example, in his 1927 production of Alexei Tolstoy's *Rasputin*, Piscator projected giant sized text onto a white screen. The effect was called *literalization* (Piscator 203). Many of Piscator's productions reveal the application of this epic device, an emphasis on the *narration* of events rather than simply showing them; a sense that the audience is being asked to *observe* the action rather than experience an emotional immersion. Both these elements, narration and observation, are fundamental to the epic form Piscator devised. As a result of his team-devised dramaturgy of directors, actors, and theatre technicians ², theatre of "the times" became a fashionable theme, driving "man" and the "I" of Expressionist drama off the stage, and "overshadowing the reinterpretation of the classics..." (Willett 110).

It is important to note that theatre containing "epic elements, existed as early as the Middle Ages" (Pavis 128). Indeed, the chorus in Greek tragedy often revealed the action of the play. According to Pavis, "There is no such thing as pure epic theatre, any more than there is purely dramatic and "emotional" theatre" (129). Still, while epic theatre may have lost "its frankly anti-theatrical, revolutionary character" it is still a "special

and systematic instance of theatrical performance" (Pavis 129), and one that we can identify.

Of course, no discussion of political theatre is complete without reference to Bertolt Brecht, a name so closely linked to 20th century political theatre that the term Brechtian is often considered synonymous with the form itself. In addition to an extensive canon of plays, notable among them *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Life of Galileo* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Brecht wrote *A Short Organum for the Theatre* from 1947 to 1948. Brecht's *Organum* details his meticulous study of an acting methodology and a dramaturgy specific to the needs of his vision of political theatre. His contribution to political theatre was to provoke discussion over its goals and aims, in particular to question the oft perceived divide between "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction" ³ (Brecht *Brecht* 69). The theatre that amused could and should be a theatre in which people learned something, realized something or were galvanized to do something. His goal was to create a form of theatre in which the relationships between people and the power structures that controlled them would be exposed:

But in my view the great and complicated things that go on in the world cannot be adequately recognized by people who do not use every possible aid to understanding... great passions or great events have to be shown which influence the fate of nations...how is he [the poet] to show the exceedingly complicated machinery within which the struggle for power nowadays takes place? (Brecht *Brecht* 73-74)

Brecht's theorizing on theatre is extensive and his views evolved over time. He took the dramaturgy of epic theatre to the level of scientific analysis, at one point literally drawing up a checklist comparing epic techniques, goals and characteristics versus those of the naturalistic theatre (Brecht *Brecht* 37). Such detailed analysis, plus the

aforementioned *A Short Organum for the Theatre*, interviews and other writings, in *Brecht On Theatre* as well as *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, a series of dialogues that air Brecht's philosophical views, make him an essential resource for examining political theatre's methodology.

It was also Brecht's goal to re-invigorate theatre as a force for change. The theatre of his day was mired in a "field where darkness still reigns, namely that of the relations which people have to one another during the exploiting and dominating process" (Brecht *Brecht* 184). Thus, similar to Piscator's work and the plays of Harold Pinter, two themes dominate Brecht's philosophical approach: truth and power. To this I would add the desire and the obligation of the playwright to respond to political events: "Brecht sees it as imperative to ensure that a play becomes a truly productive event, a catalyst to action in the modern world" (Turner & Behrndt 47).

We may therefore succinctly describe a political play as theatre that seeks the truth, challenges traditional power structures and responds to the issues of its day. The techniques used to pursue these goals may change over time, but always in evidence is the playwright's passion. Indeed, as far back as Aristotle's *Poetics*, we encounter references to the passionate act that resides at theatre's core: "...those [poets] who experience the emotions [to be represented] are most believable, i.e. he who is agitated or furious [can represent] agitation and anger most truthfully, for this reason, the art of poetry belongs to the genius or the madman..." (22). Of course, passion is revealed through conflict: "That is why, some say, their works are called "dramas", because they represent men "doing" (*drōntas*)" (Aristotle 4).

In its practical application, political theatre is all about the actions of men.

Awakening the astonished eye

Piscator's and Brecht's lives, theories, and theatrical experiments intertwined much in their careers. Laura Bradley offers a useful summary of the similarities and differences between their careers as theatre practitioners and theorists:

In the 1920s, Brecht and Piscator pioneered new forms of representation in German theatre. But whereas Piscator relied primarily on modern stage technology, including film to provide a political commentary and extend the scope of his productions, Brecht developed new dramatic as well as theatrical forms. Through his dramatic techniques, acting methods, and staging devices, Brecht created a dialectical theatre that would expose the contradictions in social reality and depict society as an ever-changing process, not a fixed state." (4)

Together both Piscator and Brecht moved the theatre beyond the naturalistic dramas of the 19th century. Prior to their innovations:

The dominant philosophers, Kant and Hegel, and the dominant dramatists, Goethe and Schiller, all had in one way or another supported a view of art as idealization, the revelation of universal, eternal truth hidden behind mundane, empirical reality. The concept of drama as idealized life or revealed truth remained strong in the theorists and the dramatists who followed them. (Carlson 248)

As theatre entered the 20th century, it was swept up in the literary and artistic experiments in *post modernism*. However, experiments in post modernism did not move theatre away from the political or undermine its potency, rather, according to Linda Hutcheon, form became integral to content: "...what I want to call postmodernism is fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political" (Hutcheon

4). According to Lehmann: "Some of the key words that have come up in the international postmodernism discussion are: ambiguity; celebrating art as fiction; celebrating theatre as process; discontinuity; heterogeneity; non- textuality; pluralism; multiple codes, subversion; all sites..." (25). However, the significance of the experiments in post-modernism on political theatre is that they make it difficult, if not impossible for anyone to develop a singular dramaturgy. As Lehmann emphasizes, "... today a Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, who could develop 'the' dramaturgy of a post dramatic theatre , is unthinkable. The theatre of sense and synthesis has largely disappeared - and with it the possibility of synthesizing interpretation " (Lehmann 25). The task, then, is to identify and assign terms and definitions to the new without insisting that any one practice in theatre experimentation should be held up as "the norm" (Lehmann 25).

In the 2010 production of *Mother Courage* by Brecht, National Arts Centre director Peter Hinton had actors announce scenes from television screens. Even though the costumes and Mother Courage's wooden cart evoked the decade spanning 1624 to 1634, the use of television screens was a way of reminding the audience that Brecht's anti-war message was still current. Inserting these pre-recorded video sequences into the production could be viewed as a form of literalization designed to capture the attention of a generation raised on digital display (*Mother Courage* prod. 2010).

Regardless of the methodology, the principles of epic theatre are clearly at work on the contemporary stage, employing the *alienation A effect*, or in German, the *E (Verfremdungseffekt)* ⁴ effect, that allows the actor to adopt the "right attitude of detachment" (Brecht *Brecht* 138):

A common use of the A-effect is when someone says: "have you ever really looked carefully at your watch?' The questioner knows that I've looked at it

often enough, and now his question deprives me of the sight which I've grown used to...I used to look at it to see the time, and now...I realize that I have given up seeing the watch itself with an astonished eye; and it is in many ways an astonishing piece of machinery. (Brecht *Brecht* 144)

It was Brecht's goal to awaken in his audience this "astonished eye", and to achieve this he developed a repertoire of techniques that isolated objects, ideas, and characters in an effort to make the audience view them as if for the first time. This was accomplished by getting the audience to "break with the habit of assimilating a work of art as a whole" (Brecht *Brecht* 91), so that "they no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is really taking place" (Brecht *Brecht* 92).

Breaking ground for political playwrights in the 20th and 21st centuries, Brecht was looking for a theatre that would 'shake up' his audience. For him, that meant nothing less than a revisiting of social relationships. As part of this new exact aesthetics, carefully constructed and rehearsed *gestus* or *gest* would break through the obscure falsehoods of the past and portray alternative relationships, relationships that would herald a new social contract.

The *gest* and the way of speaking have to be carefully chosen and formed on a large scale...The little scene where Vlassova ⁵ gets her first lesson in economics...is by no means just an incident in her own life; it is an historic event: the immense pressure of misery forcing the exploited to think. (Brecht *Brecht* 83)

Gest then is a carefully constructed *mise-en-scène* that underscores and heightens the lesson of the play, ideas wrapped up in the matrix of communication utilizing all of Brecht's devices, framing, literalization, "elegant movement and graceful grouping ...inventive miming" (Brecht *Brecht* 204), direct address, and of course music and song.

It is therefore no coincidence that Brecht's scientifically identified "exploiting and dominating process" echoes Karl Marx. According to Elisabeth Hauptman, Brecht stated: "When I read Marx's *Capital* I understood my plays" (qdt. in Willett 23). Brecht's desire to explore and re-work on stage the conduct of individuals is reminiscent of Lessing and directly linked to Piscator. "We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relationships in which action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself" (Brecht *Brecht* 190). The act of turning the audience into an alert, responsive and ultimately active witness required new forms fueled by a new purpose.

As Lessing, Piscator and Brecht all demonstrate, political theatre is a conversation with its audience and with history; it elevates the act of seeing into one of witnessing, it turns the observer into someone with a task and a responsibility. Political theatre seeks to make the spectator active rather than passive. All political theatre seeks to awaken the astonished eye, because change begins with a new perspective on what currently exists.

A new perspective on 'what happened' is what David Hare is searching for as he revisits the decision to invade Iraq in *Stuff Happens*. It is also what Thompson and Raffo are attempting to illuminate in *Palace of the End* and *9 Parts of Desire*, plays that focus on the testimonies of individuals struggling under the umbrella of larger events. Kushner's fictional and mysterious *Homebody/Kabul* is also an attempt to awaken our view of the history of Afghanistan and our complicity in that country's violent and fractured past.

Searching for an aesthetics of the exact

In his introduction to *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, Manfred Pfister states "my intention has been to establish a systematic general theory" and to "avoid falling into the trap of making normative and proscriptive value judgments" (xv). To this end, Pfister is concerned not with critical opinion but with "a detailed and sophisticated description of its [theatre's] structures and textualization processes" (xv). This same approach is evident in Brecht's *A Short Organum for The Theatre*. Both these theorists are committed to the "aesthetics of the exact" (Brecht 180), an aesthetics that would serve a moral purpose. With this 'aesthetics of the exact' in mind, let us review the goal of each chapter in this study.

In chapter one we will address David Hare's *Stuff Happens* and verbatim theatre. Strictly speaking, verbatim, by definition, means "Using exactly the same words; or, corresponding word for word" (Canadian Dictionary 1505), but as a designation for an entire genre of theatre, the term is relatively new. According to Christopher Innes, "...it [verbatim] is an attempt by the playwright to reflect public figures as authentically and recognizably as possible, using speeches taken for the most part directly from interviews" (436). I will examine Hare's play to determine to what extent it corresponds to verbatim theatre and to what extent Hare departs from the form. In particular, a close look at the playwright's departures from verbatim will reveal how he has harnessed more than one form to create a superior historical narrative. For Hare the techniques of verbatim provide material to ground the play in recognizable facts and incidents, however Hare's structure of the incidents mirrors Shakespeare directly, drawing on what Peter Szondi describes as Shakespeare's "loose and multiplace succession of scenes" in which a "narrator, designated 'Chorus,'" presents the individual

acts to the audience as chapters in a popular history" (10). This structure is most evident in Shakespeare's *Henry V* which provides a clear model for *Stuff Happens*.

In chapter two I will look at two plays, *Palace of the End* by Judith Thompson and *9 Parts of Desire* by Heather Raffo analyzing how both these texts conform to the theatre of testimony. My template for this analysis is what Aleida Assmann has identified as the "genre of testimony" (261). According to Assmann "History and memory, then, are no longer considered to be rivals and more and more are accepted as complementary modes of reconstructing and relating to the past" (263). What are the implications of this statement for theatre based on real people, delivered as testimony? One of the most obvious characteristics of both *Palace of the End* and *9 Parts of Desire* is that they are written almost exclusively in monologic speech. This raises the question of whether there is such a thing as a purely monologic address in the theatre. According to Anne Ubersfeld writing in *Reading Theatre 3 Theatrical Dialogue*, "Non-dialogues - monologues and soliloquies - are by nature dialogical, and indeed doubly so: first because they presuppose, by virtue of their being theatre, a present but silent listener, the spectator" (25). But, "They are further dialogical in that they almost necessarily include an internal split as well as the presence, within the speech of any given speaker, of an "other" enunciator" (25). This "other enunciator" would be the voice of the playwright. As we view these plays through the lens of the theatre of testimony we will see that the presence of monologic speech and its many internal "other" voices both complicates and enriches the testimonial voice in the theatre.

Finally, in chapter three I will address Tony Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul* through the lens of Lubomír Doležel's fictional worlds theory asking the questions: what kind of fictional world is Kushner creating and what is its function? For clarity's sake, Doležel's

fictional worlds theory can be reduced to a function: "*fictional particular* P(f) represents *actual particular* P (a)" (*Heterocosmica* 6).

Obviously, the mimetic function provides a referential semantics of fictionality. By matching a fictional particular with an actual counterpart - ... a fictional story with an actual event ... - it assigns referents to fictional terms." (Doležel *Heterocosmica* 6)

We will see first in *Homebody/Kabul* how Kushner, as described in the previous quote, has grafted a fictional story onto actual events. However, we will also ask if Kushner has gone one step further and created a "possible world" which Doležel would define as a "human construct" that is "a potential tool of empirical theorizing" (*Heterocosmica* 14). In addition to being a fictional world, does *Homebody/Kabul* also describe a possible world; effectively allowing the play to function as an "interpretive model" (*Heterocosmica* 14). In *Homebody/Kabul*, a play set in Kushner's imagined Afghanistan, fictional characters are forced to negotiate an imaginary hostile territory. They make choices and achieve a satisfying resolution the result of an unusual compromise. According to Doležel, "Possible worlds of historiography are *counterfactual scenarios* that help us to understand actual-world history. Similarly, possible worlds of action theory explain human acting by envisaging different *possible courses* of the agent's life history..." (*Heterocosmica* 14.) We see this envisioning of an alternative course of action acted out in *Homebody/Kabul*. The fact that choosing an alternative way of acting involves taking a moral stance is why the play fits the definition of Elinor Fuchs' modern mysterium. According to Fuchs, "modern drama never shed the mystery impulse; it continued to be expressed in the dramatic texts of expressionism and surrealism, in revolutionary Marxist theatre, in the metaphysical theatre of the absurd and beyond, evolving as a distinct, twentieth-century genre" (37). Just as the medieval

morality play became a theatrical site where human beings were instructed in moral behaviour, Fuchs' *mysterium* is also a moral place. The goal is not to achieve a purging of the emotions, which Aristotle defines as catharsis [*katharsis*: "cleansing", "purification"] (59), but to observe a lesson related to our ethical conduct. It is possible that the four plays chosen for this study may indeed cause the audience to experience a 'purging of their emotions', many of the characters portray grave injustices and profound suffering. However, the main question is whether these texts, as political theatre, take us to a moral place of ethical instruction, a site where we may not necessarily find the truth, but where we will see enacted the struggle to attain it. If such instruction is evident in these plays, it will not be unprecedented.

A struggle for the truth occurs in Gotthold Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*, a play with a plot that resonates in our contemporary world. Having adopted his daughter Rachel as a child, Nathan is accused of the "crime" of raising the girl, born a Christian, as a Jew. For this transgression, whether committed knowingly or not, the Patriarch informs us, "The Jew must burn" (*Nathan* 249). In the end, of course, this is not what happens. In a gesture both dramatic and political, Lessing allows his characters to find consensus and a way to live in the world despite their different religious views. In his introduction to the play, Demetz asserts that Lessing goes even further than simply finding a solution to one man's plight, as *Nathan the Wise* "...articulates the suspicion that perhaps in the great religions of the Jews, the Muslims and the Christians, a fourth religion might be hidden, one that is essential to all of them" (Demetz xxvi). What could be more important for any society, in the 18th century or the 21st, than to cast aside Reza Aslan's "cosmic war", and simply find, as Lessing would have us discover through theatre, 'a way to live in the world'.

CHAPTER ONE: *Stuff Happens* by David Hare

Play synopsis: In the months following the attacks of September 11, 2001, George W. Bush, 43rd President of the United States meets with his key advisors to discuss an appropriate military response. The dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein and his reported stockpile of weapons of mass destruction dominate the discussion. Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld are in favour of an invasion of Iraq, while Collin Powell is the only Bush advisor opposed. Negotiations eventually secure the support of Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair and in March of 2003, the U.S. and Britain successfully invade Iraq. Bush declares victory. No weapons of mass destruction are found.

Intro: contesting history

Judgment. Judgment is at the heart of the theatre. (Hare *Left-Handed* 26)

David Hare's *Stuff Happens* is a play about the lead up to the invasion of Iraq by U.S. and British forces in 2003. The play is based on actual events and features 49 characters based on real people. The play's dialogue is taken from parliamentary records, speeches, interviews, transcripts, and photographs. But, in addition to these techniques which conform to verbatim theatre, Hare constructs a classic Aristotelian plot and identifies a tragic hero. The result of this experiment is a powerful and important historical narrative about the consequences of the abuses of power played out on a global scale.

In this chapter, I will first determine if *Stuff Happens* is verbatim theatre. I will then address the functions of other elements such as a classically constructed plot and the presence of a tragic hero. The third task is to consider whether *Stuff Happens* qualifies as a historical narrative. This will require addressing first whether the dramatic text itself

can be a narrative. Finally, if *Stuff Happens* is a historical narrative, what makes the play so effective in its portrayal of the events it depicts?

In addition, we will discover that Hare is, by his own admission, an emulator of Shakespeare. Scenes in *Stuff Happens* mirror the effect of Shakespeare's Chorus in *Henry V*, where poetic rhetoric takes us quickly, "with imagined wing" from one "swift scene" to another (*Henry V* 2. 3. 495). But *Stuff Happens* also imparts "a sense of how history pulls us this way and that, of how we live among one another, and how everything in our own personal, even our spiritual lives is affected by how we came to be who we are" (Hare *Left Handed* xiv).

Is Stuff Happens verbatim theatre?

Christopher Innes notes that the task of verbatim theatre is to portray public figures "authentically" (436), and that would appear to be Hare's goal.

Stuff Happens is a history play, which just happens to centre on very recent history. The events within it have been authenticated from multiple sources, both private and public. What happened happened. Nothing in the narrative is knowingly untrue. Scenes of direct address quote people verbatim. When the doors close on the worlds' leaders and on their entourages, then I have used my imagination. (Hare *Stuff* Intro).

Aside from his own use of the word verbatim, Hare is describing much of what verbatim theatre purports to do: re-construct an event from the public record using real people speaking the words they spoke in order to represent as realistically as possible the events that occurred. But verbatim theatre is a relatively new label and, as it appears, not a rigidly fixed form. Christopher Innes credits Alecky Blythe, Artistic Director of the Recorded Delivery Theatre Company in New York, with labeling "this

style of documentary drama, at its most extreme, *verbatim theatre*"(436), and Blythe's application of verbatim is indeed unique:

I create plays from recorded interviews which are edited but not transcribed. Rather than learning a text, the actors copy the speech patterns and physicality of the interviewee. The show is rehearsed and performed with the actors wearing earphones through which they hear the edited interview playing, and they copy exactly what they hear, including every cough, stutter and hesitation. (Blythe 101)

Blythe appears to be alone in applying verbatim so literally to the rehearsal and performance process. This method of playing the interviewed subject's recorded voice into the actors' ears while they perform for an audience is not evident in *Stuff Happens*. More commonly verbatim theatre exhibits transcripts of one-on-one interviews, testimonies, the use of the first person narration, and actors portraying the actual interviewed subject.

Another theatre practitioner who calls his work verbatim is director Lloyd Newson of DV8 Physical Theatre. In a discussion with Newson, Friday, November 27, 2009, at the Fourth Stage of the National Arts Centre, he described his process of working with actors as a kind of 'distillation' of the text. The creative team of DV8 interviewed some 200 subjects from which they chose 85 narratives that would become the basis of their production *To Be Straight With You*. Newson and cast took the material through various edits and gradually honed in on repeated phrases or refrains. However, Newson is adamant that the majority of monologues that are in the show were subjected to little in the way of 'aesthetic manipulation'. Newson also labels this form of theatre creation, *verbatim theatre* since it begins and ends with the story of a subject related in the first person (Newson DV8).⁶

In the case of what we call documentary theatre, 'word for word' verisimilitude is not the goal. Janelle Reinelt is opposed to the term verbatim theatre, partly because she believes it is unobtainable and partly because the confusion of the two terms, verbatim and documentary "...needlessly ups the ante on the promise of documentary" (Reinelt *Get Real* 14). Derek Paget notes in practical terms that "the development of verbatim theatre can be said to have been facilitated by the portable cassette recorder" (Paget *Verbatim Theatre* 317). His observations are supported by Yvette Hutchison:

Central to verbatim theatre is the use of technology, both literally on stage and symbolically. Significantly, surveillance has become ubiquitous in this century suggesting an obsession with observation, and verifying reality in the slippery, uncertain world of postmodern constructedness. (Hutchison 210)

However, Paget has compiled a chronology of some twenty-four plays dating from 1971 which he considers verbatim if they meet the criteria of containing "substantial elements" of "purely verbatim material, tape-recorded and transcribed" (*Verbatim Theatre* 323). This criteria again highlights the role of technology in verbatim's narratives; if you are scribbling an interview by hand or from memory, you are less likely to get it word for word.

For the purpose of clarity, I will consider that the word 'verbatim' describes what is real, or what attempts to be real in the dramatic text: the presence of word for word excerpts from speeches, text from interviews conducted in print or other media, characters with the names of known persons, and scenes where a re-construction of an event that actually took place are a part of the play. All these devices constitute what is currently accepted as verbatim theatre and one label will do for this study.

An example of a methodological approach that Hare uses is contained in the following two examples:

- On March 18, 2003, British Prime Minister Tony Blair addressed Parliament on the motion of whether Britain should join the US in mounting an invasion of Iraq. His speech was 4,482 words. From this text Hare excerpted exactly 44 words. These 44 words, free of any intervention or paraphrase, appear at the end of Act Two, Scene 22.
- On Thursday, May 1, 2003, aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, George W. Bush delivered his post invasion 'victory' speech, some 1,826 words long, from which Hare extracted 126 words, again without any modification to the extracted text.

However, just before this speech is delivered by the actor playing Bush in Act Two, Scene 23, Hare provocatively adds the following: "AN ACTOR. Thanks to an artful arrangement of jump-suit groin-straps, George W. Bush, 43rd President of the United States, shows his balls to the world" (*Stuff* 115).

President George W. Bush on board the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (Bush Photo)



The stage directions then indicate that: "*Bush gets out of his plane and struts across the deck to inspect the troops. Military bands. Parade. Then Bush speaks*" (*Stuff* 115). These lines in the play are a clear invitation for the director and actor to present Bush as described. The photo shown here of Bush surrounded by pilots and crew aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln is visual proof that Hare based this passage on an event that actually took place. In addition to transcripts, interviews and speeches, the playwright has also used

photographic evidence which contains the narrative of a 'macho' president strutting around on board an aircraft carrier after ordering the bombing of Iraq.

Having established that Hare is using verbatim techniques we must consider how he has approached some of the fundamental elements such as plot, characters and space and time in *Stuff Happens*. In my introduction to this chapter I stated that Hare had constructed his play using the model of a classic Aristotelian plot. So we will examine the plot of *Stuff Happens* with this model in view.

Plot in verbatim theatre

Story and plot are two different things. The story is what happened, the plot is how it happened. Plot, according to Aristotle is "the structure of the incidents" (8). Further, in the presentation of those incidents we must be able to distinguish "a whole action which has some magnitude", and "which has a beginning, a middle and a conclusion" (Aristotle 10). For this reason, plot is rooted in action, usually the actions of characters, and is accomplished by two key agencies: "the most important thing with which a tragedy enthralls [us] are parts of plot - reversals and recognitions" (Aristotle 9). Thus tragedy is best served by the complex plot, in which "a change of the actions to their opposite" occurs (Aristotle 14). Further, there is recognition, "a change from ignorance to knowledge, and so to either friendship or enmity, among people defined in relation to good fortune or misfortune" (Aristotle 14).

The third element of plot is suffering: "These, then, reversal and recognition, are two parts of plot. A third is suffering...a destructive or painful action...deaths in full view, agonies, woundings..." (Aristotle 15).

The story of *Stuff Happens* is the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The arrangement of the incidents, Hare's plot, incorporates well known facts leading up to that invasion. The author, as previously quoted, has not incorporated anything that is "knowingly untrue".

But he has, out of necessity, been selective. Hare's play is principally about George Bush, his team of advisors and how they negotiate amongst themselves and the rest of the world as they try to attain their goal of instigating a war. The character of Tony Blair figures prominently, as securing Britain's cooperation is key to the success of an invasion. But there is not one scene in the play set in Iraq, and it would be difficult to argue, based on the historical record, that the pending 2003 invasion did not cause great consternation in that country. There may be two reasons for this absence of Iraq's leadership from the play. First, Hare may be deliberately underscoring the point that Iraq became essentially passive while the fate of its citizens rested in the hands of more powerful nations. Secondly, what went on in Iraq is not what *Stuff Happens* is about. What is excluded from a play as well as what is included is where the playwright's skill and discipline is most evident in the creation of any plot. This is no less true of a play based on verbatim sources than one constructed from fiction. Hare's play is focused on the political personalities that surrounded George Bush and Tony Blair, and his play describes how these characters arrived at the decision to go to war. In order to meet the other important criteria of plot, that it exhibit a 'whole action' which has 'magnitude', Hare has focused on the dramatic action of a group of characters bent on fulfilling one desire. As a result, his play also has moments of 'recognition': the moment when we know the invasion is inevitable, which is also the moment when Colin Powell, opposed to the invasion, has been defeated. The suffering of the people of Iraq, foreshadowed by Powell, is also now inevitable. In this respect, Hare has constructed a superior plot, a tragic one.

That which is terrifying and pitiable can arise from spectacle, but it can also arise from the structure of the incidents itself; this is superior and belongs to a better poet. (Aristotle 17)

In so far as the theatre of verbatim is about real events, Hare's play conforms to the form. In so far as a plot must have an arrangement of incidents that describes a whole action of significance, moments of recognition and suffering, that too is in evidence. Hare has combined the verbatim techniques of using real characters and presenting an accurate account of what they did and said with a classically constructed Aristotelian plot. To understand why he did that we are assisted by the playwright himself as stated in an interview with Eleanor Wachtel of the CBC's Writers & Company:

HARE: I hate verbatim theatre myself...in which people come in a pious sort of way and address the audience...and we're meant to feel a sense of righteousness...

WACHTEL: Verbatim Theatre, is that what we used to call oral history...?

HARE: Yes...there's a lot of that kind of documentary theatre, which always gives me a pain in the neck...because I always feel *got at*...[Hare's emphasis]...what I tried to do is break the form up...people who have seen the play [*The Power of Yes* ⁷] have said it's more like an installation than a play...I've tried to use the dialogue more in a Glenn Gould musicali ⁸ sort of way, rather than direct address.

WACHTEL: What appeals to you about this kind of theatre...based on transcripts.

HARE: It's good for a writer to be rebuked by reality...to have your view of the world refreshed by actually talking to people...[it's] a reminder of complexity... (Wachtel *Interview with David Hare* 2010)

Of particular significance in this exchange with Wachtel is Hare's statement that it is important for a writer to be "rebuked" by reality and to be reminded of "complexity". Regarding his derogatory comment about verbatim or documentary theatre, Hare

seems to be disparaging an attitude of self-righteousness rather than the form itself. As previously noted, Hare's introduction to the play acknowledges that his "Scenes of direct address quote people verbatim" (Hare *Stuff* Intro). So, this playwright *uses* verbatim, but he doesn't write 'verbatim' plays. What we can conclude is that as far as Hare is concerned verbatim techniques, the transcripts, the interviews, are all tools, and his overall goal is to 'break up the form' in the service of creating something unique.

Character: the soul of verbatim

Aristotle ranked plot foremost over character: "plot is the origin and as it were the soul of tragedy, and the characters are secondary" (19). But, as it is human agency that propels action it is understandable that a debate exists over which is the most important. The plot is the story of the invasion of Iraq. However, we know the outcome, so suspense is hard to come by, until you examine the play's characters. The 'soul' of Hare's drama would appear to be in his characters.

The theatrical context highlights even the most mundane of details, therefore everything we learn about a character even the minutest detail is important. Of the major players, Colin Powell is the first character we meet:

POWELL. After Vietnam, many in my generation vowed that when our turn came to call the shots, we would not quietly acquiesce in half-hearted warfare for half-baked reasons. Politicians start wars; soldiers fight and die in them.

AN ACTOR. He is awarded the Legion of Merit and evolves what becomes known as the Powell doctrine:

POWELL. War should be the politics of last resort. (Hare *Stuff* 4)

In opposition to Powell, the decorated war hero, Dick Cheney is "rock-hard, bland", a young man who "achieved a total of five student deferments in order to avoid being

drafted to Vietnam" (Hare *Stuff* 3). As for Donald Rumsfeld, "In locker-room terms, Don is a towel-snapper" (Hare *Stuff* 5). Bush is introduced last, his verbal sketch strangely at odds with everyone else:

BUSH. My faith frees me. Frees me to put the problem of the moment in proper perspective. Frees me to make decisions which others might not like...There is only one reason I am in the Oval Office and not a bar. I found God. I am here because of the power of prayer. (Hare *Stuff* 9)

As sketched by Hare, Bush seems in another world, floating on a plane of spiritual existence. These characters sketches are followed by this summary:

ACTOR. These are the actors, these are the men and women who will play parts in a defining drama of the new century. And at their head is a snappish young man, seeking his fortune in the oil-rich Permian Basin of West Texas, who will, one day, like forty-six per cent of his fellow Americans, say he has been born again. (Hare *Stuff* 9)

The choice to describe Bush, finally, as "seeking his fortune" in oil, not to mention snappish, young and "born again", paints the picture of a man with a selfish agenda, privileged, with a narrow view of the world and not to be trusted. More to the point of the *fabula*, this arrangement of the characters contains a classic element of fiction making because our 'hero', Powell, has been clearly identified. If Cheney, Rumsfeld, or Bush possess redeeming characteristics they are irrelevant. Choices have been made and with them the play's opening *state of equilibrium*⁹ clearly established. The world of this play contains characters who possess strongly different ideological points of view on how to serve and protect their country, and all are ambitious men. Cheney used his power to stay out of Vietnam, Rumsfeld is a bully, Bush believes his power is ordained, but Powell believes that serving his country means keeping it out of unnecessary wars. It is

Hare's portrayal of that eventual failure of Powell to achieve his goal that will give us a tragic hero.

But this identifying of a tragic hero is not necessarily inconsistent with what we find in theatre based on fact. Hans-Thies Lehmann reminds us that "in documentary theatre little depends on the outcome..." (55). What is "thematically at stake" in the documentary is the assigning of guilt (55). This assertion is echoed in Hare's line from *Writing Left-Handed* which I quoted in my introduction to this chapter: "Judgment. Judgment is at the heart of the theatre" (26).

Again, in this regard Powell is the character with the most dramatic through line. He is the man with the real military past who served his country, surrounded by sycophants who didn't. The one man - or so it appears in the play - who knows the cost of war. But he is also the man who will fail in his mission. In tragic Shakespearian fashion, Powell is the advisor with integrity who can't get through to his fallible leader because he is surrounded by a pack of scheming Iagos tearing at his credibility:

BUSH. I spoke strongly to Donald. It's not going to happen again.

POWELL. It should never have happened at all! Rumsfeld cut my legs off.

There is an angry silence. Bush shifts again, uncomfortable.

POWELL. Ok, so I've had this experience, and now I'm looking at the current planning - planning for Iraq - and all I can see is a group of people getting a hard-on about the idea of war, and no one giving a damn for the reality. Ten times more excitement about going in than there is about how the hell we get out! (Hare *Stuff* 52)

Prone to passionate outbursts, cursed with indisputable logic, Powell doesn't realize that the deck is stacked against him. The following speech is delivered by Powell to Dominique de Villepin of the French delegation to the UN, and witnessed by members

of the international community including John Negroponte, Jack Straw, Jeremy Greenstock, Igor Ivanov and Sergey Lavrov.

POWELL. If anyone's stupid enough to think this is payback time for whatever grudge they happen to be nursing against the US...then what they'll be doing in effect is condemning Iraqi women and children to the sort of bombardment which is going to make them wish they'd never been born. And possibly civil chaos after. (*Hare Stuff* 76)

Powell's fate is that of any tragic hero: doomed to be right and sane in a world gone mad. But, again key to the development of a tragic hero, we, the audience, are made aware of the some of the forces arrayed against him:

The Oval office, Bush alone at his desk. Rice comes in.

RICE. There's something I need to mention to you, sir.

BUSH. Whatever.

RICE. An imbalance.

BUSH. Tell me.

RICE. It's my job to balance our separate needs, separate requirements. The different departments. To listen. As of this moment, the Secretary of Defense knows your plans, sir. Donald's been part to them. You could say, some time back. (*Rice waits a moment.*) The Secretary of State doesn't know your plans. (*Hare Stuff* 90)

In the next scene Bush summons Powell and tells him he has made up his mind to invade Iraq. Moments later, Cheney and Rumsfeld belittle Blair.

POWELL. Blair's been with us! He's been with us all along!

CHENEY. So?

Cheney is grinning. Now Bush joins in.

BUSH. Dick doesn't like him.

CHENEY. I don't trust him. New Labour. What the hell does that mean?

We don't call ourselves the New Republicans.

RUMSFELD. We're not a friggin' girl band. (*Hare Stuff* 103)

Protagonists aren't belittled, they are attacked, behaviour meted out to Powell:

CHENEY. No. No, Colin. It's different for you.

POWELL. Why? Why's it different for me?

Powell waits. A real nastiness has come into the room.

CHENEY. Because you can come running home whenever you need.

There's a deadly silence. Nobody says anything. Rice shifts, tactful. (*Hare Stuff* 105)

In the end, it is the character Powell who is forced to betray his own beliefs by making the case for war at the UN, a position in direct contravention to his stated goals throughout the play. Immediately after the previous exchange, the man who most fought against the march to war, is forced to take up the cry and lead the assault.

AN ACTOR. On February 5th Powell is prevailed upon to make a presentation to the UN, using a sound-and-light show to demonstrate his case for the 'imminent threat'.

Powell sits down, then holds up a small vial of anthrax. (*Hare Stuff* 105)

In this respect Powell suffers the ultimate defeat reserved for the tragic hero, self betrayal. By creating a through line for one character, an individual central to the main dramatic question of the plot¹⁰ - whether or not Iraq will be invaded - Hare's play tells the tale of the downfall of a decent man at the hands of the cynical, the corrupt and the intellectually compromised.

The pattern of characters

Manfred Pfister provides an interesting way of observing a pattern of appearance for all the characters in a play that allows us to make observations regarding their importance as a group. Pfister's chart allows us to observe what he calls the "configuration structure" of the dramatis personae (172). The chart below has been created, according to Pfister's design, to show this configuration in *Stuff Happens*.

STUFF HAPPENS

Characters	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Actor/Ensemble	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
George W. Bush			1	1		1	1	1			1	1		1		1	1		1				1	
Laura Bush							1																	
Dick Cheney			1	1			1	1				1		1		1				1			1	
Colin Powell			1	1			1				1	1		1	1	1	1		1	1			1	
Condoleezza Rice			1	1			1	1		1	1	1		1		1	1		1	1			1	
Donald Rumsfeld		1	1	1			1	1				1		1					1	1			1	
George Tenet				1			1					1												
Paul Wolfowitz			1				1			1				1		1							1	
Paul O'Neill				1			1																	
Michael Gerson										1														
Mark Dayton														1										
Dan Bartlett																					1			
John Negroponte															1	1								
John McCain																1								
Jessica Stern																							1	
David Kay																							1	
Ari Fleischer																							1	
Interviewer																							1	
Tony Blair			1	1				1		1				1			1					1		
Jack Straw								1		1					1									
David Manning								1		1				1			1					1		
Jonathan Powell								1						1			1					1		
Alastair Campbell								1		1							1							
Richard Dearlove														1										
Philip Basset														1										
Trevor McDonald																						1		
Alan Simpson																1								
Jeremy Greenstock																1						1		
Geoff Moon																						1		
Robin Cook																						1		
Jacques Chirac																						1		
Dominique de Villepin															1				1		1			
Maurice Montanagne																1		1		1				
Jean-David Levitte																1		1		1				
Gerard Frere																						1		
Saddam Hussein																		1						
General Amin																		1						
Hans Blix			1										1		1		1				1		1	
Kofi Annan			1										1		1		1				1		1	
Igor Ivanov																1								
Sergei Lavrov																1								
M. Ertugral																	1							
Ricardo Lagos																						1		
Yo-Yo Ma		1																						
Viewpoints					1				1				1					1						1

A Journalist

A New Labour Politician

A Palestinian Academic

Brit in New York

Iraqi Exile

The pattern of activity that we see spread across 24 scenes indicates a number of things. First, there is a core group of characters surrounding George Bush at the top.

A smaller cluster of activity can be seen mid-way down the chart surrounding Tony Blair. But the top cluster showing the American characters is clearly dominant. Thus, the configuration of the *dramatis personae* has helped us identify the two centres of power in the play. Secondly, Saddam Hussein appears once in Scene 17. Such a fleeting presence for the man whose country is about to be invaded supports the point Hare is making that the powerful will decide Iraq's fate, and Hussein was in no position to significantly influence the course of events one way or the other. The third item this chart highlights is the presence of Colin Powell in a total of twelve scenes. This supports the point that he is a central figure in the play. In order to chart the course of his struggle to prevent the war, and his eventual failure, it was necessary for Hare to have this character interact with others frequently in the play. Finally, this chart helps us identify the epic structure of the scenes. All the scenes, except one, begin with an actor or member of the Ensemble, shown at the top of the chart, who enters and tells us what is about to happen. The five scenes in which this does not happen are the Viewpoint scenes, listed at the bottom of the chart. These Viewpoint characters each speak a monologue directly addressing the audience. Similar to the Actors or Ensemble characters who announce the scenes, the Viewpoints function as elements of the epic structure of the play. They remind us that what we are watching is theatre and help to keep us alert to the lessons of the play. Like all epic devices, they are present to 'awake the astonished eye'. Scene 20, however, is an exception. There is no introductory narration by an Actor or by a Viewpoint. Yet this is the scene in which the actual decision is made to go to war. The absence of an introductory narrator for this scene underscores Hare's point that the decision to go to war was one from which the general

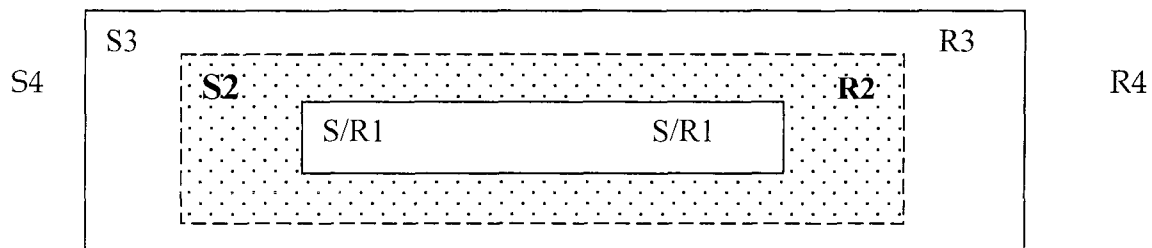
population was excluded; again, in the world of the play, power belongs to the few who will decide the fate of the many.

Thus an examination of the *dramatis personae* has helped reinforce the assertion that Colin Powell is a major character, highlighted the presence of epic devices, and identified two groups on opposite sides of the world, the U.S. and Britain, wrestling for control in a narrative that will affect many nations. The struggle Hare is describing is global.

Is a play a narrative?

In addressing Hare's *Stuff Happens* as a historical narrative, we must first begin by acknowledging the characteristics that complicate the narrativity of the dramatic text. First, there is the mediation process through which we receive a play - its channels of communication. Are these channels so indirect as to render the dramatic text invalid as a narrative? Manfred Pfister, writing in *The Theory and Analysis of Drama* underscores the problem: "Thus, dramatic texts may be distinguished from epic or narrative texts in that they are consistently restricted to the representative mode, the poet never allowing himself to *speak directly*" (Pfister 3). Pfister counters this assumption by noting that "...in light of recent narrative theory, one might object that even in narrative texts it is not the author himself who is speaking, but a fictional narrator created by him" (3). However, Pfister remains firm that "...this objection does not detract from the fundamental importance of this categorical distinction...whilst the receiver of a dramatic text feels directly confronted with the characters represented, in narrative text they are mediated by a more or less concrete narrator figure" (3).

Pfister's model for the *non*-dramatic narrative text is as follows:



In this model, "S4 stands for the actual author...as producer of the work, S3 for the 'ideal' author implied in the text as the subject of the whole work, S2 for the fictional narrator whose role in the work is formulated as the narrative medium, S/R1 for fictional characters communicating with each other through dialogue, R2 for the fictional addressee of S2, R3 for the implied 'ideal' receiver of the whole work, and R4 for the actual reader..." (3).

In his alternative model, intended to describe the dramatic text, Pfister eliminates the middle box, leaving positions S2 and R2 vacant. This eliminates the "narrative medium", without whom we do not have a line of communication between the actual author and the receiver. It is as if the author of the text is 'hiding' behind the characters.

This process is further complicated when the text is staged. In the transition from page to stage, the playwright's words are re-interpreted by a collaborative process which activates a "Repertoire of Codes and Channels" (Pfister 8), of which the actor is only one. The acoustic (verbal, musical or soundscape) and the visual (set, costumes, banners) or both (multimedia) are the most common (Pfister 8). The influence of this matrix of communication is to emphasize and enhance the meaning of the play.

According to Roland Barthes, "[Bertolt] Brecht's theatre is primarily concerned with conveying meaning and understanding rather than capturing a detailed illusion of reality" (qdt. in Fortier 29). For Barthes, "the responsibility of dramatic art is not so much to express reality as to signify it" (Fortier 29). Further to the subject of 'conveying

meaning', Hayden White proposes that "narrative is revealed to be a particularly effective system of discursive meaning production" (White x). In particular he notes that the fictional narrative is "...an unreal but meaningful relation to their social formations in which they are indentured to live out their lives", and "realize their destinies as social subjects" (White x).

Hare's play is all about political destiny, whether of individuals or whole nations. In *Stuff Happens* he presents us with word for word excerpts from speeches, quotes from interviews, and photographs of actual occurrences, all of which helps to establish the credibility of his narrative. Through his use of verbatim we understand that he wishes to explore a known event. But, he has admitted to fictionalizing those conversations that occurred away from the public eye. But, in these fictional encounters the playwright also has the opportunity to convey meaning and transmit his understanding of what occurred. As long as he does not stray too far from his established base of credibility, his fictional imaginings will be tenable. And what Hare believes occurred is a struggle for power, between individuals, Rumsfeld versus Colin Powell, between nations, the U.S. war hawks versus the reticent British, between political ideologies, the right to retaliate versus the responsibility to maintain peace.

In his 2010 interview with Eleanor Wachtel, Hare also stated the following: "It's [*Stuff Happens*] the great Shakespearian theme which is that power has its own way, and will always have its way ... you know one thing Shakespeare is not is an anarchist ... he believes in power, he believes that the person who has the power will always be able to impose themselves over the person who doesn't ..." (Hare *Interview* Wachtel).

In *Stuff Happens*, Hare emphasizes the power relationship between nations by simply quoting what President Bush said:

BUSH. ... All nations should know: America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation's security. I will not wait on events while dangers gather. I will not stand by as peril draws closer and closer. History has called America and our allies to action. Steadfast in our purpose, we now press on. We have known freedom's price. We have shown freedom's power. And in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom's victory. (Hare *Stuff* 33)

A few lines later, commenting on this speech a character identified as a Foreign Office Official responds to the speech: "We all smiled at the jejune language. It sounded straight out of Lord of the Rings" (Hare *Stuff* 33).

Bush's speech, an excerpt from his January 29th 2002 State of the Union address (Hare *Stuff* 32), makes no mention of 9/11. Indeed, in a previous scene Hare shows Bush dismissing Osama Bin Laden:

BUSH. Our objective is more than bin Laden. I just don't spend that much time on him, to be honest. Focusing on one person indicates to me that people don't understand the scope of this mission. Terror is bigger than one man. (Hare *Stuff* 30)

There is a lesson in Hare's arranged *fabula*¹¹, a lesson about power and what it does to countries and men. There are few decisions a nation can make that have more impact on the rest of the world than the decision to invade another state. In *Stuff Happens* we witness the detailed progress toward war at the beginning of the 21st century.

The nature of theatre, with its broad repertoire of codes and channels of communication also has the ability to intensify the act of 'meaning creation'. Hare has deliberately constructed his scenes to serve as sites contesting the merits of going to war. But in each of these scenes those arguing against the impending conflict are

defeated, not by the weakness of their arguments, but by duplicity and arrogance; forces which reflect Hare's theme that "power will have its way". In the end, we are left to conclude that logical argument is of scant concern in the play; the 'meaning' of *Stuff Happens* is that the United States will invade Iraq. Thus Hare's narrative has also assigned culpability, or as Lehmann would have it, identified the guilty.

The mediation of the narrative in the dramatic text is indeed complex. But it is precisely these complexities that help to create a richer and more nuanced way of representing the struggle for the truth. The dramatic text allows the playwright to acknowledge, to return to Pinter's words, that the truth is 'forever elusive', because the dialogic speech of a play is by its nature always *searching* for the truth. This also has the effect of placing the onus on the audience to respond, and to create meaning for itself. It is the task of the audience to decide if they are for or against an argument, and what manner of communication brings us closer to the truth than the multiplicity of contested viewpoints.

This notion of a site of debate as one of truth is also found in what Bakhtin describes as *dialogical* truth versus *monological* truth. According to Philip Auslander, Bakhtin's "...monological truth is presented as a single voice...It...allows for no contradiction [it is] like a declaration from the Pope or the President...Dialogical truth...is the "truth" that emerges...in the midst of...an undirected intersection of voices...It is not the unity of a system but the unity of a dynamic event, a dialogue that involves struggle and contradiction" (Auslander 41).

Monological truth would be that established by the single narrator, communicating directly to the reader. This does not necessarily mean something is true, rather that it is uncontested. Dialogical communication is evident in the mediation of the theatre where the playwright speaks through the characters, who speak to each other, and then to the

audience. It is a "dynamic event" that allows for contradiction. In this way, the playwright has the ability to create a form that can articulate struggle and contradiction.

We can see this dialogical form of truth contesting in the following exchange:

POWELL. I want us to go about this in a different way.

Bush and Rice wait for Powell to calm.

Three thousand of our citizens died. They died in an unforgivable attack.

But that doesn't license us to behave like idiots. If we reach the point where everyone is secretly hoping that America gets a bloody nose, then we're going to find it very hard indeed to call on friends when we need them.

The other two are silenced by the depth of Powell's feelings. Then Bush speaks.

BUSH. I've said before: this isn't a popularity contest, Colin. It isn't about being popular.

POWELL. No, it isn't. You're right.

BUSH. No.

POWELL. It's about being effective. And the present policy of being as high-handed as possible with as many countries as possible is profoundly counter-productive. It won't work.

Bush is silent.

POWELL. There's an element of hypocrisy, George. We were trading with the guy! [Saddam Hussein] Not long ago. People keep asking, how do you know he's got weapons of mass destruction? How do we know? Because we've still got the receipts. (Hare *Stuff* 53) ¹²

As powerful as it is, this conversation between Bush and Powell with Rice listening is fictional. It is private, it is emotional, taking place just before Bush goes to bed at 10 pm. But this does not prevent Hare from giving Powell's statements a ring of urgency

and authority in which the meaning is clear; if there was an 'element of hypocrisy' in our dealings with Iraq in the past, what about now and the future. In the case of *Stuff Happens*, verbatim is the credible platform upon which the fiction of believability is erected.

Truth & the historical narrative

Moving now from the play as narrative, we will examine *Stuff Happens* as historical narrative. Is the play giving us an accurate picture of the events leading up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq?

History comes to us in many forms. Evidence of battles, lists of who immigrated on what ship, gravestones, birth certificates, and accounts from historians of the time. It also arrives in the form of myths, evidence of rituals, pictorial representations, letters and diaries, all the various fragments and traces of personal lives. But all communication with the past is one-way; we can only decode: "historical communication" is "unilateral ... wherein reciprocity is impossible, because I do not have the presence of the men of the past, only their traces" (Ricoeur 68). So, how do we determine if the methods by which we decode the past are giving us a true picture of what happened?

To answer this question we must begin with the job of the historian: "Objectivity is just that: a work of methodical activity" (Ricoeur 23). It is important to note that Ricoeur is not stating that there is such a thing as historical objectivity, rather that there is a methodical activity one can apply to historical data; a process dependent upon precision and diligence that will provide some assurance that interpretation is accurate. As part of this "methodical activity", the historian approaches a document and in Ricoeur's words subjects it to "interrogation" by which process the document is "forced to speak" (23). The quality of that interrogation lies first with the questions asked. So,

we must consider what questions are being asked, and who is doing the asking. As Ricoeur notes, "We expect history to have a certain objectivity...", but, we also "expect the *historian* to have a certain quality of *subjectivity*..." (22). For, as he further cautions, "there is good and bad subjectivity, and we expect the very exercise of the historian's craft to decide between them" (22).

Bad subjectivity may present itself in the historian's work as a desire to interpret the facts in a particular way. An example of such a discourse occurs in the writings of Gustave Flaubert as identified by Edward Said. Flaubert's historical narratives exemplify Said's discourse of *orientalism*. Said argues that the Oriental, as viewed through the judgmental lens of the occidental European, was frequently portrayed as a distant, exotic, mysterious and unknowable other: "The eccentricities of Oriental life, with its odd calendars, its exotic spatial configurations, its hopelessly strange languages, its seemingly perverse morality" (Said 166), were interpreted as evidence of inferiority of cultural development. Thus, Europeans felt empowered to study the Orient from a European point of view and intellectual template. "In short, Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said 3).

Flaubert is a particular case in point for Said because, on the one hand, "His novels of the Orient...were labored historical and learned reconstructions...[containing] ... notes and letters that reveal a man scrupulously reporting events..." (184), on the other hand, diligent as he was, Flaubert was guilty of "delighting in their [the Oriental's] *bizarrieries*..." (184). Flaubert used the Orient as location and inspiration for much of his fictional writing, but nowhere is the oriental discourse, his delight in this 'bizarreness' of the Oriental, more present than in his 1862 novel *Salammbô*. Flaubert's diligence as a

researcher did not prevent this historical saga from deteriorating into a brutal fairy tale.¹³

Edward Said has his detractors, those who believe he pursued the Oriental discourse to the extreme, but that debate is not the focus of this study. Said's theories about what constitutes a discourse and how its presence can undermine the credibility of a historical report allows us to question whether the cultural background and inherent intellectual prejudices of the historical writer can lead to distortion in his or her historical narrative.¹⁴

In the case of *Stuff Happens*, Hare is a British playwright and the focus of his play is, with a few important exceptions, on the two major western powers, the U.S. and Britain, and how they negotiated their path to war. The character of Saddam Hussein has only one speech in the play where he apologizes lamely for any perceived offense:

SADDAM. We apologise to God about any act which has angered him in the past, and that was held against us, and we apologise to the Kuwaitis on the same basis. (Hare *Stuff* 86)

It is Saddam's incompetence that frustrates the British, not his belligerence, as evidenced by this exchange after the Iraqi government has submitted documents which were supposed to disclose their chemical weapons facilities:

MANNING. Twelve thousand pages - the whole thing a pointless re-hash.

BLAIR. The Americans are going to go crazy. They're going to say he's not in compliance...

MANNING. Cheney, Rummy, Wolfie...

BLAIR. Exactly. He's playing into their hands. They're all going to say, 'Oh great, now we can go to war!' I mean, really! This was Saddam's chance.

Why didn't he take it?

CAMPBELL. Because he's got the IQ of parsley. (Hare *Stuff* 88).

As mentioned earlier, the playwright chooses what to put into his arrangement of the plot, and what to leave out. Hare was surely aware of the debate simmering in all parts of the Middle East concerning the threat of invasion. Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa said an attack against the Iraqi leader would "open the gates of hell" in the Middle East (Warner Arab Views). Initially, the focus of *Stuff Happens* appears to be exclusively on the role of Western powers. Until we meet Hare's Palestinian Academic.

PALESTINIAN ACADEMIC. ... Why Iraq? The question has been asked a thousand times. And a thousand answers have been given. Why was the only war in history ever to be based purely on intelligence - ... - launched against a man who was ten years past his peak of belligerence? ... For Palestinians, it's about one thing: defending the interests of America's three-billion-dollar-a-year colony in the Middle East [Israel]. (Hare *Stuff* 59)

Later, Hare deliberately underscores the imperialistic attitude of the United States in this exchange:

BUSH. We need to show these people that we mean business.

POWELL. The Roman Empire. I'm familiar with the analogy. The Romans would always go out of their way to make an announcement: 'You are now dealing with the Roman Empire.' Yeah. So if you pricked a senator in Rome, if you just pricked him through his toga with a pin, then Roman soldiers would seek out the village you came from - ... - and they would kill all your family and burn down your house, ... But, sir, we're not Romans. And last time I looked at the constitution, we were still a republic, not an empire.

Bush looks chastened, as if Powell has finally reached him. (Hare *Stuff* 51)

What is interesting about this exchange is that it is quite possible Bush wasn't making an analogy. Second, Powell's reference to the Roman Empire helps us understand the means by which power *gets* its own way: the ultimate exercise of power is force.

Hare also gives the last word of the play to the character of the Iraqi Exile:

IRAQI EXILE. ... I mean, if there is a word, Iraq has been crucified. By Saddam's sins, by ten years of sanctions, and then this. Basically it's a story of a nation that failed in only one thing. But it's a big sin. It failed to take charge of itself. And that meant the worst person in the country took charge. Until this nation takes charge of itself, it will continue to suffer. (Hare *Stuff* 120)

What is significant about the Exile's speech is that it comes at the end of the play, after we have seen the characters of Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld engineer the invasion of Iraq - for no good reason. The references to a "nation that failed to take charge of itself" at the mercy of "the worst person in the country", could just as easily refer to the United States and Bush.

Both the Palestinian Academic and the Iraqi Exile are described by Hare in his introduction of the play's dramatis personae as Viewpoints. These Viewpoint characters also include A Brit in New York, A Journalist and A New Labour Politician. All of these characters are against the invasion in one way or another and they deliver their unabashed political opinions in the form of a persuasive rhetoric consistent with no holds barred political theatre.

We cannot expect a play, or any historical narrative, to give us every aspect of a story as complex as the 2003 invasion of Iraq. But the analogy Colin Powell makes about the Roman Empire expresses Hare's sentiment that the United States is acting belligerently. His Palestinian Academic tells us why he believes the war was waged, and his Iraqi

Exile tells us why it was possible to do it without opposition. In addition, as mentioned, Hare's point in not including more characters that represent opinions of the leadership in the Middle East is precisely because he is making the point that this war, which would be fought on their territory, was about U.S. interests exclusively.

But, it is fair to ask if this anti-war discourse of the Viewpoint characters invalidates the play as a historical narrative. To address this question, it is useful to remember that Roland Barthes poses the question of whether what we get from a fictional historical account is any less real or credible than other more 'scientific' accounts:

Does the narration of past events, which, in our culture from the time of the Greeks onwards, has generally been subject to the sanction of historical 'science', bound to the unbending standard of the 'real', and justified by the principles of 'rational' exposition - does this form of narration really differ, in some specific trait, in some indubitably distinctive feature, from imaginary narration, as we find it in the epic, the novel, and the drama?
(Barthes 2)

How could one portray the 2003 invasion of Iraq without somehow finding a way to dramatize the incredible tension, the world wide expressions of fear and frustration that existed in the lead up to that war. Powell's frustration in the preceding scene where he refers to the Roman Empire reminds us of that global tension.

But, the very qualities that make theatre 'questionable' as a historical narrative - the deliberate selection of specific events to create a plot, the different communication channels, the presence of fictional characters, the identification of one character's journey - all these devices make theatre a site of contestation, or debate. To present the debate about what is true or false may be as close as we can get to the 'real truth'.

Hare's play stands as a valid historical account of what a lot of nations and individuals *believed* was happening with respect to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. *Stuff Happens* captures the 'tenor' of those times, the experience of being a citizen of a Western power during the countdown leading up to a war we continue to live with as of the writing of this study.

Time, space & truth

Again, with respect to length, tragedy attempts as far as possible to keep within one revolution of the sun... but epic is unbounded in time. (Aristotle 7)

Hare has invented a new theatrical form - most akin to a Hogarthian lampoon,... In a mobile theatrical framework, brilliantly performed vignettes follow fleetingly upon one another, shifting dexterously from satire to opinion to information to debate. (Dromgoole 2004)

Both Aristotle, and Dominic Dromgoole writing in Britain's The Guardian, are referring to theatre's ability to manipulate time. In this section I will explore how the presentation of time and space in *Stuff Happens* further supports the playwright's theme of power in the play.

The 'mobility' of documentary theatre that Dromgoole refers to is the play's swift progress from scene to scene. *Stuff Happens* takes us from the White House to 10 Downing Street, to the United Nations and to other various localities amid overlapping dialogue where only moments are available to establish each new locale. This mobility is an epic technique; it reminds us that we are watching theatre.

This "epic time", as Aristotle first proposed, is indeed "unbounded". In plays using the epic structure we may experience the passage of days, years, even centuries through the intervention of scenes that leap forward or backward. This may be accomplished

through the agency of a chorus of one or more characters who describe offstage action, or address the audience directly telling them what will happen next.

Each of the plays in this study exhibits a particular chronotope, a word coined by Bakhtin to describe the quality of space and time as one.

We will give the name chronotope (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. (Bakhtin 15)

The core of Bakhtin's theory about the "inseparability of space and time" (Bakhtin 15), is that it allows him to assign a metaphorical value to various different chronotopes that he identifies. Plays that take place in a castle, for example, are "saturated" with "the historicity of castle time" (Bakhtin 19). History is made visible in the architecture of a castles with its motes, towers, and enclosing walls that conjure up past sieges. The castle is both a contained space for the trade and commerce of daily life as well as legal proceedings from the signing of treaties to the granting of petitions. Darkening its sense of historicity, the castle harbours secrets and may be the site of crimes related to the struggle for succession.

For Michel Foucault, time and space could be experienced as *utopias* or *heterotopias*. Utopias "are arrangements which have no real space" but are analogous "with the real space of society" in that "they represent society itself brought to perfection", such as a garden (*Heterotopias* 3). The heterotopia are "these places which are absolutely other with respect to all the arrangements that they reflect" (Foucault *Heterotopias* 3). The opposite of utopias, heterotopias may be places of isolation for the outcast. These are not physical spaces, per se, they may even be spaces that by themselves have little meaning. But a space may gain social significance because of the social and cultural edicts and expectations attached to time spent there (Foucault *Heterotopias* 3).

Identifying chronotopes, utopias or heterotopias may unlock clues to assist in realizing the full potential of a play's multidimensional universe. Understanding the metaphorical value of space and time in the text also provides clues to the themes of the play. On a practical level it may assist in the staging, the set design, lighting and costume or the use of sound and music.

In the case of Hare's *Stuff Happens*, we need to ask if the theme of power is effectively supported in the chronotope, or representation of space and time, in the play.

The first hint that the chronotope of time and space in the play supports the theme of power may be found in how, "The succession of different locales is used to present a vast tapestry of images in which public and private locales, interiors and scenes in towns or open countryside, aristocratic and plebeian environments, England and France are constantly being contrasted" (Pfister 255). Pfister is describing the movement of scenes in Shakespeare's *Henry V* where we fly from London and the Boar's Head Tavern (2.1. 490), to a council chamber in Southhampton (2.2. 491), to the Boar's Head again (2.3. 493), to a room in the French Kings palace (2.4. 494), thence to France again, but in the company of Henry and his army on the eve of an attack (3.1. 495). In *Stuff Happens* scenes also shift between the two dominant sites of power, in one swift succession we travel from Bush's Oval Office to his Ranch, then to Blair's office, to a meeting at the UN. In Act One, Scene Eight, we even have a scene that shows us both centers of power on stage at the same time:

"Bush is in the Oval Office, Cheney and Rice with him, listening to the call on speakerphone. Blair, David Manning, Jonathan Powell, and Alastair Campbell are in Blair's den in Downing Street." (Hare *Stuff* 28)

Just as Shakespeare's *Henry V* presents scenes that fly from a castle in Britain to the court of France, or from one opposing army to the other on the battlefield, Hare's sweep

is epic and spans the world. The chronotope of 'castle time' which evokes images of power is evident in the contemporary settings of the White House and Downing Street.

Earlier I quoted from the exchange between Bush and Powell when Powell asked the President to consider that the United States might be behaving like the Roman Empire. At this point in the play, Powell is successful in convincing Bush to seek the approval of the UN before launching the invasion of Iraq. This scene strikes a rare hopeful note in the play with Powell winning a small victory. The stage directions that end the scene provide an image that mirrors this sense that all might yet be right with the world:

The stage darkens. The White House glows in the night, creamy, surreal. An August evening in a Southern town. (Hare Stuff 55)

For this one moment in the play the White House does indeed look like a castle, a true beacon of freedom and democracy. It is also at this moment - isolated and glowing - a symbol of absolute power.

The boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself... (Foucault *Heterotopias* 5)

While Hare shows us two realms of power in all their Shakespearian grandeur, he also demolishes them with wit and satire so that another truth is uncovered: the two 'ships of state', American and British, are navigated by fools. This analogy is consistent with Foucault's heterotopias, places that are the opposite of utopias. The utopian dream of the democratic beacons of power bringing democracy to the world is demolished by what happens in the play as both centres of power blunder into a disastrous war.

Chapter conclusions:

Why is it important to Hare that *Stuff Happens* is received as a play about power? And why does this dramatic text, based on so much verbatim account, the meticulous gathering of extensive details and reportage, still manage to describe the fall of a tragic hero? Because, the "inevitable connection between personal behaviour and its social and political consequences is one of the strongest themes throughout Hare's work and is remarkably similar to a major theme of *Mother Courage and Galileo*" (Reinelt *After Brecht* 112). Or, as Hare's states in his interview with Reinelt, "...there's absolutely no way to keep a serious moral theme from emerging in the theatre..." (Reinelt *After Brecht* 112).

In the real world of Bush's circle of advisors, Colin Powell may have wavered in his support of the war, neither we nor Hare can be privy to every thought and exchange. But the meaning of Hare's play is still valid; when men of conscience or men who have experienced war are not listened to, yet more war is the outcome. And when a powerful nation becomes arrogant, the end is not good.

Hare's play is political because it shows political man at his best and worst. The man of noble intentions is thwarted. The war goes ahead. We need to know why this happened and watching *Stuff Happens* gives us the trajectory of that event. The meaning of the play is clear; a man of good intentions lost, he wasn't listened to. Because it wasn't about whether or not it made sense to invade Iraq, it was about invading in order to demonstrate the dominion of the United States on the world stage.

Referring back to the chart of *Stuff Happens*' dramatis personae and the pattern of the characters' appearances, not only do we have scenes that jump between the U.S. and Britain, but Hare's Viewpoint characters are interspersed throughout the play in a pattern similar to Shakespeare's Chorus in *Henry V*. The structure of *Stuff Happens*, with its scenes shifting rapidly between realms of power, interspersed with powerful

rhetorical speeches spoken by a chorus of individual Viewpoints, is solidly Shakespearean.

Verbatim, Aristotelian, Brechtian, Shakespearian, Hare's *Stuff Happens* is all these things. What holds it together is its reach for verisimilitude through the use of verbatim text and its determination to explore how power works. Few dramatists have the craft to wield all these elements so effectively into one play *and* accomplish the overriding directive of entertaining the audience. Further, Hare accomplishes this without slavish devotion to any one theatrical form or aesthetic but, as a playwright of some considerable artistic experience, he has the confidence (and audacity) to incorporate all that is useful and appropriate to his task.

CHAPTER TWO: *Palace of the End* by Judith Thompson & *9 Parts of Desire* by Heather Raffo

The politics of the personal is that the personal is *not* singularly about me.

(Heddon 161)

DAVID. The truth the truth must out *He yells*

I want to tell the TRUUUUUUUUUUTH

The truth the truth the truth the truth the awful horrible terrible

Truth... (Thompson *Palace* 25)

Play synopsis: Palace of the End

Judith Thompson's *Palace of the End* is written as three one-act plays:

It begins with *My Pyramids* inspired by Lynndie England, the American soldier convicted of prisoner abuse in Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. The Soldier, she is not named in the play, is nine months pregnant, confined to an office where she has been assigned a mundane "paper pushing" task (Thompson *Palace* 15).

The second monologue is entitled *Harrowdown Hill* and is based on the circumstances surrounding the suicide of Dr. David Kelly, a British weapons inspector accused of leaking secret government documents to the press. Kelly is sitting under a tree, dying of a self-inflicted wound.

The third monologue, *Instruments of Learning*, is drawn from a written testimony concerning the arrest and torture of Nehrjas Al Saffarah by Saddam Hussein's secret police. Nehrjas is sitting next to a window in her home in Baghdad overlooking a date palm.

Thompson's *Palace of the End* portrays three separate individuals in three separate worlds delivering testimonies all linked in some way to the history of conflict in Iraq.

Play synopsis: 9 Parts of Desire

Heather Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire* features the stories of nine women who speak monologues, relating experiences that begin during the first Gulf War and eventually encompass the events of 9/11 and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The characters we meet are:

- Mullaya, a professional mourner
- Layal, an artist under the protection of the regime of Saddam Hussein
- Amal, a Bedouin in search of love
- Huda, an Iraqi exile living in London
- A Doctor, herself sick and pregnant
- An Iraqi Girl, a teenager, chaffing under the American curfew
- An American, living in New York
- Nanna, an old street vendor scrounging amid Baghdad's ruins
- Umm Ghada, guardian of the Amiriyya bomb shelter where her daughter was burned alive

All the characters share one costume or prop, the abaya: "The abaya is a traditional black robe-like garment that has long been worn by both women and men in Iraq. It is not a veil, and it never covers the face..." (Raffo 66). This garment is worn by all the characters in many different ways, but it is a visually unifying image that signals a shared history with Iraq.

Introduction: history & testimony

In chapter one I examined verbatim theatre by looking at *Stuff Happens*, a play constructed from authentic documentation as well as invented fiction. I addressed the question of whether such a text constitutes a truthful historical narrative. In Judith Thompson's *Palace of the End* and Heather Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire*, we are also faced with the dramatic depiction of real events and real people, so once again the issue of truth is paramount. But, whereas Hare's *Stuff Happens* depicts a broad canvas of international politics played out on the global stage, *Palace of the End* and *9 Parts of Desire* are

concerned solely with the lives of individuals who share their private thoughts. This intimacy is strengthened by the nature of the dramatic text, monologues written in the first person delivered in direct address to the spectator.

In both these plays the narratives are shaped as testimonies. In order to examine this form I will be referring to what Shoshana Felman has defined as the "literature of testimony" (114). Similar to my discussion in chapter one, I will be concerned with the issue of historical truth. In the case of the testimony, however, the question is whether the historical narrative - based on the character's personal experience, sometimes deep trauma, and partly fictionalized - can still make a valid contribution to the historical record.

I will also examine the principle form of address in the theatre of testimony, the monologue. In both these plays characters speak their text uninterrupted and unchallenged by the other characters. In Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire* her nine characters appear one after the other. In the case of Thompson's *Palace of the End* all three characters are on stage throughout the entire play. The characters observing do not challenge the character speaking, however, this presence of an observer on stage is still important, as the observer of a testimony may reinforce or undermine the verisimilitude of what is being said by subtle behaviour, and by the mere fact of their sharing the same space.

In my introduction I quoted Heddon who states, to paraphrase, that the significance of the personal story lies in the fact that it contains a meaning beyond the scope of just one individual (161). My concern is with much more than a personal account of what an individual saw from a safe distance, how it looked from the air for example when the Twin Towers collapsed in New York on September 11, 2001. A testimony is an experience imbued with an authority and a truth that must be heard. The reason that

story must be heard - or more specifically 'witnessed' - is because the event described had a long lasting and devastating effect on the individual. This will lead to a discussion of what Kelly Oliver describes as "pathos beyond recognition" (79). In addition to providing emotional relief to the individual, a testimony may be of educational value. According to Aleida Assmann in *History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony*, the value of testimony lies in the fact that: "The question to be asked is no longer merely what has happened? but also how was the event experienced, how is it remembered and passed on to succeeding generations?" (261). The legacy of an event is transmitted through the individual's act of remembrance, a conscious act to make a trace element, ephemeral memory, into a document of history.

According to Kelly Oliver, in her article *Witnessing and Testimony*, the value of testimony lies in the fact that, "the facts of history cannot disclose the significance or meaning of historical context" (85). Further, Oliver suggests that: "Our inaccuracies and false beliefs also have meaning that can reveal something true about our desires and fears" (85). If, as discussed in chapter one, theatre must add to our understanding of not just what happened, but of what it meant, then we must ask if there is a place for the exploration of our misconceptions and fears during a time of crisis. The testimony is our route to the inner sanctum of private thought where these misconceptions and fears reside. The testimony allows us to understand not just what occurred, but how it made people feel. In this way the testimony is personal, historical and undeniably political.

Both Judith Thompson's *Palace of the End* and Heather Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire* are based on real people. Both playwrights have acknowledged using interviews and in some cases transcripts to create their characters. For this reason, I will also look at these plays through the lens of verbatim theatre. I will examine the information the playwright has drawn from the historical record, noting where they have departed to

fictionalize their account. Finally, I will view both these plays as sites for the "public commemoration" of "personal memories" (Assmann 263).

What distinguishes testimonio from autobiography, and what has generated much of its problematic character as a genre, is its mediated quality, the fact that an academic field worker must record, transcribe, and edit it. However, while troublesome for testimonio's "authenticity," such editorial participation actually constitutes a major aspect of the form's dramatic structure. (Brooks 182) ¹⁵

My goal is to prove that the theatre of testimony is emerging as yet another distinct form of political theatre. In mirroring the literature of testimony, I believe Thompson and Raffo are working with a superior form of playwriting, harnessing it to the goals of historical political theatre. They have also demonstrated that when delivered in the form of a testimony, memories and personal experiences - even those subject to fictionalizing, or that portray inaccuracies and prejudices - can become valuable historical documents.

I have paired *Palace of the End* and *9 Parts of Desire* in this chapter for a number of reasons. Both plays address individuals swept up in the events surrounding 9/11, or incidents directly related. Both describe Iraq's history of war with Western powers as a continuum, an arc of destabilization from the 1953 coup that brought Saddam Hussein to power, to the 1990-91 Gulf War, to 9/11 and the subsequent 2003 invasion. Both plays portray characters from or living in Britain, the United States, and Iraq, and both plays feature a series of monologues that directly address the listener.

As in the previous chapter, I will organize this discussion around the basic play structures of plot, characters and space and time.

Plot: a view from the panopticon

Strictly speaking, what we define as a classically constructed plot is not evident in either *Palace of the End* or *9 Parts of Desire*. There is no well defined arc or dramaturgical trajectory that clearly indicates a beginning, middle, or an end to either play.

To begin with Thompson's play, *Palace of the End* is structured as three one-act plays, each with its own title. Below, Pfister's chart (172), also used in Chapter One, now demonstrates the configuration of the dramatis personae. As in the case of *Stuff Happens*, this exercise is revealing with respect to plot.

Characters	Scene One	Scene Two	Scene Three
Soldier	1		
Kelly		1	
Nehrjas			1

The above configuration indicates one different character per scene. As a result, according to Pfister, "this is not the type of dramatic text that develops a linear plot divided amongst a set of figures in the way that is implied in the conventional interpretation of the world plot. It is a dramatic text with an extremely episodic structure in which each figure is both a primary and/or episodic figure to the same extent" (175). The episodic structure of *Palace of the End* resembles a panopticon¹⁶, with the play's three separate scenes "like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible" (Foucault *Discipline* 200). This sense of the panopticon is underscored by how the characters make their initial entrance at the beginning of the play: "A SOLDIER, Dr. DAVID Kelly, and NEHRJAS AL Saffarh all enter, as if through a looking glass, and take their places" (Thompson *Palace* 5). This panoptic structure allows us to view the entrance of the characters as if

they were witnesses in a courtroom who enter all at once, but take turns testifying. Similar to the view from the centre of a panopticon, we are going to be able to see all three characters while each individual speaks. Of course, depending on production aesthetics, they may be only partially visible. But the stage directions specify that while each character occupies his or her own world, all three worlds are simultaneously present. The characters do not interact except once during the Soldier's speech, and at the end of the last monologue.

In Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire*, the configuration of the *dramatis personae* is more complex. In this play we do not see evidence of a classically constructed plot with a beginning, middle and end, however the configuration of the *dramatis personae* does hold clues to the kind of plot Raffo has constructed. First, the playwright introduces seven of the nine characters in *9 Parts of Desire* one by one. After this introduction, there is the repeated appearance of the character of Layal, an artist under the protection of Saddam Hussein. As a result of this complicity with the regime - she has painted numerous portraits of Saddam - Layal is a deeply conflicted character. The choice of Layal as a through line character for the play underscores the fact that for all these women, surviving in Iraq is a process of negotiation. Still, despite her dominate role, Layal does not interact with the other characters. Even at the end of the play when Nanna refers to Layal, it is because she is trying to sell one of her paintings, not because the two women have met.

Once again using Pfister's chart (172), the pattern of the dramatis personae in Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire* is shown below. I have added arrows to indicate the first interruption in the sequence:

Character	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Mullaya	1																						1	
Layal		1						1					1		1				1			1		
Amal			1																					
Huda				1						1				1										
Doctor					1																			
Iraqi Girl						1																		
UmmGhada							1																	
American									1			1					1				1			
Nanna											1													1
Uncle																	1		1		1			

As indicated above, Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire* also conforms to Pfister's definition of a play with no unifying plot; the nine individuals relate separate stories and do not appear in each other's scenes. But, there are events in the text that link the separate stories of *9 Parts of Desire*. In scenes 16, 18 and 20, we hear the voice of an Uncle on the phone from Iraq. This call is made during the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre, and he is frantically trying to find out if his American niece is safe. Conversely, when the 2003 invasion occurs, the American woman is portrayed trying to contact her relatives in Baghdad, desperate to know if they are alive as American bombs fall on the city. However, this link between the American woman and an Uncle in Iraq is the only

suggestion that any of the characters know each other, and the Uncle is a voice on the phone, not a character we see. However, all of Raffo's characters, from a professional mourner, to the expatriate living in London, to the pregnant Doctor treating children for multiple cancers, or Umm Ghada guarding the tomb of the Amiriyya bomb shelter in which her daughter died, are united by Iraq's multiple conflicts that have traumatized their lives.

In contrast to Thompson's panoptic structure in *Palace of the End* where the characters come from radically different backgrounds and occupy separate worlds, Raffo's characters in *9 Parts of Desire* resemble more the inmates of a prison camp, where a group of people might have been incarcerated together after a mass arrest. Raffo's characters are united because each is suffering from the burden of a country constantly at war. Supporting this observation, the playwright specifies that "although the solo actress plays nine separate characters, through her the audience sees what could also be conflicting aspects of a single psyche" (65).

This presence of a 'single psyche' is reinforced in Raffo's description of the set for *9 Parts of Desire*: "The stage came to represent various levels of Iraqi society from the ancient to the modern: crumbling tiles, layers of mosaic, bricks, books, carpets and sandbags. At the centre of the production was a river, a reminder of Iraq's heritage as the cradle of civilization.... Every single item onstage was part of every character's life" (Raffo 66). The river in particular was necessary to "symbolize its central function connecting all of the women" (Raffo 66). Further, Raffo's women all wear the abaya. According to Raffo, this traditional black garment "works as a unifying prop rather than a costume piece" (Raffo 66). For example, Layal, the artist, "wears the abaya loosely hanging off her shoulders like a dressing gown or painting smock" (Raffo 12). Amal, the robust Bedouin in search of a husband, "wears the abaya fastened behind her head

and flowing voluptuously about her body" (Raffo 16). In addition to the visual link of the abaya, when the play premiered, Heather Raffo, a playwright and actress, played all the characters. Therefore it is understandable that her script never indicates that we see all the characters at once. Acknowledging Raffo's 'linked psyche' is important to the overall meaning of the play. As we move through the text, the pace quickens as the monologues become shorter; it almost appears as if the characters are interrupting each other. According to Raffo, this is done so that, "the time frames blur...driving the play towards a psychic civil war with the solo performer embodying the larger argument of what liberation means for each woman and for Iraq" (65). The expression of a shared desire, liberation, indicates the play's thematic unity. It also links us to Oliver's suggestion, previously stated, that testimonies, even when full of errors or inconsistencies "can reveal something true about our desires and fears" (85). As Raffo's scenes become shorter, this desire for freedom is structurally integrated into the pacing of the text. Again, specific to Oliver's statement that testimonies also exhibit "inaccuracies and false beliefs" (85), Huda, the whiskey drinking Iraqi exile refuses to join anti-war protestors in London because "I couldn't march with anyone who was pro Saddam" (Raffo 23). But does opposing the 2003 invasion of Iraq by American and British forces necessarily mean one supports Saddam Hussein? Raffo is not interested in the political debate, rather she is focused on the mixed feelings of the exile who lives safe beyond her country's reach, but whose heart is trapped within its borders.

However, returning to the question of plot in *9 Parts of Desire*, this presence of a 'linked psyche', does not meet the requirements for a unified plot with a beginning, middle and end for the whole play.

Another important requirement of a plot is action and both these plays if they do not describe a single action appear to engage in one. As Dierdre Heddon notes, "Paul

Ricoeur also reminds us that the flip side to remembering is forgetting" (63). So, 'to remember' is an action, just like 'to forget', and the principle action of *Palace of the End* and *9 Parts of Desire* is remembering.

Letting the character have their say

The first objective of the moral witness is to reveal the truth of an event that the perpetrators are eager to conceal, distort, and disavow (Assmann 269).

People testify for a reason. Their stories are not for our entertainment; they are accounts that challenge a pre-existing or accepted version of events. We can see evidence of this desire to 'set the record straight' in both plays.

In Thompson's *Palace of the End*, her character of the Soldier contests the public record she finds on the internet that condemns her as first, ugly, and second, guilty of excessive prisoner abuse, though the former appears to be her greatest concern:

If all of you was right here in front of me now what I would say to you is one *thing above all*: I am NOT ugly. (Thompson *Palace* 7)

Whether or not her superiors directly instructed her and fellow guards to soften up the Iraqi prisoners by engaging in such creative abuse as having sex in front of Muslims or forcing them to eat excrement is debatable, but clearly the Soldier feels that she was misled and that her superiors have now hypocritically left her high and dry.

None of them higher ups have spoke to me since it all came crashin down on my head. Since they moved me here to push around paper; I been waitin on their call, but the only person ever calls me is Mommy. And my lawyer. He says I am a scapegoat. (Thompson *Palace* 9)

The fact that the Soldier's testimony is contrary to her interests doesn't make it any less a testimony; there are many witnesses who take the stand and unwittingly reveal their guilt or complicity. Indeed, the unreliable witness or deceitful testimony is a

proven dramatic device for creating tension and suspense. All of Thompson's characters offer testimony that stands as contradiction to a more glossed over or publicly accepted version of the events that landed them where they are. The Soldier imagines that she is " ... like Joan of ARC being burned at the stake ... I will return one day, an American hero" (Thompson *Palace* 8). The character of Kelly in Thompson's second monologue, *Harrowdown Hill*, is determined to defeat the image of himself as " That sad little Walter Mitty of a man [who] just couldn't take the pressure" (Thompson *Palace* 19). As for Nehrjas, her goal seems to be to speak directly to the audience so that we will understand that "no matter how bad things get in your country ... you cannot I do not want to be rude but I am telling you that you cannot even begin to imagine what life was like under Saddam Hussein" (Thompson *Palace* 31). Each of the three characters in *Palace of the End*, conforms to the theatre of testimony through their desire to add their voice to the public record and alter preconceived ideas.

This desire to correct the public record is also evident in *9 Parts of Desire*. Raffo is determined to take us 'inside' Iraq. Her play is not about the politics it is about the people. Mullaya, the first speaker, addresses the destruction of an ecological and spiritual landscape, this land of two rivers that is now dried up and dysfunctional. At the outset, Raffo's Mullaya is literally engaged in the "ritual ablutions" of "mourning" (Raffo 9-11). However, in contrast to Mullaya, there are challenges to our stereotypical view of Iraq as primitive and steeped in religion. Amal, the husband hunting Bedouin, reveals her cosmopolitan side on a trip to London:

AMAL. I like London very much

I study there

I like to

walk with my friends in this Portobello market --- (Raffo 17)

After a lonely night in a Dubai hotel room, Amal experiences a painful rejection any woman in any culture might sympathize with when her prospective groom finally calls drunk and cancels his promise of marriage.

Testimony & resolution

Another important aspect of testimony is its resolution. In their introduction to *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub pose the question: What makes something a testimony? Their answer is that the text has a "testimonial resolution" (*Intro xvii*). A testimony is brought to 'resolution' when the person testifying has had their say in public, when what was secret and unknown is now public and known.

All of the characters in Judith Thompson's *Palace of the End* achieve a resolution. The Soldier finally gives into denial: "I did GOOD for my country. I said NO to the enemy. I said you don't MESS with the eagle..." (Thompson *Palace* 16). This is far from an admission of guilt, but given what we have learned of Thompson's Soldier, it is entirely credible that she remains defiant.

Kelly of *Harrowdown Hill* commits suicide because: "The only way to defeat them is to disappear, do you understand? To be present, but invisible. Like hide and seek. I'm here. But you can't touch me. I can see you, but you don't see me. I am the ghost of Harrowdown Hill" (Thompson *Palace* 26). Again, suicide is not a successful resolution, but the real Kelly did die in the woods and Thompson's narrative is constrained by this fact. A 'happy' ending to her character's tale would as in the case of the Soldier, strain the bonds of credibility. It is therefore interesting that Nehrjas in *Instruments of Learning*, who has suffered so much, does achieve a kind of happiness. But, Nehrjas is a ghost. In her version of events, she is re-united with her son, and then joins the thousands of ghosts bearing witness to Iraq's continued struggles. "And so I am here, watching. ...

And when there is finally peace, Fahdil [her son] will come again and we will fly together, we will fly through the crowns of the Nakhla and into the eyes of Allah" (Thompson *Palace* 40). At the end of *Palace of the End* we are left with an image of mother and son united and a country at peace; the resolution is one of desire fulfilled.

In *9 Parts of Desire*, Raffo's main character Layal also finds resolution in death. The rest of the women - to employ Raffo's dominant image of the river - are left 'mid-stream'. Not one of Raffo's characters is granted what we would call a resolution as a result of their testimony, they have had their say but the future is uncertain. Nana, trying to sell Layal's painting for whatever she can get, has the last word in the play:

NANA. I have to see it [the painting]

I have to eat ---

Two dollar? (*Nanna's hand is outstretched and open.*)

Two dollar? (Raffo 64)

Testimony & experience

Another aspect of the theatre of testimony relative to character is that: "The question to be asked is no longer merely what has happened? but also how was the event experienced, how is it remembered and passed on to succeeding generations" (Assmann 261). How memory is to be integrated into the official historical record raises the question that Assmann summarizes as to whether history and memory function as "rivals or partners" (261). All of which goes to character, as Assmann considers that video testimonies of the Holocaust survivors, for example, are "memorials of individual human suffering and surviving" (267).

Might we not view a fictional testimony as something similar? The dramatic text is always ready to be performed for a new generation, thus re-establishing with each performance a fresh site of commemoration. This according to Assmann is "secondary

witnessing", similar to "the staging of ancient Greek tragedy, [where] the witness carries the news of a catastrophic event as a messenger who has seen an extremely violent scene but has escaped to tell the story" (Assmann 267). In this light, we might view the actor speaking a dramatic text of testimony as also speaking for those who can no longer speak for themselves, taking on the role of a messenger charged with the task of keeping alive not the just the facts of what took place, but the personal experience of what transpired.

In Thompson's *My Pyramids*, the first monologue in *Palace of the End*, the Soldier reports that she and her fellow guards tried to force a Muslim cleric to have sex with another prisoner. The cleric refuses, saying: "There is no reason for this. This I will not do for your entertainment" (Thompson *Palace* 15). In response to this defiance the Americans force the Muslim cleric to eat shit. At this point the Soldier admits that the man's words haunts her: "Him sayin that, won't leave my head, you know? I wake up in the night sometimes, hearin him say that. I have to take a Percocet ¹⁷, make that go away" (Thompson *Palace* 15). To underscore the significance of this confession, "- both DAVID Kelly and NEHRJAS look at her [the Soldier]" (Thompson *Palace* 15). The Soldier doesn't seem to 'get it', but her fellow witnesses in this 'court' realize that this is a significant moment for her and the shared glance underscores it for the listener. Pregnant, needy, a self-described victim, obsessed with her internet infamy, Thompson's Soldier in *My Pyramids* provides a testimony that highlights the experiences and suffering of those she abused. Her testimony is not one that arouses sympathy for her but rather for her victims.

Thompson's character of Kelly doesn't address the technical details of his role as a weapons inspector. Kelly suffers because he harbours a secret. To highlight this feeling Thompson allows the character to speak metaphorically:

KELLY. Can you imagine, knowing, knowing that a man is torturing a child in your basement, and just going on with you life? Knowing it is happening right under your feet, as you wait for the kettle to boil, as you tuck your own children in bed, as you work in the garden the dim light is always there, the muffled sound of her screaming ...

(Thompson *Palace* 21)

These words have a greater impact on our emotions than historical details concerning the evidence, true or false, about Saddam's arsenal, because they portray the experience of a man of conscience placed in an impossible situation.

Testimony & fiction

According to Lubomír Doležel we can identify different levels of fiction making: "Both fiction and historiography construct possible worlds. However, in their modes of construction, in their functions, and in their structural and semantic properties the two kinds of possible worlds show fundamental differences" (viii). In clarifying this difference, Doležel states that we may view "historiography as an activity of *noesis* [¹⁸]: its possible worlds are models of the actual past. [whereas] Fiction making is an activity of *poesis* [¹⁹]: fictional worlds are imaginary possible alternatives to the actual world" (viii). Within this fiction making Doležel also identifies a "lyrical and symbolic" type of discourse (17), most akin to *poesis*. Using Doležel's definitions, we can first consider the kind of fictional worlds Thompson and Raffo have created, then what discourse is operating within those worlds. This will help us determine if the testimonies in these plays can be regarded as truthful and meaningful historical narratives.

David Hare has clearly delineated the parts of *Stuff Happens* that are from the known public record and those conversations that take place 'behind closed doors'. Where his play draws on the public record he has used speeches and exchanges quoted

verbatim. To this verbatim reportage he has added known facts. Where facts were unavailable, he has fictionalized. With respect to *Palace of the End*, Thompson states the following:

Each of these three monologues is based on news stories or research on events involving the real person named as the speaker, but the persona or character of each speaker has been created by me, and everything other than the real events springs from my imagination. (Thompson *Palace* i)

First, respecting *Palace of the End*, we can observe one very clear example of Thompson's fiction making process in the second monologue entitled *Harrowdown Hill* based on Doctor David Kelly. The real Kelly's fatal act was a conversation with Andrew Gilligan of the BBC in which he expressed reservations about the veracity of information that Tony Blair was using to justify Britain's role in the U.S. led invasion of Iraq. What exactly prompted Kelly to make this 'leak' remains the subject of speculation. Not so in Thompson's play:

KELLY. The day I heard what happened to my beloved friends was the day I blew myself up. Was the day I met Andrew Gilligan of the BBC and told him the truth. (Thompson *Palace* 25)

Thompson has crafted the story of Kelly's "beloved friends" from the following: On May 7, 2009, Steven D. Green of Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, a former US Marine, was convicted of murder and rape in the deaths of a young Iraqi girl and her family (Dao NY Times). The murders took place March 12, 2006. This incident and the one described in *Harrowdown Hill* contain many similarities, including a confession reported at the trial and in the press. The first discrepancy between the real crime and the one described in Thompson's play is that the real murders took place on a farm near a U.S. checkpoint, whereas Thompson sets hers in a bookstore in Baghdad. The second

discrepancy is more significant: the real David Kelly died July 17, 2003, three years before the murders were committed. So, this incident could not have been a part of David Kelly's life story. However, the time line of these events and the writing of *Harrowdown Hill* does allow Thompson the opportunity to incorporate this real incident in her play, using it as a motive for Kelly blowing the whistle on his superiors.²⁰

In the same way that Hare created a tragic hero in his arrangement of the incidents in *Stuff Happens*, Thompson has taken an event associated with the Iraq war and linked it to Kelly to create a classic inciting incident. If we were in the territory of verbatim, we could take issue with this alteration of the facts, however *Harrowdown Hill* is a poetic journey. We know this because we are with the character Kelly at the moment of his suicide, a private moment. Thompson has created a fictional world for her Kelly, an "imaginary possible alternative", a world in which the discourse is poetic (Doležel viii). The poetic nature of this fictional world and its function are both evident in the following passage that describes the bookstore that Kelly's murdered friend owned in Baghdad:

KELLY. ... He had books that were hundreds of years old, written in blood; he had giant books it would take three men to lift, tiny books with pages like month's wings that would fit in the palm of your hand, they smelled of history, books in every language, illustrations that would make you weep ...
(Thompson *Palace* 23)

Whether such a bookstore exists, and it might, the description is poetic, dreamy and evokes a touch of the fantastic. All of which provides a striking contrast to the murder:

KELLY. The killer climbed the stairs and said, "I've killed them. They're all dead." And then the four soldiers threw Sahar to the floor, raped the child.

Put a bayonet through the child and shot her in the face. They then set fire to the bookshop. (Thompson *Palace* 24)

Thompson's fiction making strengthens Kelly's story as a testimony. All of the things Thompson describes, the death of innocent civilian friends, the destruction of a fantastic bookstore, the repository of a culture's learning and history set ablaze, sharpens the moral message of the play. Her Kelly is not simply a compromised public servant telling us of a violation of the public trust, he is a man fueled by outrage, testifying. Further, this testimony is given all the more power because as he speaks, Kelly, who has cut his wrists, is dying.

A testimony is one technique real people use to deal with real occurrences. The act of speaking aloud reinforces a memory and shares it with others. This sharing is evident in Thompson's final monologue of *Palace of the End*, entitled *Instruments of Learning* and told by Nehrjas Al Saffarh. Here Thompson employed a fairly straightforward research methodology consistent with verbatim theatre in creating the character of Nehrjas. As she offered in an interview with Martin Morrow, it was her Toronto neighbour, Doctor Thabit A.J. Abdullah, an Iraqi history professor at York University, who provided the material for this character. The real Nehrjas had written in Arabic of her experience of torture under Saddam Hussein, and Abdullah's wife Samara translated the material for Thompson, whereupon the playwright edited it for the play (Thompson *Interview Morrow*). Nehrjas' story is full of harrowing details, how much Thompson fictionalized, edited or simply used the original transcript is of course difficult to determine. But, in the testimony of Nehrjas we hear the playwright Thompson speaking specifically and politically into the historical record.

Nehrjas' testimony is preceded in the play by the defensive Soldier, and the suicide of David Kelly, characters who offer evidence that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was a

mistake. In the character of Nehrjas, Thompson deliberately complicates the anti-invasion rhetoric of the play. A school teacher, Nehrjas was dragged from her home because her husband held political views contrary to the regime. Her testimony, which includes her own rape, the torture of both her sons and the death of her youngest, ends Thompson's play on a decidedly dark note and a forthright political declaration:

There is only one word for such an evil human being [Saddam Hussein].

Shaytaan. Satan. Because Satan means to me the human embodiment of evil.

(Thompson *Palace* 31)

Unfortunately, according to Nehrjas, while the invasion was a "moment of light and hope", it proved to be an "illusion", as "Iraq is once again hell" (Thompson *Palace* 32). Still, while there is no dialogue between the characters and they do not 'debate' the 2003 invasion, Nehrjas testimony provides powerful support for the notion that for people like her, getting rid of Saddam Hussein, certainly in the short term, was a desirable objective.

According to Raffo, the writing of *9 Parts of Desire* involved: "... a process of spending time together living, eating, communicating compassionately, and loving on such a level that when I parted from their homes it was clear to all that we were now family. ... " (Raffo 5). Raffo makes no claim to having conducted interviews or reporting verbatim, these characters are "composites" ... dramatized characters in a poetic story" (Raffo 5). Nevertheless, there is much that we learn about Iraq through these characters that is credible and insightful. But we must weight that insight against the fact that it is gained while viewing fictional characters testifying in a 'poetic story'.

Absence of documents hampers the historian's reconstruction but does not prevent him or her from hypothesizing. Since the gaps in the historical worlds are epistemic, the historian is challenged to "fill" them by plausible

conjectures. In reconstructing the past the historian relies as much on inference as on available evidence. The conjectured, hypothesized events are not marked as certain but are assigned a degree of probability." (Doležel *Possible Worlds* 39)

While we cannot verify the truth of Raffo's characters in *9 Parts of Desire* through public documents, the stories these women tell can fairly be assigned a 'degree of probability'. For example, Layal, an artist, terrified of not being under the protection of a regime threatened by an imminent American invasion surely portrays the panic many in Iraq experienced as troops massed on their borders. Nanna, who collects what she can from a destroyed city to sell on its streets, and Umm Ghada who describes the horrors of the Amiriyya bomb shelter with the attitude of a kindly tourist guide, construct the image of a population trying to survive amid ongoing conflict. Their circumstances convey a realistic picture of any country during wartime. As for the Amiriyya bomb shelter itself, here Raffo draws from historical fact.

In the early hours of February 13 [1991], the Amiria shelter was hit with a new kind of [American] bomb, one that penetrated several feet of reinforced concrete before exploding and incinerating about four hundred people inside" (Hamza 249).

Khidhir Hamza also states in his book, *Saddam's Bombmaker*, that the Amiria²¹ shelter (spelling differences are likely due to translation) functioned as a command centre for Saddam Hussein just before it was hit. Further, the shelter's luxurious accommodations - "television sets, drinking fountains, its own electric generator" (248) - made him suspicious so that he and his family stopped going there. While this information complicates the debate about whether or not the shelter was a 'fair' target, it does not lessen the pain Umm Ghada experiences as one of the few survivors of an

attack in which those not immediately incinerated were boiled to death. Hamza, whose book has a specifically stated agenda of identifying Saddam as a threat to Western allies, may well be telling the truth that the shelter was used by the Iraqi dictator and therefore of a high standard. However, neither Hamaz the author or Umm Ghada the character dispute that on the night of the attack a bomb fell and the shelter became a furnace. It isn't important to Umm Ghada that the American bomb was aimed at Saddam Hussein: it killed her child. Nor does that make her testimony inaccurate. It does make it specific to her experience. The use of some verbatim material; the real name of the shelter, an acknowledged incident, is the core truth at the centre of a partly fictionalized testimony about a mother's loss. But, in addition to that testimony of loss we have a list of conflicting reportage, denials and rebuttals: it was a military target, it was a civilian shelter, it was both. Empirical evidence and human experience do not always paint the same picture:

There is a tension inherent in the notion of witnessing in the sense of eye-witness to historical facts or accuracy on the one hand, [and] witnessing in the sense of bearing witness to a truth about humanity and suffering that transcends those facts [on the other]. (Oliver 81).

Umm Ghada will remain forever the guardian of her daughter's tomb. If that is the indelible image we are left with when we think of the Amiriyya shelter, it is an instructive one.

Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire* is full of such moments of recognition and understanding, which are the principle purpose of testimony. In both *9 Parts of Desire* and *Palace of the End*, we are less concerned with the verifiability of events and incidents than we are with the means by which we fully comprehend an experience.

The monologue

We have established that both *Palace of the End* and *9 Parts of Desire* are constructed to meet the criteria of testimonies. It is also evident that all of the characters in both these plays speak in monologues. This form of communication is also specific to the theatre of testimony and therefore merits review.

Far from being an aberration, an offence against the laws of plausibility, monologue is the essence in theatrical exchange" (Ubersfeld *Theatre* 3 25).

Key to our understanding of the monologue in theatre is that there really is no such thing as a singular line of communication. In the theatre many channels of mediation are present, even when we are receiving a direct address from one speaker. According to Pfister, in dramatic narrative, the character speaks first the words of the playwright. The actor then interprets the character he believes the playwright has written. Finally, the audience receives both the words of the playwright and the character, as well as the interpretation of the character by the actor. In the more naturalistic play, one that involves us in the emotional journey of the characters, we may be less aware of these channels of mediation. But in epic theatre, where characters step outside their characters or narrate events in advance, we are ever conscious of the voice of the playwright. In addition:

Bearing witness to a trauma is, in fact, a process that includes the listener. For the testimonial process to take place, there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an other - in the position of the one who hears. Testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude. (Laub 70)

So, in addition to the various channels of communication that are contained within a monologue delivered by an actor, we have the issue of reception to consider. Of all the

conditions that would make a monologue a testimony, the requirement that someone is listening is paramount. There are times when the playwright may choose to deliberately underscore the role of the listener by addressing them directly:

AMAL. Don't leave, stay with me

Oh, I need to talk every day this way.

Is this American way?

Tell me what you think

What should I do? (22)

Amal is described as a *"bright, festive and robust woman of thirty-eight who looks so intently at whomever she is talking to you would swear her eyes never blinked"* (Raffo 16). Her story is about her flight from a sexually repressed husband to various unsatisfactory affairs. From a sojourn in Israel, to a hotel room in Dubai, Amal is a woman in search of love. She is slightly frivolous and funny, she worries about being too fat and is puzzled, not angry, when a man rejects her. In this respect, Amal crosses political borders and reminds us that amid all of Iraq's suffering there are women who want to find a husband, have a family and live in peace.

But, in the person of Umm Ghada, guardian of the black hole of the Amiriyya bomb shelter, Iraq's suffering is paramount, and she also addresses us directly:

UMM GHADA. La, la, I do not want to show you there

it is too much

the walls are stuck with hairs and skin.

Come, I will take you to the roof

You can see how the hole was made. (Raffo 31)

At the conclusion of her 'tour' of this site of horrors, Umm Ghada invites the viewer:

"Come. Now you sign the witness book" (Raffo 32). The actor does not expect an *answer*,

it would be unusual in the theatre for someone to speak up. However, the playwright - speaking through the actor - does expect a *response*.

Raffo has juxtaposed these stories to achieve a powerful emotional effect. Amal is our conduit to the normal, the realization that many women in Iraq might be struggling over the rubble of their country to visit a lover, while women like Umm Ghada are trapped in the graves of their dead.

In *9 Parts of Desire*, nine women make 22 different appearances in the play, a multiplicity that, aided by the appearance of the abaya in every scene, also creates a singularity easily linked to the voice of the author. In true Brechtian fashion, the more a character is framed by an obvious artifice, in this case all nine characters wearing the abaya, the more fluidly that character can negotiate the territory between being inside the play and stepping outside to make a point. Layal is a character Raffo uses to make a number of points:

LAYAL. So if I am now in a position of grace, favor, rumor
so be it
I don't care
I am still trying
to be revealing something
in my trees, my nudes, my portraits of Saddam --
I fear it here
and I love it here (Raffo 15)

Raffo's implication that her character is an 'insider' of sorts, makes her a more effective witness against the regimes atrocities:

LAYAL. And she so stupid, innocent girl told her the truth...

Of course Uday, ²² he took her back

with his friends, they
 stripped her
 covered her in honey
 and watched his Dobermans eat her. (Raffo 14)

While she is disgusted at this act, Layal also condemns this innocent girl as "stupid". This same cynicism allows her condemnation of the American invasion to sound both matter-of-fact and credible:

LAYAL. You have

our war now
 inside you, like a burden, like an orphan...
 we have you chained
 to the desert
 to your blood (Raffo 35)

"Chained to the desert" is a very apt description of America's role in Iraq and a very political statement. Later in the play, when we are told that bombs are falling on Baghdad, two whole pages of the play are devoted to the repetition of the words "We love you" and a long list of the names of the American woman's relatives (Raffo 57 & 58). What appears on the page are names in columns like towers, or towers made out of names. Raffo's text literally becomes a *concrete poem*²³ that memorializes both the living and the dying. The more direct the form of address, the more blatantly political the statement. Raffo's Huda understands her listener's trepidation over certain words:

HUDA: I protested all my life, I was always political
 Even I was bourgeois - in '58 anybody who was intelligent
 was communist (Raffo 23)

It is interesting that in *Palace of the End*, Thompson also picks up on the word communist:

NEHRJAS: I can see you are pulling away from me when I say "Communist"...All the kind and thinking and peace loving people in Iraq at that time were members of the Communist Party. You would all have been members of the Communist Party. (Thompson *Palace* 33)

In either play, the use of the 'you' pronoun is a tactic that employs Brecht's alienation effect. It reminds us that we are watching theatre and begs us to consider the demonization of the word 'communist' by the west. This attempt to make us re-evaluate our prejudice about a particular word lies at the heart of the attempt to educate the audience through Brecht's alienation effect; it awakens our astonished eye.

Time & Space: the chronotope of testimony

According to Bakhtin, the chronotope is "the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied" (22). To the chronotope "belongs the meaning that shapes narrative" (22). It is the place where "Time becomes, in effect, palpable and visible", where we see its effect.

In my introduction, speaking of Bakhtin's chronotopes, I referred to castle time, time of a particular quality imbued with the historicity of the castle. Thompson's *Palace of the End* demonstrates the very effective use of castle time, as does *9 Parts of Desire*. A discussion of space and time in both of these plays will contribute to recognizing them as political and as testimonies.

The chronotope of *9 Parts of Desire* is 'river time'. Iraq is home to two rivers, the Nahr Dijlah (Tigris) and the Euphrates which intersect at Al Qurnan, south of Baghdad, before flowing through the Shatt al Arab into The Gulf. This image of a river captures the connection between the characters, as well as the flow of events gathering speed.

This seems logical as Raffo has spoken of her characters as part of one psyche. The image of the river is also evoked by Mullaya at the beginning of the play:

MULLAYA. without this river there would be no here
here would be no beginning
it is why I come (Raffo 9)

And just before the end:

MULLAYA. always it is life and death
and life and death -- (*She steps into the river, raising water to her face. As she continues she becomes fully immersed.*) (Raffo 62)

In *Palace of the End*, as the title suggests we are in castle time. The castle in Thompson's play is literally and metaphorically a place of no return. Castles are historical sites, places wherein we find the symbols of heraldic power such as thrones, scepters, or alternatively the instruments and chambers of torture, negative but equally potent symbols of power. This alternative view of the castle as a place of torture is evoked in Thompson's third monologue, *Instruments of Learning*. Nehrjas is our conduit to castle time's full potential as she undergoes torture and informs us of Iraq's history of catastrophes: invasions, the overthrow of governments, and the rise of a dictator.

Thompson's Soldier is caught in viscous or sticky time, a chronotope in which little can, or will, happen. She is pregnant, a physical state of waiting. She is also awaiting trial for her crimes in "Abu G" (Thompson *Palace* 8). She is planning an escape, but it is clear that escape is impossible and that imagined freedom only underscores the sense of entrapment.

In *Harrowdown Hill* we encounter urgent time. Kelly's chronotope is 'highly charged', on the threshold of his decision to commit suicide.

The fact that all three characters have been captured by the castle time of *Palace of the End*, the real name of an interrogation site in Iraq, emphasizes the political message of the play; it tells us we have all entered Iraq's tortured history.

In my introduction I compared Bakhtin's chronotopes to a similar theory for describing time and space, that of Michel Foucault's utopias and heterotopias. Most particularly I referred to Foucault's designation for the space inbetween: "Between these two, [utopia and heterotopia] I would then set that sort of mixed experience which partakes of the qualities of both types of location, the mirror. It is, after all, a utopia, in that it is a place without a place. In it, I see myself where I am not..." (Foucault *Heterotopias* 3).

For the Soldier in *Palace of the End* the mirror represents a desired state, an image of herself as tough and respected:

SOLDIER. I may be a little girl from West Virginia but once I was out of the gate and through the looking glass... I thought of the Twin Towers and all them people running and I thought I'm takin your soul first." (Thompson *Palace* 13)

Kelly's looking glass takes him to a least desired state. In his mirror he sees himself at his most vulnerable:

KELLY. I sat before Parliament on the hottest day in ten years, I was lashed, I was blasted, I had crashed through the looking glass; I was confused and exhausted, and I could barely be heard. (Thompson *Palace* 25)

Both of these characters are experiencing the disorientation of seeing themselves in "worlds where they are not" (Foucault *Heterotopias* 3).

In *Instruments of Yearning*, there is no mirror. Nehrjas doesn't need one. She has only a window with a "beautiful view" (Thompson *Palace* 29). The beautiful view that

represents in the literary imagination both what one sees, and the attitude with which one sees it. She is beyond the mirror, at peace, the inhabitant of no place on earth, yet able to view all space and time at once.

NEHRJAS. I can see the whole world from here. (Thompson *Palace* 29)

Chapter conclusions: pathos

According to Aleida Assmann, writing in *History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony*, "over the past two decades, history has received a potent rival or partner in its claim to access, reconstruct, and represent the past, namely memory" (262).

Assmann goes on to say that history and memory are "... no longer considered to be rivals and more and more are accepted as complementary modes of reconstructing and relating to the past" (263).

Thus we come to the emotional impact of testimony, its ability to allow the listener to share the experience of what happened to the individual testifying. We might call the act of testifying a cathartic event for the person testifying. In addition, "the listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic events; through his very listening he comes to partially experience trauma himself" (Laub 57).

Addressing emotional aspects of testimony, Kelly Oliver acknowledges that "Testimonies from the aftermath of the Holocaust and slavery do not merely articulate a demand to be recognized or to be seen. Rather, they witness pathos beyond recognition" (Oliver 79). Pathos is the Greek word for emotion or suffering. According to Pavis pathos is "The quality of a play that arouses emotion (pity, tenderness, compassion) in the spectator" (Pavis 252).

Heather Raffo's *9 Parts of Desire* begins with pathos in the character of Mullaya, a professional mourner. Contesting the public record is not uppermost in the playwright's mind. Instead, Raffo's monologues introduce us to the emotional

complexity and the depth of suffering of the Iraqi women she portrays. War affects family relationships, careers, economic prosperity, the food supply, it poisons the water and the soil, it blows people up while they shop; men become invalids, women conceive deformed babies. These are testimonies at the peak of pathos. If future generations wish to understand the suffering of Iraqi women, they need only perform Raffo's play.

What emotions do we experience in Thompson's *Palace of the End*? Her characters do not specifically ask us to pity them, indeed, as mentioned, the Soldier remains defiant. Perhaps, to some degree, the question of whether or not these are testimonies is resolved by moments of direct address:

KELLY. Is this too much too ask? That you witness my death? (Thompson *Palace* 20)

And later, when death is imminent:

KELLY. Thank you. Thank you for witnessing...it won't be long now.
(Thompson *Palace* 2)

Thompson's three characters add up to a collective testimony that captures the dilemma many people faced in 2003. The lack of coherency in the argument to go to war, the differing points of view, and the consequences for all nations involved, is forever preserved in a text that can be re-enacted.

None of the characters in either of these plays testifies in a courtroom. They are all featured in the landscape associated with their testimonies. In this way, theatre provides the viewer with an enhanced experience of not just what the person is saying, but who they are:

The dramatic strategies that push testimonial language beyond ordinary circumstancesgive it the quality of anthropological enactment rather than journalistic reportage... (Brooks 183)

Theatre's "dramatic strategies" of "anthropological enactment" are its "repertoire of codes and channels" as defined by Pfister (7). Set design, lighting, costumes, sound, all contribute to making the testimony fully biographical. In the theatre we may be given a more textured understanding of the individual and their life as well as the circumstances of the specific trauma they underwent. Assmann has noted that the video of a testimony also provides these additional details:

Video testimonies not only tell the experience of the holocaust from the subjective perspective of the victims as targets of persecution and mass destruction ... they also tell the story of their living... (Assmann 267).

According to Assmann, a video taped testimony, "Due to its inscription into a material carrier ..."survives" the survivor and has the capacity to address numberless viewers and listeners. In this way it stabilizes the individual testimony and transforms it into stable and retrievable information" (Assmann 270). The dramatic text is theatre's "material carrier", and thoughtful dramaturgical analysis of the dramatic text can achieve a similar level of "stability". The more we understand the meaning of the text, plot, characters, time and space chronotopes, the more likely that we will re-produce an effective and accurate testimony, complete with all its inherent anthropological and biographical information.

Finally, in *9 Parts of Desire* Raffo's conflicted character of Layal goes on a rampage, destroying her studio. She is then obliterated by an incoming missile. This moment is followed by Mullaya, in mourning again, and Nanna trying to sell the artists few salvaged possessions as scrap. The message is clear, Iraq's cycle of war and destruction goes on. It would be impossible for Raffo, writing and performing her text while the real war in Iraq was ongoing to offer a satisfying resolution to these women's lives.

After we have witnessed the testimonies of all three of Thompson's characters in *Palace of The End* we are also no closer to a definitive answer for whether or not the 2003 invasion should have taken place. But we do know that war brings irreparable suffering to individuals, and it is that suffering that needs to be part of the permanent historical record.

Palace of the End concludes with stage directions that indicate the three performers "communicate" (40). Thompson does not indicate the nature of this shared moment.

More music, and the three performers stand, somehow communicate with each other, and walk off. The end. (40).

Neither *Palace of the End* nor *9 Parts of Desire* offers a resolution. Indeed, the effect of these texts on the spectator is similar to a criminal trial where the testimony held an element of risk, and the people testifying were exhausted from reliving the experience, yet hopeful that their testimony had made some difference. But, consistent with any testimony, and of importance to political theatre, whether or not the reenactment of these lives will lead to understanding, recognition or change, will depend on the witness, the audience, us.

CHAPTER THREE: *Homebody/Kabul* by Tony Kushner

The map of the Middle East is a palimpsest, with arbitrary borders, made-up names, and fabricated nationalities often aggressively imposed by colonizers. (Aslan 21)

Play synopsis: A British woman, the Homebody, travels to Afghanistan where she is reportedly murdered. Her husband, Milton, and daughter, Priscilla, arrive in Kabul to recover her body, but they are unable to find it or determine her real fate. Priscilla searches the streets, hospitals and morgues of Kabul for some evidence of the Homebody's fate. Priscilla meets an Afghan woman, Mahala, who is desperate to leave Afghanistan. Eventually, Priscilla and Milton return with Mahala to London.

Intro: the modern morality play

In this examination of selected post 9/11 political plays Tony Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul* is appropriately addressed last. Many of the theatrical devices employed by Hare, Thompson and Raffo also appear in *Homebody/Kabul*, yet Kushner, in my estimation is the master of the complex arrangement of plot, characters, and time and space.

In chapter one, I addressed verbatim theatre, searching for historical truth in theatre based on real events and facts. In addition to the devices of verbatim, I discovered a classically arranged plot and a tragic hero. In chapter two, I asked how theatre in the form of a fictionalized testimony based on real people can give us an accurate account of how people experience historical events. In this chapter, I will examine Tony Kushner's play *Homebody/Kabul*, a play written before 9/11, but produced in the United States just after those events. Specifically, I will examine how Kushner has constructed his fictional Afghanistan using some facts, but relying mostly on the poetics of the fantastic: a unique combination of palimpsest histories, conjured from heteroglossic text.

My goal is to discover whether in building his fictional world of Afghanistan, Kushner has managed to create an ethical site of contestation for his fictional characters. In other words, is Kushner's fictional world intended to serve as a template to suggest how we might navigate the ethical dilemmas of our real world political problems.

After *Homebody/Kabul* premiered at the Chelsea Theatre Centre, London, in July 1999, it received its first production in the United States at New York's Theatre Workshop on December 19, 2001, some scant twelve weeks after the Twin Towers fell. It is understandable that audiences experienced a shock of recognition when confronted with a play that began with a narration of Afghanistan's history starting in ancient times then moving into the 20th century and the rise of the Taliban. The play also foreshadows an inevitable and violent confrontation between Afghanistan and the West.

The first part of the play is set in London and is written entirely in monologic speech. The second half of the play takes place in Kabul, Afghanistan, and features a cast of eleven. The characters are fictional, but the real facts of Afghanistan's political situation figure largely in the narrative. Similar to Hare, Kushner has based his play on facts related to contemporary political events. But, reminiscent of Thompson and Raffo, people also 'testify' throughout the play; telling us how their lives have been destroyed by the country's turbulent political situation. However, unlike any of the other three dramatic texts in this study, the play's resolution is fantastical, and depicts an act of transformation. An examination of how Kushner accomplishes this act of transformation through his use of the poetics of the fantastic will therefore be the focus of this chapter.

For this reason I will use Lubomír Doležel's fictional worlds theory as a template for analyzing Kushner's play. According to Doležel, fictional worlds are created as

"imaginary possible alternatives to the actual world" (*Possible Worlds* viii). But the "possible world" is defined by Doležel as a "human construct", that is "a potential tool of empirical theorizing" (*Heterocosmica* 14). The question I will address is whether in addition to its fictional world, *Homebody/Kabul* also describes a possible world; effectively allowing the play to function as what Doležel defines as an "interpretive model" (*Heterocosmica* 14). If the play is an interpretive model, the question is what for? I would propose that *Homebody/Kabul* is a model for observing ethical behaviour and proposing solutions to problems we face in the here and now. Kushner is concerned with how his characters conduct themselves when they are tested. This involves placing characters such as Milton, the Homebody's husband, and Priscilla her daughter, in unfamiliar circumstances where they are forced to negotiate with people vastly different from themselves in background and religious beliefs. These people include a number of threatening Taliban officials, Khwaja, a poet and guide, and Quango, a mostly drunk and heroin addicted unofficial liaison for the British government. This testing also involves not just what Priscilla and Milton do to survive, but whether they are, in the midst of a threat to their own safety, capable of compassion for another human being, Mahala, who desperately wants to escape Afghanistan and Taliban rule.

Thus, as we view the fictional construction of *Homebody/Kabul* and determine its purpose, we can reasonably consider that it is also a morality play, and may be situated within what Eleanor Fuchs calls the *modern mysterium*. The morality play is defined as "a play embodying a complex of moral ideas and showing them in dramatic terms" (Happé 6), a play in which the "driving force is homiletic" (Happé 11), designed to impart a tale of moral instruction. Further, the morality play often contains "images of the castle, the journey of pilgrimage, and the dance of death" (Happé 11). Indeed, as we shall see, in *Homebody/Kabul* the character of Priscilla does embark on a pilgrimage.

According to Fuchs, the mysterium is also: "... an allegorical modern dramatic genre that can be traced from Strindberg through Beckett and beyond. In the mysterium the spectator follows an unfolding on two planes: a quotidian plane on which little may happen, and a mythic level which mysteriously drives and governs quotidian events" (Fuchs 10). Further, like the medieval mystery play, we follow "a central figure's progress toward salvation" (Fuchs 39). Whereas in *Stuff Happens* the character of Colin Powell progresses toward a tragic downfall, in *Homebody/Kabul* the character of Priscilla achieves a form of salvation when she finally gives up the search for her missing Mother, the Homebody, and accepts a substitute.

In this chapter I will also propose that as a modern morality play, and despite its fictional construct, Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul* is still a political play, indeed, in the end, a play I would consider more overtly political in both form and content than those discussed in chapters one and two.

Does the political trump the fantastical

Tony Kushner is best known for his Pulitzer Prize winning play *Angels In America* (1992), a work Harold Bloom describes as "Kushner's masterwork to date" (3). Kushner himself describes *Angels* as a "fantasia" (3), a term Bloom also embraces in his introduction to the playwright's work in *Bloom's Critical Views*, a series of essays on Kushner. But Bloom makes it clear that in his opinion, "Kushner's mastery of controlled phantasmagoria is his highest dramatic gift" (3), not his "Brechtian faith in the political possibilities of theatre" (5). This raises the question of whether the mastery of a "controlled phantasmagoria" means that a playwright is not political? Must a playwright abandon a sense of fantasia and write verbatim theatre or documentary drama in order to make a political statement?

The answer lies in the specific way Kushner chooses to construct his 'phantasmagoria'. Writing in Umberto Eco's *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, Christine Brooke-Rose lists a number of characteristics she defines as palimpsest histories. The first is "the totally imagined story, set in a historical period, in which magic unaccountably intervenes" (127). Then there is the story set in a historical period without magic, but "with so much time-dislocating philosophical, theological and literary allusion and implication that the *effect* [my emphasis] is magical" (127). Finally, Brooke-Rose acknowledges "the zany reconstruction of a more familiar...closer period or event, with apparent magic which is, however, motivated through hallucination" (128). I believe Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul* most resembles the second definition. *Homebody/Kabul* is not a 'magical play', but there are transformations in the story and dislocations of a philosophical and theological nature are very much in evidence. It is also a play set in a recognizable historical period, that of the Taliban's rule of Afghanistan during the late 1990s.

Thus we have Kushner's plot, the mysterious disappearance of a woman in Kabul, Afghanistan, and the search by her daughter to find her. The main aesthetic devices at work in the play include the creation of a fictional world composed of heteroglossic text, palimpsest histories, and lastly a play the moral and mythic tone of which places it in Fuchs' *mysterium*.

I will begin with a discussion of the plot of *Homebody/Kabul*, followed by a look at elements in the play that mirror Afghanistan under the Taliban rule. Then I will examine the devices used to create the play's time and space chronotope. Finally, I will address Kushner's characters, and his use and manipulation of language.

Plot: digressions & intersections

The play is set in two historical periods. We begin in present day London where a character identified as Homebody - she is never addressed by any other name - a middle-aged wife and mother is introduced as an enthusiastic lover of travel: "I love the world! I love love love love the world!" And, further along: "I love the world. I know how that sounds inexcusable and vague, but it's all I can say for myself, I love the world, really I do...Love" (Kushner 12 & 27). Initially, there is no action. The opening scene features the Homebody *"sitting on a plain wooden chair next to a table in the kitchen of her home in London. There's a lamp on the table, and perhaps the table is covered with a homey, simple oilcloth"* (Kushner 9). Typical of any armchair traveler, the Homebody is reading from a guidebook. But very quickly we discover that this book describes an Afghanistan that no longer exists:

HOMEBODY. I am reading from an outdate guidebook about the city of Kabul. In Afghanistan published in 1965, and it is now 1998, so the book is a vestige superannuated by some ... thirty-three years, long enough for Christ to have been born and die on the cross ... I find these [historical facts] irrelevant and irresistible, ghostly, dreamy, the knowing what was known before the more that has since become known overwhelms..." (Kushner 10)

In this speech we are reminded that as recently as 1965 Afghanistan was a romantic and safe destination for adventure seeking backpackers. Then, excavating back through time, the Homebody takes us dreamily from "the very dawn of history, circa 3,000 B.C." (Kushner 9), to the migrations of the Aryans across the Hindu Kush mountains to Northern India, to the reign of Darius the Great who built Persepolis, and finally to the conquests of Alexander the Great. She describes the panoramic sweep of Afghanistan's history, interspersed with tantalizing glimpses of her personal life, a humdrum

existence in the company of a distant husband and a difficult daughter, "For whom alas nothing ever seems to go well" (Kushner 27). At one point the Homebody confesses: "I speak...I can't help myself. Elliptically. Discursively." She also apologizes for her depression, "My husband cannot bear my...the sound of me...We both take powerful antidepressants...I frequently take his pills instead of mine so I can know what he's feeling" (Kushner 13). The text is full of such asides and digressions that dwell on the "Antilegomenoi ...volumes of cast off or forgotten knowledge" (Kushner 18).

Indeed, this sense of the "antilegomenoi" is an apt metaphor for the plot of the play in this opening scene: everything is an aside, a digression. If Kushner's Afghanistan is a history of intersections, then his character of the Homebody would appear to be at a personal crossroads asking of herself, where do I journey next? It is a narration that functions as poetic incantation until we experience a sudden shift, an abrupt pause over something called the Greco-Bactrian confusion:

HOMEBOODY. Though it *feels* familiar, does it not, the Greco-Bactrian confusion? When did it end? The guidebook does not relate. *Did* it end? Are we still in it? Still *in* the Greco-Bactrian confusion? Would it surprise you, really, to learn that we are? Don't you feel it would I don't know *explain* certain things? (Kushner 16)

What "certain things"? The history of Afghanistan in the 20th century? The rise of the Taliban? The Homebody's condensed guide book history has suddenly pulled the threads of seemingly disparate human migrations and intersections into a historical whole. But this 'whole' is a tapestry of dispirit patterns, a woven continuum that makes us, the listener, part of Afghanistan's history. Kushner seems to be telling us that all history is a confusion that never ends; that we too are now implicated in this litany of conquest, in the rise and fall of empires. Why is this historical overview necessary?

Kushner may be well aware of Bernard Lewis' contention that "the general level of historical knowledge in American society is abysmally low", and whereas "the Muslim peoples, like everyone else in the world are shaped by their history...unlike some others, they are keenly aware of it" (Lewis xix). Therefore, the Homebody's tour is meant to remind us that all empires, including those of modernity, are human constructs, and that what is built can also be destroyed. For this reason Kushner uses the obscure phrase, "Greco-Bactrian confusion" - it matters not whether we know its meaning - ²⁴ to further impress upon us the complex unfolding of history. Though the power of the Homebody's narrative, the history of Afghanistan is a rushing stream, a swiftly flowing intersection of different tribes, jostling their caravans over the mountains and into Kabul one on top of another, a brilliant tapestry into which the colourful threads of Brooke-Rose's palimpsest histories are woven.

When the Homebody finally returns to the concerns of the everyday it appears that she is planning a party, but not before visiting a place in London "where there are shops full of merchandise from exotic locales, wonderful things made by people who believe, as I do not, as *we* do not, in magic" (Kushner 10). This visit to a small shop in London that contains items imbued with magic becomes magical in itself when "signing the credit card receipt I realize all of a sudden I am able to speak perfect Pashtu" (Kushner 23). Equipped with this new linguistic ability, the Homebody is suddenly transported to Afghanistan where she makes love to the shopkeeper:

HOMEBODY. We kiss, his breath is very bitter, he places his hand inside me... And there are flocks of pigeons the nearby villagers keep banded with bronze rings about their legs, and they are released each afternoon for flight, and there is frequently, in the warmer months, kite flying to be seen on the heights of Bamaru. (Kushner 26)

She abruptly terminates these fanciful musings to pay for her purchases. But when and where did this scene of lovemaking take place? Was it real, or imaginary? By the time Kushner returns us to the present, the here and now is glossed over with a veiled ghostly presence of the ancient past. In addition, this middle-aged English woman, the Homebody, suddenly has a history that is linked to Afghanistan. She travelled there, we know not how, but she has described to us vividly an experience of love making that sounds both real and fantastical at the same time. We may now add the Homebody's personal history to our knowledge of Kushner's fictional history of Afghanistan. What the playwright has accomplished - though the intermediation of the Homebody - is to place his audience *inside* his fictional Afghanistan, a history composed of many layers. We are not to imagine one chronology of historical occurrences, but all times intersecting to create a simultaneous view of the many layers of Afghanistan's palimpsest histories. Kushner has not so much initiated a plot as cast a spell. When the Homebody packs her bags at the end of the monologue and exits, we don't know where she is going. What was the meaning of her encounter with the shopkeeper? Kushner is manipulating time, referring to events that are in the future as if they have already taken place. The result is not so much confusing as mysterious and the Homebody is transformed from a dreamy, middle aged arm chair traveller into an enigma.

As we begin Act One, Scene Two of the play, we move from modern day London to Kabul, Afghanistan, and it's as if we've crossed continents to enter a 'time before'. It is important to note that Priscilla and Milton don't 'travel' to Afghanistan - they are just set down, suddenly there. Further Milton makes it clear, the minute they are left alone, that being in Kabul isn't a good idea: "People remain at home when tragedies happen and the government arranges things like shipping bodies" (Kushner 39). Milton's reservations are understandable, as the bizarre scene in the Kabul hotel room, in stark

contrast to the peace and quiet of the Homebody's kitchen, is full of menace. The Homebody is apparently dead, attacked on the streets of Kabul. Sympathy for her fate, or for Milton and Priscilla, is in short supply in this scene. After Doctor Qari Shah has delivered a horrific description of the Homebody's apparent death by dismemberment, warnings trump condolences:

MULLAH AFTAR ALI DURRANNI. In these bad times, why this lady your wife come to Kabul? She have been informed upon to have been not clad in decent attire for street, not wearing burqa, uncovered...And also she have been carrying openly this thing:

(From a paper sack he removes a yellow discman, headphones attached, and he hands it to Milton. Milton opens the lid of the discman, looks at the CD inside, closes it.)

MULLAH AFTAR ALI DURRANNI. Impious music which is an affront to Islam, to dress like so and then the music, these are regrettable.

PRISCILLA. *(From behind the bedsheet)* What is it? May I see? (Kushner 34)

There are a number of elements that signal to us that this world is subject to different rules than either Milton or Priscilla would be accustomed to. First, the brutality of the attack is described in excruciating detail by Doctor Qari Shah, the following quote is but one small part of his extended description:

DOCTOR QARI SHAH. ... The auxiliary fascia of the right, ah, hemispherical eminence, um, mamma, um breast, torn off either by force of a blow or as the corpus is dragged. (Kushner 32)

Second, Priscilla is visible only as a shadow behind a bed sheet. No explanation is given but in later scenes we learn that it is illegal for a woman to be alone with men to whom she is not related. The third bizarre occurrence in the scene is that after this

detailed description of the Homebody, Doctor Qari Shah informs us that her corpse is missing. Thus, Priscilla's presence in the scene as a shadow cast on a bed sheet underscores the illusive quality of her Mother. But so far, the plot is clear. Priscilla and her father have come in search of the Homebody and now that she is dead desire only to return her body to England.

In the next scene, Priscilla braves the streets in search of her Mother. But, it is not long before this western woman is in direct confrontation with a Munkrat; a character modeled after the Taliban's police empowered to enforce laws laid down by The Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Suppression of Vice:

(The women react with consternation when she [Priscilla] throws off her burqa. They hurry off. Priscilla picks up the guidebook, sits on the curb, lights a cigarette, starts to peruse the map. Immediately a bearded man in green shalwah kamiz appears, wearing a black turban, carrying a Kalashnikov and a rubber hose. (Kushner 44)

Priscilla is threatened with a beating and is only saved by the intervention of Khwaja who pleads her ignorance. The moment when the Munkrat backs down is a rare incidence of respect for Western sensibilities in the play.

Despite Khwaja's assistance, Priscilla's search of the city's hospitals and morgue is unsuccessful. At this point the plot becomes complicated by the obstacles placed in her path. She is told that her Mother is alive, that the Homebody has opted to remain in Afghanistan to marry a Muslim man. Further, that this Muslim's man's wife desires to leave Kabul and travel to England.

Initially, in this second half of the play, it appears that Kushner is presenting us with a conventional plot, the search for a missing woman. He then complicates the plot, a tactic consistent with classic plot development, by preventing the protagonist from achieving her goal. However, these complications come in the form of increasingly

unlikely events that put the characters off kilter; how can a woman be dead and a Muslim convert at the same time? Why would the Doctor have described in such detail the death of a woman if he had not seen her corpse? Was he lying? Further, it appears that a bizarre exchange is being suggested; if the Homebody remains in Afghanistan, then Mahala, the Muslim man's current and troublesome wife, will be allowed to go to England.

To survive in Kushner's fictional Afghanistan one is obviously going to have to revise one's definition of 'normal'. In answer to direct questions, the play offers only riddles. Even Mahala, the Muslim wife, will not say for sure if the Homebody is living with her husband, or dead. Eventually, Priscilla will come to terms with the fact that she will never know her Mother's true fate. She also accepts Mahala's plea to help her leave Afghanistan, and the final scene of the play features a magical moment in which Mahala is transformed from a terrified creature buried under a burqa into a "*modern English woman*" (Kushner 136).

Thus we have the plot of *Homebody/Kabul*, a play set in Afghanistan, during a time when the Taliban are all powerful. For this reason, it is important to examine some of the facts Kushner incorporates from the historical record, facts that help support his fictional world.

Real politics meets fictional world

In *The Theatre of Tony Kushner*, James Fisher quotes the playwright as follows:

As Walter Benjamin wrote, you have to be constantly looking back at the rubble of history. The most dangerous thing is to become set upon some notion of the future that isn't rooted in the bleakest, most terrifying idea of what's piled up behind you. (Fisher 21)

It isn't just historical facts but the *progress* of history that is the inspiration for Kushner's fictional Afghanistan. In my introduction I referred to the three kinds of palimpsest histories as described by Rose-Brooke. *Homebody/Kabul* adheres most to the second description; a story set in a historical period with no magic per se, but full of Rose-Brooke's previously mentioned 'time-dislocating philosophical, theological and literary allusions and implications' that create a magical effect (127). To accomplish this Kushner first sets up a credible Kabul.

It is 1998 and the Taliban are in charge, Americans are hated, and repressive laws are in effect to curtail the freedom of women. According to Reza Aslan, "Afghanistan in the 1980s had become a safe haven for Jihadists fleeing persecution in their home countries", and the war with the Soviets effectively became "a training ground to learn vital combat and guerrilla skills." (Aslan 115). Kushner's Quango testifies to the results of having religious zealots in charge: "For the commission of which crime [drinking alcohol] one can jolly well find oneself Toyota-trucked out to the old soccer stadium and...(He makes a gesture indicating a hand being chopped off) Rough boys, these Taliban"

(53). This sense of a country in the grip of

roving fundamentalists determined to enforce strict codes of behaviour is very much in evidence in the play. Priscilla's encounter with a rubber hose wielding Munkrat occurs the instant she removes her burqa. In Kushner's Kabul wearing the

burqa is mandatory, as it was in Taliban controlled Afghanistan as of 1996. But he treats this costume more as an obstreperous piece of clothing than a religious garb and provides us with an interesting view from the inside: "It's as if," comments Priscilla,

Photo of women in burqa:
www.independent.co.uk/multimedia/archive/0015



after just donning one, "I've contracted an exotic ophthalmological condition" (Kushner 41). Which observation allows the audience to imagine trying to navigate the world sight obscured by a cloth grill.

This contrast between a woman in a burqa, and a woman dressed in typical western fashion is a visual juxtaposition Kushner exploits throughout the play as Priscilla is constantly getting tangled up in hers and throwing it off. Under the Taliban, harsh penalties were imposed that restricted a woman's ability to participate in public life. For many a mandatory shroud was the least of their problems:

MAHALA. Atrocities they commit. People are flayed alive. The skin remove, yes? Bake to death lock in metal trucks in the desert. Thrown down...Des sources. Wells. (Kushner 84)

Kushner's portrayal of the treatment of women under the Taliban is consistent with the historical record. However, he lays down his most specific historical and political 'marker' in Act Two, Scene Two when Milton is trying to secure papers for Mahala to accompany himself and Priscilla out of the country. In a bid to speed up the process, Milton offers Mullah Aftar Ali Durranni a bribe, which precipitates the following outburst:

(Little pause. Mullah Durranni takes the wallet, throws it on the floor at Milton's feet.)

MULLAH AFTAR ALI DURRANNI. *(Calm, quiet.)* Afghanistan is Taliban and we shall save it. No one else shall, no one else care. England betray us. United States betray us, bomb us, starve us to...distract on adulterous debauch Clinton and his young whore." (Kushner 133)

This reference to 'Clinton's whore' by Durranni is significant and highlights one of the profound cultural and moral rifts between East and West.

On August 22, 1998, James Bennet, writing in the New York Times, reported that the U.S. had launched cruise Missiles at targets in the Sudan and Afghanistan in order to disrupt terrorist networks, attacks which then President Clinton described "as an act of self-defense against imminent terrorist plots and of retribution for the bombings of the U.S. embassies in East Africa two weeks ago" (Bennet *Times* 1998). The reference by Durranni to a "whore" undoubtedly refers to Monica Lewinsky, a White House intern Clinton was alleged to have had an affair with, allegations that blossomed into an impeachment trial in 1998. The trial and affair were highly publicized and engendered a sense of moral outrage at the West's perceived decadence. Kushner has captured this outrage in Durranni's rejection of the bribe. He has also reminded us that historical events are often prompted by deeply held personal beliefs.

What is real in Kushner's Afghanistan is the sense of oppression, and a palpable hatred of the Westerner, and women. Kushner has used the historical record to impress upon us that his characters are in a very dangerous place.

Time & space: elements of the fantastic

Time-dislocation, a key element of Brooke-Rose's palimpsest histories, is one of the primary devices Kushner uses to help construct his fictional Afghanistan. In addition to improbable plots twists, the layers of converging history, the presence of a multiplicity of languages, the fact that time and space are unreliable, creates an element of the fantastic in the play. This device is first used in the Homebody's monologue in the section already quoted where she goes on a dream like sojourn in the company of the shopkeeper. Time is unreliable again at the conclusion of her monologue, after the incident with the shopkeeper, when the Homebody is putting on her coat, preparing, we assume, to go somewhere. At this point she still has the Afghanistan guidebook in her hand. Does that mean she is now going to Afghanistan? Or has she already been

there? Kushner has placed the Homebody in a luminal place; both in her kitchen in London, and in Afghanistan simultaneously. As the Homebody makes her exit, Kushner also leaves us with a poetic image that suggests what fate awaits her:

HOMEBOODY. I sing to the gardens of Kabul;

Even Paradise is jealous of their greenery. (Kushner 30)

It appears that it is to Paradise that the Homebody is going. Kushner has effectively blurred the lines between real time and space and imaginary time and space, so that when, in the next act, we arrive in 'Afghanistan', we are already experiencing a sense of dislocation. From the Homebody's lyrical departure we move directly to Kabul where her husband Milton, daughter Priscilla, Mullah Aftar Ali Durranni, and Quango Twistleton are all in a hotel room listening to Doctor Qari Shah describe the mutilations his examination of the Homebody's corpse has revealed. Of course, in direct contradiction to the Doctor's supposed empirical evidence, no corpse is ever found.

QUANGO. They've come to claim her body, Minister Durranni.

MULLAH AFTAR ALI DURRANNI. This we cannot know. Where it is.

(Little pause.)

QUANGO. You lost her body? (Kushner 34)

The Mullah then delivers a rough outline of the journey of the Homebody's corpse after the attack, ending, unsatisfactorily with the conclusion: "Information regrettably is scarce. We are searching now for where she is" (Kushner 35).

Another aspect of the chronotope of space and time in the play is the presence of death. Death is a marker in the progress of an individual's timeline. The death of one's parents in particular places the individual closer to his or her own mortality. By denying Priscilla the answer to the all important question of whether her Mother is dead or alive, Kushner is robbing her of the finality and resolution that a funeral and

mourning bring. This further underscores her suitability for the mythic quest because she is an individual seeking an answer to a riddle that lies between life and death. The difficulty Priscilla faces is that her quest is doomed to failure. Only in a magical realm do the dead come back to life and Afghanistan is no longer a magical realm. As her Mother has said in her opening monologue the world of magic has been subjected to "colonization and the savage stripping away of such beliefs" (Kushner 10).

Priscilla's search for her Mother grows stranger with each bit of information she receives, eventually her Mother is present only as an elusive 'other'; which also supports the element of the fantastic to the play.

In the end, with so much death in the play, Kushner's Kabul is a chronotope of the underworld; a place where time as we know it ends.

The presence of death is one of the main reasons Mahala cannot bear to remain in the country, if her female friends have not been murdered, they have committed suicide:

MAHALA. This one dies, that one starve, that one exploded, shot, rape, rape, die, die, die, die, die, die, whole family, whole family of she...husband of she, children - she throw herself off roof...her body is in the street, as it fell. I miss...I miss...*(She weeps)*

(Pause)

ZAI GARSHI. Usually she is cheerier. (Kushner 89)

If they have succeeded in doing nothing else, Kushner's Taliban have brought the country's history to a standstill, a phenomena Kushner has represented in his play.

This sense of an underworld is also perhaps the reason our heroine is named Priscilla, reminiscent of Persephone.

Character in the mystery

What reveals character in *Homebody/Kabul* is how each individual reacts to Kushner's fictional world. As previously mentioned, it is Priscilla who is fit for the task of trying to find her Mother, or her Mother's corpse. The character of Priscilla as compared to her Father is revealed in the following exchange which takes place after they have been informed of the Homebody's death and subsequent disappearance:

PRISCILLA. Something's wrong.

MILTON. Everything is wrong, Priss, but ---

PRISCILLA. Maybe she's kidnapped. maybe she's hurt, in a hospital, and they're hiding her for some reason. We should try to call the hospitals and -
(*She picks up the phone, jiggles the cradle buttons to get a dial tone*)

Dead. And that mullah? Were you impressed with the beard and turban? I wasn't impressed. He ripped up that paper to scare us. (Kushner 19)

Unlike his daughter, who is not intimidated by her surroundings, Milton is not interested in an adventurous search: as previously stated, he believes the correct course of action is to stay home and wait for the body to be delivered. Suddenly, is it Priscilla, a girl who suffered from depression, tried to commit suicide and endured electroshock therapy back home in London, who is the one strong enough now to search for her possibly murdered Mother. But if Kushner's characters defy normal expectations, an emotionally damaged daughter much braver than her father, they do conform to what we might expect to find in Fuchs' mystery:

The hero is usually alone, deserted by his former false friends, and the despair is often given a particular visual impact, by a change of costume, or some physical affliction. The terror of his situation may be intensified by

the appearance of horrific figures who torment him mentally and physically. (Happé 16)

Peter Happé's description of the typical hero of the Medieval morality play is relevant to Priscilla's circumstances. She is confused and angry over the death of her Mother, made all the more unbearable because it is unconfirmed. Forced to wear the all concealing burqa, she is definitely experiencing a "change of costume" and her "physical affliction" is that of a depression that led to attempted suicide. The "horrific figures" who torment her are of course the Taliban religious police, ready to pounce the minute she dares take off the restrictive garment. What Kushner gives Priscilla that equips her for this quest to solve the riddle of her Mother's disappearance is insight into her own condition:

KHWAJA. May the soul of your mother awake or asleep, witness your generosity.

PRISCILLA. She would be surprised. *(She holds out her hand)* I'm trembling. I'm unused to exercise. I can't believe this day. It's as if there's more room suddenly, and air to breathe. Something's snapped, or sprung loose. I can't tell you how uncharacteristic this is. Me, trudging about. (Kushner 60)

Typical of the hero in the morality play, Priscilla is the one who is transformed by her quest. In Act Three, Scene One, Khwaja leads her to a deserted mine field described as follows:

So late at night it's nearly dawn, but the sky is still black and wild with fierce stars. An open place, mountains of rubble. Terrible fighting took place here. There are signs posted warning of the danger of un-detonated mines. There's a depression in the ground, a rectangle of cleared earth outlined in small white stones ... a flame in a pot burns at one end (Kushner 111).

In addition to being a mine field, this location is described as the grave of Cain, and it is here that Priscilla finally gives up the search for her mother.

PRISCILLA. Tell her I said she shouldn't have gone, but. Tell her I said good-bye.

(The light is changing, night giving way to dawn. A muezzin's call for prayers.)

(Kushner 117)

The setting is mystical, the resolution equally so. We still don't have proof that the Homebody is dead or alive but now it no longer matters. By the end of the scene Priscilla, having accepted that she will never see her Mother again, agrees to try and get Mahala out of Afghanistan. She has, in effect, accepted that if one life is lost another can be rescued in its place. This transformation is assisted because Kushner's fictional world is so complete.

Still, it is disquieting that a young Western woman, a presumed failure in her own culture, has 'found herself' by travelling to the mysterious East. Can this really be the first time Priscilla has challenged herself with exercise? Is there no opportunity in England to appreciate the profound beauty of a star-filled night?

There may be a touch of Edward Said's Oriental discourse - a fascination with the 'exotic East' - running through Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul*. If we consider the landscape of this scene, beautiful and terrible, in which Priscilla experiences her revelation, Said's following observation is apt:

For there is no doubt that imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away (Said 55).

The above is less criticism than acknowledgement, as Kushner is well aware of this discourse of a romantic, purifying East as key to Priscilla's transformation. Through the

character of Priscilla, Kushner is deliberately calling our attention to the positive transformations that can occur when we are exposed to other cultures:

It [*Homebody/Kabul*] is also a play about travel, about knowledge and learning through seeking out strangeness, about trying to escape the unhappiness of one's life through an encounter with Otherness, about narcissism and self-referentiality as inescapable booby traps in any such encounter; (Kushner 142).

All the characters in *Homebody/Kabul* are tested. The character who most fails to provide a moral accounting for himself is Quango Twistleton. The only solace he can offer Milton comes in the form of alcohol and opium:

QUANGO. Oh, all right then, heroin. I'm a junkie. Yes. Why else would I be here? Afghanistan supplies the world. I came here to do good, biscuits and bandages and wooly blankets. Heroin was a great surprise. (Kushner 72).

Having developed a lust for Priscilla, Quango is reduced to smelling her underwear. In contrast to Priscilla, a young woman who confronts her fears to find answers, Quango is a drug addicted and disillusioned devil's minion, the stock character of any medieval morality play which usually included a host of characters named for their virtues or vices.²⁵

The poetics of the mysterium

Kushner's play is rich with heteroglossic text, a multiplicity of linguistic codes²⁶. This presence of many languages evokes the existence of diverse peoples, and where there are many people speaking different languages we may be sure that different histories intersect. Kushner's Afghanistan is a place of intersection and converging histories.

I am only too aware he [Kushner] will continue to insist that he is a political dramatist, rather than a theological one" ...[but]..."the dramatic impulse

towards phantasmagoria always will be his [Kushner's] aesthetic redemption." (Bloom 4)

In my introduction, I proposed that Kushner is both a political and a theological playwright. With respect to *Homebody/Kabul* these two descriptions are not incompatible. I would now like to address the issue of how Kushner, as Bloom suggests, 'writes theologically'. Because it is that theological writing that the playwright uses to illuminate the truth in his fictional world. I have already indicated that the presence of heteroglossic text is one element of building a fictional world. I will now specifically address Kushner's use of these many languages in the text.

As Pricilla plunges into Kabul, she also plunges into the play's multi-linguistic matrix. Shortly after leaving the hotel room she tries to have a cigarette. A task quickly made impossible for someone wearing a Burka. But as soon as she removes this garment she is set upon by a Munkrat, described by the stage directions as "*a bearded man in green shalwah kamiz*" who appears "*wearing a black turban, carrying a Kalashnikov and a rubber hose*" (Kushner 44). This Munkrat threatens Priscilla with a beating for removing her burqa. However, he is stopped by the entrance of Khwaja who pleads in Pashtun that as Priscilla is ignorant and a British tourist she should not be beaten. While Kushner offers a translation of Khwaja's speech in italics, he does not indicate if the italicized text is to be spoken, or if the audience is to be provided by any other means with an English translation.

Curious, I contacted Steppenwolf Theatre, Chicago, Illinois, who produced the play in July of 2003 under the director of Frank Galati. Erica Daniels, Director of Casting and the School at Steppenwolf responded to my e-mail informing me that no simultaneous translation of the foreign language text in the play was provided to the audience in the Steppenwolf production. Audiences simply "picked up" the meaning of the text from

the actors gestures and interactions (Daniels *e-mail* 2010). The scene just described contains long passages of Pashtun, and of course it is the first time an English speaking audience would hear that foreign tongue in the play. However in Act Two, Scene Two, English, Arabic, French, and Pashtun are all spoken. In this scene, to some extent, the author has arranged the dialogic exchanges to create a rational for characters to translate each others speeches. Still, as Martha Lavey, Artistic Director of Steppenwolf Theatre notes in her foreword to *Homebody/Kabul*, the play is a veritable "tower of Babel" (Lavey xi). As a result of this extended 'Babel-like' mix, it would be difficult to imagine an audience composed of people who had no trouble understanding every word in the text.

But this multi-lingual matrix does support the fictional world that Kushner is constructing. If no translation is offered - and there are many techniques available to do so in the theatre - it must be assumed that we are meant to struggle with language in *Homebody/Kabul*. Being surrounded by a linguistic code we do not understand is part of our experience of the play, and a part of Kushner's tactic in transporting us to a fictional realm.

Such confusion was also the purpose of the original Biblical tower of Babel. God chose to "confound" the builders of the tower of Babel because in its construction mankind was raising himself so high as to challenge God's authority.²⁷ For this reason, the 'tower of Babel' image is evoked to imply the confusion and disorientation that multiple languages bring. It is an allusion that underscores Kushner's fictional Afghanistan as a place of cultural intersection, of mingling and clashing. Further proof that the sweep of history the *Homebody* described as a three thousand year journey has been condensed into one world, one imaginary time and place.

In addition, Kushner has introduced Esperanto²⁸ to this mix of tongues. Khwaja, Priscilla's saviour and guide, spent time in prison during which he tried to prevail upon a fellow prisoner, a learned man, to teach him English. However:

He refused; he would teach me something much better: an international language, spoken in every nation on earth. I had never heard of such a marvel! (Kushner 58)

Unfortunately for Khwaja no one else had heard of this marvel either. He emerged from prison accomplished in the 'perfect language' that no one understood. At which point - alas Kushner's lesson is not subtle - Khwaja uses this unknown language to write poetry.

According to Umberto Eco, Esperanto grew out of its originator's "desire for peace between peoples" (*Perfect* 324), making Esperanto perhaps more a dream than a language. Unfortunately the dream of Esperanto is also dashed in the play. Khwaja has given Priscilla his poems written in that obscure tongue asking her to deliver them to a friend in England. When Khwaja is discredited and the poems confiscated by the Taliban, Priscilla is accused of espionage:

MULLAH AFTAR ALI DURRANNI. (*Sternly, to Priscilla*) You have hire this Tajik mahram. He is said to have give you papers. Written in language so no person can read, these papers you are to give to person in London. There papers are not of poems but Tajik informations for Rabbani and Massoud. Placements of weapons and this. Written in...(*To Mahala, in Pashtun*) Shefer? (*Code*) Code? How it's said? (Kushner 131)

In the above quote Durranni reverses the positive vision of Esperanto by implying that this particular code is not intended as an instrument of peace, but of war.

But, if what we have in Kushner's fictional Afghanistan is a Tower of Babel, sowing chaos, then what we require for peace is a language of common understanding. Which is why, on a hopeful note, Kushner suggests that this tension between multiple languages can be resolved. In the last scene set in Afghanistan, between Milton and Mahala, Kushner demonstrates how language divides, but how it may also provide a bridge to understanding:

MAHALA. Parlez vous francais? Deutsch?

MILTON. English is my only language, alas.

MAHALA. English, and, ah *science*.

MILTON. Pardon?

MAHALA. You speak *science*.

MILTON. (*Surprised!*) Oh! Yes.

MAHALA. "Duals."

MILTON. (*Surprised! Seeing her!*) Duals! Indeed. I'd no idea you were -

(Kushner 122)

They are interrupted, but Kushner has made his point: languages, even those we make up, such as Milton's computer related vocabulary, can function as bridges to understanding, to "seeing", and the most important thing to 'see' in this Afghanistan, is the person in front of you. Mahala's stubborn effort to communicate with Milton transforms her from a raving lunatic under a shroud into a human being. It strengthens his previously weak resolve to get her out of the country. Kushner's heteroglossic text helps convey the lesson that while too many tongues in too many voices divide mankind, we can still achieve peace by just making the effort to listen. Perhaps there is a 'language' of peace after all.

Another message with a theological tone is delivered by the Homebody before her supposed departure for Afghanistan and her uncertain death:

What after all is a child but the history of all that has befallen her, a succession of displacements, bloody, beautiful? How could any mother not love the world? What else is love but recognition? Love's nothing to do with happiness/ Power has to do with happiness. Love has only to do with home. (Kushner 28)

It is Afghanistan that is the child, cursed with a history, bloody and beautiful, but worth loving all the same. This writing that mirrors the theological in content and allusion, and attempts transformation in our presence, contributes to our reception of *Homebody/Kabul* as a morality play.

The medieval mystery plays told the sacred history of the world; the moralities, based not on history but on doctrine, recapitulated this universal form through a central figure's progress toward salvation. (Fuchs 39)

Of course the purpose of theological writing is to guide the receiver toward salvation and in *Homebody/Kabul* a number of characters undertake that progress. Priscilla's final acceptance of the loss of her mother is one example. Milton also rouses himself from his hotel room and becomes active in sponsoring Mahala to leave the country. Elements of the plot evoke the mythic concept of substitution, a life for a life, which takes place twice in the play. After Khwaja rescues Priscilla from the threatening Munkrat in Act One, Scene Three, the following exchange occurs:

(She puts on the burqa.)

PRISCILLA. I'm...You're to be my uncle?

(Little pause. He looks at her.)

KHWAJA. Five years ago in the fighting just three blocks away, a mortar shell and good-bye dear gentle brother; estimable sister-in-law, nephews, beloved niece.

PRISCILLA. Is that true?

(Khawaja bows a little, neither affirming nor denying.) (Kushner 50)

Of course, the most significant substitution is Mahala for the Homebody. Mahala begs Priscilla to help her leave Afghanistan, and she claims, though she will not offer any proof, that the Homebody is now with her husband. Mahala's plight is believable and terrifying:

KHWAJA. *(Translating...)* She wants to...She is a librarian. She wants to go out and to parties. She has no books to read. She hears women dies, sounds of this come to her from, from... Her cousin hanged herself..." (Kushner 88)

Later in the same scene, Mahala literally begs Priscilla to take her out of Afghanistan:

(Mahala crawls on all fours to Priscilla, grabs her hand, kisses it. Priscilla, horrified, tries to pull her hand away. Mahala will not let go, holding onto Priscilla's fingers.)

PRISCILLA. Please, please don't.

MAHALA. To leave is a terrible thing. But I must be saved. Yesterday I could not remember the alphabet. I must be saved by you. (Kushner 90)

Mahala is the supplicant, Priscilla the one who can grant salvation, or in this case, freedom from a life of oppression and brutality. The 'trade' that takes place in the last scene, with Mahala donning Western clothes and sitting in the Homebody's kitchen is performed in the manner of a ritual:

The room in the Khyber Pass dissolves. The sounds of rain. Stephane Grappelli's version of "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" is heard through the rain. Milton helps Mahala stand, remove her coat; he watches her as she adjusts her hair and clothes, becoming a modern English woman. She looks very different. It's London 1999. In the Homebody's kitchen again, as in Act One, Scene 1, Mahal is seated in the Homebody's chair, reading." (Kushner 136)

This transformation is indeed magical. Mahala, after all, has been shrouded in a burqa for the entire play, and in more than one scene, spent most of her time cowering on her knees. In a few moments Kushner takes a woman from the oppressive Taliban to the world of modernity. The transformation further supports the mystical quality of the play's chronotope. Just as the Homebody appears at the beginning of the play to travel back in time, Mahala has now travelled forward.

Thus we have two key moments in the play that support this notion of Kushner as a metaphysical and theological playwright: the scene where Priscilla acknowledges the loss of her Mother and the scene of Mahala's transformation.

But the scene of acknowledgement that takes place under a night sky "wild with fierce stars" (Kushner 111), where Priscilla kneels by the supposed grave of Cain in acceptance of her Mother's death or irrevocable disappearance is also the moment where we have a resolution to the riddle of the play's title. This is the site where Homebody meets Kabul:

KHWAJA. This [map] says, not "Grave of Cain," but rather; "Grave of Cain?" She was pursuing a rumour: On no official map is there ever a question mark. This would be an entirely novel approach to cartography. (Kushner 68)

According to Manfred Pfister, the title "...should point forward to a crucial episode in the text...whether it anticipates the atmosphere of the play...or points towards a central element in the plot..." (Pfister 42). As Priscilla arrives at the end of her quest, we have also arrived at Pfister's "crucial episode".

These elements, Priscilla's quest, the salvation and transformation of Mahala, provide additional support for placing *Homebody/Kabul* within Fuchs' modern mysterium.

Plays within the mysterium mirror the Medieval Mystery play because in such dramas "little may happen" on the surface, progress takes place on a "mythic level which mysteriously drives and governs quotidian events" (Fuchs 10). Trying to find evidence of her Mother's death, Priscilla has searched Kabul. Such a quest, while not necessarily mundane, is a tedious action that takes her to a series of hospitals and morgues. The 'mythic' level of this quest is that her Mother can not be found, not in any sense of the word. Yet, in this strange place, Priscilla has succeeded in finding herself.

Conclusion: A final view of the periplum

A periplum is a map or drawing that shows how land looks from a point at sea. The term is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as drawn from the poetry of Ezra Pound, specifically in *The Pisan Cantos*. Pound uses periplum to describe not history from a historian's or philosopher's elevated point of view, but rather from the poet's point of view where the poet is a voyager navigating history personally. Kushner has given the last scene in *Homebody/Kabul* the title Periplum, so this notion of a historical view as both personal and poetic point is intentional.

In her essay "News That Stays News", Denise Levertov remarks: "I see its [periplum's] applicability to the experience of numinous works of art from the mobile vantage point of one's own growth and change: the different angles and aspects of the

work thus perceived, and the new alignments with its historical context, and also with the context of the perceiver's personal history" (Levertov 104).

Throughout *Homebody/Kabul*, Kushner explores new alignments with history, moments that signal, as Levertov observes "changes in the behold that contribute to new perceptions"(Levertov 105). Ultimately, Kushner's view of Afghanistan is from a distance, curiously altered, yet accurate to a degree that is useful for our understanding; a *periplum*.

As previously mentioned, *Homebody/Kabul* premiered in the U.S. December 19, 2001, at the New York Theatre Workshop barely twelve weeks after the events of September 11. This prompted much discussion about the play's "prescience". As Martha Lavey²⁹ reports, "I saw the original production of *Homebody/Kabul* at New York Theatre Workshop in December of 2001. It was an uncanny experience. We were all of us - and New Yorkers especially - still reeling from the events of September the 11th, and here was this play, obviously written long before September of 2001, set in Afghanistan, expressing precisely the politics and conflicts that had suddenly burst onto the world stage" (Lavey ix).

Kushner's reaction to the reception of his play is important, for the playwright in no way attributes his ability to envision events on the political horizon - not the specific events per se, but the shape of an impending conflict and the centrality that Afghanistan was to assume on the world stage - to some sort of mystic intuitiveness. Rather he makes it quite clear that: "I'm not psychic. If you choose to write about current events there's a good chance you will find the events you've written about to be...well, current. If lines in *Homebody/Kabul* seem "eerily prescient" (a phrase repeated so often that my boyfriend Mark suggested I adopt it as a drag name: Era Lee Prescient) we ought to consider that the information required to foresee, long before 9/11, at least the broad

outline of serious trouble ahead was so abundant and easy of access that even a playwright could avail himself of it" (Kushner 144).

Kushner's Afghanistan is a site of unbearable tension, the oppressive tactics employed to suppress its population a logical preamble surely to crimes about to explode onto the world stage, which the real Afghanistan did on September 11, 2001. Whatever else it does, Kushner's play warns of that explosion, not as a prophet but through his literary skill as the creator of a fictional world.

Priscilla and Milton do not return with the person they went to find, the lost wife and mother, instead they rescue another woman and put her in the Homebody's place. Through this gesture, we understand that it takes a measure of sacrifice to set the world right. If that is Kushner's message, it can hardly be called devoid of political signification. As Fuchs tells us: "The journey we take in both the modern mystery and its medieval forebears follows the moral education and purification of the morality play's typical protagonist, the naive traveler" (Fuchs 40). Who could be more naive than the Homebody, "safe in her kitchen, on her culpable shore, suffering uselessly watching others perishing in the sea, wringing her plump little maternal hands, oh, oh" (Kushner 28). It is the fusing of these elements, the presence of a historical political world with its accepted generalities and known facts, with a fictional world of ghosts and mythic exchanges, describing the journey into oblivion of the naive traveler, that makes Kushner both political and theological.

CONCLUSIONS: *The age of juxtaposition*

Hare's greatest achievement is one of content rather than form. He is the first playwright to convey the interconnectedness of international politics. Sophocles would write of his city-stage, Shakespeare of his nation-state. Now, there is little choice but to write of the world. (Dromgoole Independent 2004.)

In my introduction to this study I stated that I had a passion for political theatre, that passion remains and has been nurtured by this process. The value of the political play lies in its message to history. Regarding our post 9/11 era, if future generations were to stage these plays, would they understand not only the events that transpired, but what compelled us to act the way we did in response. Have these plays told the truth about our ethical behaviour during what I called in my introduction this past incendiary decade?

In considering the answer to that question I have examined the work of theorists who debate whether the dramatic text can function as a narrative and further as a viable historical narrative. I believe the evidence shows that it can. However all texts and narratives have their particular characteristics and these features must be weighted in the balance when considering the issue of truth in history. As the theatre of testimony demonstrates, experience is also a form of truth telling, and the play can transmit that experience. All of these plays have, I believe, demonstrated, as Harold Pinter insists, that while truth "is forever elusive", it can be *pursued* through the dramatic text. This because the dramatic text above all other narratives admits to the elusive nature of truth by presenting both monologic and dialogical speech where debate is intrinsic to form.

In addition, the dramatic text is always ready to be performed for a new generation; it has the ability to re-establish with each performance a fresh site of commemoration.

Thus, acknowledging Assmann's "secondary witnessing" (267), these plays may be seen as messengers who transport to the future not only the facts but the unfolding scene of an event by providing an opportunity to witness as actions its reverberations in the public sphere.

The task, then, is to identify and assign terms and definitions to the new without insisting that any one practice in theatre experimentation should be held up as "the norm" (Lehmann 25).

Much more valuable than the dominance of any one form or aesthetic, what I have discovered in the political plays written after 9/11, is a determined searching out of new forms and to some extent an advancement on each front. The resurgence of verbatim theater signals Foucault's theory of "discontinuity" (*Archaeology* 9).

"Discontinuity was the stigma of temporal dislocation that it was the historian's task to remove...It has now become one of the basic elements of historical analysis" (*Archaeology* 9). Treading in Foucault's footsteps, we must look for these moments of discontinuity within the history of political theatre, moments where verbatim-like forms send up shoots only to disappear again. Identifying such historical markers, Paget, in his essay *The 'Broken Tradition' of Documentary Theatre and Its Continued Powers of Endurance* notes that: "Modifying itself seemingly effortlessly, naturalism sails on through crisis after crisis...the rhizomic nature of alternative forms allows for different kinds of flowering - recoverable, like the past itself, by effort of will in circumstances of necessity" (*Get Real* 224). This 'different flowering' is evident in how each playwright has adapted the dominant form in their dramatic text to suit the particulars of the story they wish to tell, and the way they believe it should be told. Consistent with Paget's observation about the enduring power of naturalism, it would appear, overall, that there is a desire to 'get real' running underneath the soil of whatever form or aesthetic is dominant. Yet Hare's

experiment with *Stuff Happens* proves that shaping the narrative and allowing other forms and aesthetic devices to intrude as deemed necessary is crucial to a play's success. As a historical writer Hare also shows us the enduring power of the Shakespearian model as applied to the history play, as *Stuff Happens* both emulates the tone and mirrors the structure of Shakespeare's *Henry V*. Thompson and Raffo's testimonies have both pathos and impact because we know they represent real people and therefore real suffering. Kushner's fictional world of Afghanistan reminds us that all 'real' worlds contain an element of fiction. The greatest fiction being that we live in separate worlds. Theatre allows us to view those worlds as we would a laboratory in which we explore our ethical behaviour. In particular, as relates to Hare's *Stuff Happens*, the playwright has attempted to show what Brecht calls the "exceedingly complicated machinery within which the struggle for power nowadays takes place" (Brecht *Brecht* 73-74); more to the point we observe its failures. Thompson has spoken specifically of her leap into portraying real people and real events:

I was obsessed by Iraq, but I thought, who would I be to write about it?

How do I dare? But finally I trusted myself as a writer and made a leap.

(Morrow Interview)

Heather Raffo is a relatively new playwright and *9 Parts of Desire* was a historically timed play. Her experiences as an American who spent her early childhood in Iraq give her text an authority few could emulate. What strengthens the credibility of both Thompson's and Raffo's texts is that both playwrights focus more on the individual situations and dispositions of their characters than they do on issues concerning the general political sphere. Further, far from the realm of David Hare's Viewpoint characters, Raffo speaks only of the personal, her characters do not attempt to answer

broader political questions. What Raffo captures is the intolerable position of being a citizen with deep family ties in two countries suddenly at war.

It is also obvious from what we have said that it is the function of the poet is to relate not things that have happened, but things that may happen, i.e. that are possible in accordance with probability or necessity...For this reason poetry is a more philosophical and more serious thing than history; poetry tends to speak of universals, history of particulars. (Aristotle 12)

While it is true that Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul* employs a phantasmal style, I still believe it to be the most radically political play of the texts I have selected. The reason for this is that while Hare's play speaks of what happened and indicates what went wrong, and both Thompson and Raffo depict the consequences of those errors, little can be done with the lessons of the past until we imagine, as Kushner allows us to, what actions we might take now to re-envision the future. I stated previously that I believed Kushner's message was that it takes a measure of sacrifice to set the world right. *Homebody/Kabul* allows us to see the sacrifices we must be prepared to consider. All worlds will require transformation if they are to coexist. This because, in the end, all worlds are constructs, all societies deliberately created with the purpose of enabling us to live according to our own design. Real world events are created every day from fictional imaginings. The fictional worlds we chose to live in today have profound ethical implications: As Reza Aslan points out in *How To Win A Cosmic War*: "This self-imposed world view of constant embattlement [between fundamentalists] can be impervious to reality" (91). What we gain by viewing characters and their actions in fictional worlds on stage is the chance to expose these man-made constructs as temporary fictions that may be altered by a new design. In this lesson theatre acts as a form of empowerment.

'How shall I act?' is one succinct way of posing the question of ethics. It is also, as you will, of course, have noticed...a theatrical question. (Ridout 6)

What the theatre allows us to do is witness characters acting ethically, or unethically. All of which can take place in a contained space where much can be viewed simultaneously:

Thus on the rectangle of its stage, the theatre alternates as a series of places that are alien to each other..." (Foucault *Heterotopias* 5)

To pay witness to characters within this "rectangle" is to take advantage of many small fictional worlds. It is also to enter Foucault's mirrored space in-between utopias and heterotopias, "that sort of mixed experience which partakes of the qualities of both types of location, the mirror" (Foucault *Heterotopias* 3). This space in-between might also be called "a space of ethical uncertainty" (Ridout 11), a moral locality in which many playwrights place their characters. As all spaces in-between are for deciding, we will then determine for ourselves if we are witnessing the possibility of a new utopia or less desirable heterotopias taking root. Theatre best portrays these spaces of ethical decision making. We are viewing the world in which we live as a publicly shared act. As we observe the contested space of the theatre, we are in the presence of those with whom we will build the world to come.

I believe all these playwrights have to some degree entered Eleanor Fuchs' *mysterium*, a place where the morality play is meshed with the aesthetics of fictional worlds, with testimony, and with verbatim. The *mysterium* is a place designed to portray characters challenged by moral issues, where the characters embark specifically on a quest for solutions. Morality is a strong theme in Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul*, specifically the question of how people behave when their world is turned upside down. Priscilla, a young woman who caused her parents grief in the world before the

play is transformed into someone stronger when she is faced with Kabul. Mahala risks the ire of the Taliban in a bid to escape the country. In the end, it is women, the most oppressed, who are the brave ones in Kushner's Afghanistan. The men are either raving lunatics like the Taliban, cowards like Milton, or somewhere in between, like Quango, doomed to be ineffective. The one man who temporarily assists Priscilla, Khwaja, disappears at the end of the play in a manner that places her in peril. Morally, politically, Kushner would appear to be constructing a world designed to demonstrate that our salvation lies with the oppressed, and that a social order that makes war on women can only go mad. As noted, Harold Bloom believes that Kushner's writing style and a political agenda are incompatible, but the themes presented in *Homebody/Kabul* would appear to demonstrate exactly the opposite.

According to James Fisher: "*Homebody/Kabul's* haunting timeliness [a reference to the premiere of the play so shortly after the events of 9/11] has impressed its first critics and audiences, but Kushner eschews the label of prophet. His mission is to incite in his audience an emotional, humanizing response to the harrowing moments of existence and survival, as well as to prod vigorous discussion of strategies for navigating the political, social, and intellectual minefields of our time" (Fisher xii). This mission to "humanizing the world by incessant and continual discourse about its affairs and the things in it" (Demetz *Nathan Intro*), is consistent with the goals of the 'ethical dramaturgy' I referred to in my introduction; it connects Kushner to Lessing, Piscator and Brecht. In *Homebody/Kabul* Kushner has his political eye on a fictional Kabul that will serve as a testing ground for what he believes is happening there now, and what will happen in the future. In this respect he is following Aristotle's directive that a poet should write not of things that have occurred, but of what might. Thus, Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul* is a fictional world that suggests possibilities. The fact that he wrote the

play before certain events unfolded, but that in his play we see the shape of things to come, is not so much "eerily prescient" (Kusner 144), as it is a validation of his process of fiction making.

The play constructed through verbatim techniques, transcripts, interviews, and documents helps us understand what really happened, it uncovers facts that may have been hidden or obscured. The theatre of testimony helps us understand what people experienced, who they were, how they survived. The theatre that constructs a fictional world creates a site of observation in which what exists can be taken in a direction which allows us to imagine new possibilities. The dramatic text is a life-like repository, a place where we see where the world has been, how it got there, and where it can go.

We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at the moment. (Foucault *Heterotopias* 1)

There were many plays written after 9/11, and many of the forms I have identified in this study appear to varying degrees in most of them. Were I to continue this work, I would extend my overview of verbatim theatre, of testimony and of fictional worlds and examine the appearance of these forms across a broader spectrum of dramatic texts. For this reason, I have not identified any one form that I believe dominates the dramatic text post 9/11. While there has been a resurgence of verbatim theatre, or forms of documentary, verbatim techniques remain a tool, as does the testimony, as are fictional worlds. But all of these forms have been used to respond to the new political paradigm of our post 9/11 world. Regardless of form, it would appear that it is still imperative to "produce a response to the urgent concerns of the day" (Turner& Behrndt 47).

Or, as Brecht would have it we are still bound to "alter the world [because] it needs it" (*Messingkauf* 96).

Endnotes:

¹ Established in 1978, The Susan Smith Blackburn Prize is an international award created to recognize women playwrights. Judith Thompson won in 2007-08 for *Palace of The End*. Heather Raffo won the Special Commendation Award in 2004-05 for *9 Parts of Desire*.

² Piscator's productions were technically complex, with machine driven parts that animated walls and ceilings. The set for *Rasputin* by Alexei Tolstoy shows segments of a hemispherical stage with arches and an exposed architecture that injects a futuristic aesthetic into the dramaturgy of the play (Piscator 202, 203). "We are not concerned here with the figure of Rasputin the adventurer...The idea is to create a piece of world history..." (Piscator 230).

³ "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction" is the title of essay number 20 from *Brecht on Theatre* by Bertolt Brecht, Trans. John Willett, page 69, in the chapter *Exile: Scandinavia, U.S.A.*. The phrase is also sometimes quoted as 'theatre for pleasure *and* instruction', however in the case of Willett's text, *or* is used.

⁴ The A-effect is the alienation effect. In German the word is *Verfremdungseffekt* which is shortened to the V effect. In *Brecht on Theatre* by Bertolt Brecht, translated by John Willett, Brecht begins his chapter entitled *Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting* with this preface: The following is intended to refer briefly to the use of the alienation effect in traditional Chinese acting. This method was most recently used in Germany for plays of a non-Aristotelian (not dependent on empathy) type as part of the attempts being made to evolve an epic theatre" (Brecht *Brecht* 91)

⁵ Character in Brecht's *The Mother*.

⁶ Lloyd Newson's To Be Straight With You was in performance at the National Arts Centre November 26 and 27, 2009, in Ottawa. The play, as described by Newson in the NAC programme is "a work about tolerance/intolerance, culture, religion and homo/sexuality." Newson joined a panel discussion on Friday, November 27 at the NAC's Fourth Stage on Art and Politics. After the panel, a few University of Ottawa students sequestered him for a more detailed interview on the methodology of his theatre craft. This methodology is further outlined in the Educational Articles written by Newson and included in the Works Cited list.

⁷ Hare's play *The Power of Yes* is about the 2008-09 worldwide Financial crisis.

⁸ Not a miss-spelling, Hare created the word.

⁹ As defined by Rush the *state of equilibrium* "shows us what the world is like...before it is interrupted", by the play's events (Rush 285).

¹⁰ The "major dramatic question (MDQ)" is "that central question that runs through the whole play, causing the audience to wonder whether or not the agent of action will achieve her goal" (Rush 284).

¹¹ *fabula*: "From the Latin *fabula* (tale, story, narrative)" (Pavis 138)

¹² When these lines were spoken during the Studio 180 production of the play that I attended in Toronto, a good portion of the audience cheered and clapped. Whether or not this passage spoke an absolute truth or not, some of the people in the audience certainly heard what they believed to be true and expressed their support. The playwright's point of view was given hearty affirmation, so one could conclude that these audience members had experienced the war in the same way that David Hare did; as an act of hypocrisy. Thus, Hare was giving historical recognition to an opinion held by many of his audience, even though both playwright and audience know that the play is woven from fact and fiction.

¹³ The book's narrative excesses reach a shrill peak when Flaubert describes a scene of crucified lions their "faces contorted in hideous grimaces"(18), and is also evident in the description of the tortured Mâtho from the book's final scene where "...his appearance was no longer human...completely red from top to bottom...stripped of flesh...two flames came from his eye sockets which seemed to go up to his hair..." (281). Flaubert's description of the exotic, brutal Oriental was not without consequences. In the wake of the novel's popularity, the Empress Eugenie, wife of Napoleon the Third, "decided to attend a costume ball dressed as Salammbô...", and Flaubert was accused from the pulpit of attempting to "revive paganism" (Brown 370).

¹⁴ It is significant that as Flaubert's reputation as a novelist endures, many readers enjoy and study *Madame Bovary*, but not *Salammbô*. In his book *Heterocosmica*, Lubomir Doležel makes frequent mention of *Madame Bovary*, a selection which testifies to the book's enduring usefulness as a reference point for discussion. *Salammbô* is not mentioned. Yet, in its day *Madame Bovary* earned Flaubert censure and a court case, whereas *Salammbô* sold well for a time. It is likely that as the discourse of the 'mysterious', 'brutal' and generally inferior Oriental has fallen out of favour, so have the novels that drew inspiration from that stereotype.

¹⁵ Brooks use of the word "testimonio" is specific to her essay on the subject: "Testimonio's Poetics of Performance", listed in the Works Cited. As the other sources I have quoted refer either to the theatre of testimony, the literature of testimony, or testimonial literature, for consistency, I will use those more common terms.

¹⁶ Panopticon: an architectural figure at the centre of which is a tower with windows that open onto the inner side of a ring of cells that surround the building; each cell is visible in its entirety from the central tower. (Foucault *Discipline* 200)

¹⁷ Percocet. Generic name: acetaminophen & oxycodone; a narcotic pain reliever. Not recommended during pregnancy. Percocet: www.drugs.com/percocet.html

¹⁸ Noesis: understanding through reasoning and the exercise of the intellect. Source: www.thefreedictionary.com/noesis

¹⁹ *poeisis*: According to Lubomír Doležel writing in *Heterocosmica*, "Fictional worlds of literature of constructs of textual poeisis. All possible worlds are constructs of human productive activities; fictional worlds of literature are products of textual poeisis"(23). According to Richard Janko in his Glossary of Aristotle's *Poetics*, poesis means literally "making, from *poiein* "make" (218.)

²⁰ This time line is also consistent with the development of Thompson's script over a period of four years. *My Pyramids* was first presented as a one-act play in 2004 at Toronto's Wrecking Ball, a political cabaret. However, *Harrowdown Hill* was first workshopped in June of 2006, four months after the incident in which Steven D. Green was implicated, and the play received additional workshops throughout the fall of 2006 and later in 2007. Thus, the time line of development for *Harrowdown Hill* allows ample opportunity for Thompson to have read about the case, and subsequently incorporated its particulars into her version of Kelly's story.

²¹ The difference in spelling is undoubtedly due to different translations of the Iraqi word into English. Further reading in Hamza's book makes it clear that we are talking about the same shelter and the same attack.

²² Uday was one of Saddam Hussein's sons.

²³ Concrete poetry is defined in the ITP Nelson Canadian Dictionary of the English Language as: "Poetry that conveys meaning by graphic arrangement of letters, words, or symbols" (ITP 289). A further understanding of concrete poetry is found in M.H. Abrams A Glossary of Literary Terms: "It is frequently asserted that "poetry is concrete," or, as John Crowe Ransom put it in *The World's Body* (1938), that its proper subject is "the rich, contingent materiality of things" " (Abrams 31).

²⁴ "Bactria was an ancient country of SW Asia, fragmented in 130 BC by nomadic tribes" (Canadian Dictionary, Nelson). The phrase Greco-Bactria confusion would appear to be the playwright's invention. "Bactria was an ancient country lying between the mountains of the Hindu Kush and the Amu Darya (ancient Oxus River) in what is now part of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Bactria was especially important between about 600 BC and about AD 600, serving for much of that time as a meeting place not only for overland trade between East and West but also for the crosscurrents of religious and artistic ideas" (Encyclopedia Britannica online: www.britannica.com). This sense of Bactria as a "meeting place' for trade, cultural exchange and various conquests that eventually led to the dissolution of Bactria, likely inspired Kushner's phrase.

²⁵ The cast of characters listed for *The Castle of Perseverance* written 1400 - 25, includes: Avarice, Backbiter, Shrift, Penitence, Humility, Death, The Soul, & Truth, Justice & Peace. (Happé 76).

²⁶ The term [code] has come to the fore in sociolinguistics, where it is mainly used as a neutral label for any system of communication involving language. (Crystal 66)

²⁷ "And the Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (God *Genesis* 11: 6&7)

²⁸ Esperanto was first proposed in 1887, in the book *The International Language* by Dr. Ledger Ludwik Zamenhof who wrote under the pseudonym Dr. Esperanto (Doctor Hopeful) and this was soon adopted as the name of his language. (Eco, 1995, 324)

²⁹ Artistic Director of Steppenwolf Theatre

WORKS CITED:

- Arendt, Hannah. *Foreward*. Nathan The Wise, Minna Von Barnhelm and Other Plays and Writings. By Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. ed. Peter Demetz. New York: The Continuum P Co., 1991.
- Aristotle. Poetics. Trans. Richard Janko. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987.
- Aslan, Reza. How To Win A Cosmic War: God, Globalization and the End of the War on Terror. New York: Random House, 2009.
- Assmann, Aleida. "History, Memory, and the Genre of Testimony." Trans. Konstanz. Poetics Today. 27:2 Summer 2006. (261-273)
- Auslander, Philip. Theory for Performance Studies. USA and Canada: Routledge, 2008.
- Bakhtin, M.M. "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics." Narrative dynamics: essays on time, plot, closure, and frames. ed Brian Richardson. Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2002.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Discourse of History." Trans. Stephen Bann. Comparative Criticism, 3 (1981): 7-20. www.clas.ufl.edu/users/pcraddoc/barthes.htm
- Bennet, James. "U.S. Cruise Missiles Strike Sudan and Afghan Targets Tied to Terrorist Network." The New York Times 22 August 1998.
- Blair, Tony. "Statement of the Prime Minister Opening Iraq debate in Parliament." I beg to move the motion...www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page3294.asp. 18 March 2003.
- Bloom, Harold. Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Tony Kushner. Ed. Harold Bloom. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2005.
- . Shakespeare: The Invention of The Human. New York: Riverhead, 1998.
- Blythe, Alecky. "...on verbatim theatre." "Resource Material." Talking to Terrorists By Robin Soans. London: Oberon Books, 2005. (101 - 103)
- Bradley, Laura. Brecht and Political Theatre: The Mother on Stage. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Brecht, Bertolt. Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic. Ed. and trans. John Willett. London: Methuen, 1964.
- . Mother Courage and her Children. Trans. Eric Bentley. London: Methuen, 1922.
- . The Messingkauf Dialogues. Trans. John Willett. London: Methuen, 2002.
- Brooke-Rose, Christine. "Palimpsest Histories". Interpretation and Overinterpretation. with Umberto Eco, Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler. ed Stefan Collini. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1992. (125-138)
- Brooks, Linda Marie. "Testimonio's Poetics of Performance". Comparative Literature Studies. Vol. 42, No. 2, 2005. (181 to 222)

Bush, George W. Photo: United States President George W. Bush on board the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln*, 1 May 2003. Posted: 9:48 PM EDT (0148 GMT)

---. "Unedited transcript of President Bush's historic speech from the flight deck of the USS Lincoln." Posted: 9:48 PM EDT (0148 GMT) CNN: Aboard The USS Abraham Lincoln, 1 May 2003.

Canadian Dictionary of the English Language. ed: Susan Green and Jan Harkness. Scarborough, Ontario: ITP Nelson, 1997.

CBC News In Depth: Afghanistan. In the line of duty: Canada's Casualties. Updated August 30, 2010. www.cbc.ca/news/background/casualties/list.html

Carlson, Marvin. Theories Of The Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present. Ithaca and London: Cornell U P, 1984.

Concise Atlas of the World. The Times. Maps, Collins Bartholomew. London: Times Book Group, 2006.

Crystal, David. A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. Fourth Edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.

Daniels, Erica. "Re: Translation of Text." April 26, 2010, e-mail to Laurie Fyffe regarding Steppenwolf Theatre's production of Tony Kushner's Homebody/Kabul.

Dao, James. "Ex-Soldier Gets Life Sentence for Iraq Murders". New York Times. New York: May 21, 2006.

Demetz, Peter. Introduction. Nathan The Wise, Minna Von Barnhelm and Other Plays and Writings. by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. ed. Peter Demetz. New York: The Continuum P Co., 1991. (1 - 40)

Doležel, Lubomír. Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins U P, 1998.

---- Possible Worlds of Fiction and History: The Postmodern Stage. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010.

Dromgoole, Dominic. "Reality Check". The Guardian. London, UK: 23 October 2004. Culture/Stage/Theatre guardian.co.uk

Eco, Umberto. The Search for the Perfect Language. Trans. James Fentress. Munich: Blackwell, 1995.

---. Interpretation and Overinterpretation. Ed Stefan Collini. With Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler and Christine Brooke-Rose. Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1992.

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub, M.D. Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History. London: Routledge, 1992.

Fisher, James. The Theatre of Tony Kushner: Living Past Hope. New York: Routledge, 2002.

-
- Flaubert, Gustave. Salammbô. Trans. A. J. Krailsheimer. New York: Penguin, 1977.
- Fortier, Mark. Theatre Theory: An Introduction. USA, Canada: Routledge, 2005.
- Foucault, Michel. The Archaeology of Knowledge. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. London: Tavistock, 1972.
- . Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Random House, 1995.
- . "Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias" Trans. Jay Miskowiec. Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité, October 1984. <http://foucault.info/document/heteroTopia/>
- Fuchs, Elinor. The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism. Indianapolis: Indiana U P, 1996.
- Hamza, Khidhir with Jeff Stein. Saddam's Bombmaker: The Terrifying Inside Story of the Iraqi Nuclear and Biological Weapons Agenda. New York: Scribner, 2000.
- Happé, Peter. "Introduction" Four Morality Plays. Ed. Peter Happé. England: Penguin Books, 1979. (9-72)
- Hare, David. Stuff Happens. New York: Faber and Faber, 2004.
- . Writers & Company. Interview with Eleanor Wachtel, CBC Radio, Toronto, 7 February, 2010.
- . Writing Left Handed. London: Faber and Faber, 1991.
- Heddon, Deirdre. Autobiography and Performance. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Hutchison, Yvette. "Verbatim Theatre in South Africa: Living History in a Person's Performance." Get Real. ed. Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. (209-223)
- Innes, Christopher. "Towards a Post-millennial Mainstream? Documents of the Times." Modern Drama. 50:3. Fall 2007.
- Keller, Joe. theatre & politics. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Kushner, Tony. Homebody/Kabul. Revised Version. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2004.
- Laub, Dori M.D. and Shoshana Felman. Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Lavey, Martha. *A Foreword*. Homebody/Kabul by Tony Kushner. Revised Version. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2004.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies. Postdramatic Theatre. trans. Karen Jurs-Munby. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. Nathan The Wise, Minna Von Barnhelm and Other Plays and Writings. ed. Peter Demetz. New York: The Continuum P Co., 1991.

-
- Levertov, Denise. New and Selected Essays. USA: New Directions Publishing, 1992.
- Lewis, Bernard. The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror. New York: Random House, 2003.
- Luckhurst, Mary. Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Mother Courage and her Children. By Bertolt Brecht. Dir. Peter Hinton. Perf. Tanya Jacobs, Richard Donat, Randi Helmers. National Arts Centre Theatre, Ottawa. 15 January 2010.
- Newson, Lloyd. "DV8 Physical Theatre: Articles for Teachers and Students." Production conceived & directed by Lloyd Newson. Research: Lloyd Newson & Anshu Rastogi. London: National Theatre, Education Department, 2008. p. 1-12.
- Oliver, Kelly. "Witnessing and Testimony." *Parallax*. Vol. 10, No. 1. 2004.(79-88)
- Paget, Derek. "The 'Broken Tradition' of Documentary Theatre and It's Continued Power of Endurance." Get Real. Ed Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. (224-230)
- . No other way to tell it: Dramadoc/ docudrama on television. Manchester: Manchester U P, 1998. (224-238)
- "Verbatim Theatre: Oral History and Documentary Techniques." *New Theatre Quarterly*. Vol. 3, No. 12. Nov, 1987, 317 - 336.
- Pavis, Patrice. Dictionary of The Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis. trans. Christine Shantz. Toronto: U of T Press, 1998.
- Pfister, Manfred. The Theory and Analysis of Drama. Trans. John Halliday. Cambridge: U of Cambridge, 1988.
- Pinter, Harold. *Nobel Address*. nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/.../pinter-lecture.html 2005
- Piscator, Erwin. The Political Theatre: A History 1914 - 1929. Trans. Hugh Rorrison. New York: Rowohlt Verlag 1978.
- Raffo, Heather. Nine Parts of Desire. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 2002.
- Reinelt, Janelle. After Brecht: British Epic Theater. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1994.
- . "The Promise of Documentary." Get Real. Ed Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. (6 - 23)
- Ricoeur, Paul. History and Truth. Trans. Charles A. Kelbley. Foreword, David M. Rasmussen. Illinois: Northwestern Press, 2007.
- Ridout, Nicholas. theatre & ethics. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Rush, David. A Student Guide to Play Analysis. Carbondale, USA: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005.
- Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Vintage, 1997.

Schechner, Richard. Performance Studies: An Introduction. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Stuff Happens. By David Hare. Dir. Joel Greenberg. Perf. David Fox, Michael Healey, Nigel Shawn Williams, Karen Robinson. Royal Alexandra Theatre, Toronto, 5 December, 2009.

Szondi, Peter. Theory of the Modern Drama. Ed & trans by Michael Hays. Foreword: Jochen Schulte-Sasse. Theatre and History of Literature, Vol 29. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Thompson, Judith. An Interview with Judith Thompson. Eleanor Wachtel. The Masks of Judith Thompson. ed. Ric Knowles. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 1991.

---. Interview with Martin Marrow. CBC. Toronto, 16 January 2008.

www.cbc.ca/arts/theatre/archived-features.html

---. Interview with Jian Ghomeshi. CBC, Toronto. Podcast. 5 February 2010.

www.cbc.ca/podcasting/pastpodcasts.html

---. Palace of the End. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2007.

Turner, Cathy and Synne K. Behrndt. Dramaturgy and Performance. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008.

Warner, Margaret. Arab Views, September 6, 2002. www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east

White, Hayden. The Content of Form. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1987.

Willett, John. The Theatre of Erwin Piscator: Half A Century of Politics in the Theatre. London: Methuen, 1986

Women in Burqa. (photo) The Independent. photo: [www.independent.co.uk / multimedia/archive / 0015](http://www.independent.co.uk/multimedia/archive/0015)