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**The Unlisted Character:
On the Representation of War and Conflict on the
Contemporary Stage**

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Abstract

The focus of this dissertation is the theatrical representation of both the individual and war in a time of disintegrating national states and the dramatisation of destruction versus survival as the driving forces on stage. In a study on the future of empire it has been observed that instead of progressing into a peaceful future, the 21st century has slipped back in time into the nightmare of perpetual and indeterminate state of warfare: ceasing to be the exceptional state, war has become 'the primary organising principle of society', thus echoing Giorgio Agamben's declaration that the state of exception has become the status quo. Seminal studies on contemporary warfare and society such as Mary Kaldor's *New & Old Wars* (2005) and Ulrich Beck's *World at Risk* (2008 [2007]) trace how the face of war has changed over the past fifteen years. The dramatic texts examined in this thesis reach from plays depicting inner-state conflict, civil war and the politics of fear, for example Caryl Churchill's *Far Away* (2000), Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995) and Zinnie Harris's war trilogy (2005-2008) over documentary and verbatim-based plays and their attempt to portray the trauma of war by recreating on stage the process of giving testimony and by endorsing public grieving (e.g. various Tricycle productions and Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* [2006]), to adaptations of Greek tragedies (like Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* [2004]) and a Shakespearean play. The questions underlying this work are: how can war be represented on stage? and, how do the plays replicate the sociological structures leading to violence and war and explore their transformation of societies? Springing from the discussion about 'New Wars' in the age of globalisation, it will be demonstrated here how these 'New Wars' also bring forth new plays about war.

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Harold Pinter
Weather Forecast

The day will get off to a cloudy start.
It will be quite chilly
But as the day progresses
The sun will come out
And the afternoon will be dry and warm

In the evening the moon will shine
And be quite bright.
There will be, it has to be said,
A brisk wind
But it will die out by midnight.
Nothing further will happen.

This is the last forecast.

March 2003

Introduction

*And hither am I come
A prologue arm'd
William Shakespeare*

'What should and should not be described as war is no longer a question for academics alone, but an issue of possibly world-political importance', the political scientist Herfried Münkler asserts (2005: 4). He explicitly refers to the date of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States as a crucial watershed, but the question about the changed nature of war has been at the forefront of international relations theory since the mid-1990s, when the state of Yugoslavia collapsed into a series of terrible civil wars, and even earlier, 1991, at the time of the first Gulf War. War is conceived as an aberration only, when, in fact, it has become the status quo and the main force to organise society. Drawing from the ever-increasing body of plays investigating this changed nature of war, this thesis intends to explore how the contemporary wars and conflicts are represented on stage, in order to demonstrate that with the change in warfare during the last twenty years, the representation of war on stage has also changed significantly.

In the space of the last two decades, the structures of conflict, and thus the perception thereof, changed from a 'traditional' (read: modern) concept of war as a clearly defined inter-state or intra-state conflict between clearly designated combatants to an amorphous amalgamate of belligerent actions that are more readily associated with pre-modern state structures, with a certain formlessness, where the 'laws' of war do not hold any significance any more and the differences between combatant and non-combatant, frontline and homeland and ultimately war and peace have broken down. Not confined to a limited area, the fighting might break out anywhere (Münkler 12) and guerrilla warfare, terrorism and other characteristics of asymmetrical warfare prevail. While the erosion of states leads to wars being fought by para-states, mercenaries and private warlords, urban spaces become the sites of civil war.

Apart from individual acts of aggression against the strongholds of the 'First World', the site of these wars is mostly not in what one could call the 'First World'. But the Western society defines itself increasingly via its involvement in these wars, in which it might partake as aggressor, interventionist or indeed as economical partner and/or facilitator of one of the belligerents. How the 'Fortress West' negotiates and processes its relationship to and involvement with these New Wars brings up questions such as the permanent state of exception and the concept of the *homo sacer*, as recently explored by the Italian philosopher

Giorgio Agamben, the role of public trauma, grief and mourning in connection with war, the claim to truth attributed to testimony and the voyeurism of witnessing other people's suffering. Specifically the political discussion of the *homo sacer* presents itself as an important parallel to the function of the scapegoat in tragedy.

It is thus of particular interest to examine how the performing arts, as the art form which, historically, portrayed war before it portrayed anything else, react to the present circumstances. By considering several contemporary plays on war, this thesis attempts to show how the traits and structures of the New Wars as described by the observations and new theories of contemporary war scholars manifest in the representation of war and conflict on the contemporary stage. The plays show how the disturbing experience of war may be represented on stage and mediated to an audience that, for the most part, does not have its own war experience. They chronicle the attempt of a generation largely untouched by the experience of war in their own country to comprehend what is happening in a global society that is engaged in widespread warfare without always fully acknowledging the state of war, or what it entails. They critique how and for which reasons war is waged, the way it is not called by its name, the readiness with which we allow atrocities to happen in order to consolidate our security; and they imagine the state of war in the 21st century as a palimpsest of the state of war in the Middle Ages and in Classical Antiquity. If we read the plays through New War theory, recurring patterns manifest themselves, and they indicate two major concerns in the approaches to the portrayal of war: (1) how the New Wars are structured (in an attempt not only to understand the other, those who live through war, but also to imagine how we would experience war, how universal the experience of war is) and (2) where the (Western) community from which these plays spring stands in relation to these New Wars.

I would like to propose that war haunts the New War plays just as death haunts the Morality Play. But in the case of the contemporary plays, war is an unlisted character, only sometimes anthropomorphically manifesting in specific archetypal roles such as the child soldier, the soulless killer, the Unknown Soldier doubling as Benjamin's Angel of History or as the woman who reveals herself as Bellona, goddess of war. Furthermore, I would like to suggest that it is precisely by means of presenting temporal and spatial simultaneity, of visually and textually combining political, historical and cultural references that theatre becomes the medium which can reveal the New Wars as palimpsests of old wars.

Existing Research

There is an abundance of critical material on all the individual aspects of the New Wars, political-theoretical as well as sociological works and individual and comparative case studies, which are reviewed in the first chapter of this thesis. But while there are many works on the different theatrical forms these plays may take, there is little to no material on contemporary war drama. Even though the individual chapters of this thesis give a more detailed literature review of the respective subject matter, it seems necessary to present a short overview over the research that has been done specifically on theatre and war in the 20th and 21st century.

Critics have not yet recognised the continuous representation of war and conflict on stage as reason enough to identify 'war and conflict plays' as a literary genre in its own right. Hence, the bibliographical record on this subject remains remarkably thin. To date, only two anthologies have been published that bring together exclusively plays concerned with war and war-like conflicts in the 20th century. In 1985, the Theatre Communications Group publishes *Coming to Terms: American Plays and the Vietnam War*. The edition contains a number of plays from the 1960s and 1970s, such as David Rabe's *Streamers* (1977), Terrence McNally's *Botticelli* (1969), Amlin Gray's *How I Got That Story* (1979), and Tom Cole's *Medal of Honor Rag* (1977), and three plays from the 1980s: Michael Weller's *Moonchildren* (1988), Stephen Metcalfe's *Strange Snow* (1983), and Emily Mann's *Still Life* (1980). In 1999, Claire M. Tylee edits *War Plays by Women. An International Anthology*. This volume is restricted to plays relating to World War I, which leads to the exclusion of more contemporary plays on World War II, the Vietnam War, and other wars. Why Joan Littlewood's documentary musical drama *Oh, What a Lovely War!* (1963) has been excluded remains a mystery; however, the editor justifies her decision by wishing to concentrate on plays that also qualify as closet dramas (Tylee 1999: 3).

In recent years, several critics have written on the subject of war and conflict drama. One significant collection is Tony Howard's and John Stoke's *Acts of War: The Representation of Military Conflict on the British Stage and Television since 1945* (1996), offering an extensive historical overview on war drama and television plays in Britain since 1945. The collection also analyses individual works and the representation of battle scenes in ballet, the portrayal of a pacifist troupe of actors, the representation of the army and soldiers in British television, and the connection between war drama and the construction of national identity in times of war. While this study comes very close to the subject of this thesis, it nevertheless concentrates on earlier works; an analysis of equivalent plays from the 1990s onwards remains to be the gap this work tries to fill. The same holds true for Michael Balfour's edited

collection *Theatre and War, 1933-1945: Performance in Extremis* (2001). Heinz Kosok, in his thorough study *The Theatre of War. The First World War in British and Irish Drama* (2007), points out how poorly drama as a genre is being represented in studies of literature of and about World War I. While none of the plays Kosok discusses touches on the New Wars which are the focus of this thesis, his attempt at filling an evident blank in scholarship and taking stock of a large body of work demonstrates well how the state of war may be reflected in drama and becomes a point of reference for more extensive research on the representation of war on stage in the twentieth century.

A few significant articles have been published on contemporary war drama. In 1990, Toby Silverman Zinman uses the resurfacing of the Vietnam War as a media event as an occasion to revisit the Vietnam drama ("Search and Destroy: The Drama of the Vietnam War"). Jeanne Colleran looks at "Disposable Wars, Disappearing Acts: Theatrical Responses to the 1991 Gulf War" in 2003 and discusses the relationship between the 'unseen' but televised war and the stage. As an example for an intended broader comparison, one essay in particular should be mentioned: Peter Paul Schnierer, "The Theatre of War: English Drama and the Bosnian Conflict." (1995). The same essay collection, Bernhard Reitz' *Drama and Reality*, features Uma Narain's "Theatre of the Vietnam War: Reality Truer Than Experiential Fact".

In 1996, Nora M. Alter's study *Vietnam Protest Theatre. The Television War on Stage* appeared. This publication is restricted to the examination of the cultural production during the Vietnam War, with a special focus on protest theatre (in contrast to drama representing war veterans or plays justifying the war). In her foreword, Alter states that although there had been extensive studies of films dealing with the Vietnam War and its social and personal repercussions, no research had been done on respective plays. She strongly criticises social and cultural critics' ignorance of drama. Now, fifteen years later, the state of research on war and conflict drama is still very fragmentary, and Alter's statement that 'Vietnam Protest theatre has not yet been grasped by critics as a coherent genre' can only be completed thus: nor has the theatre of war and conflict in general (Alter 1996: xx).

Researching, creating and documenting performance in zones of war and armed conflict around the world, James Thompson's work on community theatre in Congo, Kosovo, Sudan and other war-torn countries, *Digging up Stories. Applied Theatre, Performance and War* (2005) and the later project documentation *Performance in a Place of War* (2008), follows the tradition of Applied Theatre as developed by Augusto Boal and approaches the New Wars from another geopolitical and theatrical angle than this thesis, exploring war zones as performative spaces and discussing questions such as why and how theatre can exist in

places of conflict, what the practices are and whether theatre could possibly resist or even provide an alternative to war.

There is some scholarly work on recent cinema productions about the contemporary wars, for example the last chapter in Guy Westwell's *War Cinema. Hollywood on the Front Line* (2006), and the chapter on the cinema and the war on terror in Alex Danchev's *On Art and War and Terror* (2009) presents a good survey of cinema portraying the war on terror. Most of these films portray New Wars, and yet, there is a fundamental difference to the new plays on war: confluences of space and time, as the theatre frequently arranges, do not fit with the largely realist mode the cinema employs, which calls for the employment of large machinery and the depiction of war on a greater scale. Nevertheless, a selective overview of some of the more prominent films portraying the New Wars might help perceiving the plays discussed in this thesis in a wider cultural context. Recent productions include *Welcome to Sarajevo* (1997), Michael Winterbottom's portrayal of the media circus in the Holiday Inn during the war in Bosnia, David O. Russell's almost farcical take on the First Gulf War with *Three Kings* (1999) (which finds an acidly bitter complement in Sam Mendes' *Jarhead* [2005]), Ridley Scott's early and rather simplified depiction of warlordism and western interventionism in *Black Hawk Down* (2001). Stephen Gaghan's *Syriana* (2005), that terrifying story of the amalgamation of war and organised crime, can be cited as one major film displaying the typical economic structures of the New Wars. In the last few years, the portrayal of the second Iraq War has been prevalent in war film production, and the new films have become bleaker than many of the past. Examples are Paul Haggis's sobering *In the Valley of Elah* (2007), in which a father uncovers his son's war crimes, Nick Broomfield's *Battle for Haditha* (2007), which chronicles a US-marine-led retaliative mass killing of Iraqi civilians, and finally Kathryn Bigelow's critically acclaimed *The Hurt Locker* (2009), which depicts a bomb disposal expert who finds himself so addicted to the rush of war that he is incapable of leading a civilian life. Quentin Tarantino's satirical Holocaust revenge fantasy *Inglorious Basterds* (2009) should also be counted here, given that it is not only about a Jewish-American hit team seeking revenge for the genocide, but can be read as an allegory on the current war on terror.¹

¹ The rhetorical parallels are encapsulated in the motivation speech Lt. Aldo Raine (Brad Pitt) gives his team before they leave for occupied France: 'Nazi ain't got no humanity. They're the foot soldiers of a Jew-hatin', mass murderin' maniac, and they need to be dee-stroyed. That's why any and every son of a bitch we find wearin' a Nazi uniform, they're gonna die.'

Approach and Methodology

Initially, the research for this thesis was concerned with contemporary plays about war in general and would have encompassed a choice of plays written in the last 30 years which had war – any war – as a subject matter. This would have included several recent plays on the two world wars as for example the National Theatre's recent production of Nick Stafford's *War Horse*² (2007) set during the First World War, Frank McGuinness' *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985) and Bill Bryden's *The Big Picnic* (1993), Roger Howard's *A Break in Berlin* (1981), plays by Charles Wood³, plays on the Northern Irish conflict (Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain* [1980] springs to mind, as do several plays by Christina Reid), plays engaging with the threat of nuclear war prevalent in the 1980s, such as Edward Bond's grandiose *War Plays* trilogy (1985), plays relating the Falklands War such as Robert Holman's *Making Noise Quietly* (1987) and late plays on the Vietnam war such as David Hare's *Saigon: Year of the Cat* (1983)

All of these plays would have been prime examples in discussing the nature of war and its devastating effect on the individual. However, while it soon became clear that the project might become too expansive without a more defined limitation to specific wars, there was also a notable difference between those plays approaching war with a rather historical interest in events during, for example, the two world wars or the numerous wars for independence in the 1950s-1970s and a new kind of war, which became the interest and soon the worried concern of several contemporary war scholars: the so-called New Wars. As the state of war threatens to become perpetual and the state of exception has become the status quo, as is argued, respectively, by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri and by Giorgio Agamben, seminal studies on contemporary warfare and society such as Herfried Münkler's *The New Wars* (2002), Mary Kaldor's *New & Old Wars* (2005) and Ulrich Beck's *World at Risk* (2008 [2007]) trace how the face of war has changed over the past 15 years.

It is for this reason that I stepped away from contemporary plays concerned with the portrayal of wars that were fought before the beginning of the mid-1990s, before the phenomenon of the New Wars emerged together with a critical awareness for these wars, before the development of globalisation was accelerated rapidly by an increasing global interconnectedness and before the great wave of eroding nation states and the simultaneous barricading of the first world countries who attempt to become one great gated community.

As political and social sciences brought forth comprehensive and seminal studies on the implications of the New Wars different facets appeared; it became evident that this thesis

² Adapted from Michael Morpurgo's novel of the same name (1982).

³ Extensive research on Wood's war plays has been conducted by Dawn Fowler: Fowler, Dawn. "Charles Wood's Theatre of War 1959-2007". Diss. University of York, 2008.

would also focus on plays informed by these New Wars, that, in fact, this would be the major criterion for them to be chosen for inclusion. This liberated the choice of plays from geopolitical boundaries, as questions of spreading playwrights' nationalities in order to maintain a representative balance were no longer immediately relevant.

Several of the plays referred to in this thesis only ostensibly portray a geographically or historically recognisable war. Their main interest lies with the nature of war, more specifically with the nature of the New Wars in a post-national age, with the geopolitical and sociological structures that lead to war and those that allow for it, even encourage it to continue infinitely. War is the crucial moment in these plays, the determining force which is shaping the characters, and not just the backdrop. The war and its reverberations have not only small, but direct influence on the action of the plays. They make the experience of war at home accessible for a society that often cannot reflect on their own war experience other than by reflecting on the soldiers it might have sent abroad to fight and on the war refugees it might receive in return. Significantly, these plays frequently address a societal taboo in the form of the *homo sacer* by presenting on stage – and thus actually embodied – precisely those figures western society has attempted to cast off: the victims of war in the form of traumatised returning soldiers, refugees, asylum-seekers, unlawful combatants, those Judith Butler identifies as 'precarious lives' (Butler 2009: 1). And while former plays might have concluded with the end of the war, these new plays cannot, because the wars are perpetual; they might die down to skirmishes but will eventually flare up again. The plays might end with the individual freeing themselves from the war, which will go on without them.

The choice of plays discussed here can only be exemplary and does not attempt to present an exhaustive survey of contemporary war drama. Some plays may prevail more than others simply because of personal preference, but all the texts chosen are of interest to this thesis. They share a symptomatic portrayal of the New Wars, whatever aesthetic form the play might take. While they are anchored in the theatrical canon, some may be more familiar to the reader than others, which is why all plays discussed are listed with short synopses at the end of the thesis. This thesis also does not attempt to compare and contrast plays about Old Wars with plays about New Wars or older plays about contemporary wars with newer plays about contemporary war. For such an endeavour there would be too few similarities as reference points, because both have changed: the wars and the plays

Being aware of the patterns and structures of the New Wars, there was always a danger of treating the plays merely as secondary sources for discussions of the New Wars, 'neglecting' that they are, in fact, plays and not reports from the front line. I gradually turned away from close readings of individual plays as more and more parallels in the motives and the

playwrights' approach became apparent, which allowed me to use the plays exemplarily to illustrate individual arguments.

The dramatic texts examined in this thesis reach from plays depicting inner-state conflict, civil war and the politics of fear, for example Caryl Churchill's *Far Away* (2000), Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995) and Zinnie Harris's war trilogy (2005-2008), over documentary and verbatim-based plays and their attempt to portray the trauma of war by recreating on stage the process of giving testimony and by endorsing public grieving (for example various Tricycle productions and Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* [2006]), to adaptations of Greek and Shakespearean tragedies (such as Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* [2004], Elfiede Jelinek's *Bambiland* [2003] and David Greig's *Dunsinane* [2010]). Some seemingly obvious choices are missing: I have, for example, excluded both Trevor Griffith's *The Gulf Between Us: the Truth and Other Fictions* (1992), which is on the First Gulf War (1991) and David Edgar's *Pentecost* (1994), which attempts to portray the war in post-communist Yugoslavia, because, while clearly set in a war situation, both plays are primarily interested in something else.

The focus of this thesis is the theatrical representation of both the individual and war in a time of disintegrating national states and the dramatisation of destruction versus survival as the driving forces on stage. A four-tier analysis demonstrates how the New Wars bring forth new plays about war. These new plays examine the state of war in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century

- 1) by introducing the concepts of New Wars and the state of exception as crucial frames of reference for the new plays about war
- 2) by exposing the *homo sacer* or bare life in its form as the human evidence for the monstrous reality of war as one of the remaining huge taboos of our stages and the political taboo of our society
- 3) by attempting to find the truth about war in testimonies, nursing western society's vicarious and actual traumas, indulging in public grief and exposing the voyeurism involved and uncovering who or what is regarded as 'ungrievable'
- 4) by peeling back the layers, exposing the 'Persian palimpsest' on stage and thus demonstrating how the New Wars are underwritten by the Thirty-Years War and ancient warfare

Chapters

The first chapter traces the development of the political theory of New Wars, introduces the major characteristics of these recent developments of violent international conflict and touches on the relations between the role of violence in times of war and the general

performativity of violence. An outline of the interaction between New Wars and globalisation leads to a discussion of the prospect of perpetual warfare in the twenty-first century world risk society and the increasing acceptance of war as the status quo, coming to a suggestion of how these New Wars might have acquired the status of character on the theatrical stage, as the primary antagonist and as the element forming the characters.

The second chapter explores the connection between the theatre, cruelty and taboo, to determine how society's relationship to cruelty and taboo might be reflected. Historically located after the 'In-yer-face' theatre wave of British theatre, the New War plays examine the roots of human aggression and the wars that result by exploring contemporary society's position towards what is taboo and 'sacred'. However, by redefining the aesthetics and politics of cruelty, the In-yer-face theatre movement has inflected this debate. The New War plays draw from surrealist tradition and the 'theatre of the absurd' to portray the state of exception as the norm in times of war, exposing, at the centre of the plays, the primary object of taboo: the *homo sacer*, and the complementing localization to the state of exception, the camp.

The third chapter examines the truthfulness and effectiveness of using testimony to mediate the experience of war, as opposed to depicting fictionalised accounts of traumatising war experiences. A brief outline of the historical legacy of documentary and verbatim drama and its aesthetics leads to a discussion of the claim of truthfulness and authenticity of documentary drama. Tracing the use of testimony in literature and the role of the witness in the narration and negotiation of traumatic events, the chapter then discusses whether the 'trauma-by-proxy' experience might have enabled the current phenomenon of public grief. Drawing from a cluster of exemplary plays, the chapter considers plays based on testimonial evidence, which are set into opposition to plays which depict war trauma without using either testimony or the documentary theatre style. It discusses what the testimonial mode says about us and our hunger for truth, the apparent favouring of factual truth over aesthetic truth and the attempt to fill the lacuna of unspoken testimony by (re)imagining it. The discussion of public grief leads to an examination of the relation between mourning and war and to an analysis of the notion of grievability.

The fourth chapter offers a survey of the theory of adaptation and examines several adaptations of Greek tragedies and a Shakespearian play in order to demonstrate how they incorporate elements of the New Wars into the text to draw attention to the parallels between ancient and modern warfare. Tracing the themes touched upon in the adapted texts and how they are taken up and adapted in the contemporary productions, it determines how far these palimpsestic adaptations of classical tragedies are able to highlight the parallels between the

structures of ancient and contemporary warfare and thus demonstrate how the New Wars are, in fact, the return of something very old.

Chapter I

New Wars on the Stage of the World and in the World of the Stage

*Fear is arguably the most sinister of the demons
nesting in the open societies of our time.*
Zygmunt Bauman

A recent political-philosophical study on the future of empire suggests that, instead of progressing into a peaceful future, we have slipped back in time into the nightmare of perpetual and indeterminate state of war. War, it seems, is no longer the exceptional state, but 'the primary organising principle of society' (Hardt and Negri 2006: 7), thus apparently returning to Heraclitus' observation that 'war is the father of all things'⁴ and echoing the philosopher Giorgio Agamben's declaration that the state of exception has become the status quo (Agamben 2005: 8)⁵. In what follows, I will propose that the philosophical and political-theoretical discourse surrounding the changing nature of war coincides with the attempt of recent plays to engage with the state of war as it has become prevalent during the two decades which straddle the turn of the millennium.

A quintessential instance may be observed in what has become one of the most canonical plays of the 1990s: 'Looks like there's a war on', one of the characters in Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995) remarks in the second scene of the play, looking out of the hotel window, and her partner on stage remains remarkably unperturbed. The conversation quickly turns to a local football match and the room service is used, while the conflict raging outside is not acknowledged any further, let alone explained (Kane 2001: 33-34). The situation outside might refer to the suppression of a rebellion, peacekeeping measures, maybe a colonial invasion; even skirmishes between autonomous military troops seem possible, but while the play descends further and further into the portrayal of a world decidedly out of joint, the characters have long accepted their position in the midst of instability and the antagonist they are playing against: the war as the unlisted but ever-present character.

Agamben asserts that it is difficult to define the state of exception due to its close relationship to civil war, insurrection, and resistance, as civil war is contrary to 'normal conditions' and thus 'lies in a zone of undecidability [sic] with respect to the state of

⁴ Heraclitus fragment 53: 'War is father of all, and king of all. He renders some gods, others men, he makes some slaves, others free.' (Heraclitus 1987: 37)

⁵ Agamben derives this argument from Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History", number VIII (Benjamin 1999: 248-249).

exception, which is the state power's immediate response to the most extreme internal conflicts'. 'In this sense', he states,

modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system. Since then, the voluntary creation of a permanent state of emergency (though perhaps not declared in the technical sense) has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states, including so-called democratic ones. (8)

It is noteworthy that Agamben emphasises the fact that for the state of exception to come in effect, an official declaration is not necessary, because the state of exception is located between the juridical and the political state, precisely defined by its exception from the rule – even the rule which defines its existence.

New Wars

In order to be able to fall back on these theories in later discussion of the intersection between the political and social developments and the plays, the following will give a concise overview of the New War theories and adjoining developments in political and social theory.

In the past two decades, a number of political theorists have discussed the possibility of a new form of war, the so-called 'New Wars', a term coined by the political scientist Mary Kaldor in her seminal and much discussed study *New and Old Wars* (1999) to describe the development of a new type of organised violence emerging during the last decades of the twentieth century as 'one aspect of the current form of globalisation' (2006: 1)⁶. Earlier studies had already done research into similar areas, such as Martin van Creveld's survey *On Future War* (1991), Robert D. Kaplan's investigation of 'The Coming Anarchy' (1994), Kalevi Holsti's account of the state of war in the late 20th century (1996), and Mark Duffield's research on warlords and private protection in post-modern conflict (1998). The interest in establishing a new category with its own typology and the number of ensuing publications grew rapidly, so that Henderson and Singer in their 2002 critique of various of these approaches could already speak of 'New War' theorists (Henderson and Singer 2003:

⁶ I will henceforth refer to the second, extended, edition (2006) of Kaldor's study. The second edition now includes material on the 2001 war in Afghanistan and a study of the 2003 war in Iraq. In the introduction to the new edition, Kaldor also acknowledges adjustments she made to her original argument, pointing out the rise of an increased 'atmosphere of fear' since the terror attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 and the rising prevalence of identity politics since the mid-1990s. She also registers a less optimistic outlook towards the decline of war and international conflict than in her first edition.

165). Also in 2002, the political scientist Herfried Münkler published his landmark study on the New Wars, synthesizing many previous approaches and establishing the similarities to pre-modern wars as a common reference, while reasoning that the economic circumstances of globalisation and 'shadow globalisation' should be taken into account when examining the motives and backgrounds of the New Wars.

While Mary Kaldor considers that 'post-modern' wars might be a more appropriate term, given that it might offer 'a way of distinguishing these wars from wars which could be said to be characteristic of classical modernity', she maintains that this specific term is also used in reference to 'virtual' wars and wars in cyberspace. More significantly, she argues, the New Wars combine elements of pre-modernity and modernity.⁷ She crucially emphasises that the New Wars

involve a blurring of the distinctions between war (usually defined as violence between states or organized political groups for political motives), organized crime (violence undertaken by privately organized groups for private purposes, usually financial gain) and large-scale violations of human rights (violence undertaken by states or politically organized groups against individuals). (Kaldor 2006: 2)

She stresses the interdependency of war and the evolution of the modern state (15, a point more extensively treated by Münkler 2005: 51-73) and argues that society derives from this history a stylised notion of war which 'still profoundly affects our thinking about war and dominates ... the way policy-makers conceive of security' (17). Modern warfare, as developed in the nineteenth century, 'involved war between states with an ever-increasing emphasis on scale and mobility, and an increasing need for "rational" organization and "scientific" doctrine to manage these large conglomerations of force' (26). And while reasons to join up and fight during 'old wars' were clearly defined, the post-war period has shown that 'at least in Western countries, there are few causes that constitute a legitimate goal for war for which people are prepared to die' (29).

Kaldor contrasts the New Wars with earlier wars in terms of their goals and the methods of financing (6): a thought that has also been developed by Münkler in his influential analysis *The New Wars (Die neuen Kriege, 2002)*⁸, who argues that, since a direct pursuit of

⁷ She also notes that the sociologist Martin Shaw uses the term 'degenerate warfare' to imply a continuity with the large-scale 'total' wars of the twentieth century and their genocidal aspects, while equally emphasizing 'the decay of the national frameworks, especially military forces' (2006: 2). Wolfgang Sofsky uses 'wildcat wars' to indicate the comeback of 'marauding bands, the increasing frequency of massacres and the systematic use of rape as a war measure' (Münkler 24). The philosopher Hans Magnus Enzensberger, whose essayistic *Aussichten auf den Bürgerkrieg* (1994) suggests that civil wars start in the metropolises all over the world and that in contemporary civil wars, all legitimacy has evaporated, calls them 'molecular wars'.

⁸ All references and quotes are from the 2005 translation.

war is less expensive than in the past, the military force is destabilised or even privatised. Certain forms of violence that used to be tactically subordinate to a military strategy such as guerrilla warfare and terrorism have acquired a strategic dimension of their own. Consequently, forms of violence that used to be part of a single military system are rendered autonomous. Once regular armies have lost control over the course of war, it will be in the hand of players for whom war as a contest between like and like is an alien concept (3). Münkler lists para-states or partly private actors such as local warlords, guerrilla groups, firms of mercenaries operating on a world scale and international terror networks as the New Wars' principal belligerents (1, also Kaldor 2006: 6).

Kaldor builds on this assessment of the interdependence of asymmetric warfare and contemporary war financing in the New Wars by explaining that they occur

in the context of the disintegration of states (typically authoritarian states under the impact of globalisation). ... fought by networks of state and non-state actors, often without uniforms ... where battles are rare and where most violence is directed against civilians as a consequence of counter-insurgency tactics or ethnic cleansing. ... [T]axation is falling and war finance consists of loot and pillage, illegal trading and other war-generated revenue. ... [T]he distinctions between combatant and non-combatant, legitimate violence and criminality are all breaking down. These are wars which exacerbate the disintegration of the state – declines in GDP, loss of tax revenue, loss of legitimacy, etc. (3)

Underlining the erosion of dichotomies accompanying twentieth and twenty-first century life, Mary Kaldor asserts that this evolution involves 'both integration and fragmentation, homogenisation and diversification, globalisation and localisation' (4), enabling a global presence within the New Wars, which comprises international reporters, mercenary troops, military advisors, diaspora volunteers, NGOs and international institutions including peace-keeping troops (4-5). Foreshadowing what the sociologist Ulrich Beck would later describe as a general break-down of modernity's dualisms (2009), and providing a vital link to Agamben's assessment of the state of exception as the status quo, she explains that '[t]he erosion of the distinction between public and private, military and civil, internal and external, also calls into question the distinction between war and peace itself' (32).

Ethnic-cultural tension and increasingly also religious conviction play an important role in contemporary wars, as do strong nationalist movements. This emphasis on sectarian identities (religious, ethnic, or tribal) undermines the sense of a shared political community, allowing for mass murder, genocide, and deportation. Kaldor suggests this could be considered the purpose of these wars (2006: 80-91), arguing that the goals of the New Wars are often not of a geo-political or politico-ideological nature but about identity politics, by which she means 'the claim to power on the basis of a particular identity – be it national,

clan, religious or linguistic' (6). She maintains that she is using the term 'identity politics' narrowly to signify an act of 'labelling', suggesting that, as these labels – often of both religious and nationalist nature – are frequently considered birthrights, 'conflicts based on identity politics may also be termed ethnic conflicts' (80). Complementary, the anthropologists Bettina Schmidt and Ingo W. Schroeder argue that an escalation of long-term violence between clearly established groups of actors is the actual root of war, derived from an 'ideology of antagonism' which is replicated again and again, completely dissociated from any other conflict, which leads to the violence that reproduces violence (Schmidt and Schroeder 2001: 15).

In an early assessment of the structures leading to large-scale civil war, the political scientist Robert Kaplan says that many of the intra-state wars of the late twentieth century are governed by a pre-modern formlessness, reminiscent of the wars in medieval Europe before 1648, when the peace of Westphalia formed the foundation of the era of organised nation-states (Kaplan 1994: 41).⁹ Especially in West Africa, but also increasingly in Middle Eastern countries, the concept of crumbling or failed states can be witnessed, characterised by central governments withering away, the rise of tribal and regional domains, the free spread of disease and the growing frequency of war (42). Münkler emphasises how similar to 17th-century Europe the current conditions are, when 'the state is no longer what it was then not yet: the monopolist of war' (2). Consequently, 'the new wars might in many respects involve a return of something thoroughly old' (*ibid.*). Using the Thirty Years' War as the 'analytic framework and comparative reference' underlying his profound analysis of the New Wars (32-50, here 42), Münkler points at the

characteristic mixture of private enrichment and hunger for personal power, political drives for expansion into neighbouring states, intervention to save and protect certain values, ... internal struggle for power, influence and domination (2)

which is underscored by significant religious-denominational connections (3). With only some exceptions¹⁰, most of the major wars of the last few decades demonstrate similar combinations of values and interests and of belligerents, Münkler explains. He lists the wars in sub-Saharan Africa – Great Lakes region¹¹, southern Sudan (the conflict notoriously not

⁹ Trutz von Trotha points out that even the term 'civil war' is misleading, 'because it suggests that the state unit is the frame of reference, even though such a reference plays no role either in respect of the actors or of the classification "guilty" an "innocent". Or the combatants may attack an "enemy" with whom they are not at war as understood in the former Clausewitzian world. The date of September 11th 2001 shines out here like a beacon; it is the writing on the wall.' (Trotha 2004: 4)

¹⁰ Münkler lists China and Vietnam, Iraq and Iran, Ethiopia and Eritrea as examples of 'classical' inter-state conflict (3).

¹¹ E.g. the civil wars in Rwanda (1994) and Burundi (1993-2005).

called 'genocide')¹², Congo (the Second Congo War, involved with several other regional conflicts and directly concerning eight African nations)¹³, Somalia (the most frequently cited 'failed state', civil war since approx. 1988), and Angola (a civil war lasting over thirty years, 1975-2002) – alongside the wars related to the collapse of Yugoslavia¹⁴, the conflicts in Eastern Anatolia¹⁵ and the Caucasus region¹⁶, the protracted Middle Eastern conflict¹⁷, the hostilities in Sri Lanka (civil war 1983-2009) and the wars in Afghanistan since the early 1980s¹⁸ as bearing 'much greater resemblance to the Thirty Years' War than to the inter-state wars of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries' (3, 10, 47).

One of the major attributes of the Thirty Years' War is the widespread 'use of force not only against the armed enemy but also – at times principally – against the civilian population', Münkler maintains (42), describing the marauding troops of the seventeenth century who, strikingly similar to recent trends, 'plundered and murdered their way across the land' (44). He adds that there is also an obvious structural parallel to the New Wars

in the war economy organized according to the principle of *bellum se ipse alet* (war feeds war). ...[W]ar itself becomes part of an economic life that is no longer under political control or subject to political limitation. ... [S]ince these wars do not usually involve rapid and total mobilization of forces but slowly use them up on an ongoing basis, most of them last a long time and keep flaring up after temporary lulls. (44-5)

Considered in the light of Münkler's analysis, the structures of contemporary warfare may well be described as palimpsestic, displaying the framework of something not new in every way, but in some ways rather old.

¹² Conflict in the region Darfur (and adjoining Chad). The war crimes connected to this conflict are subject to an ongoing international discussion regarding their status as genocide. If the occurrence of genocide were declared, the international community would have to commit to intervene, possibly with military force (United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, General Assembly Resolution 260, adopted 1948, entry into force 1951). This circumstance provides the punch line to Jennifer Farmer's short 2007 play *Words Words Words*.

¹³ 1997-2003 (peace treaty in 2003, fighting still ongoing).

¹⁴ 1991-2004, here the Slovenian Independence War 1991, Croatian War of Independence 1991-1995, war in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-1995, Kosovo War 1998-1999, 2001 insurgency in the Republic of Macedonia.

¹⁵ Conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, 1999-ongoing.

¹⁶ Most notably in Chechnya, 1994-1996 and 1999-2009, but also for example the South-Ossetia War 1991-1992, disturbances in Ingushetsia (ongoing), and the conflict in Dagestan (since 2000). The 2008 South Ossetia war might be counted as well.

¹⁷ For example the First Intifada 1987-1993 and the Second Intifada (2000-2005). Münkler observes that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is intertwined with many wars in the region, of which the one in Lebanon (1982-2000, 2006) might be the longest and most consequential. The 2008-2009 Gaza War might be counted as well.

¹⁸ Various civil wars 1989-2001, conflict connected to the US military's Operation Enduring Freedom 2001-ongoing.

Globalisation and Risk Transferral

In contrast to Kaldor's claim of the New Wars' finance consisting mainly of 'war-generated revenue' (2006: 3), Münkler again points to research on the Thirty Years' War to attest that the war 'could not have lasted for thirty years in Germany if new reserves had not continually flowed in from abroad', arguing that fresh foreign troops and funds subsidised the war and hence prolonged it (45) and that equally in the twenty-first century, under the conditions of globalisation, the 'belligerents have unhindered access to the resources of the world economy' (46). In the New Wars, he observes a range of interest groups which expect profit from a continued state of war and hence 'find nothing to suit them in peace' (3). The political theorist Neil Curtis notes a decisive shift from the common Utilitarian belief that supposedly 'no one benefited from wars except for a few contractors and arms manufacturers' (Curtis 2006: xiii), maintaining that there is a fundamental fault to be found with the prevailing Utilitarian argument that trade should be free because economic rivalry was amongst the primary causes of war: this line of reasoning, Curtis argues, fails to address the complex relationship between finance, trade and violence (xiv) and the mechanisms by which finance and trade often profit from ongoing violence and conflict. The sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky agrees that 'people like to cling to the illusion that economic and democratic developments can guarantee peace' (Sofsky 2003: 131).

Kaldor suggests that the New Wars are also affected by the social and cultural changes connected to the development of globalisation of the 1980s and 1990s, which, while facilitated and certainly accelerated by the end of the Cold War, cannot solely be attributed to the breakdown of the East-West dichotomy. She considers the phenomenal progression of globalisation to result in part from the rapid development of information technologies and considerable improvements in communication and data-processing. The increasing global interconnectedness also bears great significance for the future of the modern state, because it suggests the crumbling of territorially based sovereignty and in some cases the disintegration of the state (5) as the boundaries between the political and economic spheres continue to break down, as well as those between the public and the private, and consequently between military and civil, spheres (113).

Further contributing to the argument, Curtis recalls Samuel Huntington's notorious 1993 thesis of the 'Clash of Civilisations'¹⁹, which, since the terror attacks in 2001, has become the moral fibre strengthening the widespread perception of the 'War against Terror' as a war in defence of 'Western values': values which Huntington lists as individualism, liberalism,

¹⁹ Before the concept was developed at book length (1996), the format in which it is now widely known, it appeared as an essay in *Foreign Affairs* (1993). The references in this dissertation are drawn from this first publication of Huntington's controversial thesis.

constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets and the separation of church and state (Huntington 1993: 24, 32). Curtis regards this argument as absurd, since

the idea that, by implication, the other cultures are those of intolerant masses saved from the threat of anarchy only by the desire for hierarchy and domination is profoundly ideological, if not racist, and would seem to fit in well with the 'civilizing' discourse of colonialism. (20)

He points out that one of the main reasons for global conflicts stems from the destruction of traditional ways of living by 'the practices of neo-liberalism that reduce human beings to the aggregated expression of free-market economics' (*ibid.*), a view also taken by Münkler (8-9) and Kaldor (73).²⁰ Already in 1994, in his chillingly farsighted article, Kaplan suggests poverty, tribalism, sparsity of resources, illnesses and fugitive movements as possible reasons for the 'coming anarchy' (39-66), indicating that political instability combined with economic hardship would eventually prove to be an explosive fusion.

Considering the effects of ever-increasing interconnectedness on Western societies and their uneasy relationship with the war they wage (mainly in other parts of the world) on fear and terror (reflecting on the futility such an endeavour implies, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman calls the concept of a War on Terror a *contradictio in adiecto* [2007: 19]), Beck is prompted to assert that

the quotidian experience exists within the perceived emergency of the global dangers resulting from civilisation's actions – info-technological networking, financial flows or natural crises. (2007: 325)²¹

He observes how 'a pressure to cooperate' is created, compressing the world 'into a "self-coercing" commune in the view of joint risks and transnational dangers.'²² In other words, the interaction between the public and the global is caused by the world risk society's reflexivity' (325).

Nothing that happens anywhere on the planet in the modern information society, Bauman declares, can remain in the realm of the unknown, in an 'intellectual outside' (2007: 5); so what happens anywhere affects everybody else: there is no 'material outside', either, thus

²⁰ Playing on the military theorist Carl von Clausewitz's famous definition of war, Beck states in 1999 that war has become 'the continuation of morality by other means' as 'the human rights policy becomes a kind of civil religion of the West, especially the United States' (1999b: 985, cited by Münkler: 126).

²¹ This and all subsequent translations from Beck (2007) are my own. The publication *World at Risk* (2009), the title of which suggests congruence with the German publication *Weltrisikogesellschaft* (2007) from which these quotations are taken, does not, in fact, comprise the same text but a series of lectures developed from the much more comprehensive 2007 publication.

²² Beck draws here on Peter Sloterdijk's *Sphären II – Globen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999: 984).

'[n]othing is truly, or can remain for long, indifferent to anything else – untouched and untouching'. In the wake of globalisation, there are only a few exceptions to the general rule that all societies lie materially and intellectually open (6). He adds that the attribute of 'openness' brings with it the fate of what he calls 'negative globalisation': a situation in which all fundamental problems are globally originated and globally invigorated, hence evading local solutions (7, 25) and draining strength and power from nation-states and their subjects (24), in spite of which, curiously enough, politics 'tends to be passionately and self-consciously *local*' (82).

In accordance with Bauman, who speaks of a 'Fortress Europe' which strengthens its borders against the East and the South (53), Curtis reflects that for a number of commentators (eg. Hardt and Negri), 'the war against terror epitomizes this challenge to the status of war in which the post-Cold War era is no longer split into bipolar superpowers but governed by one military massive hyperpower'. War has been 'reduced to a form of police action in which a vastly superior force simply arrests activity that is not in its interest'. While it should be noted that Curtis employs a rather Western-centric view here and neglects to take into account the Civil Wars sweeping through whole continents without much interference by the 'superior force', yet he is not wrong to state that this radical shift in power singles out the current era of warfare; 'the war against terror claims to be a war in defence of modernity as a way of life' (Curtis 2006: x, s.a. Hardt and Negri 2006: 39). Referring to Hans Joas (2003), Curtis considers that it might be precisely our conception of modernity which leads us to perceive war as a marginal topic only:

It is as if war is merely an aberration that modernity would correct. Understood as the road away from immaturity, barbarity and the particularities of tribalism, modernity is a beacon of civility and universality; a relatively autonomous intellectual journey of reason towards enlightenment. (ix, corresponding s.a. Sontag 2003: 74)

He argues that, while modernity is actually tied to the violence of political revolution and the ensuing wars, it has been fashioned as 'transcendent, lifting itself and its adherents above the violent and aggressive impulses of earlier stages of human development' (*ibid.*). In an interview broadcast in 2009, Beck develops a similar line of thought, then states that in rejecting its supposed rationality and embracing technological progress 'as a blind fate', modernity 'had turned out to be radically unmodern [sic]', as modernisation had produced outcomes that the theory of modernisation failed to see – 'modernity has outstripped the concepts with which sociology was trying to grasp it' (*ibid.*). Beck calls this state of affairs 'radicalised modernity', a modernity that has created consequences it is unable to address. Pointing out one of 'modernity's habits', the creation of simple, opposing categories – he calls them 'dualisms' – he states that 'by radicalisation of modernity, those dualisms don't work

any more' (*ibid.*), an argument he has also made earlier when describing the global situation as 'an insolvable mix of new and old wars, virtual wars and national and transnational terrorism' (2007: 268). This reasoning, very much in line with the New War theorists and their prevailing presentation of a massive case of blurred boundaries and collapsing dichotomies between war and peace, leads Beck to interpret the military interventions Western states have conducted in recent years, under various names, by introducing the term 'risk war'. He explains that

on the one hand, [the term] describes – at least in the self-conception of the governments employing military means – military interventions in foreign (not hostile), more or less insecure (eroding as well as stable) states with the aim to minimize and control a 'global risk' (transnational terrorism, the distribution of nuclear, chemical, biological weapons of mass destruction etc.). It is a matter of global risk management with military means, but which assumes and/or replaces other diplomatic, police, lawful, economic etc. initiatives. At the same time, the term 'risk war' refers to *risk transfer war*²³. This means risk redistribution wars ... a war strategy and warfare which – under the primacy of risk control and minimisation of casualties – minimises self-exposure and maximises the exposure of others. (268, emphasis in the original)

Paradoxically and systematically, each aspect of a risk war refers to each other, Beck explains, since this is, as it were, 'a war to prevent a war'. This mode of legitimisation enforces the local and social isolation of war casualties. Preferably, there should only be 'invisible casualties', at least on one's own side. The whole war strategy is oriented towards this risk transfer: 'the risk to die has to be "exported"' (269).

The New Wars on Stage

'The most obvious reason why "theatre" and modern war seem so compatible' says Paul Fussell in his sweeping study of World War I and the memory thereof, 'is that modern wars are fought by conscripted armies, whose members know they are only temporarily playing their ill-learned parts' (Fussell 2000: 191). Fussell's assessment of the nature of modern armies, if it was even wholly tenable for the First World War, is of course rather dated by now (and cautiously ignores the many civil wars, insurgences and resistance movements between 1918 and 1975²⁴ which were not fought by conscripted armies on all sides), but his appraisal of the correlation between theatre and war still holds true. The intricate link between theatre and war can already be assessed by reflecting on the use of shared

²³ Beck here refers to Martin Shaw: *New Western Way of War: Risk Transfer and Its Crisis in Iraq*. Cambridge: Polity, 2005.

²⁴ Year of first publication.

terminology such as the 'theatre of war', 'players' or 'actors' in a conflict, the 'roles' of states or para-state organisations, and of course the ever-present 'staging' of political power by the public exertion of violence, which refers back to the meaning of the word *theatron*: a place for viewing. Pointing out the performative aspect of war, the literary scholar Srinivas Aravamudan comments: '[a] mass combat and social sacrifice, war is both real-life and theatrical performance, an event that can include the planet in 'scenarios,' such as those involving nuclear war' (Aravamudan 2009, 1506).

Tragedy, the playwright Rolf Hochhuth argues, was not born from 'the spirit of music'²⁵, but originates from politics and war. Before exemplifying how some of the recent plays on war portray specific features of the New Wars as described in the forgoing account, it might be useful to consider that the first known play, not preserved for posterity, had been provoked by war, by a political catastrophe: Phrynichus' *The Siege of Miletus* (ca. 492 BC) re-enacted for the state of Athens the fall of a flourishing Ionian metropolis, the murder of the men, and the forceful evacuation of the women and children (Hochhuth 2001: 12-14).²⁶ According to the historian Thucydides, Athens perceived the Melian neutrality as a threat to the empire. In his *History of the Peloponnesian War* (~431-404 BC), Thucydides portrays this episode in the form of a dramatic dialogue, in which the Athenian ambassadors argue that they had no choice but to suppress Melos, given that power had to protect itself, since

in the human realm, justice is enforced only among those who can be equally constrained by it, and that those who have power use it, while the weak make compromises. ... Given what we believe about the gods and know about men, we think that both are always forced by the law of nature to dominate everyone they can. (5.89-105 [1998: 227-229])

There is a certain similarity to be observed to Curtis's assessment of a 'superior force' which 'arrests activity that is not in its interest'. Incidentally, Münkler acknowledges Thucydides as the 'inventor' of reading war as both a sequential and parallel series of conflicts (47n45). In a work otherwise predominantly written in prose and speeches, the dialogic form of this account of Athenian power politics is remarkable and its use invites two interpretations: that the author was reluctant to annotate an event that was traumatic for both the Melians and, in

²⁵ See Friedrich Nietzsche. *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*. Leipzig: E.W. Fritzsche, 1872. Nietzsche argues drama and thus tragedy had come from Dionysian musical festivities. While I do not intend to argue against the Dionysian roots of the genre and form of drama, one cannot dispute a possible thematic origin from the experience of war.

²⁶ Olga Taxidou points out that the play has not survived because it had been banned due to having 'brought the audience to tears, arousing feelings of remorse and shame, and in Platonic terms triggering the fear of an epidemic of uncontrollable grief' (Taxidou 2004: 97), a mode of theatrically generated public mourning which might well have found its renaissance in what has been called the public 'pornography of grief' (see chapter III).

retrospect, the Athenians, and that the dialogue's alleged origin in testimony represents a claim to truth and thus, in effect, an early form of verbatim theatre:

Melians: And just how would it be as much to our advantage to be enslaved, as for you to rule over us?

Athenians: You would benefit by surrendering before you experience the worst of consequences, and we would benefit by not having you dead

Melians: So you would not accept our living in peace, being friends instead of enemies, and allies of neither side?

Athenians: Your hatred doesn't hurt us as much as your friendship. That would show us as weak to our subjects, whereas your hatred would be a proof of your power. (5.92-95 [228])

A short excursion into the history of theatre will demonstrate that the New War plays have developed from a tradition of portraying war and conflict on stage. The first written record of the Western theatre tradition can be found in Aeschylus' *The Persians* (ca. 472 BC) on the Persians' defeat in the Battle of Salamis (Law, Pickering and Helfer 2001: 462) – interestingly enough, this is also the first play that might be called a 'documentary drama'. Greek drama also introduces the discussion of gender and warfare on stage, most notably probably in Euripides' *The Trojan Women* (415 BC).²⁷ When Euripides wrote this play about the violent aftermath of the Trojan war, the city of Athens had fought five wars at the end of which the defeated cities were left to a fate similar to that of Troy (Delebecque 1951: 251, Morrissey 1997: 7). Both *The Persians* and *The Trojan Women* evoke a war on stage for a society which has been spared from actually finding itself the site of battle for that particular war, but which has been involved in it, as belligerent, as beneficiary and as bereaved.

Several of William Shakespeare's plays are set in a time of war, but especially *Henry V* (1599)²⁸, in which war is the central motif, has long been regarded as the 'benchmark war play' in English-language theatre. Many of the succeeding plays can be traced to the exemplary portrait of an ideal sovereign and warlord who became a model for war literature in general (Howard and Stokes 1996: 2-4). Until the 1940s, Henry had been regarded as a heroic fighter in England's service; the patriotic content rendering *Henry V* especially attractive in times of political crises. Only since the Second World War has it often been reinterpreted as an anti-war play (Habermann and Klein 2000: 375²⁹).

Vividly portrayed by Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen through the eyes of a common man in his novel *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus* (1669), the Thirty Years' War,

²⁷ Modern adaptations of this play will be discussed in chapter IV of this thesis.

²⁸ Date of first performance. First quarto: 1600, first folio 1623.

²⁹ The same passage also references Laurence Olivier's film version (1944), which, in the opening credits, dedicates the film to 'the Commandos and Airborne Troops of Great Britain'.

which now resurfaces as 'comparative reference' in the political theory of the New Wars, has also famously been adapted twice to the stage: while Friedrich von Schiller's historical drama *Wallenstein* (1797-99) follows the classical tradition to centre its narrative on a leader (or warlord; Münkler calls him a 'charismatic entrepreneur' [49]), it is Bertold Brecht's epic play *Mother Courage* (1941³⁰) which depicts this particular perpetual war in a series of tableaux describing precisely those circumstances Münkler and Kaldor will later name as equally paradigmatic of the New Wars. *Mother Courage* therefore might be seen as a paradigm for contemporary plays on war, just as the Thirty Years' War is a paradigm for contemporary wars. Specifically, the principle of *bellum se ipse alet* is, of course, the underlying driving force of the play; Münkler's description of the economic organisation of the New Wars could well be describing the Thirty Years War as portrayed by Brecht. But even while *Mother Courage* portrays the war machine as a force field from which the characters cannot escape, the play nevertheless makes a very personal argument about the mother and her fatal choices, her warped priorities and her greed. In this case, the war is a means to demonstrate, to enhance the mother's flaws, and the flaws of a society built on greed and the accumulation of capital, but it remains a means. In the new plays on war, the characters can only react to the war, which has become an agent of and by itself.

In the twentieth century, a number of plays engage with contemporary conflict situations. Prominent amongst the British plays on the First World War is R.C. Sherriff's *Journey's End* (1928), set in the trenches and depicting heroic sacrifices among the British army officers (Howard and Stokes 3). At the beginning of the Second World War, the war rarely translated onto British theatres. In lieu thereof, light comedies, classical plays, or revues were given and were regarded with favour by the government: Winston Churchill knew about the importance of the theatres conveying optimism to the general public to boost the fighting spirit. Terence Rattigan³¹ and J.B. Priestley³² can be named as playwrights that actually broach the issue of war while it occurred (*ibid.* 3-4).

Many of the post-war plays discuss the front and the soldiers' life in the army, heroism, the Holocaust and the *blitzkrieg*. But comedies, and farces in particular, are successful, the genre in which, traditionally, death is overcome. Examples are R.F. Delderfield's *Worm's*

³⁰ Written 1938/39, premiere in Zurich 1941. In 1955, Joan Littlewood and her Theatre Workshop gave the first London performance. The eponymous character derives from a minor character in *Simplicissimus*, who becomes the central (and equally eponymous) character in another novel by Grimmelshausen, also belonging to the 'Simplician Cycle': *Trutz Simplex: Oder Ausführliche und wunderseltzame Lebensbeschreibung der Ertzbetrügerin und Landstörtzerin Courasche* [*Trutz Simplex: Or Expansive and Wondrously Curious Biography of the Arch-Cozener and Land-Louper Courasche* - my translation] (Nürnberg, 1670).

³¹ *While the Sun Shines* (1943); *The Deep Blue Sea* (1952) (Howard and Stokes: 3).

³² *They Came to a City* (1943); *Desert Highway* (1944) (*Ibid.*: 4).

Eye View (1945), Hugh Hasing's *Seagulls over Sorrento* (1949) and Colin Morris's *Reluctant Heroes* (1950) (*ibid.* 8). Other plays tend to present a romantic myth of military life. The fictional frame mostly has an authentic historical reference to wars in the past, such as Charles Wood's plays *Cockade* (1963), *Veterans* (1972) and *Jingo* (1975) (*ibid.* 10).

In the 1960s, one of the most important British plays on war emerges: Joan Littlewood's *Oh, What a Lovely War!* (1963), a revue about the First World War. Other landmarks are Peter Brook's take on the Vietnam War, *US* (1968) and John McGrath's *Events While Guarding the Bofors Gun* (1966) on the Cold War (Howard and Stokes: 18-20).

In 1980, Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain* depicts the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and the Falklands War (1982) is discussed in Louise Page's *Falkland Sound* (1983) and Ian Curteis' *The Falkland Play* (1987). Meanwhile, the fear of a nuclear war amongst the superpowers grows and the risk of such a war taking place in Europe seems very real. Among the plays examining the possibility of a nuclear apocalypse, Edward Bond's trilogy *The War Plays* (1985) is perhaps the most noteworthy (Howard and Stokes: 23-25).

War's pivotal role in the origin of drama has been well established, and in line with this tradition, the new plays on war are equally brought forth by a society entangled in war. Its citizens find themselves in a position not very dissimilar to that of the city state of Athens at the time of the premieres of *The Siege of Miletus* and *The Trojan Women*: at the centre of a self-described 'civilised world' and fighting their battles outside the realms of the state. The following will give some exemplary instances of how the new plays on war mediate different features of the New Wars.

Because the war is transferred to the outside of the borders of the collective conscience, it remains invisible – it is unlisted also because we choose not to see it. The horrors of war are evoked on stage to bring the audience into a position alike to that of the victims of war and to make war accessible for a society that cannot reflect on its own war experience. Illuminating the theatrical reverberations of the current global state and thus, inadvertently, defining the crucial nexus between the dramatics of a world at risk and war and the theatrical representation of this world's risks and wars, Beck declares that '[w]orld risk is the *staging of the reality* of world risk' (2007: 30).

The surreal and apocalyptic visions of many recent plays on war have frequently been criticised for their alleged 'lack' of reality, for inventing unrecognisable settings and conflating familiar European or Western surroundings with a war zone not compatible with the Western self-perception. But drama's 'mimetic function', as far as it can be regarded as mimetic at all, might have been unrecognised: after all, these plays portray as a given a status quo which the audience largely refuses to recognise in any state of development either on or

off stage. The plays are, of course, never entirely mimetic: they imagine something that could come into being with all the premises already in place, a reality that has not come to pass but is nevertheless real.

While a definite setting for many of these plays remains obscure,³³ they can be roughly divided into two groups: those set inside the war zone and those set outside it, assuming that, to a certain degree, this dichotomy still holds true. By locating the civil war in an undefined reality that is nevertheless perceived as uncannily familiar, these contemporary plays force a western audience to confront the possibility of war in their midst, to question the idea of it only happening in the realm of the Other. By dislocating the wars into the centre of what Bauman describes as 'Fortress Europe' (but which could easily be extended to, for example, 'Fortress West'), the plays demonstrate that the roots of violence and conflict are always to be found in peacetime society, that the civil war is not generated 'outside', but always endogenous. The defining force of plays set outside the war zone is fear, the armed conflict in conscious absentia. 'The play is set in the country it is performed in. All characters are white', debbie tucker green instructs for her 2005 play *stoning mary (2)*³⁴. The technique is as simple as it is effective, instantly anchoring a play, whose stories of child soldiers, sparse medical aid and execution by stoning would conventionally evoke a non-Caucasian cast, in an explicitly Western context. In the recent plays, war transforms the identities of the characters. Once they have 'internalised' the state of constant conflict, there is no critical vantage point from which to judge the politics and circumstances of the conflict; in the case of a play set 'inside' the war zone (and thus mostly inside the Western Fortress), the plays' social reality is not mediated for the audience because it is 'too real' for the characters, who do not experience warfare as something extraordinary.

The frequent lack of a 'historically recognisable' conflict may be one of the main differences between contemporary plays and earlier plays that depict war; as mentioned above, both Shakespeare and Schiller, for example, anchor those of their plays in which war is a central motif in a specific historical context, as do, of course, the playwrights writing on the First and Second World War. 'Any war', however, is the essential force shaping the characters of the New War plays, to whom the external description of their surrounding horror does not matter when they are struggling to survive. They only react to the act of war and thus may have internalised the mechanics of the New Wars they are confronted with, the fragmentation, the changing loyalties, and the decentralisation. Following Melanie Klein, this act of internalisation denotes the exegesis of an often hereditary war trauma.

³³ With the exception of the recent verbatim plays (see chapter III).

³⁴ N.B.: This playwright and her work always appear in lower case.

In the recent plays, the armed conflict often is the defining moment, the element shaping the characters, not just the background to a narrative that is 'also about war', but whose characters fight their battles primarily on a metaphorical level. Often, the plays concentrate on the portrayal of civilians, which might be a reflection of the current ratio of military to civilian casualties in wars. At the turn of the 20th century, it stood at 8:1, while today, it is almost reversed: in the 1990s, the ratio was approximately 1:9 (Kaldor 2006: 9). War's reverberations have not only a small, but a powerful and direct effect on the action of the plays. The plays often close with individuals freeing themselves from the war, which will continue without them, as the war machine continues to fight for and by itself.

The increasing blurring of the dualisms that used to make out the differences between war and peace, military and civil and public and private is a state portrayed for example in the plays of Sarah Kane, Caryl Churchill, Sam Holcroft and Zinnie Harris, all of which describe a society that seems to be engulfed in a constant undefined conflict while maintaining a sense of 'normality' (mainly signifying that the state of exception has become the quotidian). The frontlines are unclear and there is a permanent and diffuse threat by that which is foreign.³⁵ Ian's antagonising of anything alien in Kane's *Blasted* runs parallel to the arbitrary listing of enemy groups in Churchill's *Far Away* (2000). The characters lose control of their lives in these chaotic circumstances, having long lost track of what the conflict is about and where they themselves stand. '[E]veryone's moving and no one knows why', Joan says in *Far Away*, and she describes how even the elements are perceived as a potential threat: '... I didn't know whose side the river was on, it might help me swim or it might drown me' (Churchill 2000: 43-44). The soldier who has just arrived on the scene in *Blasted* inquires after Ian's social status as a fellow combatant. When Ian confirms that he is a soldier 'of sorts', the question follows: 'Which side, if you can remember.' 'Don't know what the sides are here', Ian counters (40).

The constantly replicated 'ideology of antagonism', identified by Schmidt and Schroeder as one reason for retaliatory violence to escalate become self-perpetuating in an environment of ethnic-cultural tension (15), is the point at which Zinnie Harris's *Solstice* sets in, portraying a small community sliding into the first skirmishes with their neighbours that will lead to full-scale civil war. As the older generation starts to cut ties with the other side, the younger generation engages in retaliatory violence:

Adie: They are going to piss all over us Dad

Michel: that may be so

³⁵ For Ian's xenophobia in *Blasted* see e.g. Kane 2001: 3-4, for his paranoia see Kane 2001: 28. For a list of frontlines in *Far Away* see the whole third act, Churchill 2001: 34-44.

Adie: all my friends and their parents are leaving. There are all these rumours about what is coming in on the airfield.

I don't know what we can do

Michel: we leave it up to the politicians
there have been crises like this before
it blows over

Adie: they hate us over there

Michel: if we don't fight we don't lose

Adie: it isn't about winning or losing
they will win anyway
it is just about not turning over and letting them.

(Harris, *Solstice*, 2005: 77)The simmering violence in *Solstice*

finally escalates, the first refugee camp is erected and will become a permanent residence for its inhabitants, and a sprawling detention centre becomes the site of another murder. War gains a 'social reality of its own', set apart from the 'civil' reality under peaceful conditions. War's reality enforces its unique forms of social relations, drawing everybody 'into the specific logic of life under violence' and leaving only three forms of possible existence under the conditions of civil war: soldier, deserter and civilian (Maček 2001: 197-98). *Solstice's* Michel prophesises the evolution of contemporary warfare as described by Kaldor, involving simultaneous integration and fragmentation and allowing for a local war to nevertheless be played out on a global stage which involves the international press, mercenary troops and international peace-keeping forces as well as non-governmental organisations and institutions (2006: 4-5):

It will turn into nation against nation.

Already there is international outcry, other armies will arrive. What started as a small settlement fighting its neighbour will attract other parties like flies to...

Lots of people will die. (Harris 135)

The last scene in *Solstice* shows two characters watching, from a vantage point, the war descend upon their community, predicting what the New War theorists have described as an entangled net of belligerents on an international scale that bears a great resemblance to the Thirty Years' War and very little to the inter-state wars that the West has come to expect as the standard form of war over the last two centuries, but 'the modern conventional war, the Clausewitzian war, is history', says the sociologist Trutz von Trutha (2004: 3).

Münkler elaborates on his assertion that the difference between combatants and non-combatants has broken down and that the fighters are thus undrilled (61), focussing particularly on the phenomenon of the child soldier as a figure which has become one of the

most haunting features of the New Wars. Almost offhandedly, the fate of child soldiers is introduced early in Harris's *Midwinter* (2004):

Maud: He won't starve for long. They'll decide they need him soon. Then they'll feed him. Feed him up. Oh, there is food. Didn't you know that? We may be under siege but food does get in.

After all they need food to feed the ten-year-olds they call the men.

Leonard: He's eight.

Maud: So they'll let him starve for another two years yet. (6-7)

Because young people display such a 'remarkable insouciance in the face of danger' and because their instinct for self-preservation is less developed than that of adults, they also display less inhibition in using violence, make no allowances for defenceless people and often display a particular cruelty and brutality, which results in them becoming 'the most feared participants in the new wars' (Münkler 80). In debbie tucker green's *stoning mary* (2005), the child soldier is shown breaking into a couple's home and refusing anything they offer to give him, asking them to 'beg', presumably for their lives, which he then takes nevertheless (tucker green 2005: 41), affirming Münkler's statement on child soldiers:

These adolescents, for their part, often consider a gun as the only means of getting food and clothing, or as the simplest way of acquiring desirable consumption goods and status symbols. (18)

'I can't sleep with him back in the house', the child soldier's mother says as the son has been returned to his parents (tucker green 52), haunting the community as a living atrocity, the war in the shape of a child. The child bearing arms remains offstage but is subject to an inquiry in the aftermath of war crimes in Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* (2004) and occupies centre stage again in Holcroft's *Cockroach* (2008), where school children are drafted directly from the school grounds to join the army. It reappears in David Greig's *Dunsinane* (2010), both as part of the 'regular' invading army and as part of the guerrilla forces of the besieged Queen Gruach – this play also serves as a good example for the portrayal of a typical low-intensity conflict.

The marauding troops observed by Münkler as paradigmatic of the Thirty Years War and the New Wars are portrayed, directly or indirectly, by Kane, Greig, Crimp, tucker green and several playwrights contributing to Nicolas Kent's cycle of short plays in the collection *How Long Is Never?* (2006) on the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

As a final example, the effect of a globalised economy on the generation of conflict is explored in Harris's *Solstice*, in which a minority community is uprooted in order to exploit the resources of the territory, and in *Fall* (2008), which portrays a newly peaceful society attempting to ensure its readmission into the international community by restoring certain economic connections with other countries:

Howard: ... We don't have anything we can sell, no minerals, no resources, but we have space. And we have a blind eye. ...
Before I go any further, just to say it isn't just continental investment, it's everyone behind them, right up to various European politicians. ...

Pierre: What do they want?

Howard: A canal.

Pierre: A canal?

Howard: Alright, a canal and a factory. Look, we don't ask. A canal and a factory, for the investment that we need? For cheap fuel, for jobs and some sort of functioning economy? We are talking about a thin strip of water, and a plot of land. ...

Pierre: What does the factory make?

Howard: That is where our valuable blind eye comes in. (71-72)

Perpetual Warfare, the World Risk Society, the State of Exception and the Stage

Crucially, in the case of most of the New Wars, it is almost impossible to determine a clear beginning or end (Münkler 13). 'I'm not sure that they're all necessarily about the same war, or even set in the same country', Harris says about her war trilogy *Solstice*, *Midwinter* and *Fall*, '... what links them is the idea that war has cycles like the seasons, from the tiny events that spark conflict, to the awful, horrendous loss of life' (qtd. in Innes 2008). As indicated earlier, Münkler argues that changes in the modes of funding a war are an essential reason for why the New Wars may stretch over decades, as the financing has become an important element in the actual fighting, in difference to classical conflicts between states (1). As it is almost impossible to disentangle the various individual motives and causes for war, there is often no prospect of lasting peace: Münkler attributes to these wars the increasing involvement of 'para-state players' rather than states (8), asserting that the former often 'use military force essentially for self-preservation' and not to bring the war to an end. If this is the prerogative of all parties involved in the war, then it could, sufficient funding provided, theoretically last forever, often not even identifiable as war any more, as the actual fighting seems to be suspended (12-13, s.a. Hardt and Negri 2006: 52) – a development portrayed by Harris in *Midwinter* (2004), where the fighting is never really mentioned and the war declared over without the circumstances changing significantly.³⁶

At this point, it might be worthwhile to return to Agamben's lucid analysis of the state of exception, which, following up from Benjamin and tracing the political development of the 20th and early 21st century, he determines as having become the permanent state of affairs:

³⁶ See Chapter II.

Faced with the unstoppable progression of what has been called a 'global civil war,' the state of exception tends increasingly to appear as the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics. ... Indeed, from this perspective, the state of exception appears as a threshold of indeterminacy between democracy and absolutism. (2005: 8)

Not constituting a juridical state itself, the state of exception denotes the limit of juridical law; it is where public law may tip over into politics. The philosophers Hardt and Negri see the development of potentially indeterminate war as engrained in the decline of the nation state (and with it, the decline of armed conflicts between nation states) and the subsequent emergence of a global empire within which rages a global civil war (2006: 3, s.a. Bauman 2007: 25). Arguing that the 'isolated space and time of war in the limited conflict between sovereign states has declined [and] war seems to have seeped back and flooded the entire social field', they agree with Agamben's assertion that the state of exception has become the rule and now determines both foreign relations and homeland security in most states (7). War seems to have become 'a *permanent social relation*' (12, emphasis in the original).

Analysing the global framework of risk awareness and the resulting politics of fear, Beck seems to have found the skeleton key to what in Agamben's argument remains obscure, namely the underlying motives for the global society's increasing acceptance of the state of exception as the norm. He observes that worldwide there are new security arrangements in place as a reaction to anticipated terror attacks which have not, in fact, taken place (2007: 13). The anticipation of catastrophe changes the world, he says, and we have become members of a 'world risk society' (*ibid.*, s.a. Bauman 2007: 11). Risk has a similar force of destruction to that of war, he argues, as '[s]ocial hardship is hierarchical, whereas the new risks are democratic. They also hit the rich and powerful. The shock becomes noticeable in all areas' (Beck 27). This leads to fear governing the attitude to life and to security gaining top propriety over liberty and equality on a scale of civil values, followed by a tightening of current laws and a seemingly sensible 'totalitarianism of danger prevention' (28). The 'economy of fear', Beck continues, will feed on the general 'breakdown of nerves'. Like water and electricity, security has become a publicly and privately organized profitable consumer item (*ibid.*), to which Bauman adds that the tradition of 'capitalizing on fear' is rooted in early 'neoliberal assault on the social state' (2007: 17). It is crucial to note that

[r]isk is *not equivalent* to catastrophe. Risk means the *anticipation* of catastrophe. ... While each catastrophe is defined locally, temporally and socially, the anticipation of catastrophe does not know any spatio-temporal or social concretion. (29, emphases in the original)

Of course, the global anticipation of catastrophe largely defies the methods of scientific determination. However, the less determinable the danger, the more weight will be gained by the culturally varied perceptions of risk, leading to a blurring of the distinction between risk and cultural perception. The same risk, perceived from different national and cultural perspectives, will become fact in a different way and will thus be evaluated in a different way. The more the world 'closes ranks', the more these contrasting cultural perceptions will emerge as mutually exclusive certainties, Beck argues and evokes Huntington's clash of civilisations when stating that the 'clash of risk cultures', of culturally different 'risk realities' or 'risk perceptions', is set to become a fundamental problem of world politics in the 21st century (34). The lately emerging 'terrorist world risk society' has to be understood as an anti-governmental constellation of threat within which the state of exception becomes normal and thus simultaneously disempowers governments (as their established means become unfit) and empowers them, because the call for lost security predominates and justifies everything – finally at the cost of liberty, equality and democracy (84). The global risk society finds itself engaged in a restless quest for lost security, by means of sanctions and strategies which simulate rather than ensure control and security and 'add fuel to the general feeling of insecurity and threat'. The perception of danger

causes widespread solidarity overcoming differences of class, nation and religion and a consent on the legitimate defence against dangers which break with the basic principles of humanity. (279)

Bauman agrees that fears have become completely immersed into the daily routines, as they have become self-perpetuating and self-reinforcing, seemingly having 'acquired a momentum of their own' (2007: 9). The most unbearable and overwhelming fears are produced by the 'insecurity of the present and uncertainty about the future', rooted in a sense of impotence and the perception of having lost control over the presumably rational (26). He observes that, in spite of being well protected and relatively safe, it is the Western society which feels 'more threatened, insecure and frightened, more inclined to panic, and more passionate about everything related to security and safety than people of most other societies on record' (55). As the epigraph to this chapter indicates, fear truly emerges as the emotion that haunts the 'Fortress West', and it lies at the heart of the New War plays as well. In Mark Ravenhill's cycle of short plays, *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* (2008), it is present in every one of the plays; certainly in "Fear and Misery", in which a couple discusses how to keep their young family safe:

Harry: I want us – you, me, Alex – to build a wall against ... Somehow the world out there got full of ... Somehow there's nothing but hate out there. Aggression. Somehow the streets got filled with addicts who need to steal to get so high they can kill

who then come down and want to attack and steal your ... THE WORLD IS ATTACKING US, THE TERROR IS EATING US UP AND YOU ... WE NEED GATES. WE NEED TO, TO, TO ... DRAW UP THE DRAWBRIDGE AND CLOSE THE GATES AND SECURITY, SECURITY, SECURITY, SECURITY. I CAN'T FIGHT THIS WAR EVERY DAY (sic., Ravenhill 2008: 48)

The war, the actual fighting, has, of course, not entered their lives – but the spectre of war has long invaded their house and will move with them into the gated community, even as they try to lock it out, while, in the nursery next door, their son is haunted by a version of the Unknown Soldier doubling as Benjamin's Angel of History. The contamination by fear is creeping: 'My husband is sent out on one operation after the other,' the General's wife Amelia says in Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* (2004),

... with the aim – the apparent aim –
of eradicating terror: not understanding
that the more he fights terror
the more he creates terror –
and even invites terror – who has no eyelids –
into his own bed. (2)

Kaldor asserts that during the Cold War period, the idea of war was kept alive while the reality of war was being avoided. In the many wars taking place in Europe and all over the world, more people died than during the Second World War, but because

these wars did not fit our conception of war, they were discounted.
... The irregular, informal wars of the second half of the twentieth century, starting with the wartime resistance movements and the guerrilla warfare of Mao Tse-tung and his successors, represent the harbingers of the new forms of warfare. (32)

Progressing from this historically embedded avoidance of the reality of war, the peculiar attitude towards many contemporary conflicts is not entirely surprising. And just how successfully Western societies have internalised and normalised the permanent state of exception and war, to the point of a perceived state of peace even while engaged in war, is described by Beck, who considers Jean Baudrillard's quite radical statement that the first war in Iraq in 1990 had not taken place (Baudrillard 2000). Beck maintains that the weakness of Baudrillard's theory lies in the fact that the Iraq war *did* really take place, but that both statements – it did and it did not take place – do not exclude each other: the war took place for the others, but not in the country of the warring nation. Perceived peace and actual war may thus coexist simultaneously, locally and socially separated, and linked to each other within the selective virtuality of the war by a certain staging and legitimising paradigm – Caryl Churchill's 1997 play *This Is a Chair* comes to mind, in which war and global conflict are even more present by their absence, by Churchill's insistence to have a momentous title

announced at the beginning of each perfectly mundane scene, thus demonstrating how war could and could not take place at the same time.³⁷ 'It is, by the way, the Western gaze which is articulated in Baudrillard's pointed remark', Beck reflects, 'the gaze which is blind for the victims of the other' (2007: 273). Speaking about the experience of pain, Scarry says that for the person suffering the pain, 'it is "effortlessly" grasped (that is, even with the most heroic effort it cannot *not* be grasped)' whereas for the person not suffering that particular pain,

what is 'effortless' is *not* grasping it (it is easy to remain wholly unaware of its existence; even with effort, one may remain in doubt about its existence or may retain the astonishing freedom of denying its existence. (Scarry 1985: 4)

Equally, the experience of war, while inescapable for those caught inside the war zone, can be easily involuntarily or wilfully ignored (if not as 'effortlessly' as pain) by those outside the war zone, or those considering themselves as being located outside the war zone.

While the criticism that the Western gaze is blind towards the victims of the Other might be accurately observed in the case of Baudrillard's statement and is also taken up by Judith Butler in her recent work on war and ungrievable life, it does not necessarily hold true for the recent dramatic works on contemporary war, who either adopt the Other, the unvoiced, as their central characters or who embrace the Other in the form of war itself as an independent force on stage, illustrating how the characters have internalised the war machine. In the context of globalisation, a synecdoche of space takes place, the civil war invades not only public spaces but also the living-rooms – or it seems to invade them, generating a widespread feeling of fear. While José Rivera's *Marisol* (1992) portrays an uninhabitable urban neighbourhood in an apocalyptic cityscape in which the main war is waged by angels who rebel against 'a senile God' (Rivera 1997: 159) and Churchill's *Far Away* and Harris's *Midwinter* have the character of bleak parables, Holcroft's *Cockroach* and Kane's *Blasted* locate the undefined conflict somewhere much closer to a tenable reality. *Cockroach* is set, both spatially and temporarily, at the centre of a war, close enough to compel the population to live in a permanent state of expecting the worst, shortening the training time for the new soldiers to fourteen days and ordering an ordinary comprehensive school to show their support of the war effort by sorting and cleaning the uniforms of the dead. 'Nobody in this room's boyfriend is dead,' teacher Beth points out to her class in Sam Holcroft's *Cockroach* (2008). 'Nobody in this room's boyfriend has even been called. And until that time we will stay in here and finish our revision session!' (Holcroft 32). In possibly one of the most extreme portrayals of the state of exception as the norm, Holcroft shows the school lessons as an attempt at normality:

³⁷ Also see Chapter II.

Lee: What's the fucking point?

He laughs.

You're crazy.

Beth: Excuse me?

Lee: You got dead men's uniforms piling up on the playing field and you want us to sit in here and revise the hormones of your menstrual cycle.

Short pause.

Beth: Yes. (47)

Beth teaches on until only a few of her students are left and the war effort finally takes over the classroom. As in the plays by Kane, Harris and Churchill, the war is presented as a constant and quite amorphous threat that is fully incorporated into the people's lives and governs all their decisions.

As if in anticipation of Agamben's later thesis of the state of exception having become the norm, with which this chapter opens, the author Hans Magnus Enzensberger has asserted that most western urban spaces resemble war zones already, that they are breeding grounds of random violence and have long become the site of a fully-fledged civil war sanctioned by a state of exception the factual existence of which is ignored by the general public (Enzensberger 1994: 18-22, 26-27). His assertion might seem a bit far-fetched, reactionary even in its portrayal of large parts of the people as degenerate, self-destructive and socially underdeveloped. However, the creeping loss of civil liberties and personal privacy, approved of by citizens who agree to disclose ever more personal information while their safe space crumbles around them is rapidly becoming normality. It has also in recent years become a trope of the theatre. In a realisation of Agamben's state of emergency, the urban spaces in these plays descend into actual war zones, suspended from the social norm and at the same time fully absorbed into the characters' quotidian life. The wars that take place elsewhere are reimagined as happening inside the Western *polis*.

The Role and Performativity of Violence

By highlighting the performative aspect of violence, I wish to establish a connection between the specific role violence plays in the staging of political power and in the depiction of war-related violence on the theatrical stage.

In view of Carl von Clausewitz's assertion that, during warfare, the immediate objective of the inflicting of violence is 'neither to conquer the enemy country nor to destroy its army, but simply *to cause general damage*' and to '*wear down* the enemy' (106, emphases in the original), it should be difficult, if not even futile, to attempt to distinguish between 'old' and

'new' wars merely on the basis of forms and occurrence of violence, given that violence has always been intrinsically linked to the act of war. Yet many acts of extreme violence that formerly were considered undesirable and illegitimate side-effects of old wars now define the mode of fighting (Kaldor 2006: 106). Under the already dire conditions, nothing beneficial can be offered the people as an incentive; therefore to control them successfully depends on spreading fear and insecurity and on perpetuating the hatred of an ostracised Other. This is achieved by committing extreme and conspicuous atrocities that involve a large number of people, with the aim of creating a shared complicity, sanctioning violence and increasing communal rifts (105).

Kaldor states that it is one of the aims of the new warfare to create hostile environments for people that cannot otherwise be controlled by the warring parties. She lists several techniques of population displacement: the 'systematic murder of those with different labels', for which Rwanda is an example; strategies of ethnic cleansing, which is defined broadly as 'forcible population expulsion' and which could be witnessed in the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Transcaucasus; and the physical or economical transformation of an area into an uninhabitable region (through enforced famines or sieges), as has been happening in southern Sudan (105-6). However, she rejects the notion that the New Wars are a reversion to the primitive and stresses that primitive wars were 'highly ritualistic and hedged in by social constraint', whereas these New Wars 'apply rational thinking to the aims of war and refuse normative constraints' (106-7). Münkler explains that, due to the asymmetrical make-up of the wars, which are mostly not waged against a similarly armed enemy but primarily engage in wide-spread hostilities against the civilian population, heavy weapons are hardly ever required (74-5).

Schmidt and Schroeder remark upon the performative quality of violence, stressing that, without an audience, violence may still leave people gravely injured or dead, but it remains socially meaningless. They suggest that the efficiency of violence derives from the staging of power and legitimacy, probably even more so than due to actual physical results. As a performance, violence extends its efficacy over space and time, reaching a large majority of people who might not all be physically affected by it. This performative quality renders violence an everyday experience even if nobody is subjected to actual physical harm on a daily basis. It is amplified by a high visibility of the performance, which usually would be staged in a public arena (6). 'My play is only a shadowy representation of a reality that's far harder to stomach', the playwright Sarah Kane asserts in an interview in an attempt to defend herself against the reproach of portraying gratuitous violence in her plays (Sierz 2001: 106), and she is frighteningly accurate in her claim. Debord's spectacle on the one hand, Artaud's

theatre of atrocities on the other, the performance of violence apparently only acquires social meaning in the moment of being witnessed, which allows for a reassessment of the much-debated value and necessity of the representation and aestheticisation of violence in various mediums of art.

Emphasising the importance of the bodily nature of violence, Sofsky offers an interesting angle to consider when trying to determine the performative nature of violence, which at least in part relies on a certain allurements, a desire to watch. He argues that

the fascination of violence is ultimately physical in nature. The sight of it can become an obsession. It is not an avid desire for sensation that holds mankind spellbound but violence itself, the destruction of another body, the whimpering of a living being, the smell of blood. We feel conflicting reactions at first. Violence is repulsive, it induces nausea, it arouses fear and terror, but at the same time it is seductive and enthralling. ... The shock hits us in the pit of the stomach; we feel a moment of sickness, dizziness, then a brief quivering of the nerves until at last relief soothes the fear. ... Violence has the full force of immediacy. Because it affects the body directly, it breaks all the rules that usually hold humanity in check. Death is vividly, suddenly present. (9-10)

For this reason, violence has always been a vital part of the performing arts as well: the element of scopophilia is as important as the fact that the theatre is able to use actual bodies for the representation of violence, thus highlighting the bodily experience of both performer and spectator. Stating that '[t]heatre is an art of bodies witnessed by bodies', the theatre scholar Simon Shepherd argues that the act of witnessing signifies a person attesting 'to the truth of something that is or was present for them.' Because witnesses are 'something more than passive viewers', theatre audiences in their role as witnesses 'are physically engaged by that which is present to them, to the extent that they might be physically possessed by it.' (2006: 73). Through the physical presence of the bodies on stage the acts of violence one knows about theoretically, in the form of statistics and reports, become again connected to actual bodies. Of course, it is not genuine violence that is witnessed on stage – the witnessing is an approximation rather than a replaying; a 'shadowy representation', played out, if one wanted to apply this analogy, against the back wall of a cave.

Although Susan Sontag asserts that 'nobody likes to see their suffering twinned with somebody else's' (2001: 113), Schmidt and Schroeder declare that violence is never so specific and culturally bounded that it cannot be compared (5-6), and thus that it cannot be represented. And while '[e]ven with the best effort, a full comprehension of the other's pain will never be achieved', as Scarry says, the reality of this pain 'comes unsharably into our midst as at once that which cannot be denied and that which cannot be confirmed' (4).

The Unlisted Character

One of the most striking characteristics of the New Wars Münkler finds to be reflected in the semantics of fellow theorists and political commentators. He comments on Martin van Creveld's assertion on the new epoch of 'low-intensity wars' which 'can keep smouldering for a long period of time' (Creveld 1991: 57):

Van Creveld's choice of vocabulary already conveys the radical nature of the changes. Wars are no longer conducted but *smoulder on*. Indeed, the position of war as the subject of sentences suggests that it is no longer simply an instrument of politics (as Clausewitz would have had it) but has actually put itself in the place of politics. (Münkler 32, emphasis in the original)

War thus seems to have become an agent of and by itself, defying Clausewitz's objection against the idea that war might obey a logic and laws of its own (Münkler 33). While Clausewitz maintains that war has 'certainly a grammar of its own, but its logic is not peculiar to itself'³⁸, Münkler observes that precisely this passage in *On War*

presents the folly that throws the specificity of the new wars into such sharp relief ... The new wars, one might say as a variation on Clausewitz, have not only grammar but also logic of their own. This finds expression in statements that contain war as their subject: War 'smoulders on', 'spreads out', 'extends over' and so on. (33-4)

It is on this rather Hobbesian background that a theory of war as the 'unlisted character' on the stage of the recent plays on war might be developed. Just as contemporary fears seem to have gained 'a momentum of their own' (Bauman 2007: 9), war might have undergone the same transformation. Having acquired an active grammatical position in the theoretical texts written about the state of war, it can also be considered for inclusion into the dramatis personae, given that in the new plays on war, the characters have identified war as their primary antagonist, their actions are provoked by the rhythms and thrusts of ongoing conflict, the direction the narrative takes is often less dependent on the characters' choices and more on where they find themselves caught between ongoing battle and the idea of peace.

It is left to the characters whether they continue to submit to the fact of perpetual war or whether they chose to ignore its taunts, whether they might try to form a majority that will simply decide upon peace, thereby risking to merely dislocate the war:

Leonard: The war is starting again.

³⁸ Münkler's translator refers to the contended Clausewitz-translation by John Graham, edited by Anatol Rapaport (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), which in this particular instance, however, proves to be closer to the original German text than Michael Howard and Peter Paret's. The quote above is therefore as it appears in Münkler 2005: 33 and refers to page 367 (book V, chapter 2) of the Rapaport-edition.

Pause.

That is what they are saying.

Maud: It's a joke.

Leonard: No joke. ...

I thought it was a rumour, so I went up to a town official and asked him, is it a rumour, I asked. ...

He said he wished it were. There were tears in his eyes. It's a new war, he said.

Pause.

You talk about jokes, well, he told me one. And he wasn't a funny man. But this one, funny things. How can it be? I said to him, this new war, how can we go to war? ... The soldiers are all sick, they have this parasite. ...

And do you know what he said to me then?

This next war won't need soldiers.

Pause.

That is the punchline, by the way. This next war won't need soldiers. ...

It's impossible, isn't it? Like a self-defeating...

HOW CAN THERE BE A WAR WITHOUT SOLDIERS?

(Harris, *Midwinter*, 2004: 75-76) *Midwinter* ends with a new war

fought without soldiers, hinting at the findings of the new-war theorists: that war is fought 'for war's sake'. Megalothymia is such a powerful part of the soul that even if a just cause is won, men may begin to struggle against it simply for the sake of struggle (Curtis 2006: 63). It can thus be said that war genuinely becomes a character, as it fights for and by itself, resuming Hobbes' thesis that war will ultimately always turn against the state, as the state is against war, and thus aims at rendering the war machine obsolete.³⁹ In many plays, the war is an unseen force, but it might take on the form of the child soldier (for example in Tucker Green's *Stoning Mary*), of the soulless killer (in Mouawad's *Scorched*), the warlord (the General in Crimp's *Cruel and Tender*) or of the woman who turns out to be war personified (as does Gruach in Greig's *Dunsinane*). It is in this shape, as Agamben's shape-shifting werewolf or *homo sacer* (1998: 106), that the far-away civil wars nevertheless take place in the Western Fortresses as well, and not least also on the theatrical stage.

³⁹ As taken up and widely discussed by Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 11.

Chapter II

A Civil War, Far Away: Taboos on Stage and the *Homo Sacer*

Someone who is perennially surprised that depravity exists, who continues to feel disillusioned (even incredulous) when confronted with evidence of what humans are capable of inflicting in the way of gruesome, hands-on cruelties upon other humans, has not reached moral or psychological adulthood. No one after a certain age has the right to this kind of innocence, of superficiality, to this degree of ignorance, or amnesia.

Susan Sontag

There is an intricate link between the theatre, cruelty and taboo, which reflects society's relationship to cruelty and taboo. Historically located after the 'In-yer-face' wave of British theatre, the new war plays examine the roots of human aggression and the wars that result by exploring contemporary society's position towards what is taboo and 'sacred'. However, by redefining the aesthetics and politics of cruelty, the In-yer-face theatre movement has inflected this debate. The New War plays draw from the surrealist tradition and the 'theatre of the absurd' to portray the state of exception as the norm in times of war, exposing, at the centre of the plays, the primary object of taboo: the *homo sacer*.

In the development of his theory of the *homo sacer*, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben derives from Aristotle two Greek terms for the state of living, *zoē* for the simple fact of living common to all living beings, animals, men and god alike, and *bios*, for 'the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group', a life that has a certain quality to it (Agamben 1998: 1). *Bios* means to be a citizen of a polis, to be able to participate in the shaping of society, in the cultural and political life of the community – what is denoted by 'the good life'. Therefore, if a person is cast out of their community, stripped of their civil rights, of their human rights and their social and legal status, they become the Roman *homo sacer*, the one 'who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed*' (Agamben 2004: 8, emphasis in the original). What is left is the bare life, the *zoē*, the contact with which is taboo.

Linked to the Roman *sacer*, 'taboo' in the Freudian sense is that which is sacred, both consecrated and impure, uniting the maleficent and the beneficent (Freud 1974: 311, Girard 2005: 271), calling forth a reaction of either awe or horror and revulsion, as well as a terror of physical or mental contact, for fear of contamination (Freud, *ibid.* 218-19). Noteworthy here is that, anthropologically, taboo as the sacred comes first, the division into evil and good follows later. Freud defines the taboo as the root of human ethical and legislative codes

(317). In his wide-ranging study *Violence and the Sacred* (1972), the anthropological philosopher René Girard argues that the sacred consists of forces whose dominance over man increases in proportion to the effort to master them, as in case of natural catastrophes, but he singles out human violence as 'the heart and the secret soul of the sacred' (Girard 32). He underlines the intricate, maybe constitutive, relationship between taboo and violence as well as between taboo and drama, raising the issue of the representation of violence in drama and suggesting the term of 'sacrificial crisis' to clarify a central aspect of the disrupted cultural order in Greek tragedy: the crisis brought about by an impure, a taboo element (46, 51). The situation involves 'a crisis of distinctions': the difference between impure violence and purifying violence has been obliterated, rendering purification impossible and leading to an outbreak of violence (51-52), which, if left unappeased,

will accumulate until it overflows its confines and floods the surrounding area. The role of sacrifice is to stem this rising tide of indiscriminate substitutions and redirect violence into its 'proper' channels. (10)

Asserting that the traces of sacrificial crisis, and specifically of the rituals of sacrifice and purification, are more pronounced in tragedy than in myth, given that tragedy is always also 'a partial deciphering of mythological motifs', Girard states that

[t]he poet brings the sacrificial crisis back to life; he pieces together the scattered fragments of reciprocity, and differences are swept away in this storm just as they were previously dissolved in the real crisis that must have generated the mythological transfiguration. (68)⁴⁰

In-Yer-Face Theatre and Taboo on Stage

The initial emergence of the new plays on war is part of a period in the 1990s which also saw the emergence of a new wave of theatre in Britain and Ireland, which became known under various names, the most widely-used being In-yer-face Theatre. Prominent plays and playwrights include Sarah Kane, whose 1995 debut *Blasted* is generally regarded as marking the beginning of the era, Judy Upton (*Ashes and Sand*, 1994⁴¹), Jez Butterworth (*Mojo*,

⁴⁰ Literary critic Derek Hughes criticises Girard mainly for his alleged misreading of *King Oedipus*, arguing that he bases 'a theory of society upon an imaginary account of a primeval state of nature', continuing that '[Girard] does not attempt to show by what chain of cause and effect a text such as *King Oedipus*, most of which is not 'myth' but Sophocles' invention, can express the conditions of man's primal state' (10). It should be emphasised that even though Girard devotes a significant part of his study to a discussion of Sophocles' play, he does not, in fact, base his theory of the connection between violence and the sacred solely on the play. Furthermore, his discussion of the nature (if not necessarily the origin) of collective violence finds its counterparts in the examinations of the same phenomenon by political and social theorists such as Schmidt and Schroeder, Kaldor and Münkler.

⁴¹ 1st December 1994, six weeks before *Blasted* (12th January 1995). Nevertheless, the latter is conventionally viewed as ushering in the new phase.

1995), Mark Ravenhill, whose play *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) became one of the most successful British play of the 1990s (Saunders 2009: 19) and Enda Walsh, whose *Disco Pigs* (1996) is widely considered to have rung in the phase for the Irish stage (soon to be followed by Martin McDonagh [*The Leenane Trilogy*, 1996-1997] and Conor McPherson [*The Weir*, 1997]). Further should be noted Martin Crimp (*Attempts on Her Life*, 1997), Irvine Welsh (*Headstate*, 1997; his novel *Trainspotting* [1993] was successfully adapted for the stage by Harry Gibson in 1994 and could be seen as a fore-runner of In-yer-face Theatre), Bryony Lavery (*Frozen*, 1998) and Rebecca Prichard (*Yard Gal*, 1998), to name just a few. Many of these plays premiered at the London Royal Court Theatre. Drama critic Aleks Sierz, who coined the term in 2001 in his eponymous study on British contemporary drama, defines In-yer-face Theatre as 'the theatre of sensation: it jolts both actors and spectators out of conventional responses, touching nerves and provoking alarm' (4).

A 'theatre of sensation' calls to mind not only Antonin Artaud's concept of a *Théâtre de la Cruauté* and Peter Brook's *Theatre of Cruelty*, but also influential cultural movements in other art forms, notably the 1997 Saatchi exhibition at the Royal Academy of Art in London, *Sensation*, which displayed the then controversial work of young British artists such as Tracey Emin, Sarah Lucas and Damien Hirst. While the artists were hailed for rejuvenating the British art scene on the one hand, they were criticised on the other hand for displaying artwork later described by the press as 'gory images of dismembered limbs [and] explicit pornography' (BBC 1997). The public reaction to this show echoes the outrage at Paul Gauguin's depiction of Tahitian nudes and Vincent Van Gogh's intensive colours, as displayed in that famous exhibition of modern art at the Grafton Galleries⁴²: a show which prompted Virginia Woolf to write that 'on or about December 1910, human character changed' (Woolf 1924: 4), suggesting the opening date of the exhibition as the date modernism entered Britain.⁴³ It might go a bit far to claim that human character changed yet again on the opening date of the Saatchi exhibition, but it is fair to state that both the *Sensation* exhibition and the theatre of the 1990s (and, indeed, the media reporting of the wars in Iraq 1991-1992, in the Balkan region 1991-1995 and later in Kosovo 1999) chronicle a subtle shift in many Western citizen's attitude towards cruelty, taboo and voyeurism. Over the decades, this shift might turn out to be character-changing after all, as scopophilia and sensationalism have become more and more the general *mode d'emploi* of what Guy Debord, in his thesis on a

⁴² *Manet and the Post-Impressionists*

⁴³ Peter Stansky's 1996 study on early Bloomsbury and the post-impressionist exhibition, *On or About December 1910*, not only offers a good overview of the contents of the exhibition, but also gives some insight into the public and critical reaction.

consumer society centred around images and staged events, already in 1967 describes as the 'society of the spectacle'.⁴⁴

Sierz makes note of the frequent use of shock tactics as one defining feature of the mid-1990s plays, asserting that they were questioning and pushing moral boundaries and thus affronting the general consensus of what could and should be shown on stage. This form of drama, he says, 'also taps into more primitive feelings, smashing taboos, mentioning the forbidden, creating discomfort' (4). The depiction of taboo subjects in drama (if not always directly on stage), of cruelty, violence and shock-evoking topics, is firmly rooted in the theatrical tradition. In Euripides' *Bacchae* (405 BC), a man is torn apart by delirious women – one of them his mother, thus portraying the taboo of infanticide. After committing patricide and incest, Sophocles' Oedipus blinds himself (ca. 429 BC), and his Ajax commits suicide on stage (ca. 450-430 BC). The extensive representation of violence in the English Mystery and Passion Plays prompts medievalist Jody Enders to state that '[m]urder, torture, and violence, it seems, have perpetually functioned as theatre' – note here that she lists them as the basic components of medieval plays (48). Gruesomely violent scenes in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (early 1590s) and the graphic blinding of Gloucester in *King Lear* (1603-6) further demonstrate the wide-spread portrayal of violent content on stage. Jacobean revenge tragedy is so notorious for its depiction of violence that twentieth-century playwrights Howard Brenton, Howard Barker and David Edgar have been called 'the new Jacobeans' (Russell-Taylor 1971: 24-7), alluding to John Webster's *The White Devil* (1612) and Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606) for the detailed depiction of murder, Middleton's and William Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622) for the representation of mutilation and John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633) for the portrayal of incest. It is crucial to differentiate between what is taboo and the depiction of that which is taboo. A taboo in society is not identical with a taboo portrayed in the theatre: while the former may cause a shock to a personal belief system, the latter is breaking aesthetic conventions and thus causes an 'aesthetic shock'. For example, incest is taboo in society and thus shocking when presented without condemnation on stage, whereas blinding was not taboo in medieval and pre-modern society, but would even then have been shocking in its depiction on stage.

Following the lineage of plays like John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956), Sierz sees the early 1960s as a decade in which 'a truly confrontational theatre' emerged in Britain. Notably, Peter Brook's 1964 'Theatre of Cruelty' season at the Royal Shakespeare Company used Artaud's theory to experiment with texts (amongst them Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade*

⁴⁴ Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Paris 1967. Trans. Nicholson-Smith, Donald. New York: Zone Books, 1994.

[1963], Jean Genet's play on the Algerian revolt *The Screens* [1961] and the premiere of Artaud's *Spurt of Blood* [written 1925]) that ultimately led to a controversy about so-called 'dirty plays' (Sierz 17-18, Esslin 1966: 312). In 1965, there followed Edward Bond's *Saved*, in which, infamously, a baby is stoned to death. To this list should be added Portable Theatre's 1971 production *Lay-By* (collaboratively written by Howard Brenton, Trevor Griffiths, David Hare, Stephen Poliakoff, Brian Clark, Hugh Stoddart and Snoo Wilson), which included themes of violence and rape along with 'the prolonged confrontation with a naked body' (Stevenson 2004: 308, 378), *East* (1975) by Steven Berkoff and *The Romans in Britain* (1980) by Howard Brenton, which begins with a scene including homosexual anal rape⁴⁵ (s.a. Nikcevic 263). Sierz argues that the rendering of subject matter as taboo would have encouraged playwrights to circumvent the taboo and to include the subject anyway (10-15), quoting Artaud's *First Manifesto on the Theatre of Cruelty* (first published 1932⁴⁶):

The theatre will never find itself again except by furnishing the spectator with the truthful precipitates of dreams, in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism, pour out on a level not counterfeit and illusory, but interior. (Artaud 1993: 70)

Strongly influenced by the surrealist movement, Artaud calls for a theatre which demonstrates the real chaos within society and questions space, time and the conventional view of the psyche. His *cruauté* signifies crudeness more than actual cruelty, a mystical force of life which is supposed to bring forth a process of self-awareness by way of 'cruel healing', by transmitting the cruelty to the audience; he famously states that '[i]f theatre wants to find itself needed once more, it must present everything in love, crime, war and madness' (65). After the atrocities of two world wars and the Holocaust, Artaud's approach became a point of reference for the post-war generation of playwrights and theatre makers who attempted to find an adequate form to represent the world after industrialised killings and genocide. Clare Wallace argues that Artaud's concept of total theatre takes up the idea of an 'intense all-encompassing experience of theatre' while at the same time foreshadowing a fresh interest in the experiential in the In-yer-face playwrights, specifically in Sarah Kane (2010: 95). This generation of playwrights, the first to be taught in playwriting courses at university, often by the generation of political playwrights such as David Edgar and Edward Bond, is thus acutely aware of the history and the aesthetics of cruelty on stage. The theatre

⁴⁵ In 1982, the play was subject to an unsuccessful private prosecution on the grounds of 'gross indecency'. The legal outcome of these proceedings was that an offence under the Sexual Offence Act could now be committed in the theatre (a concise breakdown of the circumstances of the trial is given by Mark Lawson's article on the revival of the play: Lawson, Mark. "Passion Play. How the Romans in Britain Changed Theatrical and Legal History." *The Guardian*, Friday 28 October 2005, sec. G2).

⁴⁶ In *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 229: Octobre (1932): 141-152.

scholar Simon Shepherd wryly remarks that by reading the work of philosophers Michel Foucault and Jean-Francois Lyotard

a generation of students thought they learnt that power was constituted not as a monolith but as a set of micro-negotiations and that attempts to make sense of society through overarching grand narratives were misleading. ... [P]art of the work of the dramaturgy is not so much to imitate the feeling of life in the modern UK as to demonstrate an awareness of how properly to think about this life. (2004: 637)

To a certain extent, these plays may be understood as an aesthetic discussion, as in some ways very meta-theatrical pieces. The rawness they present might be caused by the attempt to dissociate from this theoretical background.

However, the benchmark play of their cohort, *Blasted*, did not exactly receive standing ovations. Since Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain*, there had not been such a ferocious and controversial public reaction to a play as there was to Sarah Kane's debut (Sierz 2001: 94-99, Urban 2001). The author, then only 23, rose to very sudden fame and became British theatre's new *enfant terrible*. At the time, Kane was one of the few UK playwrights prepared to broach the issue of war in former Yugoslavia and the atrocities associated with it. *Blasted's* suggestion that a 'civilised' Western country – especially the often isolationist island of Great Britain – could be the site of a modern civil war proved very provocative, witness the negative press reaction. Kane, it was said, had only aimed for the violent images' shock effect, there was no deeper significance to the play which simply corresponded with violence-indulgent cinema.⁴⁷ The allusion is most possibly to the then trend-setting films of US-American director Quentin Tarantino, known for his graphic portrayal of stylised violence (e.g. *Reservoir Dogs* [1992], *Pulp Fiction* [1995], *Kill Bill* [2003 and 2004]; s.a. Nikcevic 270). Many critics also implied the play was a waste of "taxpayers' money"⁴⁸, as was equally suggested in the case of the aforementioned *Sensation* exhibition⁴⁹. Of course, wars are also financed by taxes. In the culturally rather quiet January of 1995, the play 'detonated like a bomb' with a flood of hysterical media coverage in its wake that demonstrated how oddly lopsided public outrage can be:

⁴⁷ See for example Michael Billington's review "The Good Fairies Desert the Court's Theatre of the Absurd." (*The Guardian*, 20 January 1995: 22) or Jack Tinker: "The Disgusting Feast of Filth." (*The Daily Mail*, 19 January 1995: 5). Also see Sierz 2001: 95, Berns 2003: 65.

⁴⁸ For instance Tinker 1995, also John Peter (*Sunday Times*, 29 January 1995) and Charles Spencer (*Daily Telegraph*, 5 March 1995).

⁴⁹ For example by the then mayor of New York City Rudolph Giuliani, who threatened to withdraw funding from the Brooklyn Museum, where the exhibition was shown in 1999/2000. Referring to Chris Ofili's piece *The Holy Virgin Mary*, Giuliani said: 'I don't believe the taxpayer's money should go toward desecrating somebody else's religion.' ("This Week" [*ABC News with Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts*] 3 October 1999).

The week the play opened there was an earthquake in Japan in which thousands of people died, and in this country a fifteen-year-old girl had been raped and murdered in a wood, but *Blasted* got more coverage in some newspapers than either of these events. ... The representation of violence caused more anger than actual violence. (Kane in Stephenson and Langridge 1997: 130-131)

The principal reason why the representation of violence is perceived as more offensive than actual violence is that the audience is confronted with its own scopophilia, and with the corresponding question of whether it is shameful to be offered aesthetic pleasure from the depiction of suffering. And perhaps another reason may be found in Debord's suggestion that the spectacle, the mere representation of reality, has assumed more significance in contemporary society than reality itself.

In ripping apart both the set and the time-space continuum – the seasons are disrupted as well and a scene beginning in spring ends in summer⁵⁰ – Kane explicitly takes an anti-naturalist stance. Following Artaud's call for a 'theatre that wakes us up heart and nerves' (Artaud 64), she wants to convey experiences with her play and put her audiences 'in direct physical contact with thought and feeling' (Kane 1998). 'What makes the play experiential is its form,' (Sierz 98) she explains, arguing that in it she had attempted to conflate form and content: 'the form is the meaning' (Kane in Stephenson and Langridge 130). With the hotel room's wall, any remains of an illusionary 'fourth wall' between stage and audience is also torn down; non-involvement becomes impossible. Wallace maintains that this is quite different to 'the ironic distance characteristic of art or literature that is perceived as postmodern', and that the elements of art, experience and transformation, which Kane cites as 'central to her experiential theatre ... have been, in both latent and overt ways, of primary importance to the [historical] avant-garde' (89).

In its motifs, the play is also more indebted to theatre tradition than to the alleged glorification of violence and the blood baths of post-modern cinema. In his lucid introduction to the collection of Kane's plays, fellow playwright David Greig points out that the play's roots were to be found in Shakespeare's analysis of degraded men: Lear on the heath and Timon in his grave (Kane 2001: x).⁵¹ Reminiscent of *Lear's* Gloucester (as well as Oedipus and, to an extent, *Endgame's* Hamm), who only recognises the truth when he loses his sight, the blinding and thus professional disabling of a journalist who refuses to acknowledge the reality of war can be seen as a punishment for his failure in witnessing and giving testimony on the truth:

⁵⁰ The seasons are indicated by different sounds of rain at the end of scenes.

⁵¹ A more detailed analysis of Kane's use of *King Lear* can be found in Saunders, Graham. "'Out Vile Jelly': Sarah Kane's *Blasted* and Shakespeare's *King Lear*." *New Theatre Quarterly* 20 1 (2004): 69-78.

Ian: Enough

Soldier: Ever seen anything like that?

Ian: Stop.

Soldier: Not in photos?

Ian: Never

Soldier: Some journalist, that's your job.

Ian: What?

Soldier: Proving it happened. I'm here, got no choice. But you. You should be telling people.

Ian: No one's interested ... I write... stories. That's all. Stories. This isn't a story anyone wants to hear. (47-48)

The passively indifferent journalist Ian may also be read as an allegory for Western Europe's uninvolved attitude towards the war in former Yugoslavia. Indeed, the critics' initial preoccupation with the alleged lack of an 'external reality' (Billington 1995)⁵² in this play is symptomatic of society's comportment towards the Bosnian war, which was dutifully reported but largely left to unfold as the Western neighbours failed to acknowledge and react to the atrocities happening in the middle of Europe. The reality of the Bosnian war did not register until it was far too late. The most violent scenes depicted in this play did not spring from Kane's imagination, but are drawn from life, inspired by atrocious episodes from that same war (and, no less disconcertingly, from football hooliganism), causing the playwright to state that the reality of human violence by far exceeds the brutal scenes in her play (Sierz 102-103, 106).

Incidentally, it might be worth noting that, contrary to popular belief, but in line with Clausewitz's assertion that there is no immediate purpose to violence other than 'to cause general damage' (6), violence in war is more often than not gratuitous in the moment it is inflicted and only acquires social meaning by its performative quality, almost 'in retrospect'.⁵³ If the violence in these plays appears to be gratuitous, that is because violence itself is so and acts in a mostly arbitrary way. Girard, too, argues this when defining its links both to the anathema and to the sacred in Greek tragedy: it must remain unanimous, it does not differentiate. Ultimately, the victims on a tragic stage are arbitrarily chosen by the perpetrator, and this choice is a diversion of the constant threat of unrestrained violence and total destruction lingering underneath (88). Violence and the origins of a fully-grown war are always inherent in the structure of peacetime society. Stating that her play came into

⁵² Christopher Innes criticises a 'lack of any believable social context' (2002: 529).

⁵³ Also see chapter I of this thesis.

existence when she saw a TV report on Srebrenica under siege in 1995, Kane says that the connection between 'a common rape in a Leeds hotel room' and what was happening in Bosnia had been obvious to her: 'One is the seed and the other one is the tree' (Sierz 101, also Buse 186).

The plays grouped under Sierz's heading of In-*yer-face* theatre have also been called the 'theatre of urban ennui' (Nightingale 1998: 22), which reflects the condition Mary Kaldor describes when she portrays the emerging global groupings – transnational social movements of anti-globalisation activists and of those excluded from the globalised society – as not yet or only minimally politicised: not fit to 'form the basis of political communities on which new forms of power could be based'. She identifies a certain individualism and anomie as characteristic for the current period, citing

the sense that political action is futile given the enormity of current problems, the difficulty of controlling or influencing the web-like structure of power, the cultural fragmentation of both horizontal networks and particularistic loyalties. Both what [political economist Robert] Reich calls the *laissez-fair* cosmopolitan, who has 'seceded' from the nation-state and who pursues his or her individualistic consumerist interests, and the restless young criminals, the new adventurers, to be found in all the excluded zones, reflect this political vacuum. (2006: 79)

'Soon it was obvious that gritty plays about violence dominated this new wave,' Sanja Nikcevic states in a testy and at times dismissive study of the 'New European Drama' in 2005, which traces the influence of British plays of the 1990s on Continental theatre productions and playwriting (260). She criticises the British trend of 'New Brutalist drama' for leading to a wave of 'clones of British In-*yer-face* theatre' that were hailed as the New European Drama and 'proclaimed to be the only correct expression of the *Zeitgeist*' (262), although she claims that the plays had little to add to theatre and nothing at all to the theme of cruelty and violence, given that they lacked argument or character-development and that the '[a]ction moves from torture to torture, piling up violence towards climactic deaths' (263). 'In-*yer-face* never potentializes change,' Nikcevic declares, and, displaying perhaps a rather conventional view of the forms political theatre may take, she elaborates:

The worlds [depicted in these plays] are stabilized states of horror, which makes them not political but fatalistic. They offer violence on an archetypal level as something inherent in us, not as the consequence of a social structure, as a political play would show; instead we're given the dramatic equivalent of a horror movie. ... But the difference between a horror movie and in-*yer-face* drama is that the latter pretends to be realistic. ... Unfortunately the horror-movie element foregrounds the New European Drama not as politically aware but as a genre which superficially conforms to society's worst impulses. (264)

But another view can be taken of this. The theatre of the nineties, with its generous depiction of sexual content, self-indulgence and violence, written at a time of civil wars and massacres thought to be inconceivable within post-1945 Europe, probably depicted rather accurately what the average citizen does in view of the new wars and atrocities. To paraphrase the title of Mark Ravenhill's notorious 1996 play – ironically, the British Council's flagship 'BritPack' play brought all over Europe as a cultural export of New Labour's 'Cool Britannia'⁵⁴ in 1998 (Saunders 2008: 12) – hedonistically seeking constant pleasure, we consume and have intercourse.⁵⁵ Most of these plays portray the myopia, complacency and solipsism characterising the Western citizen (Iball 2008: 44). The seemingly random outbreaks of violence described in the plays do not only find their forerunner in the stoning of a baby in Bond's *Saved*, but have rather proved to be prophetic. How, therefore, can the depiction of what seems to be a sign of a cultural crisis be gratuitous?

Of course, the In-er-face plays of the 1990s present 'stock taboos': exhibition of violence and sexual acts on stage, drug-taking, incest, as well as uttered and enacted obscenities (here, there is relevance in the origination of obscene from *ob scena*: that which should not be displayed, which should happen off-stage only). Grouped together in a single play and performed in as much detail as possible, the effect may indeed be less shocking and rather wearing – but the choice of how graphically these themes are depicted often lies with the director. The Berlin theatre *Die Baracke*, for example, which, under the leadership of director Thomas Ostermeier, took on many of the 1990s plays directly from the Royal Court, acquired some notoriety for their productions which followed a distinctive blood-and-gore aesthetic clearly informed by the sleek, ironic portrayal of violence made popular and fashionable by contemporary cinema (Nikcevic 261). One can agree with Girard that

[t]he most daring provocations and the most shocking scandals have lost all power to provoke and shock. That does not mean that violence is no longer a threat; quite the contrary. The sacrificial system is virtually worn out, and that is why its inner workings are now exposed to view. (310)

It is questionable, therefore, whether 'this sort of drama' does indeed 'smash taboos', as Sierz has it, so much as highlight them and point out their parallels, all leading back to the root of all taboos, the ambiguity of the sacred.

⁵⁴ A short period following New Labour's election victory in 1997 came to be known as 'Cool Britannia' (D'Monté and Saunders 2008: 10-11, also Urban 2008: 39-41), characterised by a blend of specifically British youth culture, pop music and visual art which was embraced as a new and progressive image of the nation by the new government.

⁵⁵ Incidentally, the play was staged around the time when the First Congo War began and a few weeks after the Taliban captured Kabul.

Ceci n'est pas une guerre: Surrealism and the Taboo on the Reality of War

Several of the recent plays on war have been criticised for allegedly being removed from reality and for merely presenting images instead of arguments.⁵⁶ The plays have been deemed to be not 'political' enough, and indeed their Artaudian influences might appear to be incompatible with the theatre tradition in Britain, which has been shaped from the 1950s onwards by a more specific and outspoken form of political theatre. Significantly, in Britain of the late 1950s to the 1970s, Brechtian and Artaudian (and by extension, Absurd) theatre could be regarded as rivals, as is perhaps best demonstrated by the famous 'London Controversy' between playwright Eugène Ionesco and theatre critic Kenneth Tynan, carried out in the *Observer* over several weeks in 1958.⁵⁷

The early 1970s saw the emergence of a predominantly Brechtian approach to some aspects of playwriting and theatre production (not least by the emergence of Caryl Churchill), which made a strong claim to objective political analysis and might be perceived as disparate to Artaud's display of the subconscious and the unconscious. However, in an overview of drama in English literature in the second half of the twentieth century, Randall Stevenson asserts that a combination of the Brechtian tactics and 'directly shocking stage devices' has not been uncommon amongst left-wing political playwrights, who discovered that Brecht's distancing method and Artaud's subjective, experiential approach as well as the physical and ritual elements in his theatre complemented each other well (2004: 377-378).

Rooted in surrealism, Artaudian theatre tactics allow for sudden shifts in plot, distortions of space and fantastic imagery. It is via the bridge of the notion of the 'absurd' that a line from surrealist drama to the aesthetics of some of the New War plays may be drawn. In his eponymous study on the Theatre of the Absurd (1962), the theatre scholar Martin Esslin states that this form of theatre demonstrates the human attempt to handle 'a world deprived of a generally accepted integrating principle, which has become disjointed, purposeless – absurd' (Esslin 290). After the atrocities of two world wars, faced with the decline of religious belief and thus the relative meaninglessness of 'simple and complete systems of values', this form of drama recognised the human condition as absurd and portrays people confronting life 'in its ultimate, stark reality' (292). The absurd play shows human beings often removed from their social or historical context, 'confronted with the basic choices, the basic situations of [their] existence' (*ibid.*). The New Wars, with their mass-scale atrocities

⁵⁶ See Billington's 1995 critique of Kane's drama, also see Billington 2000.

⁵⁷ See Tynan 1975, 235-240, Donald Watson 1976, 124-125. While Tynan criticises Ionesco's anti-realist approach and demands recognisable methods which would depict reality and 'real' human crises (Tynan 1975: 237, Watson 1976: 124), Ionesco maintains 'that the real human problems lie beyond the powers of logical communication and the contact can only be made by bypassing the logical meaning of words' (Watson 124).

and shifting objectives, enmities and frontlines which constantly create new realities, obtain an equally absurd reality for those caught up in their machinery, as the barriers between the rational and the irrational have broken down. The characters exist within these surreal and absurd scenarios without discussing or questioning them. This merger of conceptual opposites is central to what David Gascoyne describes as the aim of surrealism (Gascoyne 2000: 24). The step from Artaud's complete rejection of realism in favour of collective archetypes to absurd theatre's exploration of 'man's precarious and mysterious position in the universe' (Esslin 1962: 292) is relatively small. Esslin points out that absurd theatre cannot rely on a 'generally accepted cosmic system of values' (293) and thus always represents 'one poet's most intimate and personal intuition of the human situation' (*ibid.*), one playwright's conscious and subconscious, subjective impression of reality. He finds more traces of the surrealist influence on absurd theatre in the surrealist approach to painting, and perhaps it is via this 'concentration on the poetic image as a concretisation of the inner reality of the conscious and subconscious mind and the archetypes by which it lives' (1962: 287) that the convergence of the surreal and the absurd in the New War plays can be understood best.⁵⁸

Blasted lulls the audience into a false sense of security, but after the detonation of the bomb and the entrance of war on stage, the scenes further unfold in the still recognisable but now *verfremdete*⁵⁹ surroundings of a hotel room. This forged unity of space – a hotel room doubling as a bomb shelter in the middle of civil war – suggests a very fine line between the perceived security and civilisation of a peaceful country and the chaotic violence of a civil war: on the one hand, the play stays in Leeds; on the other, it shifts to a war-torn zone, thus abolishing any emotional and geographical distance (Sierz 107).⁶⁰ The hotel in the play is, of

⁵⁸ In a well-known parody of Kane's work by Irish playwright Chris Lee, a tree grows out of the blood of a severed head, proclaiming: 'at last, I have truly known love' (Saunders 2009: 49). This is an obvious jab at Kane's play *Cleansed* (1998), in which flowers grow out of the ground on a site that has just been shelled (Kane 133). Among other things, *Cleansed* (with its titular allusion to ethnic cleansing, but also to *katharsis*) is also a play about a rape camp and, not only in this respect, Kane revisits the Bosnian war in her third play. The image of flowers bursting out of the site of destruction calls to mind a very specific form of commemoration in the Bosnian capital: a Sarajevo Rose is a floral-patterned scar in the concrete of public footpaths and roads, left by a mortar shell explosion and subsequently filled in with red resin to remind of those killed by the detonation.

⁵⁹ In lieu of using one of the common English translations for what Brecht terms *Verfremdungseffekt*, and of which 'alienation effect', 'estrangement effect' and 'disillusion effect' are those most in use, I have opted for maintaining the German original in this thesis.

⁶⁰ A letter commenting on Billington's negative critique in *The Guardian* demonstrates how citizens living in what are perceived as peaceful countries might identify with the allegedly surreal circumstances portrayed by Kane. The reverend Bob Vernon states: 'Mr. Billington writes that "the reason the play falls apart is that there is no sense of external reality – who exactly is meant to be fighting whom out in the streets?" That's a good question. My local shopping centre looks like Grozny, only two out of two dozen shops remain. The rest are reduced to shattered glass and wrecked steel shutters. Some housing estates in our city look like war zones, too, burnt out houses, glass- and

course, also an allusion to the famous Holiday Inn in Sarajevo, situated in the centre of town on what was called 'Sniper Alley' during the siege (1992-1996), and alternatively serving as the headquarters of the Serbian Democratic Party and as shelter for the foreign media.

It is a surprisingly small step from Artaud's surrealism to Kane's surrealism, as displayed by her forceful conflation of middle England with the site of a full-blown civil war, and from both Artaud and Kane to the surrealism of actual war. Caryl Churchill's short play *This Is a Chair* (1997) aptly portrays a society eerily disconnected from political realities and blatantly self-indulgent. Playing on Immanuel Kant's concept of mediate representation (an object has all the attributes of what is commonly recognised as a chair, hence it is a chair), the title of the play obviously also refers to René Magritte's famous surrealist painting *La trahison des images* [the betrayal of the images] (1928-29), which portrays a pipe, while its caption stresses '*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*' [this is not a pipe] – it is just the very realistic image of a pipe.⁶¹ In Churchill's play, the titles of the individual scenes, of which the script states that they 'must be clearly displayed or announced' (Churchill 2008: 40), are headlines such as 'The War in Bosnia' (41) and 'The Labour Party's Slide to the Right' (45). Though negotiated in the realm of politics, but not by the individual citizens, these themes are mostly wilfully excluded from domestic life; they might well be regarded as taboo themes. The dialogues in the play are often painfully banal, remain on a superficial level and are preoccupied with private conflict, betrayal and deceit; but they transport an eerie undercurrent of unspoken horror, such as the family dinner scene which occurs twice in the play, once under the title 'Pornography and Censorship' (44), once under 'The Northern Ireland Peace Process' (55). In this scene, quoted in full below, parents attempt to coerce their daughter to eat, hinting at unspecified consequences if she refuses:

Father: Is Muriel going to eat her dinner?

Mother: Yes, eat up, Muriel.

Father: Have a special bite of daddy's.

Mother: Yes, eat up, Muriel.

Father: Muriel, if you don't eat your dinner you know what's going to happen to you.

Mother: Yes, eat up, Muriel. (44, 55)

Janelle Reinelt suggests reading this scene specifically as a portrayal of human behaviour on a small scale but also as 'versions of larger problems'; thus, the underlying threat in the family conversation points at the diffuse modes of oppression and unspoken intimidations

rubbish-littered streets, dazed and tranquillised people trying to survive. With so many casualties who is fighting whom out there? I don't know either' (*qtd. in* Singer 2004: 158).

⁶¹ The play's title also gestures towards Eugène Ionesco's *The Chairs* (*Le Chaises*, 1952) and its portrayal of the futility of human communication.

operating in conflict situations on a larger scale. However, Reinelt admits that a literal reading is almost impossible (32-33). In the foreword of a recent edition of her plays, Churchill states that the titles 'should probably be updated for new productions ... "The War in Afghanistan" would probably be a title, and "Climate Change" would be there. Though not, of course, written about' (2008: viii). As the scenes evade a proper decoding, as one struggles to reconcile the grand themes of the titles with the very private scenes displayed, one realises that this is an inversion of Magritte's discrepancy between caption and display. In this play, it is the display which states, for example in the first scene (in which a romantic date goes awry), '*ceci n'est pas la guerre de Bosnie-Herzégovine*', though clearly it has been announced by the caption that it is,⁶² arguing in contrast to both Kant and Magritte that, even though there is no sign of the Bosnian war on stage, it is still equally real: the two realities of a botched date and of a large-scale genocide are not mutually exclusive. Part of the reality of the Bosnian war in the middle of Europe is that Europe ignored its occurrence until it was too late, while it was not only 'on display' via media reporting, but also actually happening.

Three years later, in 2000, Churchill's allegorically encoded *Far Away* had its world premiere. In shortly under one hour, she conjured a grotesque dystopia on an Orwellian scale, almost more disturbing than the explicitly violent *Blasted*. The play returns to the widening gap between people's daily lives and the political sphere dramatised in *This Is a Chair* (Aston 2001: 116), but this time, the surrealism of war has reached the stage: *Far Away* documents the slow escalation of underground guerrilla action via official state barbarism to a world at war, tying in the acceptance of violence in a 'closed society'. The exact social and political circumstances, however, are only hinted at and never fully explained. For the audience, it is therefore as impossible to position itself within this intricate framework of alliances and antagonisms as it is for the characters, caught helplessly within a despotic system whose ideology, power centre and international relations remain ambiguous and unstructured:

Harper: The cats have come in on the side of the French. ...

Todd: But we're not exactly on the other side from the French. It's not as if they're the Moroccans and the ants.

Harper: It's not as if they're the Canadians, the Venezuelans and the mosquitoes.

Todd: It's not as if they're the engineers, the chefs, the children under five, the musicians. (Churchill 2001: 35-36)

In the characters' imagination, new groups are constantly formed and dissolved again, but their interconnectedness remains indistinct and opaque, leading to paranoia and isolation.

⁶² The title to be displayed or announced for this scene is 'The War in Bosnia' (41).

The randomness of enmities and absurdity of frontlines demonstrate what contemporary paranoia is made of: a statement of particular importance in a world which, one year after the drama's première in September 2001, became engaged in a global 'war on terror', and thus, in the original sense, on fear, recalling again Ulrich Beck's assessment of the world risk society (see chapter I, s.a. Quint 2003: 178-179; Prado Pérez 2002: 103). The dialogue between Todd and Harper encapsulates the rhetorical process that enables the cultural construction of the fear of everything strange; the manner in which a demonised, dehumanised or otherwise threatening ethnically defined Other is forged through narratives, myths and the deliberate planting of rumours. 'Once such ethnically focussed fear is in place,' state the sociologists Roger Brubaker and David D. Laitin in their discussion of ethnic and nationalist violence, 'ethnic violence no longer seems random or meaningless but all too horrifyingly meaningful' (Brubaker and Laitin 1998: 376-378).

Refusing to allow a clear-cut interpretation or any specificity of location within the audience's reality, *Far Away* may be read as an allegory. It uncovers social structures that benefit the development of violence and war. Harper's willingness and ability to deceive herself and her niece and to convince both of them that the mistreatment of others will ultimately lead to good is mirrored in Joan's readiness to stoically accept and ignore the drawbacks in the hat factory and the bigger grievances within her country. Her silence is also an image of the average confused citizen, who bemusedly turns away from international happenings, just as Joan does not watch the parades and the executions, allowing herself to ignore their existence (Prado Pérez 2002: 99) and not comprehending that she personally contributes to the regime's atrocities (Quint 180). Of course, Joan actively chooses not to witness, let alone question, the alarming circumstances in her country.

The surreal and apocalyptic visions of this play have been criticised for an alleged 'lack' of reality, for inventing unrecognisable settings and conflating familiar European or Western surroundings with a war zone not compatible with the Western self-perception. 'The evening constantly astonishes', Michael Billington writes in *The Guardian*, '[b]ut, while I am prepared to accept Churchill's thesis that we are slowly sliding into barbarism, I would prefer the case to be argued rather than presented as a dramatic given' (2000).⁶³

But the recent war plays acknowledge as given a *status quo* which the audience largely refuses to recognise as more than incipient or potential either on or off the stage. It might be worth considering that 'surreal' does not exactly signify 'unreal': by locating civil wars in an undefined reality that is nevertheless perceived as uncannily familiar, the playwrights force a

⁶³ Five years later, Billington will criticise tucker green in a similar vein: '... her idea only half works because the action appears to happen in some abstract no-mans land.' (2005)

Western audience to confront the possibility of war in their midst, to question the idea of it only happening in the realm of the Other. Girard argues that violence as an anathema still operates today: its sacred or taboo character may be determined by recognising the neglect modern societies display towards the concept of collective violence, the 'refusal to attach any significance to the phenomenon, even when it thrusts itself upon our attention' (88-89). Thus, to portray, or to exhibit, the taboo on stage, to a modern society that might consider itself too enlightened to still have any taboos left to be broken on stage, is to cause the audience to recoil, bodily and mentally, at the enforced contact with the anathematised, the existence of which is vehemently denied.

Returning briefly to Girard's discussion of Greek tragedy, it might be worth considering that even in the contemporary plays on war and large-scale violence, the taboo emerges indeed as the sacred on stage, pointing at a crisis brought about by a crime which allows the impure to disrupt the cultural balance. Ian raping Cate in Kane's *Blasted* is not on a factual level the root of the conflict outside, but metaphorically it is: the conflict only enters the room after the rape has taken place. Though Wallace argues that there is no 'pretence of the recovery of the sacred' in Kane's drama as it depicts a world 'in which transcendental values are short-circuited from the outset' (Wallace 96), it seems important to stress that the term of the sacred as well as the figure of the *homo sacer* both have a religious and a political meaning. To fully grasp these two concepts, Agamben states, one has to accept the validity of both (1998: 80). While the New War plays do not necessarily point at individual crimes as the root of the sacrificial crisis, given that their 'crisis' is perpetual and infinite warfare not to be traced back to an individual crime, most of them still display a taboo at the centre of their narrative. Infanticide, for example, is the narrative hinge of tucker green's *stoning mary* and a precise encapsulation of the conflict which provides the canvas on which the private drama is played out, though it is not its root. Rather, the ongoing deprivation and the conflict, by forging a child into a ruthless and cruel killer, provoke the homicide:

Older Sister: You killed a man. ...

Younger Sister: And I'm gonna be stoned down for it. ...

Older Sister: You killed a man who was a boy.

Younger Sister: ... That *boy* was a soldier.

Beat.

Older Sister: That soldier was a child –

Younger Sister: That *child* killed my parents. *Our* parents, *ourn*. ... I done somethin. Least I done somethin. I done somethin – I did. I did. I did – I done somethin. (tucker green 2005: 63-64)

Having killed the child in revenge of her parents' murder, Mary (the Younger Sister) will be killed by communal revenge as well, but contrary to Girard's earlier assertion that the sacrifice would 'stem this rising tide' (10), it is quite obvious that Mary's execution, about to commence at the end of the play, will appease nothing, that the conflict and the long-term violence will continue to spread, as the community is trapped in a circle of reciprocal violence, because 'the mimetic character of violence is so intense that once violence is installed in a community, it cannot burn itself out' (Girard 86). This is also explored in *Solstice* (2005), the first part in Zinnie Harris's war trilogy, in which part of the escalating conflict can be traced back to reciprocal killings between the two communities ('[h]e did the bride because the bride's brother did his sister' [Harris 2005: 83]), though the conflict soon becomes detached from any other dispute, shifting to the increasing suspicion of the neighbours and the urge to strike first. Even though the plays do not offer answers to the question of the origin of violence and the connection of singular violent outbreaks to fully fledged civil war, they find connections between the empty phrases of tabloid newspapers, 'sexual fantasies, nationalist aspirations, football tribalism, homophobia, racism and open warfare' (Sierz 97, Saunders 2002: 124), which echoes Kaplan's, as well as Schmidt's and Schroeder's, arguments about the future wars and the roots of violence.

In Lebanon-born Wajdi Mouawad's play *Scorched* (2003), the site of civil war to which the scraps of information lead the main characters is repeatedly called 'the country', and again, it could be any country ravaged by a history of blood feuds and civil war. In the figure of the father/son, Mouawad depicts a child born into a cycle of violence, incapable of understanding anything else, utterly beyond ideologies and ultimately unperturbed by the large-scale violence of the civil war, the absurdity of which he sees sanctioned by the clown's nose his mother left him before she gave him away. There are elements of the *Oedipus* myth in the play, with the administrator Hermile unwittingly acting as both Tiresias and the Sphinx and the children of the tyrant sent off to solve the riddle instead of the tyrant himself. Though deeply interlaced with the workings of civil war in the Middle-Eastern region, the key to the mystery at the heart of the play is an incest-crime. Like Oedipus, whose disposition to violence he exceeds, Nihad/Abou Tarek sleeps with his mother without recognising her and becomes both father and brother to the twins. The revelation of this unity drives his mother Nawal to swallow the knowledge and fall silent, thus internalising her personal trauma and her memory of the war, and leaving it to her children to reveal the truth to their brother and father. Jeanne, who relies on mathematical explanations of the world, finds that graph theory fails her when she tries to reconcile her understanding of the family's 'visibility polygon' with the undeterminable relations and visibility graphs of a

family torn apart by civil war. To find her place within the polygon, she has to determine another element, which will change the form of the polygon that, up to now, had been a triangle of Jeanne, her brother and her mother. 'The visibility graph which I have always drawn is wrong,' Jeanne discovers:

What is my place within the polygon? In order to find out, I have to solve a hypothesis. My father is dead. That's the hypothesis. Everything indicates it is correct. But nothing proves it. I have never seen his body, have never seen his grave. It is thus possible – between one and infinity – that my father is alive. (27, my translation)

Jeanne's polygon reveals itself to be of a different shape, but not the pentagon she expects. Her father and previously unknown brother occupy a blank space she is not able to see, as she and her twin realise that their mother's narratives, which informed their identities, do not give a truthful account of the past.

It is the incompatibility of different narratives also forming the identity of the central (but absent) character in Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children* which signals a lacuna at the centre of the play, the absence of a definite account. To acknowledge this lacuna turns it into a taboo again – especially in the off-stage, public discussion of this play.⁶⁴

A Harbinger of Ill Tidings: the *homo sacer* on Stage

Perhaps finding their predecessor in Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* (of the eponymous play [1879]), whom society treats like an animal (whereas Büchner does not), the *New War* plays portray people in various stages of losing or having lost their status of *bios*, having been reduced to bare life in the form of the *homo sacer*. War functions as a catalyst for this change by subjecting people to such levels of terror, violence and deprivation that they lose their sense of humanity, as can be witnessed in the case of Ian in Kane's *Blasted*. His reduction to bare life is anticipated by the breakdown of form of the play, in which the dialogue, already stichomythic in the first scene, becomes even sparser, the scenes shorter, until they are no more than snapshots, pictures of Ian, whose life structures have been destroyed and who has been brought down to naked existence (Kane 3, 24, 39, 50, 57, also see x). In the play's last scenes, he tries, confronted with the debris of his life, to maintain his integrity as a human being. The imagery in his single scenes eventually echoes Beckett's *Happy Days* (1961): like Winnie, he is buried to his neck under the floorboard of the stage. Being both alive and dead at the end, he is also both consecrated and impure, the embodiment of the *homo sacer*. It is at this same stage of existence that the characters in Zinnie Harris's *Midwinter* (2004) are first introduced.

⁶⁴ See chapter III.

As if it was a continuation of Churchill's *Far Away*, *Midwinter* seems to be set during the fragile peace between one outbreak of fighting and the next pause in an endless war. The play is conceived as the middle part of a trilogy, the first part of which, *Solstice*, followed in 2005, the third part, *Fall*, in 2008. In *Midwinter*'s thirteen scenes, frontlines and causes for the war are not even mentioned; a nameless major conflict controls the characters' lives, who first enter the scene starved and craving for food as they meet over the carcass of the dead horse one has found and defends fervently against the others. Hunger and sickness are constant themes in Harris' play, depicting the exhausted and starved regions predicted by Kaplan and described separately by both Münkler and Murshed in their analyses of the specific economy of the New Wars and their long-term impact on the exhausted and devastated regions in question (Münkler 74-98, Murshed 2002).⁶⁵

Leonard: We smelled the meat.

Maud: Don't move.

Leonard *takes a step forward.*

Leonard: Couldn't smell anything else for miles. Half the city will be following us. ...

A noise in the bushes makes them both start.

Maud *holds up the stone again.*

Maud: Who is there?

Leonard: It'll be half the town. They'll have smelled it, I told you.
...

Maud *(to the bushes)* Don't move. I'm armed.

Leonard: It won't make a difference. They are starving. They'll storm you. (Harris 2004: 3-10)

Throughout the first few scenes, the audience witnesses the creeping dehumanisation of people who have lived through deprivation: Maud appears almost feral in the beginning, ready to murder anyone who comes too close to the carcass of the dead horse that she claims is hers. Especially Sirin, the orphaned child, has become so accustomed to the constant drifting, the search for food and other means of survival that he seems to live purely on his instincts when presented with food and water, violently licking the blood from Maud's arms as she feeds him the horse meat (8), drinking as much water as he can, even more than he requires: he will not stop feeding as long as there is nourishment (12-14).

⁶⁵ Kaplan quite accurately predicts that '[f]uture wars will be those of communal survival, aggravated or, in many cases, caused by environmental scarcity. These wars will be subnational, meaning that it will be hard for states and local governments to protect their own citizens physically. This is how many states will ultimately die' (1994: 62).

In Jonathan Lichtenstein's *The Pull of Negative Gravity* (2004), it is the recognition of the loss of *bios* which drives the returning soldier Dai to ask his mother to end his life. Dai's paralysed body represents the war which had been abstract and was not actually present before Dai returned. Imagining Dai's return, the members of the family envision him radiant (Lichtenstein 2004: 28-9), brave (30-32) and untouched (32-33). Instead of corresponding to this established image of the returning hero, Dai's damaged form documents a war which Britain joined while still convinced to gain an easy and heroic victory, but which has been drawn out. 'The soldier killed at the front disappears from the homeland's sight,' Benjamin Bieber states in a study on the reintegration of soldiers in post-war societies, 'whereas the invalid [sic.] is very visible, he cannot be denied and to hero-worship him becomes difficult' (Bieber 2002: 272, my translation), in fact, the visibility of the injured body turns it into an anathema.

The *homo sacer* also appears in another instance in the new war plays: as a person or group of people that have been legally ostracised from or have never been part of the community (such as asylum seekers and refugees), by official decree turned into *homines sacri*. Agamben points out that Western politics is based on this simultaneous exclusion and inclusion of bare life into its legislation (1998: 7). Mostly, of course, the bare life has remained invisible – the taboo status of the *homo sacer* demanding a shielding from the public eye. As the taboo on which, according to both Agamben and Girard, Western society is founded, it has also remained the last taboo to be brought to the theatre. What happens if the bare life is piled up on stage? The soldiers in Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* (and those in their counter-play, David Greig's *Dunsinane*) sense their *bios* slipping away as they are drawn deeper and deeper into the political and moral abyss that is the war against Iraq. The adults in Churchill's *7 Jewish Children* come to an intellectual justification of stripping *bios* from the Other, as do several of the unspecified characters in Mark Ravenhill's cycle of short plays, *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*. Using the selective editing techniques of verbatim theatre in their play *Guantánamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* (2004), Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo are able to draw specific attention to the language of ostracism employed by US government officials (specifically the then Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld) to justify the detainment of so-called unlawful combatants in the infamous detainee camp in Guantánamo Bay.

The distinctions between included and excluded have shifted, Agamben argues, and those who are excluded from the modern *polis* signify a new kind of 'living dead man, a new sacred man' (1998: 131). Those 'ousted' from the 'Fortress West', maybe even rendered stateless by denaturalisation decrees, may become refugees or asylum seekers and so find

themselves outside the law, as *homines saceri*. The statelessness of refugees is not always to be accredited to the active stripping-away of rights. Bauman points out that 'their statelessness is raised to an entirely new level' at a time of crumbling or failed states with no state authority to speak of and no body of state to which the refugees could be referred. They are thus truly '*hors du nomos* – outside law; not this or that law of this or that country, but *law as such*' (Bauman 2007: 37)⁶⁶. As discussed before, the state of war is intrinsically tied to mass refugee movements. They may be both the outcome and the driving cause of the phenomenon of eroding states and the 'continuing frontier-land conditions in "suprastate" global space,' Bauman states, as (in a wry parallel to the anarchy described in Münkler's Thirty Years' War scenario) he attests the regions in a perpetual state of war certain attributes of the 'Wild West', as the population finds itself in a state of lawlessness. If the people manage to escape the battlefield, they find themselves plunged into 'another type of lawlessness, that of the global frontier-land' (*ibid.*).

Agamben argues that the 'concept of the refugee', and indeed the refugee as a 'form of life', cannot be examined within a discussion of the concept of human rights. While he follows Hannah Arendt⁶⁷ in stressing that the concept of human rights is intrinsically interlaced with the nation-state and that 'the decline and crisis of the one necessarily implies the end of the other', he argues that the refugee

must be considered for what he [sic] is: nothing less than a limit concept that radically calls into question the fundamental categories of the nation-state, from the birth-nation to the man-citizen link, and that thereby makes it possible to clear the way for a long-overdue renewal of categories in the service of a politics in which bare life is no longer separated and excepted, either in the state order or in the figure of human rights. (1998: 134)

The figure of the refugee, if made visible and consequently acknowledged, is thus challenging and even threatening the very idea of the nation state as such. To illustrate the condition of the refugee people floating in some kind of suspended state outside an established culture, Bauman returns to Michel Foucault's concept of the ship as the ideal heterotopia – Foucault's model of an 'effectively enacted utopia': the perfect union of the entirety of society's arrangements and all their opposites in a confined place that lies 'outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality' (Foucault 2002: 231), for which the ship would be the ideal space: 'a drifting "place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity

⁶⁶ Bauman refers here to Michel Agier's study of refugees in the era of globalisation, *Aux bords du monde, les réfugiés* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002: 55-6).

⁶⁷ Agamben refers here to the fifth chapter (on refugees) of Hannah Arendt's study *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1951).

of the sea" (Bauman 2007: 45, Foucault 236).⁶⁸ Yet the boats full of refugees approaching the coast of Lampedusa, the Suspected Illegal Entry Vessels ('SIEVs') advancing Australia⁶⁹ – and indeed their inversion hailing from the lawless land, the virtually stateless pirates roaming the waters off the Somali shores – could not be further from Foucault's ideal ship as 'the greatest reserve of imagination for our civilization' (Foucault 236). Though equally endowed with dreams and hopes, this ship is not welcome in any port, the Western *polis* would rather see it sink than allow it to land, the idea of the refugee being so ominous, that they will be transferred from one heterotopia, the ship, to another, the refugee camp, to prevent the *homo sacer* from contaminating the *polis*. The refugee boat thus taints, even subverts, Foucault's ideal, as it turns into the slave ship or the prison hulk. Bauman states that it is not even possible to properly grasp the concept of the refugee, as they are 'ineffable ... Jacques Derrida's "undecidables" made flesh ... not only *untouchables*, but *unthinkables*. In a world filled to the brim with imagined communities, they are the *unimaginables*' (2007: 45).

Especially the ongoing civil war in Darfur (since 2003) has led to an increased portrayal of the refugee on stage, as is demonstrated, for example, by the seven short plays that form the Tricycle Theatre's cycle *How Long is Never? Darfur – a Response* (2006). While the main objective of these plays is driven by the aspiration to transmit a message, often at the expense of aesthetic quality, Lynn Nottage's *Give, Again?* stands out in its portrayal of the mildly disinterested reaction to humanitarian crises, the general urge to keep the crisis at bay. Considering various fundraising letters over breakfast, a couple discusses for which advocacy group they should donate ('Darling, Darfur or the rainforest?' [Nottage 2006: 91]), demonstrating how the readiness to give loses momentum once the crisis becomes habitual:

Man: Oh stop it. I won't be made to feel guilty about this thing, not during breakfast...It was a crisis a year ago, for God's sake. So, why is it still going?

Woman: I don't know, that's a very fair question. I'm sure there's a reasonable answer. If you ask me, someone at the United Nations appears to be a very sound sleeper.

Man: ... What is the trouble there again?

⁶⁸ From the lecture entitled "Des Espaces Autres" given in 1967, published first in *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité* in October 1984. Bauman refers to the English translation published in *Diacritics*, 16 (spring 1986), 22-27; the quotes used here are taken from a reproduction of that same translation.

⁶⁹ It is worth mentioning that specifically in Australia, the issue of 'SIEVs' has been subject to numerous plays in recent years: referring to research conducted by Melissa Yeomans and Geoffrey Milne, theatre scholar John McCallum notes there are 'at least thirty theatre productions' between 1999 and 2005 (2006: 136), notably Paul Dwyer/1.0's performance *CMI (A Certain Maritime Incident)*, which used transcripts of the Australian Federal Parliament's 2002 Senate Select Committee on an event in October 2001 (see chapter III of this thesis).

Woman: Genocide.

Man: Genocide? My, that's a strong word. ... But I find that word is being bandied about quite a bit these days, it's like the new human rights trend. "Genocide". An oldie but a goodie. (92-93)

So what does happen if the bare life is piled up on stage? The refugees and asylum seekers, the flotsam and jetsam of the great intrastate wars, do not only represent the eternal stranger.

As Bauman emphasises:

Refugees and immigrants, coming from the 'far away' yet bidding to settle in the neighbourhood, are uniquely suitable for the role of an effigy through which the spectre of 'global forces' ... can be burnt. After all, asylum seekers and 'economic migrants' are collective replicas (an alter ego? fellow travellers? mirror images? caricatures?) of the new power elite of the globalised world, widely (and with reason) suspected to be the true villain of the piece. Like that elite, they have no tie to any place, are shifty and unpredictable. ... [They] bring home distant noises of war and the stench of gutted homes and scorched villages that cannot but remind the settled how easily the cocoon of their safe and familiar (safe *because* familiar) routine may be pierced or crushed and how deceptive the security of their settlement must be. The refugee, as Bertold Brecht pointed out in "Die Landschaft des Exils", is 'ein Bote des Unglücks' ('a harbinger of ill tidings')⁷⁰. (2007: 48-49)

The modern nation state's relationship to the refugee is not entirely similar to the *polis'* relationship to the *homo sacer*, given that the latter, while still upholding the taboo status of the outlawed, claims power of arbitration for deciding upon the exclusion. The modern nation state confronted with the refugee, however, is at the same time confronted with its own conceptual decline, with a taboo that should, within the context of the nation state and derived from the self-perception as a civilisation which has overcome the primitivism of taboos, not exist at all and presents itself thus as a paradox. And thus, while the Western audience may feel smugly superior and affirmed in the enlightened and preconceived knowledge of how alarming the camp at Guantánamo is (or, indeed, other versions of internment camps), how abysmal the plight of war refugees, how pitiable the fate of those excluded or expelled from the globalised community, there is also a sense of repulsion, because a transgression has taken place in the form of a confrontation with the *homo sacer*, with the taboo.

⁷⁰ "Landscape of Exile", poem, written 1941 and then published as a lied in Hanns Eisler's *Hollywooder Liederbuch* [Hollywood Songbook] (1942), first published as a poem in *Selected Poems* (1947). Bertold Brecht, *Gedichte*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964, vol. 6 p. 2. Slightly more prosaically, H.R. Hays translates: 'the messenger of misfortune' (Bertold Brecht, *Poems*. Edited by John Willet and Ralph Manheim with the co-operation of Erich Fried. London: Methuen, 1979, p. 364).

Churchill's *Far Away* demonstrates how effectively the bare life is excluded when its existence is denied, an exclusion that should not be legal and is yet happening in the midst of society. What exactly Joan has seen in her aunt Harper's house never becomes clear (Churchill 2000: 12-21); what kinds of repression the state exercises against its citizens is only hinted at (23, 37); even Todd's description of his deeds in the war are brief and, in any case, are so surreal that a haunting, violent atmosphere is transmitted, but the audience only hears his testimony and is spared the shock of witnessing the actual violence (40-41). It transpires that there lies another taboo at the heart of this play, which will be displayed on stage. The only scene depicting an unfiltered occurrence, without transformation by a character's narrative, is II.iii, the prisoners' death march:

Next day. A procession of ragged, beaten, chained prisoners, each wearing a hat, on their way to execution. The finished hats are even more enormous and preposterous than in the previous scene. (30)

Churchill, herself, stresses the importance of this scene by placing the following request into the list of characters: 'The Parade (Scene 2.5): five is too few and twenty better than ten. A hundred?' (8). This scene, standing in for all death marches and other processions of victims, conjures associations of prisoners being transported to the concentration and extermination camps in Hitler's Third Reich, the expelled Armenians' march through the Syrian Desert, streams of refugees fleeing the war-torn former Yugoslavia, the train of prisoners on their way to Pol Pot's Killing Fields, or mass flights from massacres in Rwanda (Prado Pérez 98, 101). Refugees, prisoners, asylum-seekers, slaves or forced labourers are all possible interpretations; due to the restrained wording of the stage direction, a production may also choose to reference a more contemporary event. The June 2001 production of *Far Away* in Berlin, for example, showed 60 handcuffed prisoners whose eyes were sealed shut with black duct tape (Kahle 2001: 15). In hindsight, this seems eerily anticipatory: similar pictures were transmitted only one year later from Afghanistan, showing alleged Taliban fighters being seized by US-American troops. The prisoners in the Dublin production in 2004 wore the orange-coloured overalls of American detainees, mostly known to the international public from footage from the American detention camp in Guantánamo (Meany 2004).⁷¹

The monstrous and frightening images show the prisoners wearing elaborately designed hats that, in a grotesque way, are reminiscent of fashion shows or horse races. In the obvious public humiliation of the prisoners, as they are on display and inviting abuse, there is, of course, also an element of the ritual sacrifice to be found. Girard lists the social categories from which the victims of scapegoat rites are drawn in ritual, naming 'vagabonds, beggars, cripples' – to which, now, one might perhaps add economic and war refugees, asylum

⁷¹ Detainees in American prisons wear the orange overalls when being transferred etc.

seekers, displaced persons, illegal immigrants, unlawful combatants, stateless persons and the group Bauman calls 'wasted lives'⁷². Girard asserts that 'derision of one form or another plays a large part in the negative feelings that find expression in the course of the ritual sacrifice' (268). A scapegoat rite involves a surrogate victim appeasing the violence within the community. Usually, the victim is destroyed; it is always expelled, at which point the community considers itself to be free from infection (281).⁷³ The scapegoat is, of course, the person who has become a taboo, the *homo sacer*: the one whose life is sacred, defined purely by being excluded from the *polis* and stripped of all civil rights (Agamben 1998: 8). By such exclusion, the *homo sacer* is initially 'situated at the margins of the political order', but through a gradual merging of what is inside and what is outside, the excluded is positioned at the political centre of the state of exception (*ibid.*, 9).

In an attempt to explain the violent urban protests which took place in the suburbs of Paris in May 2005, the critic Slavoj Žižek points out the lack of any ideologically rationalised hope amongst the protesters, any demands by them. The riots were based on a demand for recognition, 'simply a direct effort to gain *visibility*' (Žižek 2008: 63-65, emphasis in the original). This acknowledgment of the ghosts within the midst of the community, of the *homini sacer* inside the *polis*, is a vital step towards the understanding of the state of exception, as it is in these protests that the previously and normally invisible bare life suddenly becomes visible.

Last Girl Standing: From *zoē* to *bios* to the Monster

'Classical wars ended with a legal act which assured people that they could adjust their social and economic behaviour to conditions of peace' Münkler writes, continuing that the majority of the New Wars cease 'when the overwhelming majority of people behave as if there were peace, and have the capacity over time to compel the minority to behave in that way too' (13). Small groups therefore hold the power to define whether peace remains or not, and those 'who decide on war or peace are those most prepared to resort to violence' (*ibid.*). In the last scene of Harris's *Midwinter*, the main character simply refuses to acknowledge the re-entrance into the cycle of violence:

⁷² In his eponymous publication (2004), Bauman uses the term, which, as he specifies, should more accurately be 'wasted humans', to describe those made 'excessive' or 'redundant' by modernisation, those not wished or able to stay (5).

⁷³ Referring to Dennis Hughes' study *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), Derek Hughes, in a further critique of Girard's study, points out that 'evidence even that *pharmakoi* were ever killed is doubtful' (14). It should be stressed that Girard does concede that the surrogate victim does not necessarily need to be killed to fulfil the role of the scapegoat. Again, considering that Girard's study is not primarily concerned with human sacrifice but with the sacred and its relationship to violence, Hughes' critique appears to be slightly beside the point.

Maud: In this house, whatever happens out there, in this house ... Peacetime. That's all I know.

Pause.

It's peacetime here, you understand. There is no more of this, not here. Not just as Sirin is learning to talk. No, not now. We are in a different land to out there. They're in one season, but we are in another.

You understand? In the four walls of the garden —

Leonard: I don't even understand it.

Maud: So don't mention it. It's gone. ... That is it. It's over, do you understand me? There is no war.

Leonard: Even as...?

Maud: Peacetime. (Harris 2004: 76-77)

By eliminating the elements of war from her life, Maud tries to maintain the notion of a peacetime reality, consciously breaking the cycle of violence that is alluded to in the seasonal motif of the whole trilogy. As mentioned before, this play sits in the middle of the trilogy, and it is the only one ending on a note that allows for the possibility of peace. Like the middle panel of a triptych, the hearth scene with a nuclear family at the centre is flanked by two panels depicting narratives of the beginnings of violence and war, both of which will lead back to the centre piece.

Although the scenarios of life in a perpetual state of war suggest stagnation, leaving little or no room for character development, several of the New War plays nevertheless portray a character ascending from the fragmented state of bare life to something resembling a life with quality again, the stage of *bios*. Harris explains she wanted to demonstrate how people have to 'reforge' their identity after a war in order to leave it behind. The deep hatred and the prejudices prone to people with a background of war are very difficult to shift (Harris in Burnett 2004). Maud, who is trying to create a hearth, a domestic set-up, has to sacrifice a lot to maintain it. By assuming her sister's identity and taking her childhood friend's son as her own, she has formed a new identity and found a way to allow peace to happen.

In an analogy to Nikcevic's earlier assertion that the plays of the 1990s were 'the dramatic equivalent of a horror movie', there is a curious similarity to be found between a trope belonging to the genre of horror film, particularly the 'slasher' sub-genre, and several of the female characters in the new plays on war. The 'final girl' describes the character who survives the slaughter and 'lives to tell the tale', who acts as the 'investigating consciousness' in the films, and who has, since the mid-1970s, been almost exclusively female (Clover 1992: 35). So named by Carol J. Clover, she is 'the one who first grasps, however dimly, the past and present danger, the one who looks death in the face' and becomes a survivor (39).

'When you've just stepped in you can't tell what's going to happen,' Joan says at the end of Churchill's *Far Away*, when the play comes full circle as the action returns to Harper's house and the bellicose results of the events described in the first scene are shown (2000: 44). Joan's life as a fellow traveller and her silence are broken with her decision to tear free from society's constraints and to dare to take the step towards freedom, when she recognises that it is impossible to maintain a simple alliance – or even to separate the dangerous from the absurd. It is when she releases herself from the war that her speech begins to flow. And it is the formerly stuttering, victimised Cate who chides Ian in *Blasted*: 'You can't give up. ... It's weak' (55).

In Sam Holcroft's *Cockroach* (2008), the play that takes Agamben's state of exception to the extreme, it is again a young girl who understands how to survive this never-ending war:

Mmoma: ... This is a weak man's war, isn't it, Miss? There's only one winner. And the weak man will be king. ... He came. He sat at the back and saw. And now he conquers. (Holcroft 2008: 67)

When all the boys in their form have left Holcroft's war-fostering school, the girls remain to sort through the dead soldiers' uniforms. By the end, the teacher loses her courage, and nearly her mind, out of grief. The girl who takes charge is Mmoma, who is most ready to attach herself to the strongest personality in the room, who imagines being with a soldier by arranging a lifeless uniform to resemble an actual man, then talks to him and dances with him. She is the one who understands the Darwinian aspect of the endless war, that it will be those who do not fight but stay behind who will survive. She is the last girl standing:

Mmoma: Beth, can you do something for me? Can you bag up buttons for me? I'm going to give you loose buttons, and you're going to sort them into regiment. Can you do that, Beth? Can you do that for me?

Beth nods.

All right then.

Everybody look where you are for buttons. Whatever buttons you can find in ten seconds and we're going to give those buttons to Beth, okay? Ready? Ten. Nine. Eight.

Mmoma, Leah and Beth search for buttons.

Seven. Six. Five.

All the women stop. They breathe in and out.

Four. Three.

They resume the search.

Two. One.

The women turn to her with handfuls of buttons.

Now give me all your buttons, and we'll sort them into regiment.

The women collect all the buttons together and settle down for the sorting.

The End.(84-85)

By sorting through the dead soldiers' uniforms and preparing them to be worn again, the women fulfil a traditional female role as carer and providers, ensuring the continuation of the war. It is interesting to note that the cockroach is famed to adapt to circumstances so well that it can 'survive anything' – but there are few creatures perceived as so repulsive by a Western sensibility. The parallel between the survivors of the nameless war, with the school apparently right at the frontline, and the insect which cannot be destroyed might be found in Mmomas rationalization that those best adapted to the war, those 'not going', will not 'get squashed' (35).

Queen Gruach in David Greig's *Dunsinane* (2010) takes this further, and into quite a different direction. The former Lady Macbeth, who survived Shakespeare's play and reclaimed her name in the process, leads the occupied country into a guerrilla war which will wear the English army out, stating:

You'll go home in the end. Beaten and humiliated. And when you're back in your empty castle, Siward, and one of mine is on the throne again in Dunsinane, I'll send parties of men raiding into your beloved Northumberland to take cattle and women and burn villages and kill your knights. For as long as I reign I'll torment you and when I die I'll leave instructions in my will to every Scottish Queen that comes after me to tell her King to take up arms and torment England again and again and again until the end of time. (Greig 2010: 136)

Indeed, the whole guerrilla in *Dunsinane* seems to be organised by the women, and Gruach deliberately allows the English army to believe she is operating a witches' coven to ensure the overthrow of the satellite king (59-61). In this respect, the Queen is styled almost as the war goddess Bellona, who, in myth, is 'little more than a personification of bloody war'⁷⁴, but who, in Greig's play about an invading English army which helps to settle in a new government in order to shift the power-structures in Scotland, becomes the voice of the invaded country.

Girard points out that ascribing the trait of violence, which is perceived as masculine, to women can be regarded as following the thematic tradition of Euripides' *The Bacchae*, where this motif denotes 'the loss of sexual differentiation'. He argues that 'one of the effects of the sacrificial crisis is a certain feminisation of the men, accompanied by a masculinization of the women' (150). Analysing the instances of plot-driven and cast-determined cross-dressing

⁷⁴ In Shakespeare's play, the Lady Macbeth's identity as a goddess of war is mentioned in I.ii, as Macbeth, after a victory on the field, is called 'Bellona's bridegroom' (*Mac.* I.ii.5-6).

on the Greek stage, Olga Taxidou points out that the King in *The Bacchae* 'dresses up as a woman just before his *peripeteia* is about to commence' and that this 'reversal of gender roles ... signals the end of the kingdom itself' (Taxidou 2004: 102). The crisis here is again heralded by a taboo, and the 'final girl' in these new plays, while frequently the one to bring about the possibility of change, may also become the anathema. The taboo, Freud specifies, does not only cling to the one who does what is forbidden, but also to people in specific circumstances, to these circumstances themselves, and to impersonal objects. The person who broke the taboo becomes taboo, because they have the dangerous ability to tempt others to violate the rule. Provoking envy, the one who breaks taboos is thus truly contagious in the sense of every example inviting imitation (Freud 1974: 324).

'She is abject terror personified,' Clover writes of the final girl, 'she alone looks death in the face, but she alone also finds the strength either to stay the killer long enough to be rescued ... or to kill him herself' (35). In aligning the figure with the notion of the abject, it conceptually approaches the idea of the outcast: facing the horror, but thus contaminated by it, the final girl becomes the *homo sacer*. 'The sacred king is also a monster,' Girard states in an analysis of Oedipus's roles of, consecutively, monster-killer, monster and surrogate victim. 'Like all incarnations of sacred violence, Oedipus can and does play every part in succession', he points out, adding that in mythology, there is no distinction to be made between physical and moral monstrosity (266-7).

At the end of tucker green's *stoning mary*, the eponymous Mary will indeed be stoned, subjected to that ancient form of capital punishment traditionally associated with the crime of taboo-breaking, she has become a monster to society and is shunned by her sister and by prisoner support groups alike. It is the mother of the homicidal child soldier who picks up the first stone to kill her son's murderer.

Like Oedipus, the General in Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* (2004) necessarily is also a monster, a larger-than-live war-monger who has no place in the prevalent conception of 'just war'⁷⁵, but who might have a very real place in the war one refuses to see. In this contemporary treatment of Sophocles' *The Trachiniae* (430 BC), the hero is called forth to justify the atrocities he instigated and committed during the war on terror:

James: ... You are accused of crimes. You have wiped people off this earth like a teacher rubbing out equations. You've stacked up bodies like bags of cement. ...

⁷⁵ It should be noted here that in many discussions of contemporary warfare, the notion of 'just war' in the sense of Michael Walzer's just war theory (1977) is used freely and frequently, but nevertheless as a cipher only, without ever returning to Walzer and verifying whether the war discussed does actually conform to the principles of just and unjust war. It is because, largely, Walzer cannot be applied to the New Wars any more.

General: ... I have purified this world for you.
 I have burnt terror out of the world for people like you.
 I have followed it through the shopping malls
 and the school playgrounds
 tracked it by starlight across the desert
 smashed down the door of its luxury apartment
 learned its language
 intercepted its phone calls
 smoked it out of its cave
 thrown acid into its eyes and burnt it to carbon.
 While you've been logged on to internet chat-rooms
 I've seen my friends burst open like fruit. ...
 So don't you talk to me about crimes
 because for every head I have ever severed
 two have grown in their place
 and I have had to cut and to cut and to cut
 to burn and to cut to purify the world –
 understand me? ...
 (*Points to himself proudly.*) *Kallinikos. Kallinikos.* [the great victor]
 (Crimp 57-58)

It is in evoking an image of purification that Crimp invites this passage to be aligned with a sacrificial crisis. To avert disaster, the community found their champion, who, like the Greek hero Heracles on whom he is modelled and whose epithet he uses to describe himself, becomes the incarnation of the violence he set out to purge from the world. Explaining that he did exactly as he was instructed to do, his last and repeated words are 'I am not the criminal but the sacrifice' (67-9), and, considering the wide-ranging licence he was given by the community to keep it safe from war and terror, he might be right.

'The returning warrior risks carrying the seed of violence into the very heart of his city,' Girard states (44), and returning to Harris's *Midwinter*, this is demonstrated by Grenville, who ultimately fails at reclaiming his civilian life, because '[he] has turned back into a soldier,' as Maud observes with alarm (Harris 2004: 64). In the character of a soldier unable to leave the war behind, bringing it with him in the form of a parasite that is literally eating him from the inside and rendering him blind, Grenville echoes the figure of the Soldier in Kane's *Blasted*. Veterans are here depicted as carrying the seed of war inside themselves, not only in the form of shell-shock, but also as a possible male urge to (self-) destruction (Sierz 104). The returning soldier's war trauma is manifested in the form of this parasite fighting him from within: he has been contaminated by the violence. The nameless soldier in Kane's *Blasted*, a twisted version perhaps of the Unknown Soldier who is also haunting the plays in Ravenhill's cycle *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*,⁷⁶ represents any soldier caught up in the

⁷⁶ When the headless soldier appears in little Alex's room in the fifth play in Ravenhill's cycle, "War and Peace", Alex soon demonstrates that he is already well aware of the difference between those inside the gated community and those who protect it from the outside: 'You keep away from me,

machinery of war and all military atrocities that have been committed. Recounting tales of rape, torture, grotesque murders and the mass transportation of refugees in cattle trucks, he is also war's victim, unable to overcome the trauma of his girlfriend's murder, which he acts out in all its brutality over and over again (Innes 2002: 531; Buse 2001: 176).

How the community exorcises their monsters by means of a public sacrifice that is turned into a spectacle can be observed in Harris's *Fall*, in which the condemned war criminal Ebenezer wonders why it takes so long to build the platform upon which he will be executed. 'There is a second construction', Justine, the human rights activist, tells him, and this second construction 'is for the crowd' (Harris 2008: 96-97). As the executions are stalled, the crowd becomes more and more frenzied and violent, and by the end of the play, it is quite obvious that the country will slide back into a state of conflict.

The Camp as Paradigm of Modernity

Because the internment camp in one of its guises – as refugee camp, resettlement camp, secret and/or extra-judicial detention camp or rape camp – is a by-product of contemporary warfare, it is worthwhile to explore the connections between the camp, the state of exception and war, and how the new plays on war mediate the possibility and reality of the camp in their treatment of the New Wars.

A version of the camp features in many of the New War plays, in its incarnation as the refugee camp (for example several plays in Nicolas Kent's collection *How Long Is Never? Darfur – A Response* [2006] or indeed the numerous plays examining the situation in the Gaza Strip as an enlarged refugee camp⁷⁷), the internment camp (Zinnie Harris's *Solstice*, Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo's *Guantánamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* [2004] and, presenting a disturbing imagined account of the events at Abu Ghraib by the American soldier Lyndee England and of Saddam Hussein's torture houses, Judith Thompson's *Palace of the End* [2006]), the internment camp in its manifestation as the rape camp (Wajdi Mouawad's *Scorched*, Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* [1996] and Eve Ensler's *Necessary Targets* [both 1996]) and the prison which is on the verge of becoming an extra-judicial detention camp (tucker green's *stoning mary* and Harris's *Fall*). In *Guantánamo*, *Cleansed* and *Palace of the End*, the camp is also at the centre of the narrative.

wanker. You – you – this is my room, this is my property, my family's ... We drive and SUV... I am so powerful and you're, you're... you're scum... you eat bad food, you have numeracy and literacy issues, you will never be on the property ladder ... you don't belong in a gated community. Out, get out, away. You are a monster. You look like a ... you are a deformed monster. Monster ... MONSTER.' (Ravenhill 2008: 60)

⁷⁷ For example David Hare, *Via Dolorosa* (1999) and *Wall* (2009), Alan Rickman and Katherine Viner's edited version of the diary of Rachel Corrie (2005). One might add here David Greig's 2004 adaptation for the theatre of Raja Shehadeh's prose memoir *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing* (2003).

Agamben cites the 'politicisation of bare life as such' as the 'decisive event of modernity' (1998: 4) and argues that the camp is 'the hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity, whose metamorphoses and disguises we will have to learn to recognize' (123). He argues that in the present age, the usually 'unlocalisable' state of exception found its 'permanent and visible localization' in the concentration camp. In contrast to the prison, which still operates within a legislative frame belonging to the normal order, the camp is governed by 'martial law and the state of siege' (20). It is only opened if the state of exception, which should have been temporary only, has become the rule and has been localised within a 'permanent spatial arrangement' which continues to operate *hors du nomos*, as the exception and the norm are conflated: the camp becomes the space where the constant state of exception is normalised (168-69). Agamben argues that it is due to a complete suspension of law and its indistinction from fact, to the conflation of, first, rule and application and, second, exception and rule, that 'everything in the camps [is] truly possible' (170, 173), that 'whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on law but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily act as sovereign' (174).

In an instance of bizarre hubris and unwitting internalisation of the distinction between *zoē* and *bios* and how the state of exception sanctions the mistreatment of the *homo sacer*, the soldier modelled on Lynndie England⁷⁸ in Judith Thompson's play *Palace of the End* (2006) recounts how she and her friends abused a mentally handicapped girl during their high school years and compares this offence to the abuse done to the Iraqi prisoners later:

...and we made her strip and bark like a dog and even lick Ryan's dickie, and there was a moment that I realized she would do anything we said. ... And we laughed oh my God we laughed ...but dudes, [she] is an American, she was very VERY different from the APES AT ABU GHRAIB. They was monsters in the *shape* of human beings. They was prisoners of WAR. So, there I was, little me, in ABU GHRAIB ... and I was the BIG boss of these BIG DEAL TERRORISTS, guys who had KILLED AMERICANS. GUYS WHO WERE PLANNING ANOTHER 9/11, dude, AND YOU ARE UPSET THAT I laughed AT THEIR WILLIES?
(Thompson 2007: 14)

The camp indicates 'the political space of modernity itself' because it is created at a time at which the modern nation-state experiences a politico-structural crisis (*ibid.*), on which one can expand, with Kaldor, as the differences between public and private, military and civil, internal and external, war and peace collapse (Kaldor 2006: 32). The description of the camp as a space outside all normal order holds true even if, for example in a failed-state scenario, there is no state left to implement the state of exception: returning to Bauman's reading of

⁷⁸ Former US Army reservist Lynndie England gained notoriety by her active involvement in the 2004 Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse.

Foucault's heterotopia, the camp, specifically the refugee camp, does not even need to be legally tied to a specific state; even if the state is gone, the camp is still there, as a spatial manifestation of the state of exception fringing the global order.

Following from the first chapter of this thesis, which traces the interdependency of the state of exception and the global risk society as the implications of the perpetual state of war, one can easily observe how a society constantly anticipating risk and calling for more security will be increasingly accepting of the state of exception as the status quo and thus the existence of the camp in the midst of society. As the political system ceases to engage with people and judicial rules in a specifically defined space only, at the very centre of the system emerges 'a *dislocating localization* that exceeds it and into which every form of life and every rule can be virtually taken' (1998: 175, emphasis in the original).

While Agamben speaks primarily of the concentration camp, he concedes that the thesis holds true for other versions of the camp as a 'dislocating localisation' as well, since it is

the hidden matrix of the politics in which we are still living, and it is this structure of the camp that we must learn to recognize in all its metamorphoses into the *zones d'attentes* of our airports and certain cities. The camp is the fourth, inseparable element that has now added itself to – and so broken – the old trinity composed of the state, the nation ... and land. (1998: 175-76)

When *Homo Sacer*, in which Agamben extrapolates how urgent it will become to discuss the state of exception, is published in 1998, one of the most infamous camps of the twenty-first century has not yet been erected, but it is fair to say that, by now, the Guantánamo detention camp – or indeed its variations such as the Bagram Theater Internment Facility and the 'Camp Redemption' facility at Abu Ghraib – has become the exemplary contemporary camp at the heart of the World Risk Society.

Closely connected to the cultural imagery of the camp is the corresponding imagery of deportation *to* the camp. The trope of human beings crowded together on a train or lorry to evacuate or to be taken away has become one of the iconographic images of twentieth-century warfare that has become part of the post-modern collective experience. He '[s]aw thousands of people packing into trucks like pigs trying to leave town', the soldier in *Blasted* testifies (50), and little Joan of the *Far Away* land sinking into total war tells her aunt what she saw in the courtyard at night:

Joan: There was a lorry.

Harper: Yes, I expect there was.

Joan: When I put my ear against the side of the lorry I heard crying inside.

Harper: How could you do that from up in the tree? ... There might be things that are not your business when you're a visitor in someone else's house.

Joan: Yes, I'd rather not have seen. I'm sorry. ... If it's a party, why was there so much blood?

Harper: There isn't any blood. ... In the dark? How would you see that in the dark? ... You've found out something secret. You know that don't you? ... Something you shouldn't know.

Joan: Yes I'm sorry.

Harper: Something you must never talk about. Because if you do you could put people's life in danger. (Churchill 2001: 14-17)

Harper's subsequent attempts to dismiss what Joan heard and saw echo a segment from Harold Pinter's one-act play *Ashes to Ashes* (1996), in which the references to past atrocities buried at the centre of the play – the selection of women and children for transport, presumably into concentration camps – remain equally oblique, as the two characters come to the (not entirely voluntary) agreement that nothing ever happened at all:

Devlin: ... A little while ago, you made... shall we say...you made a somewhat oblique reference to your bloke...your lover? ...and babies and mothers, et cetera. And platforms. I inferred from this that you were talking about some kind of atrocity. Now let me ask you this. What authority do you think you yourself possess which would give you the right to discuss such an atrocity?

Rebecca: I have no such authority. Nothing has ever happened to me. Nothing has ever happened to any of my friends. I have never suffered. Nor have my friends. (Pinter 2005: 413)

In both cases, one character attempts to discredit the testimony of a witness, resulting in the witness accepting an altered truth as reality. Because the respective situations refer to a state of exception, which is situated outside the normal order, there is no language to describe it properly, the individual's judgement and authority to discuss the events related to the state of exception is questioned.

The literary scholar Jacqueline Rose muses on the familiar saying that truth is the first casualty of war. 'We tend to understand this as referring simply to the censorship of information,' she says, 'but Freud⁷⁹ is making another point. Numbing its own citizens' capacity for judgement is one of the chief war aims of the modern state.' (Rose 2007: 163) She continues that the modern state asks a huge sacrifice of its people by pressuring them

to give up their right not to believe in it. If there is one thing worse than disillusionment it is not being allowed to recognise that disillusioned is what you are. ... There is a lie at the heart of democracy if the state will sacrifice its citizens' freedom to take dissent to the limit, and indeed its relationship to them, for the sake

⁷⁹ In *Mourning and Melancholia*, 1917.

of its own violently enacted and no less violently preserved self-regard. (*ibid.*)

This disillusionment is harrowingly portrayed by Judith Thompson's imagining of a monologue by the British weapons inspector Dr. David Kelly, moments before he loses his life on Harrowdown Hill, when he reflects on how it is to live with the knowledge of a great crime being committed and having to pretend not to know about it in order to maintain one's own comfort:

I'm beginning to think that it's the greatest sin of our time.

Knowing, and pretending that we don't know, so that we won't be inconvenienced in any way. ... Can you imagine, knowing, knowing that a man is torturing a child in your basement, and just going on with your 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, you pretend to yourself "It's the crows on the line," but in your belly you know it is her *agony*, he is cutting off her fingers one by one, pulling out her eyes, her teeth unimaginable torture and this is something you know for certain, others may guess at it, many deny it, but you know it for certain and you don't tell anyone because you might lose something if you do. Your carefree life, your ability to be happy, your job. Your job. And if you lose your job you lose your pension. (Thompson 24-25)

The phenomenon of cultural deliberate and actual blindness in confrontation with atrocities and in fact with the camp is closely connected to the victims' need to testify to the atrocities happening in the camps, and to have somebody witnessing this testimony. In the camps, and afterwards, becoming a witness is a means of survival (Agamben 1999: 15). This elemental need to testify in order to define and come to terms with the truth is one of the premises of the following chapter.

Chapter III

A Crisis of Truth:

Testimony, Documentary, Trauma and the Pornography of Grief

Truth in drama is forever elusive.
Harold Pinter

The political and social climate of war and terror seems to generate an almost spiritual need for what is, perhaps optimistically, called 'the truth'; and it seems as if the theatre, with its tradition of claiming to offer both *katharsis* and the truth, might satisfy this need. But 'the truth' may be harder to define than it appears. There is a juxtaposition of the 'aesthetic' versus the 'authentic' concept of truth to be observed here; the 'aesthetic' claiming to provide insight by means of verisimilitude and cathartic effect, whereas the 'authentic' holds a claim to objectivity. 'Authenticity is one of those words that can do no wrong', the critic Jan Lloyd Jones teases, '[i]t is a word that always manages to be on the side of the angels' (Lloyd Jones and Lamb 2010: xiv). 'Authenticity' distances itself from anything artificial and fictional; as a concept, it could, if one wanted to par with Lloyd Jones, be regarded as the patron saint of documentary drama.

The documentary play, by its form but also its subject matter and agenda, is the bastion of testimony in contemporary theatre. With the sub-form of courtroom drama or 'tribunal plays' highlighting the legal origins of the term testimony, it is easier to see testimony linked with trauma theory and trauma culture, since both rely strongly on testimonial evidence and the witnessing of the act of testifying. Therefore, it appears a natural development that the war traumata of soldiers and civilians inside and on the periphery of the war zone should find an adequate means of representation in the documentary dramatic mode.

However, this also leads to a certain dilemma: 'testimonies' given on stage can feed a sinister public appetite for stories of loss and suffering, creating a forum for public grief that invites the pornographic. 'The feeling persists', states the critic Susan Sontag in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), 'that the appetite for such images is a vulgar or low appetite, that it is commercial ghoulishness' (112). When extensive grief and public mourning become the driving forces of the public discussion of the state of war, the underlying but ever-present social classification of grievable and un-grievable lives emerges.

The History and Aesthetics of Documentary Drama

In order to differentiate the specific conceptions of 'truth' in connection with the genre, it seems vital to trace the development and the aesthetics of documentary drama through the last and into the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Often regarded as a subgenre of historical drama or an extension of the French *pièce à these* (Paget 1998: 119), documentary drama has its roots in plays such as Georg Büchner's *Danton's Death* (1835) and Karl Kraus' *The Last Days of Mankind* (1918). As an independent genre, it can be traced back through 1950s Germany to the US-American *Living Newspaper*, a form of didactic documentary theatre that arose in the 1930s and developed from the Russian *Blue Blouses*, who had in turn sprung from the original 'living newspaper': a form of theatre which developed after the Russian revolution of 1917, deriving, as the theatre scholar Frantisek Deák has shown, from the 'spoken newspaper', read out aloud to a gathered audience (42). Such readings then developed into the visualised presentation of news, using posters, diagrams and statistics, and dramatising it by means of monologue, dialogue, mass declamation and short sketches, and the transforming of the news into songs (Fisher Dawson 20).

Theatre scholar Gary Fisher Dawson also lists agit-prop theatre as documentary theatre's predecessor, arguing that the Federal Theatre Project forms the developmental link between the Russian and German agit-prop theatre forms (19). This movement became an internationally recognizable form in the 1960s under the notable direction of Erwin Piscator, and there develops from it a collective tradition of documentary theatre models with a Piscatorian influence, such as the jointly devised plays by Joan Littlewood and Ewan McColl (e.g. *Oh, What a Lovely War*, 1963), the so-called Stoke-method documentary plays of Peter Cheeseman (e.g. *Fight For Shelton Bar*, 1974), the company plays by the Canadian Paul Thompson and the Theatre Passé Muraille Company (*Farm Show*, 1972) and, of course, the US-American *Living Newspapers* (1935-39) under the guidance of Hallie Flanagan (Fisher Dawson 1999: 118). Prominent early playwrights of the genre are Peter Weiss, Rolf Hochhuth and Peter Brook. Later, the playwrights Emily Mann, Molly Newman, Julie Crutcher, Barbara Damashek, Vaughn McBride, Anna Deavere Smith, Richard Norton-Taylor and Robin Soans and theatre directors Max Stafford Clark and Nicolas Kent became its prominent ambassadors. A typical example of the form from the 1990s might be Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, about the Rodney King trial concerning the mistreatment of a black man at the hands of several white police officers (1991/1992), which sparked extensive riots in Los Angeles.

Fisher Dawson sees the significance of the primary source as the 'currency of the documentary theatre' historically established by Erwin Piscator in 1927 (18). In contrast to other historical drama, which is also concerned (at least in part) with historical sources, the style of the documentary drama is described and determined by the particular use that it makes of original documents. As he puts it, there is a shift from the Aristotelian concept of 'exposition, complication, recognition, reversal, complication [and] resolution' to a non-Aristotelian one of 'montage, juxtaposition, historical documentation, distantiation, direct address, audience participation [up to] Total Theatre' (7). He points out the persuasive character of documentary drama where the documents are

directly incorporated into the dramatic text and the performance text of each play ...[A] documentary play is one that has had conferred upon it by the institution called theatre the status of a documentary play for the purposes of learning about, recalling, interpreting, or responding to, a historical moment. (17)

Significantly, by naming the genre 'documentary', purpose and anticipation have been simultaneously created.

The primary concern of the documentary drama is historical authenticity through the 'objective' transmission of the documents resulting from the historical events. Usually, it contains material already familiar to its audience and close in time to contemporary historical events, because the audience's memory of recent events will not need much refreshing prior to the representation (Paget 1998: 62). Ideally, documentary drama does not have any fictional elements and refrains from any disruption of the realistic illusion on stage. But while it is seen as the 'realistic extreme hold' of the genre of history plays, the verbatim use and the montages of multiple different source texts within one play have a strong epic effect, which counteracts the realistic claim (Berninger 2006: 85-6).

Drawing on the work of Gregory Henry Mason, Fisher Dawson makes useful distinctions between five classes of documentary theatre. The first class, documentary tragedy, follows the historical facts more or less closely. The second class, the documentary problem play, dramatises a social issue rather than centring on international concern. History documents are used in a relatively free style as the play moves away from the characters and towards a theme. The third class, the documentary propaganda play, is marked by the more or less systematic use of documents and it is divisible into various types, among them the historical pageant which glorifies past events and specific Piscatorian types which use juxtaposition and montage devices; this is, for example, how Karl Krauss's World War I drama *The Last Days of Mankind* (about a third of which consists of a montage of newspaper articles, slogans, court decisions, etc.) may be classified. The fourth class is represented by agit-prop documentary drama, in which the characters tend to be stereotypical, relying only lightly on

documents, instead focussing more on humour and satire. The fifth class, the documentary tribunal form, is described as mainly depending on primary-source documentary evidence, which is then transcribed into the dramatic text. Mason regards this form as the purest form, 'because veracity in factual authenticity takes precedence over thematic concerns' (126-7).

Paget explains how documentary drama traditionally retells (inter)national historical events or represents the careers of significant (inter)national figures, reviewing, critiquing or celebrating them. It may portray community-based issues to provoke discussion in a local or international context. Recent documentary drama has focused on the 'ordinary citizens' whose unique experience brought them media attention (1998: 61). Differentiating between drama-documentary and documentary drama, Paget describes the former as 'more closely related to its verifiable real-life events', while the latter tends to rely on

fictional constructs, such as an invented plot and characters composed from several real-life originals. ... Within the essential fictionality complex elements of verifiable factual precursors and real-life situations may be incorporated, however, and may show through as a palimpsest (1998: 114).

According to Fisher Dawson, in the neoclassical understanding of drama growing from Aristotle, the appearance of truth became a prime concern of drama, and verisimilitude represented the ideal (92), but he notes that by the late 1990s the ideal seems to have shifted from the mere similitude of truth, however defined, to the claim to documented truth:

At a time when perception counts for more than substance, not to mention the fall-in-truth itself, the documentary playwright opts for the real thing on-stage, and tries with the aid of a number of authenticating sign systems to accomplish this aim. (93)

However, some writers have been suggesting recently – and I think validly – that there is a flaw in the genre itself. Take the example of Peter Weiss, whose drama *The Investigation* (*Die Ermittlung*, 1964) about the Auschwitz atrocities is based on testimony given at the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial.⁸⁰ Weiss understands documentary theatre as a dramatic tribunal which requests the audience to pass judgement on past events. In his 'Fourteen Propositions for a Documentary Theatre' (1968), he stresses that the documentary play is always biased: most of its subject matter cannot lead to any other conclusion than condemnation (298). But this surely is a form of bias which annuls any claims of objectivity – and objectivity is regarded as part of the 'ruling opinion's' 'deceiving excuses for their deeds' (*ibid*, also see Berninger 91). Weiss lists the primary source materials for the documentary play and refers to them as 'segments of reality', believing them to be 'the only weapons against an untrustworthy news media' (Fisher Dawson 15). Yet Agamben's discussion of the Auschwitz

⁸⁰ Weiss attended the trial, which lasted from the end of 1963 through the summer of 1965.

trials is relevant here. He highlights a problem arising from the legal tradition of testimony: the idea of the trial is to pass judgement, and once it has been passed, the matter has been dealt with. The Auschwitz trials, he argues, 'helped spread the idea that the problem of Auschwitz had been overcome. The judgments had been passed, the proofs of guilt definitively established' (1999: 19). The framework of a legal trial thus allows for a finality in the discussion of the question of Auschwitz, and by extrapolation from Agamben's argument, of any matter brought to trial. Following this argument, a play using testimony as its primary material and styling itself as a 'trial' where 'the truth' is supposed to be brought to the fore, cannot actually claim to open up the discussion of its subject matter at all, as the verdict has already come in before the curtain rises, and this is surely a valid critique of Weiss's approach in *The Investigation*.

And the critique can be broadened. Even though documentary drama makes a claim for pluralism in theory, the biased interpretation of history lying at the heart of so many plays accounts for the fact that it rarely refers to openness or to the imperfection of any form of historiography (Berninger 93). Most of the 'classic' documentary plays consciously oppose the illusion of stage realism, thus distancing themselves from the historiographical claims of objectivity: within the construction of history, this dramatic form often openly takes sides. It is based on the radicalisation of an idea of authenticity in two variants that are intrinsically linked to each other, as is wryly expressed by Lloyd Jones at the beginning of this chapter. Authenticity is understood as a value of and by itself, whereas fiction is regarded as being inferior, because in some sense false. Documentation is considered to be a weapon against a representation of history that is felt to be wrong and that has to be 'corrected'. This principle of the general value of authenticity can be traced back to Aristotle's *Poetics* (9.16-27, 14.23-27). It is an understanding that forms the basis of a credo of realism; conformingly, only the 'credible' also has the value of being 'beautiful'. As authentically 'true' material is credited with a high potential of credibility, while truth and beauty are fused to an inseparable unity, fiction is rejected. An argument's truthfulness is thus placed before its aesthetics (Berninger 86-88), indeed, it might *be* its aesthetics.⁸¹

Paget suggests that the 20th-century meaning of 'fact' allows for the conception that there was an essential factual level to lived experience, somehow located 'before' interpretation, 'unbiased': it is not weighed down by ideology, but is 'originary' (1998: 104). There seems, he says, to be a wide-ranging assumption that 'the very factuality of a play renders it in some

⁸¹ The consecration of the notion of truth seems to stem from what Julia Kristeva describes as '[t]he break between the concept of a truth which we might call theoretical and which acknowledges the place of the real, and a linguistico-logical truth'. The rupture, she declares, 'is from this point on [i.e., Modernity] complete' (1986: 221).

way more 'real', therefore more 'true', than other created works' (1990: 42) – because the actual occurrence of an event can, to a certain extent, be verified, often by witnesses' testimony, which might be directly used in the play as well: it is above suspicion of fiction. But there is an underlying fallacy here, which has been noted, independently, by the critics Mark Berninger and Paul Ward. The very process of generating a documentary play contradicts this assertion of truthfulness and authenticity: in consequence to the literal use of the source material, the individual source texts should also be arranged chronologically according to their date of creation or recording. Changes and shortenings as well as the montage of different sources signify an intervention with the authenticity of the original material, a manipulation of the text which is in fact close to traditional drama's assumed right of interpretation (Berninger 89-90). Ward describes this as the dilemma of

how to deal with and understand something that quite clearly is attempting to represent *reality* ... but as it does so, uses specific *aesthetic devices*. A commonsense suggestion is that the aesthetics somehow *distort* or *change* the reality being represented. (2005: 6 emphases in the original)

The same discussion gives ample room to claims to moral superiority on the side of theatre-practitioners such as Robin Soans, who thinks that what he does is not much different from governments' 'spins' on the news items they allow to be published, insisting that while these manipulations aim at obscuring meaning and limit the public's knowledge, he himself edits 'in order to enlighten and intrigue, and therefore to broaden our knowledge' (Hammond and Steward 2008: 35). Even though the preference of one passage of text over another constitutes a massive interception with the genuineness of the material, it is precisely this process of montage and editing which Weiss sees as the particular creative quality of documentary drama, asserting that it is thus elevated over mere reproduction of the original texts (Berninger 93). Paget also stresses that the plays' 'close relationship to their actual base' could signify that the documentary material could be exhibited directly in the performance and could permeate the fiction in several ways. '[A]ll this is done with a polemical purpose,' he writes about the attempt 'to argue a case forcefully, which generally opposes an established point of view' (1990: 110). He describes the promise inherent in the term 'documentary drama' as one of 'factuality' and 'documentariness', arguing that

absolutes open up one on another – 'fact' and 'real' on to 'natural' and 'true'. The equation seems so often to be that factuality plus verisimilitude equals veracity. Thus the true story is twentieth-century culture's attempt to posit an Absolute Drama which is both real and true, and thus unassailable. (*ibid.* 162)

Art historian Arnold Hauser points to an 'intensified hunger' for truth and reality characteristic of the mid-20th century, represented by a leaning towards the factual and the

authentic, hence to the document. He highlights the desire for being informed alongside an 'activistic ulterior motive' and a 'flight from the story and from the individual, psychologically differentiated hero'. This tendency, Hauser argues, signifies the claim to show 'the plain reality, the unvarnished truth, unadulterated facts, that is, life "as it really is"' (1958: 257).

Although this thesis is primarily concerned with the New Wars of the last twenty years, it might be worthwhile – bearing these ideas of documentary drama, ideological and sceptical, in mind – to look briefly at US-American Vietnam war drama, and specifically at Emily Mann's *Still Life*, to trace the roots of the subject of war and its portrayal by documentary-style theatre. The Vietnam protest theatre, amongst which Megan Terry's *Vietrock – an Anti-War Rock Musical* and the more commercial *Hair – The American Tribal Love Rock Musical* by James Rado and Gerome Ragni (both 1966) can be listed as early examples, came out of the off-off-Broadway scene and frequently used devices of scenic montage.⁸² Writing over a decade later, Mann, who explicitly calls her style of theatre 'Theatre of Testimony' (Fisher Dawson 119), stresses that she chose the form of documentary theatre to prevent the events and the reality of the people from being denied, claiming that the personal testimonies allow to present and open up facts which otherwise evade rational analysis because of their sheer complexity and magnitude (Bigsby 134).

The literary scholar Philip Kolin states that for Mann, 'the courtroom and the theatre are almost identical' (1993: 232). The stage design of *Still Life* (1980) evokes a conference room or courtroom (Mann 1997: 37), begging the question of who or what is on trial: Mark for being a murderer and a thug, Cheryl for being complicit in her own suffering, Nadine's naiveté, the state of war, male values, a national fascination with violence, or the audience and thus society (Bigsby 148). Cast in a double role for this play, the audience might be on trial, but also functions as witness and jury, thus fulfilling the role ascribed to the witness by literary scholar Cathy Caruth.⁸³ Mann arranges the monologues in such a way that they seem to comment on each other and give meaning to the interlaced personal narrations, thus using oral history as a way of structuring the play. To extend the analogy, the ultimate artificiality of the documentary form is underlined by Mann's artful arrangement of the testimonial

⁸² Nora M. Alter gives a good overview over the Vietnam protest theatre in her study *Vietnam Protest Theatre. The Television War on Stage* (1996).

⁸³ **Mark:** After I was there, I could never move with people who were against the war in a real way. ... (Looks at audience. Sees or thinks he sees that they're on the other side. Moment of murderous anger. He shuts up and exits.) (Mann 66-67); **Cheryl:** He blames it all on the war... but I want to tell you... don't let him.' (43); **Nadine:** I wonder how you perceive him.' (97); **Nadine:** What do you see, just a cast of characters?' (128).

material for her play. A propos *Still Life*, the critic Christopher Bigsby explains that documentary drama creates a new context for testimonies, thereby changing their nature:

Private conversation becomes public event, confidences are breached, and even though they are so with the sanction of those who offered them there is a subtle shift in pressure, moral no less than social. Such theatre, moreover, derives part of its power precisely from what is not said but known. Behind the personal anecdote is a public history. Therein lies the metonymy. This is ... our means of decoding the cipher of the past. Personal testimony is an attempt to break through the implacable fact of an enormity whose sheer scale ... seems to resist rational analysis, since the irrational can, by definition, never be explained. (133-34)

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a noteworthy upsurge of 'verbatim' theatre (Hammond and Steward 2008: ii). Some thematic forms occur more frequently than others, among them the Holocaust testimony.⁸⁴ Another frequent occurrence are plays based on diaries, such as David Greig's 2004 play *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing*, based on the diary of the Palestinian lawyer and writer Raja Shehadeh, or Alan Rickman's and Katherine Viner's 2005 play *My Name Is Rachel Corrie*, the dramatised diary of the eponymous American activist who died during an incident in Palestine.⁸⁵ Both plays examine the specific state of living in a region under siege.

Following the format created by Weiss's *The Investigation*, there have been many trial plays during the 1990s and the early 2000s, notably the Security Affairs editor of the *Guardian* and theatre producer Richard Norton-Taylor's *Nuremberg: The War Crime Trial* (1996), a verbatim play based on the original transcripts of the first and biggest of the trials⁸⁶, in the same year Nicolas Kent's *Srebrenica*, based on transcripts of the hearings at the United Nations War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague in July 1996⁸⁷, and in 2003, again by Norton-Taylor, *Justifying War: Scenes from the Hutton Inquiry* (2003), based on selected transcripts from the Inquiry⁸⁸. In the Piscatorian tradition, these productions often apply the trial model,

⁸⁴ For example Emily Mann's 1997 play *Annulla* and Martin Sherman's 2002 play *Rose*, both one-woman-pieces based on interviews with Holocaust survivors.

⁸⁵ Rickman's and Viner's play, composed by editing Rachel Corrie's emails and diary entries, led to an interesting public controversy. The play was widely discussed and attacked before it even came to a stage, largely by the Jewish Diaspora in Britain and the US (see Weiss, Philip. "Too Hot for New York." *The Nation* 16 March 2006, <http://www.thenation.com/article/too-hot-new-york?page=0.0>, accessed 28 March 2011). It has been regarded as not really a 'forged' but 'garbled' document, an instance of one testimony being given at a greater trial, while 'the other side' was not given a voice (Davis, Clive. "My Name Is Rachel Corrie." Review. *The Times*, 18 April 2005).

⁸⁶ This is the Goering, Speer, Streicher, Hess, Rosenberg trial for genocides and crimes against peace and humanity.

⁸⁷ Relating to the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia in July 1995.

⁸⁸ On the inquiry into the death of Dr. David Kelly, the British Government's chief advisor on Iraq's chemical and biological weapons programme, who seems to have taken his life in July 2003 after being named the source who leaked the government's exaggerations concerning Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction to the press.

assembling 'documents' as evidence and presenting them as a prosecuting council might assemble a case. Often it is governments or their institutions that 'stand accused' (Paget 1998: 110). While Norton-Taylor's *Justifying War* is set up much like a classical documentary court drama,⁸⁹ in that it presents edited transcripts taken from the evidence of twelve witnesses in the first part of the David Kelly inquiry, Robin Soans takes a different approach in his 2005 play *Talking to Terrorists*. Evidently reconstructing the scenes of the interviews, a multitude of conversations lay out an intricate and extensive international map, not only of people who have been involved in terrorism, but also of politicians, diplomats, former hostages, psychologists, and journalists. Not following a specific narrative strand, the play offers an apparently unmediated personal account of different people's truths and experiences that leave the slightly uneasy feeling of empathy for many of the viewpoints and personal histories presented, not all of them necessarily taking up tenable positions. It is, in this respect, quite similar to *Via Dolorosa* (1998), David Hare's monologue about his visit to Israel and Palestine in the role of the 'embedded playwright', which can be seen as a prime example of banking on authenticity to approach a notion of the truth. The play is a first-hand eye-witness report, performed by the author himself, who deliberately styles himself as a non-actor, somewhat naïvely entering the intellectual fray and trying to expose the various weaknesses of arguments by confronting them with the bemused attitude of a visiting foreigner. Chris Megson comments that Hare seems to use verbatim address and personal testimony to a greater extent when he aims at discussing complex political issues (2007: 122).

Victoria Brittain's and Gillian Slovo's play *Guantánamo. 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'*, using testimony by five British detainees in the US-American detention centre, was commissioned in 2004 by the London Tricycle theatre, which has been a key location for verbatim drama in British contemporary theatre. But on a bigger stage and with a longer run, David Hare's 2004 play *Stuff Happens* presents a more complex and interesting case of documentary drama⁹⁰, because technically, it is not fully based on testimony: it is the partly news-based, partly imagined account of the events that led to the British/US-American invasion into Iraq in 2003. Hare employs a similar approach as used in the plays from the 1960s: he explores actual political and/or historical events and incorporates factual material into the dramatic text. Different from 1960s docudrama, however, *Stuff Happens* is 'post-

⁸⁹ Richard Norton-Taylor prefers to call his plays 'tribunal plays' (Hammond and Steward 2008: 105; also see Megson 2007). He also does not refer to himself as a playwright, but as the editor of transcripts (Giese 2009: 214).

⁹⁰ In this case, exactly in the sense of how Paget defines the type in contrast to drama-documentary (1998: 114); see above.

ideological', not targeting a general system of political thought or government, but a specific group of politicians and their actions (Wessendorf 2007: 340). In the author's note, David Hare speaks in favour of artistic freedom and of emplotment:

The events within [the play] have been authenticated from multiple sources. What happened happened. Nothing in the narrative is knowingly untrue. Scenes of direct address quote people verbatim. When the doors close on the world's leaders and on their entourage, then I have used my imagination. This is surely a play, not a documentary, and driven, I hope, by its themes as much as by its characters and story. (2004: xi)

In this play, the 'testimonial' parts are comprised of factual material drawn from historically verifiable press conferences, public speeches and statements of the actual political players, all incorporated into a fictional dramatic text. As in the case of Mann's *Still Life*, the reception of the play relies on the spectators' collective past and individual memory. To a Western audience of a certain age-group (i.e., old enough to have seen or read, or otherwise 'witnessed', these statements at the time they were originally given), large parts of this material are well known, as are all of the political figures portrayed on stage. Oddly enough, however, the characters only really become credible to the audience when they are alone with each other in undocumented situations, when there are no constraints of attestable reality, allowing the author to imagine their dialogues and call on a sympathy facilitated by the general mistrust towards the sorts of statements politicians would give in a public context. In the fictionalised parts, the focus is often on the semantics of arranging 'information' for the public about the planned attacks and the state of war, thus depriving the publicly verifiable 'facts' of congruence with 'truth' (a notion also taken up by Jennifer Farmer's short one-scene play *Words, Words, Words* [2007]⁹¹).

Dearlove⁹²: We have a source who is saying that the Iraqi military are able to deploy chemical or biological weapons within twenty to forty-five minutes of an order to do so.

There is a moment's silence.

Blair: This is a source of your own?

⁹¹ **Young Woman**: 'The systematic killing of all the people from a national, ethnic or religious group' Eight letters.

Annan: Eight.

Aid Worker: Starts with 'g'.

Young Woman: Starts with 'g'. Genocide.

Journalist: Genocide?

Annan: Be quiet! ... You used the 'g' word! ... We can't use that word!

Young Woman: What's wrong with calling it what it is? Genocide. ...

Annan: Because then we'd have to do something. (Farmer 2007: 34)

Richard Norton-Taylor remarks: 'The stage is perhaps better suited to portraying these casual evasion tactics than any other art form or medium of communication' (Hammond and Steward: 114).

⁹² Sir Richard Billing Dearlove, head of MI6 1999-2004.

Dearlove: Not exactly. ...

Blair: Richard, it's not in anyone's interest that this information should be wrong.

Dearlove: Clearly.

Blair: If the weapons inspectors go back in, and – God forbid – any of these weapons are found not to exist, then my life as Prime Minister will become very difficult indeed.

Dearlove *waits.*

Can you - what I'm asking – can you promise this information is sound? ...

What did he say? 'Twenty to forty-five? ... Use forty-five. (63-65)

In spite of its subjectivity as displayed by the choice of verbatim material, the lack of contextual scenes in which this material is displayed and its propagandistic parts – though not being in the form of a tribunal play, it is very much a court drama putting the government on trial – *Stuff Happens* offers a fairly adequate portrayal of how the general public perceived the historical situation leading to the war in Iraq, and how inseparable the state of war is from state propaganda. Its dramatic strength derives from scenes which have no strict documentary supporting a sceptical view about documentary drama as a form.

A Crisis of Truth: Testimony and 'Vicarious' Trauma

One can observe an interesting interface between trauma and docudrama, for which a detour into the field of psychoanalysis proves useful. Referring to Julia Kristeva's essay 'The True-Real' (1979), Paget points out that documentary drama's 'different position on the "facts-truth axis"' renders it a potential danger 'to a hegemony under threat.' He considers Kristeva's exposition of what she terms *le vréal*, an amalgam of '*le vrai*' and '*le réel*',⁹³ which describes 'the fundamental instability of the facts-truth axis in the twentieth century' (1990: 29). Speaking about 'the spectacles of mass terror and terrorism' and the languages of the unnameable as represented by psychoanalysis and modern art, Kristeva observes that the true 'has lost its former logical and ontological security, and is now expressed instead as the true-real' (Kristeva 1986: 217). It is perhaps noteworthy that Kristeva identifies psychosis as the crisis of truth in language (218), allowing for an assertion of the connection between trauma and the documentary play via the testimonial mode in the language of psychoanalysis.

⁹³ 'When we listen to the contemporary forms of discourse that try to expound on its source and development, we recognize that the great disruptive force in present-day speech can be summed up as follows: the *truth* they seek (to say) is the *real*, that is, the 'true-real' [*vréal*]' (216, emphasis in the original).

In her work on trauma in literature Cathy Caruth defines a 'crisis of truth' as a poignant mark of our era, echoing Kristeva's assertion of the connection between psychosis and the perception of reality.⁹⁴ Such a crisis, Caruth writes,

extends beyond the question of individual cure and asks how we in this era can have access to our own historical experience, to a history that is in its immediacy a crisis to whose truth there is simply no access. (Caruth 1995: 6)

Caruth refers here to Holocaust testimonies and works of fiction based on these. As analysed in several earlier publications by Dori Laub, a defining experience of the Holocaust has been the frequent denial of the events to the extent that the victims could not rely on any witnesses, thus effectively wiping out the memory. History therefore takes place without a witness, and victims find themselves 'being inside the event that made unthinkable the very notion that a witness could exist' (Laub 1992: 81). A pivotal part of the constitution of trauma is precisely this lack of a witness. Consequently, it is essential for victims of trauma to have the recollection or the revisiting of their trauma witnessed by somebody else, in order to testify for the event to have happened, to 'recapture the lost truth of that reality', and to allow for the victims to face their loss. 'What matters is the experience itself: living through testimony, giving testimony' (84-91, here: 85). Exploring education and crisis in connection with trauma theory, Shoshana Felman reasons that such testimony occurs in court

when the facts upon which justice pronounces its verdict are not clear, when historical accuracy is in doubt, and when both the truth and its supporting elements or evidence are called into question. The legal model of the trial dramatizes, in this way, a contained, and culturally channelled, institutionalized, crisis of truth. The trial both derives from and proceeds by a crisis of evidence, which the verdict must resolve. (17)

Besides Felman's noteworthy use of the term 'dramatize', hinting at the artificial composition of a legal trial and indeed at its theatricality – Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (458 BC) is the first courtroom drama – it is important to recognise that the term 'testimony' belongs to both a legal and a therapeutic tradition. The affiliation with law terminology explains why the term carries a truth claim with it; and this translates into the truth claim of verbatim theatre and other documentary drama using testimonies as source material. The affiliation with the therapy tradition in turn explains the air of the sacrosanct that surrounds testimony – the widespread assumption that it does not have an aura in the Benjaminian sense, that it is not tied to its circumstances and 'the artist's imaginative labour' (Kaufman 2005: 122), and the

⁹⁴ Caruth's work established trauma theory – until then only connected with psychoanalysis – within the field of literary analysis.

belief that, by continuous reproduction and citation of the supposedly autonomous testimony, an absolute version of the truth can be recreated on stage.

Both the therapeutic and the legal tradition rely greatly on the performative aspect of testimony: to be valid, it needs an audience. Now that the discourse of testimony has moved from its restricted usage in the legal context to the fore of the contemporary cultural narrative, the question arises: whose trauma exactly is being 'unearthed' and negotiated in the case of the contemporary plays based on testimony? The characters giving testimony on stage are not the actual victims; they are depicted by actors that chose to be on stage simulating the experience, while the original victims had no choice. In consequence, a trauma reproduced on stage does not constitute trauma in its original sense; it is a copy. Can the audience therefore 'vicariously' experience the trauma, as is frequently claimed in a therapy as well as in a media-related context?⁹⁵ Indeed, many of the plays using testimony as a theatrical device are not even concerned with traumatic events in the strictest sense at all, as the term is used more and more loosely.

'Testimony ... contains a lacuna', Agamben argues in his discussion of Holocaust testimony: those who can testify have survived and can thus not testify on the more common experience of not surviving. In a Holocaust situation, the survivor is the exception, not the rule, and 'this lacuna calls into question the very meaning of testimony and, along with it, the identity and reliability of the witnesses' (1999: 33). He refers to novelist Primo Levi's memoirs of Auschwitz, in which he asserted that the survivors as witnesses speak instead of those who did not survive the camps, they bear witness 'by proxy'⁹⁶, 'to a missing testimony', and the value of testimony is thus changed substantially (34). 'But not even the survivor can bear witness completely, can speak his own lacuna,' Agamben notes (39), as the unspoken testimonies always linger around the spoken ones. At the heart of each testimony sits 'the true cipher ... the *larva* that our memory cannot succeed in burying, the unforgettable with whom we must reckon' (81). The distinction between Agamben's discussion of this lacuna and Caruth's inaccessible truth at the heart of the historical crisis is that Agamben's assessment is based on the notion of the Holocaust, of which the most common experience is

⁹⁵ For example by E. Ann Kaplan, 2005: 87. In her study *Trauma Culture. The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (2005), Kaplan discusses the impact of trauma both on the individual and on entire cultures or nations and about the need to share and 'translate' such traumatic impact (Kaplan 2005: 1). Referring to media reporting on the Rwandan genocide and on the Iraq war, she points out the phenomena of vicarious trauma and 'empty' empathy, arguing that most people encounter trauma vicariously through media rather than directly, and that this results in symptoms of secondary trauma. Arguing that such vicarious trauma invites members of a society to confront, rather than conceal, catastrophes, Kaplan concedes that it might also arouse anxiety and trigger defence against further exposure (87) – Ravenhill addresses this in the fourth play of his cycle *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*.

⁹⁶ In: Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, New York: Random House, 1989: 84.

not to survive, whereas Caruth's, Laub's and Felman's assessment of the impossibility of telling approaches the notion of trauma from a psychoanalytical point of view. Caruth describes a cipher in the generation of trauma when she says that

[t]he historical power of trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all ... it is not fully perceived as it occurs. (1995: 8).

A traumatic history can thus only be understood by acknowledging that the traumatic event itself is inaccessible (*ibid.*). Thus, when Agamben argues that the principal witnesses to the Holocaust are missing because they have not survived, the same cannot be said about, for example, a mass rape, which *can* be survived – but can it be remembered? The theory of trauma claims that testimony to such a traumatic event cannot be

a completed statement, a totalisable account of those events. In the testimony, language is in process and in trial, it does not possess itself as a conclusion, as the constation of a verdict or the self-transparency of knowledge. Testimony is, in other words, a discursive *practice*, as opposed to a pure *theory*. (Felman 1995: 16-17, emphases in the original)

But as certain plays in the last 20 years have shown, it is quite possible to depict the traumatic experience of war by other aesthetic means than by resorting to verbatim theatre and testimony. Several of the New War plays portray the war trauma amongst other things, such as Mouawad's *Scorched*, in which Nawal internalises the trauma by refusing to speak, an action repeated by her daughter Jeanne once she discovers the incest lying at the heart of their family. The parasite blinding *Midwinter's* Grenville is, of course, an internalised trauma as well. But of all the characters in the plays discussed, Maud most literally internalises the war in *Midwinter*. Unable to overcome the loss and deprivation, she ravenously consumes a dead horse, reminiscent of the four horsemen of the apocalypse: pestilence, war, famine and death,⁹⁷ thus making war a part of herself, and alluding to the generation of a trauma in the Freudian sense.

Jonathan Lichtenstein's *The Pull of Negative Gravity* (2004) and Naomi Wallace's *In the Heart of America* (1994) both explore the subject of traumatised war veterans in greater depth without employing testimonial evidence or the structures of the documentary genre. Instead, both playwrights chose to use fictionalised accounts of their characters' traumatisation. In order to assess the way in which the structures of trauma are manifest in these two plays, Christina Wald's research on the performative presentation of mental disorders in contemporary Anglophone drama offers helpful insight, as it suggests that

⁹⁷ See New Testament, Revelation of St. John, chapter VI, 1-8.

trauma drama approaches trauma from a post-traumatic perspective, thus following the assertion of trauma theory that trauma is constituted belatedly:

Rather than depicting abuse, Trauma Drama puts on view the post-traumatic, psychic repetition compulsions and traces the protagonists' attempt to come to terms with their traumatisation. (Wald 2007: 156)

Wald speaks of 'an aesthetic of traumatised realism', created by the 'combination of realist dramatic conventions with traumatic modes.' Arguing that the plays she groups under the heading 'trauma drama' are grounded in recognisable contemporary settings and in generally agreed realist conventions, she examines how the structures of traumatic experiences are employed as texturing devices for the plays, staging trauma's psychic returns and privileging the internal reality of the traumatised characters over external reality. With this departure from the realist convention, the play's arrangement and aesthetics are adapted to the structure of traumatisation. 'Trauma Drama', Wald declares, 'makes radical use of psychological realism, or maybe even more appropriately, of psychopathological realism' (158). She observes that in the plays trauma is staged 'as a performative malady' (*ibid.*, emphasis in the original) which

oscillates between performing and being performed and between working through and acting out. Trauma Drama integrates postmodern concerns with the loss of autonomy, with 'machineness' and 'being performed', but does so through the depiction of characters who are at the same time endowed with the agency to perform. (160)

Lichtenstein's returning soldier Dai loses part of his humanity during his deployment in Iraq. Now, he can hardly make himself understood, resulting in a powerless fury as he is losing his language and cannot give testimony on what has happened to him. In the terms of the previous chapter of this thesis, he is turned into the *homo sacer* from which his family recoils: a taboo in the family and on stage.

(*The Chinook approaches. Dai trembles.*)

Vi: You're trembling. Bad memories?

Dai: Yes. (*The Chinook passes over.*) Don't like. Don't like.

Vi: You'll be alright. Let it out. ...

Dai: You. Fucking. Fuck-pig bastards. ... I hate you. The things I have seen! It doesn't go away! The things I have seen! It doesn't go away! (Lichtenstein 2004: 61)

In order to banish the horrors they witnessed, Laub records that some survivors or witnesses of traumatising events have developed a sort of 'compulsive narration', which can become an all-encompassing life-task (Laub 62). For Dai, possibly in consequence of his impaired

ability to communicate, the experiences lead to the desire to block the ongoing stream of memories and to stifle the war within himself:

Dai: Mother! Faces!

Vi: Quiet.

Dai: Can't. ... Silence. I want silence.

Vi: They'll be here soon.

(**Dai** hands **Vi** a pillow.)

Dai: Smother me. (**Vi** refuses it.) Smother me.

Vi: No.

Dai: Smother me.

Vi: I can't.

Dai: You can. (**Dai** holds out the pillow. **Vi** accepts it.) Thank you.
(*She smothers him. He struggles vehemently. She stops.*) Again.

Vi: I can't.

Dai: Please. Before. They. Come. (64-66)

In several of the plays Wald examines, past and present as well as external and internal realities intermingle. By adapting dissociation as a dramatic mode, trauma is used as a spatio-temporal structuring device (156). There is an interesting connection to be made with Mary Kaldor's observation that in the case of the New Wars, time and space are equally distorted, as our hyperlinked awareness perceives a simultaneous and synchronised presence of distant places and different wars (2006, vii). Naomi Wallace's *In the Heart of America* (1994) refers to the First Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm⁹⁸, 1990-91) and the Vietnam War (1964-1975⁹⁹), specifically the My Lai massacre on March 16 1968, during which a unit of US soldiers killed between 400 and 500 Vietnamese civilians in the span of four hours.¹⁰⁰ The ghost of a murdered Vietnamese woman, stating she comes from Tu Cung (Wallace 2001: 116)¹⁰¹ returns to haunt an old soldier deployed to Iraq thirteen years later. Wald observes a problem in the staged representation of the literal return of the trauma, as they 'are always already representative and the actors' bodies on stage are part of a distinctively representative and mediated realm' (156). Thus, when the Vietnamese woman takes up her haunting of the soldier in earnest, in a reminiscence of the murdered daughter Beloved in

⁹⁸ Lue Ming's remark that she met Remzi 'in a bad storm' can also be read as an indication of place (2001: 92).

⁹⁹ These dates designate the so-called 'American' phase in the war in what is now called Vietnam. The whole military conflict stretched from 1946-1975.

¹⁰⁰ For an examination of the massacre and a representation of the subsequent judicial proceedings see Olson and Robert, 1998.

¹⁰¹ The original name of the village which had been renamed My Lai 1-6 by the American military (Clearly 2002: 5).

Toni Morrison's eponymous novel (1987), there is no question as to whether the play has any claim to authenticity in the sense discussed earlier in this chapter. The missing witness, the lacuna, enters the scene, correcting and adding to the partial testimony given by the soldier:

Lue Ming: March 16, 1968. Charlie Company...

Boxler: A unit of the America Division's Light Infantry Brigade entered —

Lue Ming: Attacked.

Boxler: Attacked an undefended village on the coast of Central Vietnam and took the lives —

Lue Ming: Murdered.

Boxler: And murdered approximately five hundred old men, women, and children. The killing took place over four hours. Sexual violations...

Lue Ming: Rape, sodomy.

Boxler: Anatomical infractions.

Lue Ming: Unimaginable mutilations.

Boxler: Unimaginable. Yes. ...It's over now. They say it's over.

Lue Ming: The past is never over. (134-135)

Wald points at the recent rise of the labels 'wound culture' and 'traumaculture', acknowledging that trauma is considered a dominant cultural formation for Western societies (2).¹⁰² As a cultural trope, trauma has been generalised to the extent that it loses all significance (1), but she maintains that it is the subject generating the most urgent cultural questions, 'among them the issues of experience, memory, the body, and representation' (3). She links trauma to the attempted interpretation of the centennial crises of the 1890s and 1990s, stating that it is 'a new means of interpretation for modernism and modernity in general, designating that part of personal or collective history which cannot be made up for, which remains inconceivable and inadequate' (3).

Mark Ravenhill's 2008 cycle *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* portrays this disposition in several of the individual short plays; most poignantly in the opening 'Women of Troy'. It depicts a chorus of mourning characters expressing their confusion and grief in the wake of the 2005 bus bombing in London. In their almost archetypical theatrical role, the mourners are reminiscent of the lamenting victims of war in Euripides' and Aeschylus' tragedies. But the scenario is turned on its head: these characters have not actually lost their relatives or loved ones and their homes. Contrary to the women of Troy, they are not the victims of a

¹⁰² Wald refers here to Roger Luckhurst (2003) and to Mark Seltzer's. *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

full-scale war in an invaded country, but middle-class citizen of a First World society subjected to a terrorist attack:

- You see. We are the good people. Just look at us. Take a look at us. Take a good look at all of us. Gathered here today. And what do you see? You see the good people. ...
- We are the – no doubt about that – good people.
- That's right, the good people. The good guys. The righteous ones.
- You're just blowing us up like this –
- It's frightening. It's horrific. It's horrible. (7-8)

'Being good' seems to be of central importance here. The characters display a clean, left-liberal, whole-food consuming conscience; 'I only eat good food,' another character says, 'Ethical food. Because I believe that good choices should be made when you're shopping. All of my choices are good choices' (8). Thus, the cycle starts with a play that portrays a society which seems to define itself by individualistic lifestyle choices. There is an aspect of 'buying oneself free' from ethical responsibilities. On the whole, the notion prevails that, as an individual, one has done 'nothing wrong' and thus cannot possibly be subjected to any kind of attack. One is part of the tribe of the 'good' people, the 'good guys', not to be confused with the Other, the bomb-throwers, the scum, those in whose lives the occurrence of terrorist attacks is more imaginable and acceptable.

I suggest that the opacity people currently perceive as being confronted with – the loss of trust in their governments, the manipulations they experience, the increasing feeling of insecurity as Western societies are attacked on home ground, by so-called 'home-grown terrorists', the involvement in wars for undisclosed reasons and under pretexts – consolidates to just such a 'crisis of truth' as observed by both Kristeva and Caruth (also see Megson 2007: 123). Thus, Paget comments on the late twentieth-century wish for theatre based in fact:

An all-too-human desire to trust in something (facts will do) is often undermined by an equally human suspicion that something is missing (even if we are not sure what). (1998: 104)

This leads to a peculiar case of what I have come to call a collective 'inverted trauma': we find ourselves in the position of wanting to be a witness, but not knowing to what kind of potentially traumatic event we are a witness. Nevertheless, Norton-Taylor insists that the act of 'witnessing ... the exposure of injustice as a group of spectators places a corporate responsibility on the audience to acknowledge that injustice – and, potentially, to act to prevent similar future injustices', arguing that the stage is the 'perfect place' to facilitate this process (Hammond and Steward 124). In direct consequence, verbatim theatre does not

attempt to re-enact the actual events that had produced the trauma, but to re-enact the interview, casting the audience in the role of a direct witness and confessor. However, the testimonial material presented in verbatim theatre plays might prove to be a surrogate testimony, supposed to fill a vacuum, the loss we feel as we are deprived of our function as witnesses in the world off stage. Megson enthuses that the verbatim productions, specifically the Tribunal format, 'enable their audiences to undertake a collective act of bearing witness', that they are 'acts of reclamation' (123). While testimony and documentary are often conflated in the context of verbatim theatre, it is important to remember the essential difference between the two: while a documentary uses testimonial evidence, it is not, in fact, of and by itself a testimony; neither in terms of its content, nor in terms of its modes of production. Thus, for example, Norton-Taylor, in *Justifying War*, reproduces 'Lord Hutton's Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr David Kelly' (Norton-Taylor 2003: 7) down to the situational exchange in the video interview with the late David Kelly's wife Janice Kelly on September 1st 2003¹⁰³:

Dingemans: Where had you met?

Kelly: We had met when he was at Leeds University. ...

Dingemans: Mrs Kelly, you will need to keep your voice up a wee bit, if that is all right.

Kelly: That is fine. (82)

But even if the edited transcripts of twelve witnesses appearing in the first part of the Inquiry are presented in a court-like setting and the production attempts to maintain the illusion of this being an actual hearing of the actual witnesses, it remains a documentary approach to the representation of the Inquiry.

The theatre company Version 1.0's use of the verbatim material relating to the Australian Senate Select Committee inquiry into the so-called 'Children Overboard affair' in 2002¹⁰⁴ differs greatly to Norton-Taylor's highly realistic theatrical presentation of documentary sources. In *CMI (A Certain Maritime Incident)* (2004), a 'mock-verbatim piece' (McCallum 2006: 128), the testimony, while almost untouched in the text, is subverted by the mode of production, which plays heavily on the conception of 'truth' and how it is commonly 'revealed':

¹⁰³ Megson comments that there is 'a general orientation towards hardcore illusionism' to be found in the tribunal plays (116-117).

¹⁰⁴ Also called 'SIEV (= Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel) 4 affair', the incident involved a boat carrying asylum seekers that approached the Australian coast on October 6th 2001. In an attempt to sway votes towards a stronger stance against immigration and foreign infiltration, it was falsely claimed by the government that passengers had thrown children overboard in order to exact asylum.

Vice Adm. Shackleton: ...This brings me back to the evidence I gave to the Senate on the 20th of February 2002, when I was asked about the 'fog of war'. My answer was:

She pulls out a brightly coloured beer coaster from her pocket, and reads from it. Her voice deepens and slows. The music volume increases.

It is related to the reality that everything is real but it is not real. You are trying to build a puzzle from many disconnected pieces. Sometimes the pieces fit accurately, sometimes they do not. You are dealing with millions of shades of grey and it is only as events start to get to the point of culmination that they start to form up into a real pattern, and then sometimes it disintegrates again as the events change. ... It is never absolutely right; it is never absolutely wrong. *The music cuts abruptly.* This is what I call 'the fog of war'¹⁰⁵. (Version 1.0 2004: 147-148)

While the text is largely taken directly from the transcripts, the performance is self-referential and continuously seeks to subvert 'the conventions of the supposedly "authentic"' (McCallum 138) as represented by verbatim theatre and the Tricycle productions since the mid-1990s. The actors 'keep drawing attention to the fact that they are not really senators, even though they are speaking their words', critic John McCallum reports and points out that the action on stage subverts 'the "authenticity" of testimony' by regarding the parliamentary discourse as 'another type of performance' (*ibid.*). It also refutes the convention of verbatim theatre as represented by Norton-Taylor.

Another interesting counter-example is the second act of Judith Thompson's play of three monologues, *Palace of the End* (2006). The whole play consists of imagined testimony, and the middle part comes closest to the attempt of addressing the lacuna Agamben speaks of, albeit in another historical context. This testimony, entitled 'Harrowdown Hill', is given by Dr David Kelly, in the last few moments of his life, his wrists already slit and the drugs already ingested.¹⁰⁶ 'Is this too much to ask? That you witness my death?' Kelly asks the audience, conceding that he does not want to be alone, but cannot have his loved ones stay with him, because, naturally, 'they would revive me' (Thompson 2007: 24-25). The audience most certainly will not interfere – the death of David Kelly and the surrounding circumstances being far too intriguing to interrupt his speech – and so one of the two characters in Thompson's play who are already dead at the time of production and whose real-life models thus will never give a testimony any more, now demonstrates that the

¹⁰⁵ A military term: Clausewitz describes as the 'fog of war' the problem of geographically and cartographically knowing an area, but having to deploy one's own recon to obtain information about the precise circumstances important for a military operation (Clausewitz 84).

¹⁰⁶ Thompson leaves little room for interpretation that, at least in her narration of the event, David Kelly took his own life.

testimony of the dead is only possible as imagined account, and what is, naturally, imagined is an account of, finally, the truth:

To *hell* with vows of secrecy, professional confidentiality.
To *hell* with my pension.
To *hell* with my life as I know it.
The *truth* the truth must out.
He yells.
I want to tell the TRUUUUUUUUUUUUUTH.
The truth the truth the truth the truth the awful horrible, terrible.
Truth truth truth truth truth truth truth .
And out it poured. (28-29)

By providing a satisfactory version of that 'truth', theatre returns to the traditionally assumed role of art: to bring about an emotional process of purgation, regeneration and reconciliation inherent to the concept of *katharsis*. Such an emphasis on its regenerative and restorative powers sees drama as 'the *pharmakon* of social and personal malaise' (Taxidou 113-115). Thus, theatre holds the potential to account for collective trauma, but also to provide a remedy. *Pharmakon* in its full sense, however, is both a poison and a cure (*ibid.* 114). While documentary theatre permits a keyhole view onto complex structures and events, the wider context remains obscure. Audiences seldom take into account that testimony does not offer completed statements or a totalisable account of the events (Felman 1995: 17), that there is, in fact, an aura to testimony which they choose to ignore. The unique emotional experience of theatre seems to have a numbing effect on the ability to perceive what is presented as biased, neglecting the whole process of editing and arranging connected to the generation of a responsible documentary drama. Concerning the testimony presented in *Guantánamo. 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'*, the play's director emphasises that there was a 'strict rule of being 100 per cent verbatim' (Kellaway 2004). In a display of deep trust into the authenticity of 'facts', author Gillian Slovo states:

To fictionalize the play would have deprived it of its power, deprived it of the fact that this is fact. I don't think you could have made up something quite as bizarre as what these people have been through. Audiences wouldn't believe it. (qtd. in Metz 2006)

It seems as if the taglines used as subtitles or teasers for movies, and increasingly also for documentary and verbatim-theatre plays, such as 'based on a true story' or 'taken from spoken evidence' (as it appears for example, on *Guantánamo*) function as a quality feature, proudly announcing that, in fact, there is nothing artificial, no art, to be found in this play – as if art *ipso facto* involved a distorting of the truth. However, '[t]o bear witness is to place oneself in one's own language in the position of those who have lost it [their language],' Agamben observes. In a lucid defence of the created as opposed to the cited, he maintains

that Friedrich Hölderlin's statement *Was bleibt aber, stiften die Dichter* (what remains is what the poets found¹⁰⁷)

is not to be understood in the trivial sense that poets' works are things that last and remain throughout time. Rather, it means that the poetic word is the one that is always situated in the position of a remnant and that can, therefore, bear witness. Poets – witnesses – found language as what remains, as what actually survives the possibility, or impossibility, of speaking. (161)

And ironically, it might yet be the aesthetic that achieves more satisfying results: a point Harold Pinter makes in his moving stand for political theatre:

But the real truth is that there never is any such thing as one truth to be found in dramatic art. There are many. These truths challenge each other, recoil from each other, reflect each other, ignore each other, tease each other, are blind to each other. (2005: 1)

Dramatists as well as audiences therefore have to allow for different truths to stand on the same page. Contemporary documentary plays and plays based on testimony certainly define society's loss of trust and hunger for unmediated information.

The Pornography of Grief and Ungrievable Lives

Ann Kaplan records a specific kind of media reporting which encourages a form of sentimentality that she calls 'empty empathy': the viewers or newspaper readers are presented with a daily 'barrage of images', almost all of them mere fragments of a large and complex situation in a foreign culture. The focus on the individual rather than on the larger implications of the global crisis allows the viewer or reader a sentimental response to the events instead of inviting a critical reflection on the situation (93-94). The empathy is 'empty' because it is not actually tied to a larger context, because the crisis has not really been grasped, nor is there any interest in doing so.

The tenth play in Ravenhill's collection is called "War of the Worlds". It is this play which brings the ridicule of the public 'mourning sickness', a term coined by cultural historian Patrick West (2004), to new heights. Like the first play, it does not name individual characters; the indention and dash suggest that another actor speaks. The scene depicts the chorus of people of a city engaged in a public demonstration of grief – for somebody else:

- We've never seen such sickening things on our televisions.
- These are the most sickening things ever to be seen on television. ...
- I'm so sorry. I don't know you. But will you hold me and share my grief?

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Heller-Roazen's translation of the last line of Hölderlin's poem "Andenken" (Remembrance); 'found' is here to be read in the sense of 'create'.

- Of course I'll hold you. Of course I'll share your grief.
- Thank you. This feels right, doesn't it? Isn't it right when there's so much pain that we all come together like this and hold each other and share each other's pain?
- May I cry?
- Of course of course – let it out – let go – drive it out of you – drive the sadness out for all of us to see. Here – everyone, see – look now – all of you look at this one woman – as I drive the sadness out of her – come grief – come pain – come howl – come – YES! (120-3)

'Modernity', Simon Stow states, 'has been marked by a triumph of private grief over public mourning; in memorialization, pornography is now the dominant mode' (2008: 224). In his analysis of the *New York Times*' "Portraits of Grief", a series of brief essayistic portraits of the individual victims of the terror attacks the daily newspaper ran from September 12, 2001 to September 10, 2002, Stow criticises such a public indulgence in grief, observing the 'frenzied emotion that it necessarily engenders, that which ... robs the victims of the balanced perspective that the Greeks believed was essential to democratic discourse' (224). Drawing on the notion that death has become a taboo subject in our society, he suggests that

the act of not dealing with death, or its by-product, grief, may play itself out in an excessive and deeply conflicted fascination with the subject in the public sphere. In this sense, the pornography of grief embodied by the *New York Times*'s 'Portraits of Grief' is a part of the broader pornography of death that has framed the depiction of the events of 9/11. (237)

Pointing out the close relationship between pornography and melodrama, Stow traces the discussion of pornography being a 'body genre', scrutinising the

claim of the pornographic to encompass the pleasure that emerges from 'the deferral of satisfaction itself'¹⁰⁸. ... In this sense, it is – in part at least – the endless repetition and deferral of satisfaction that may generate much of the pleasure in the pornographic even ... to the point of boredom. (235)

In the context of grief, the sought-after satisfaction is equally of a bodily nature – the discharge of tears – as the satisfaction desired in the context of pleasure; and Stow argues that the daily publication of these 'snapshots' of lives demanding to be grieved and invariably generating tears bears more than a little resemblance to the repetitive mode of pornographic stimulation. In the recent usage of the term 'pornographic' for the general, also non-sexual, graphic, detailed, often gratuitous, depiction of something, there is an element of the 'uncalled-for', unjustified by the circumstances, groundless. Thus, the equally recent

¹⁰⁸ Stow refers here to Zabet Paterson. "Going On-line: Consuming Pornography in the Digital Era." *Porn Studies*. Ed. Linda Williams. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. 104-23. Here: 109.

phenomenon of 'recreational grieving' lends itself to be labelled 'pornographic': already the very sampling of personal testimony in the cultural narrative of survival and 'survival-by-proxy' mirrors the mechanical reproduction and repetition of the pornographic.

Simon Stephens's 2007 play *Pornography* portrays a fragmented London society in the days leading up to the 2005 terrorist attacks. The play shares a certain formlessness with Ravenhill's cycle of shorts – Stephens invites directors to shift the text around, to use as many actors as seem feasible; and the individual lines are not ascribed to specific characters. In the terms of the previous chapter, this play portrays a society on the cusp of a 'sacrificial crisis' (Girard 46, 51). Depicting several scenes of transgression in the public and private sphere and centring on a man travelling through the country towards London with the intention of detonating a bomb inside the train, the play leads up to a roll call of 52 victims of a terrorist attack. The roll call consists of obituary snippets, excluding the names of the victims, achieving an oddly individualised and at the same time impersonal effect, reminiscent of the *New York Times*' "Portraits of Grief". In the same play, one character dismisses the intrusion into the privacy of grief which has become standard in different media in recent years:

You'll see them talking about their loss. Maybe their child has been abducted. Or they lost a lover in a terrorist attack. Or a natural disaster. ... And they always do this! They'll be talking perfectly normally. ... But then the thought of their lost one, of their child or their lover or their colleague, hits them like a train. And their voices catch in their throats and they can't carry on. Tears well up in their eyes. And what we do is, we stay with them. Every time. We hold them in our gaze for a good twenty seconds before the cut. It has become a formula. (Stephens 2009: 232)

While theatre might offer a glimpse of the truth, it is also manipulative, as shown by the example of Gregory Burke's 2006 play *Black Watch*, a National Theatre of Scotland production. Based on interviews with servicemen and ex-servicemen who served with the legendary Royal Highland Regiment, the Black Watch, the play is centred on the deployment of the Scottish infantry regiment to Camp Dogwood in Iraq in 2004, while also offering a history of the regiment which has been a crucial subject of identification for local communities over the last two centuries. It is a tribute play, a performance-based war memorial. In contrast to the empty tomb of the unknown soldier, though, this play specifically offers a face and a name for the audience to attach their mourning to. During its tour through Scotland, the theatre actively invited friends and family members of the soldiers who were deployed to Iraq at the time, also of soldiers who were killed in Iraq, to attend the performances. Many of the members of the audience came out of the theatre in tears, stating how moved they were by the production, how the production allowed them to publicly

acknowledge their friends and family in active service. Over a scene in which three soldiers die in a suicide bombing, a Gaelic lament is played¹⁰⁹, further tying the play to its Scottish roots and evoking a very real connection with the audience and with the community out of which the regiment as well as the script were forged. The play relies heavily on the unique standing of the regiment in Scotland: throughout the play, there are several references to the regiment being a tribe, recruiting almost all its soldiers from the same area in Fife (Burke 2007: 30-1):

Cammy: We started before Culloden. We dinnay really ken when. 1715, or maybe 1725. When Scotland was an independent nation we were fucking mercenaries tay half ay fuckin Europe. But it was 1739 when we really threw our lot in way the British. ... Since 1745 the Black Watch has fought all over the world. A lot ay the time we've been used in tribal conflicts. We're good at them.

Beat.

We're a fucking tribe ourselves. (Burke 2007: 30-31)

The local roots of this regiment not only carry the text, they are an integral part of the staging of the play. 'When images of the war dead are connected with the grief of their families, especially mothers, receiving their bodies,' Carol Acton writes, 'they become particularly potent in their ability to undermine wartime aims' (2007: 2). She argues that the available discourses and their validation in wartime are strictly limited and are defined by the binaries 'of enemy and ally, masculine and feminine, front and home, while reinforcing public and private behaviour designed to support the war effort.' Thus, meaning is subscribed to wartime death, limiting or silencing grief and replacing it with abstractions of honour and pride (5). In this way, the act of publicly mourning one's dead children can become a strong critique of the war effort they were engaged in.¹¹⁰

In tragedy, lament becomes a matter of mimesis. In Athenian theatre, mimesis is not mere representation, but archetypal re-enactment: 'Far from being an *imitation* of real-life genres, the dramatized lament of Athenian state theatre is taken to be a *model*.' For Plato, there was a danger 'not only in the representation but also in the reality that is being represented, namely, the real behavior of real women as they lament their dead' (Gregory Nagy in Loraux 1990: ix-x, emphasis in the original). The danger of such grief is the closeness between grief and anger. The emotions of grief, the source of lament, spill over into emotions of anger and rage. 'When mourning cannot end, when it becomes anger that can never be erased from the mind,' Nicole Loraux argues, 'we see the ultimate justification for revenge, for the spirit of

¹⁰⁹ 'A Thearlaich Òig' ('Oh Young Charles Stewart', aka 'Chisholm Lament'), a lament relating to the Battle of Culloden.

¹¹⁰ It is perhaps an interesting twist of fate that the New Wars happen to take place in a geographical area where public grieving is much more part of the culture than it is in the West.

vendetta, for all the horrors of retaliation, against earlier horrors' (xi-xii). It is this 'contaminating quality of mimesis', originating in enactment, which Plato fears will 'trigger a social epidemic' (Taxidou 2004: 6). Of course, mourning is also potentially demagogical; it provides the opportunity for a state or community to tell stories about itself, which are essential to the creation of what Benedict Anderson calls the 'imagined community' of the nation (Stow 228).

Early in Burke's play, an extract from the BBC Four's *Today* programme is recreated, discussing three Black Watch soldiers who died in a suicide bombing during their deployment in Iraq. In the following scene, again a recreation of a well-known publicised media event, the rhetoric of public grief and its instrumentalisation for political ends is clearly demonstrated:

John Humphrey: ... The dead soldiers will, of course, be mourned, are being mourned. With me are the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, and the leader of the Scottish National Party, Alex Salmond, who says grief will be replaced by something else.

Alex Salmond: I think it will give way to a wave of anger as Scotland and the Black Watch families compare and contrast the bravery of our Scottish soldiers with the duplicity and chicanery of the politicians who sent them into this deployment.

John Humphrys: Is that anger justified, Mr. Hoon?

Geoff Hoon: No, it is not, and I'm afraid the leader of the Scottish Nationalists' comments demonstrate clearly there are not depths to which he will not sink to seek ... He and his colleagues and other Members of Parliament who raise that issue were given absolute assurances by me, by the Prime Minister, by other members of the Government, that there was simply no political motive underlying this request. ...

Alex Salmond: The Black Watch have been sent in to do an impossible job – eight hundred Scottish soldiers are replacing four thousand American marines and we're actually expected to believe that one hundred and thirty thousand American soldiers in Iraq couldn't do that job. (Burke 2007, p. 8-9)

The adaptation from a live radio show to live theatre again connects the grief with visible bodies, employs the dependence of testimony on liveness and on witnessing.

The immense success of the play not only in Scotland, where this flagship production of the recently established National Theatre of Scotland has been hailed as the new 'Scottish Play', can be traced back to the combination of a local theatre tradition rooted in oral history and music with the subject of a community in need of being able to commemorate and publicly mourn their soldiers.

The sociologist Tony Walter argues that bereavement is originally 'an invention of the romantic movement'; to immerse in grief is 'a luxury only to be afforded by those with the

requisite time and space' (1999: 35-36). By now, though, people from the West seem to be grieving according to a natural and inner 'grief process'

supported or inhibited by culture but not interacting with it in any more complex way, whereas in the past and outside of the white West, grief is assumed to interact with culture in important and subtle ways. (xv)

In their study on journalism in a culture of grief, Carolyn Kitch and Janice Hume agree that 'the attention paid to deaths that are seen as socially symbolic has never been more public.' Considering the way in which grief is conducted in and through the media, they propose that public mourning has returned to an almost Victorian level of ritual (2008: xii).

'Today, otherwise uninvolved people respond emphatically to news of the deaths of young soldiers, who might have been 'anyone's' son or daughter,' explain Kitch and Hume, commenting on the publicising of very personalised newspaper and online obituaries. When covering murder or disaster,

television news programs and newspapers transmit images of mourning rituals that seem to be a form of direct communication from the grieving subjects to the news audience. Because these violent incidents transcend the private grief of immediate family and community, ... they blur any concept of a boundary between what has historically been called the public and private spheres. (xxi)

Stow asserts that the community 'addicted to the pornography of grief can only demand more and more explicit material – that which is likely to distort the democratic process by making *mênis* [= the grief that turned to wrath], not careful deliberation our dominant mode.' He denominates the launching of the current 'war on terror' as proof for the grief-wrath of *mênis* (238).

In her recent essays on war and grief, Judith Butler discusses how the objectification and dehumanisation of the cultural Other allows for the withholding of grief and for the killing of the Other. She argues that while we protect certain lives, while the termination of their claims to sanctity are sufficient to mobilize the forces of war, other lives are not subject to this protection and do not qualify as 'grievable', either (2004: 32). The value of life is only ever asserted in the possibility of its loss, in its precariousness, she reasons, when it is determined whether the loss of a certain life would matter or not: 'grievability is a presupposition for the life that matters' (2009: 14). If a life is deemed as not grievable, it is not counted as a life:

there is no life, or, rather, there is something living that is other than life. ... The apprehension of grievability precedes and makes possible the apprehension of precarious life. Grievability precedes and makes possible the apprehension of the living being as living, exposed to non-life from the start. (15)

In this respect, the bare life, the *homo sacer*, is not grievable if its loss is not an 'actual', a perceived loss. Returning to Agamben (and indeed to Aristotle), *bios* is thus not defined by attributes of citizenship, but rather by qualifying for grievability. The division into grievable and ungrievable lives, into lives 'perceived as lives' and those which, 'though apparently living, fail to assume perceptual form as such', allows for the sorting of populations into groups of those whose lives need to be preserved and those whose loss is acceptable (24). The fact that a life can always be lost leads 'to a specific exploitation of targeted populations, of lives that are not quite lives': lives that have been framed as dispensable and thus have become dispensable. In spite of their obvious precariousness, they are not perceived as vulnerable and in need of protection but rather as a threat to those lives which are recognised as grievable, as actual lives (31). Contemporary political life in a multicultural society is brought to a crucial test when 'not everyone counts as a subject', as some communities are disregarded and their subjects are perceived as 'living, but not yet regarded as "lives"' (31-32). The division of the world population into lives that are grievable and ungrievable can be observed 'from the perspective of those who wage war in order to defend the lives of certain communities, and to defend them against the lives of others – even if it means taking those latter lives' (38). The ungrievable lives cannot be mourned, Butler emphasises,

because they are always already lost, or, rather, never 'were,' and they must be killed, since they seem to live on, stubbornly, in this state of deadness. Violence renews itself in the face of the apparent inexhaustibility of its object. The derealization of the 'Other' means that it is neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral. The infinite paranoia that imagines the war against terrorism as a war without end will be one that justifies itself endlessly in relation to the spectral infinity of its enemy, regardless of whether or not there are established grounds to suspect the continuing operation of terror cells with violent aims. (2004: 33-34)

In Mark Ravenhill's first play of his collection of shorts, discussed earlier in this chapter, this notion seems to have been taken up by the following exchange:

- I see nothing when I look at you.
- I see ... darkness. I see –
- Everything that is ... you are opposite and – oh shit, this is hard
- You are so different. ...
- You are not a person. I don't see you as a person. I've never seen you as a person. You're a bomb. I look at you. And all I see is a bomb. I see you there now and I see you and I hear you ticking away and I feel frightened and angry and disgusted. That's what I feel. ("Women of Troy", 12)

Butler speaks out against the idea that grief is privatising and depoliticising, arguing instead that it offers a sense of political community of a complex order by emphasising the relational

ties and their implications for theorising mutual dependency and ethical responsibility (2004: 22). Grief should be a 'point of departure for a new understanding', she states, 'if the narcissistic preoccupation of melancholia can be moved into a consideration of the vulnerability of others' (*ibid.* 30). She refers to Aeschylus's *Oresteia* when she proposes to refuse the cycle of violence in the name of justice founded in grief, to form the world anew by taking into account how it came to be involved in this cycle of mourning and violence in the first place (*ibid.* 17).

It is at this point that one might want to consider Caryl Churchill's short play *Seven Jewish Children*, staged first in London in February 2009, written as a response to the situation in Gaza in January of the same year. In seven very short scenes, the history of a state is evoked, leading up to the last scene, set that January. In every scene, the unnamed adult speakers discuss how to explain the respective current situation to a little girl: the persecution, the camps, the emigration, the division of the country, wars, Intifada, how to justify the air strikes against a neighbouring country, how to protect the child from fear and install a sense of being in the right. This is negotiated by evoking the past suffering of the people, by constructing and negating the Other, reaching a climax near the end:

Tell her, tell her about the army, tell her to be proud of the army.
Tell her about the family of dead girls, tell her their names why not,
tell her the whole world knows why shouldn't she know? Tell her
there's dead babies, did she see babies? Tell her she's got nothing to
be ashamed of. Tell her they did it to themselves. Tell her they
want their children killed to make people sorry for them, tell her
I'm not sorry for them, tell her not to be sorry for them, tell her
we're the ones to be sorry for, tell her they can't talk suffering to us.
(tableau 7)

As in Churchill's *Far Away*, this demonstrates how effectively the Other is excluded by stripping it of the attributes that designate a citizen and reducing it to bare life, to the *homo sacer*, the desired exclusion of which becomes rationale for a continuation of a war, which is fought from memory and often over memory. The incompatibility of the different narratives - none of them actually authentic, but all of them equally true - forming the identity of the central (but absent) character of a little girl points at the lacuna at the centre of the play, at the heart of the different testimonies, and to acknowledge this lacuna turns it into a taboo again - which is repeated in the off-stage, public discussion of this play.¹¹¹ The girl at the

¹¹¹ See, for example, the discussions on *The Atlantic* (Jeffrey Goldberg, "Caryl Churchill: Gaza's Shakespeare, or Fetid Jew-Baiter?" [www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2009/03/caryl-churchill-gaza-apos-s-shakespeare-or-fetid-jew-baiter/9823/ accessed 20.01.2011], also portrayed on Chris Wilkinson's theatre blog on *The Guardian's* website ("Noises off: Controversy about Caryl Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children* hits US" [www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2009/apr/01/caryl-churchill-noises-off accessed 20.01.2011]). The play also prompted other plays in response, for example Deborah S. Margolin's *Seven Palestinian*

centre of the play remains obscured, in 'darkness and silence', as it were, waiting to be mobilised for another turn of the war.

Children: A Play for the Other (available online: <http://www.neshamah.net/seven-palestinian-children>, accessed 25.02.2011).

Chapter IV

The Barbarian Palimpsest: Adaptations

*The National Library burned for three days last August and the
city was choked with black snow.
Set free from the stack, characters wandered the streets, mingling
with passers-by, and the souls of dead soldiers.*
Goran Simić

'I wish to enter a protest against the use of the *Trojan Women* or any other Greek tragedy as a means of furthering a peace movement, raising money for the Red Cross, or stirring up sentiment for any specific cause, however worthy,' it is stated in a complaint to *The English Journal's* "Round Table" section in 1915.¹¹² 'These great expressions of Greek genius', it continues,

have a message of their own which is of infinitely greater moment to the world than even the European war. To use them as mere instruments of propaganda is a crime against art. It is almost like robbing the sheeted dead. [...] The Greek figures were hopelessly overlaid by visions of bursting shrapnel in the Carpathians and Cossack raids in Eastern Prussia. Why should anyone be allowed to deface these lovely glimpses of the antique world by spraying over them an ill-smelling tincture of modernity? (Balaustion 1915: 398)

The 'ill-smelling tincture of modernity,' indeed. The anonymous author might have wished to be spared being reminded of contemporary atrocities while watching 'lovely glimpses of the antique world', but Euripides' tragedy, first performed in 415 BC, was not written as an uplifting, detached representation of an old legend. Possibly written during, and certainly performed immediately after the Athenians' massacre of the adult males and the enslavement of the women and children of the island of Melos, scholarship suggests it was intended to be adapted to contemporary war and conflict (Cartledge 1997: 31).

Relevance of Techniques and Terminology

Recently, the concept of adaptation has been newly assessed, and these discussions and theses are brought together very usefully by Linda Hutcheon's influential study *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006). In the light of her discussion of adaptation as a form of 'palimpsestic'

¹¹² 'Balaustion' is a pseudonym, probably in reference to Robert Browning's long poem "Balaustion's Adventure" (1871) set in 413 BC, in which the young girl Balaustion extracts herself and her fellow travelers from predicament by recounting a performance of Euripides' *Alcestis* (438 BC) – the poem is thus itself an adaptation of Euripides, in this case transposed into another medium. The actual name of the author of the complaint above remains anonymous.

intertextuality (7) and her thesis that it is both a process of 'creative reinterpretation' and a product of 'extensive, particular transcoding' (22), it is valuable to reconsider what is understood as an 'adaptation' and which questions are tied to this genre, with particular reference to ancient wars and contemporary ones.

Thucydides' "Melian Dialogue" in his *History of the Peloponnesian War* is an early example of adaptation: the dramatisation of the reports from Melos can be read as an attempt of simultaneously authenticating and aestheticising (and thus to a certain extent dissociating oneself from) the material. Historically adaptation is the norm rather than the exception in human cultural production (Hutcheon 2006: 177). Hutcheon cites the '(post-) Romantic valuing of the original creation and of the originating creative genius' as a reason for the common tendency in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to regard adaptation as inferior to what is, tellingly, called the 'source text' (3-4). In the introduction to their 2000 anthology of Shakespeare adaptations from the seventeenth century to the present, Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier maintain that 'adaptation' is not even the right term to be used, because there is no correct term, 'only labels with more or less currency, connection to history, and connotations both helpful and misleading' (2000: 2-3). They suggest the label 'appropriation' as more suitable, as it implies a form of 'hostile takeover, a seizure of authority over the original in a way that appeals to contemporary sensibilities steeped in a politicised understanding of culture' (3); and this term is later taken up by Julie Sanders in her historicising study *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006). Sanders considers both forms as 'sub-sections of the over-arching practice of intertextuality' (Sanders 2006: 17) and emphasises the dialogic interplay with the adapted or appropriated texts that characterise them (32, 62). While she sees 'adaptation' as a form of transposition, commentary and analogue (21-22), she credits 'appropriation' as having a more distant relationship to the appropriated text (26). Fischlin and Fortier go further when they argue that every dramatic production is already always a form of adaptation, as the dramatic text may be regarded as an 'incomplete entity that must be "translated" by being put on stage. Adaptation is, therefore, only an extreme version of the reworking that takes place in any theatrical production' (7; also see Sanders 48).¹¹³ Theatrical adaptation can be seen as an

intertextual apparatus, a system of relations and citations not only between verbal texts, but between singing and speaking bodies, lights, sounds, movements, and all other cultural elements at work in theatrical production. (Fischlin and Fortier 7)

Hutcheon clarifies that an adaptation as a 'formal entity or product' constitutes the 'extensive transposition of a particular work or works', often involving changes into a different

¹¹³ This goes against the common notion that a dramatic production is a realization of the text.

medium, genre or frame, as can, for example, be observed with the National Theatre's 2007 adaptation of Michael Morpurgo's novel *War Horse* (1982). The transposition may also involve altering the ontological category of a work, 'from the real to the fictional, from a historical account or biography to a fictionalized narrative or drama' (7-8), which is, of course, the premise for the previously discussed form of documentary drama, which adapts documents, historical sources and testimonial evidence onto the stage.

There are several ways of adapting material, and for the focus of this thesis, all of them apply. As a 'process of reception', adaptations may be classified as intertextual and can therefore be experienced 'as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation' (Hutcheon 7-8). Adaptations which clearly announce their relationship to the adapted text therefore display their different layers, as their connection to other works 'is part of their formal identity, but also of what we might call their hermeneutic identity' (21). These adaptations rely strongly on the audience's historical and cultural memory as well as on its 'acquaintance with the adapted text' to recognise 'difference as well as similarity' (21-22). Ravenhill's cycle *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* is an interesting case to be considered here. Although all of the individual titles are titles of epics or other well-known 'grand narratives', he adapts motifs and themes more than plots and relies on the audience to recognise the parallels or differences to the adapted text. And on first sight, to Churchill's *This Is a Chair* the term adaptation seems not to apply at all – but considering it an adaptation of the idea behind Magritte's painting, one recognizes that the play conforms quite accurately with the ideological set-up of the painting. It is a close adaptation of various pressing political and sociological issues of contemporary society precisely because it does not portray them at all but uses them as frames only.

The widespread theory that the plot is the 'common denominator' which can traverse distinct media and genres – the same plot could be treated in an epic, a play, a ballad, an opera, a ballet, a novel, as comedy, as farce, etc. – implies that the work, and its perceived success, depend on the similarities found in different sign systems for key elements of the story: 'themes, events, world, characters, motivations, points of view, consequences, contexts, symbols, imagery' (Hutcheon 10). However, Hutcheon points out that 'either a story can exist independently of any embodiment in any particular signifying system or, on the contrary, it cannot be considered separately from its material mode of mediation'¹¹⁴ (*ibid.*); again, the question of whether a story has an aura or not has to be considered.

¹¹⁴ Hutcheon refers to Millicent Marcus, *Filmmaking by the Book: Italian Cinema and Literary Adaptation*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993: 14.

If a work of art is submitted to a radical change in context, then the myriad corresponding contexts in which the work is created and received result in a change in the work's ideological and literary reception and interpretation, because the contexts of creation 'are material, public, and economic as much as they are cultural, personal, and aesthetic' (Hutcheon 28). Thus when, for example, Martin Crimp transposes Sophocles' *The Trachiniae* (430 BC), that story about the death of the great Greek warrior Heracles at the hands of his jealous wife, into the context of a contemporary 'war against terror' led by a Western alliance under the guidance of a ruthless general (*Cruel and Tender*, 2004), a fundamental update in meaning and intent occurs. Far from being focused mainly on questions of family loyalty and private betrayal, the story of a warlord ruthlessly killing the inhabitants of a whole city¹¹⁵ because he lusts after the daughter of the local ruler becomes a portrayal of, simultaneously, the atrocities committed during the genocides in Rwanda and Congo and the often questionable 'blanket' resolutions readily passed by Western countries involved in the war on terror: 'if you want to root out terror – and I believe we all of us want to root out terror – there is only one rule: kill,' the government minister Jonathan explains to the General's wife Amelia, à propos the sudden presence at the family residence of a young Rwandan woman and her alleged brother, whom he claims are the sole survivors of a justified attack on the city (2004: 12-13).

The revelation comes soon after from the lips of a weary war correspondent, and Crimp expands on Sophocles with a vivid and recognisable description of a contemporary war scenario:

Richard: Here come the helicopters. And here come the rockets out of the rocket-tubes. And here are the bottles of blood bursting in the hospital refrigerators. And oh – look – these are the patients blown off their beds onto the broken glass. And here are some heads on poles, Amelia...

Amelia: Boring, boring – you think I don't / know all this?

Richard: And here – oh look – what's this? Who's this girl? Her name is Laela. And he wants this girl so much – so much – he is so – what's the word? – inflamed – that in order to take this girl from her father he is prepared to murder not just the father, but the inhabitants of an entire city... (2004: 18)

Adapting the play for the present time by reassigning the geographical parameters and the characters' social background allows Crimp to maintain most narrative elements of Sophocles' play to the point of being able to fuse the modern-day General with the mythic

¹¹⁵ In contrast to Sophocles, who names Oechalia on Euboea (*The Trachiniae* 244-245 [Sophocles 1994: 154-55]), Crimp transposes the war to Africa and specifically refers to Gisenyi in Rwanda (Crimp 4).

hero. Central to most New Wars, the figure of the warlord can be identified by 'a combination of entrepreneurial, political and military logic in a single person', Münkler explains (91), and even if Jonathan, the politician in Crimp's play, is otherwise prone to distorting the facts, his assessment of the General is likely to be correct: he is the Western community's spearhead in the war against terror as well as the 'strongman', sent into areas of conflict to eradicate terror by whichever means necessary and outside the legislation of international law: 'You tell him to forget blue cards. You tell him to forget the conventional rules of engagement', Jonathan says when he describes how the General's operation was ultimately orchestrated and executed by himself and not, as would be customary, in consultations with any form of General Staff, or, for example, the UN's Military Staff Committee (Crimp 13). As discussed in chapter II of this thesis, the General's role as the appointed warrior-champion of the community also defines him as the *homo sacer* in form of the returning warrior who threatens to contaminate the community with violence and war – just as Heracles may not rejoin his family, because although his labours may be at an end, he has also become the epitome of violence and exorbitance. The General displays similarities with the notorious Congolese rebel Laurent Nkunda: the son's accusation 'You have wiped people off this earth like a teacher rubbing out equations' (57) may be read as a reference to Nkunda's past as a school teacher, as may be the accusations of leading child soldiers into battle (13); but he morphs into his mythological prototype by the end of the play, as, upon his impending arrest for crimes against humanity, he starts recounting the twelve labours of Heracles:

General (almost inaudible): I killed the Nemean lion.

Jonathan: Uh-hu.

General: ...tore off its skin...

Jonathan: Uh-hu. Very / probably.

General: I killed the snake that guarded the tree ... bore the weight of the earth... . (64)

Sanders points out the 'availability for rewriting' of literary archetypes which brings them to a state of constant flux as they are being transformed by adaptation and appropriation (62). Thus, this is not a play about Heracles the ancient mythical warrior, but about a society that transfers the role of this warrior to their defenders, leaving it up to their discretion to take whatever action necessary to defeat the terror or at least keep it at bay, then casts out the defenders as they become contaminated by the violence they have been commissioned to commit.

The Pastness of the Present, the Presentness of the Past and the Palimpsest: *The Trojan Women* and *The Persians*

The adapted text should perhaps not be regarded as something demanding reproduction, but rather suggesting recreation, offering 'a reservoir of instructions, diegetic, narrative, and axiological' which may or may not be used by the adapter, because in the process of adaptation, interpretation comes before creation (Hutcheon 84).¹¹⁶ Hutcheon stresses the need for an investigation into the creative process of adapting, arguing that the 'urge to adapt' needs to be discussed even at the risk of sounding backwards in theoretical-historical terms (107). While she considers adaptations a reminder of the impossibility of the 'autonomous text or an original genius that can transcend history, either public or private' (111), she insists that

because each adaptation must also stand on its own, separate from the palimpsestic pleasures of doubled experience, it does not lose its Benjaminian aura. It is not a copy in any mode of reproduction, mechanical or otherwise. It is repetition but without replication, bringing together the comfort of ritual and recognition with the delight of surprise and novelty. As *adaptation*, it involves both memory and change, persistence and variation. (173, emphasis in the original)

Fischlin and Fortier argue that the whole idea of originality holds an unfounded claim to independence and that theatrical adaptation is but one form of 'the cultural reworking taken to be basic to cultural production in general'. They refer to Roland Barthes' *Theory of the Text* (1981) when assessing that

all writing, like all cultural production, is an interweaving of already-existing cultural material. In myriad ways, we draw upon what has come before us and exists around us in anything we create. (4)

Deriving from Gérard Genette's *Palimpsests – Literature in the Second Degree*, Hutcheon suggests thinking of adaptations as 'inherently "palimpsestuous" works, haunted at all times by their adapted texts' – and, one should add, by the associated past and present cultural material. 'It is what Gérard Genette would call a text in the "second degree"¹¹⁷, she says, 'created and then received in relation to the prior text'. She stresses that adaptations nevertheless remain autonomous works and retain their own aura, their

¹¹⁶ Hutcheon refers to André Gardier. "Le narrateur sonne toujours deux fois." In: Groensteen, Thierry, ed. *La transécriture: Pour une théorie de l'adaptation*. Colloque de Cerisy, 14-21 Aug. 1993, Québec: Editions Nota Bene, 1998, 65-80; specifically, Hutcheon refers to 68-71.

¹¹⁷ Hutcheon refers to Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982: 5.

own 'presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be'¹¹⁸ ... [A]n adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing. (9)

It is specifically this understanding of adaptations as palimpsests which provides a very useful structural frame not only for the below analysis of the adaptations of classical plays, but also, as will be demonstrated later, for an evaluation of the relationship between the New Wars and the new plays on war in general.

How the concept of the palimpsest may come into effect on a textual level can be illustrated by two recent productions of Euripides' *The Trojan Women*. A few months before the premiere of the original play in 415 BC, Athens invaded Melos, killed the men, enslaved the women and children and colonized the island. In portraying a contemporary war by retelling a mythological event, thus inviting the audience to identify and empathize with the victims of the massacre at Troy and, by indication, at Melos – because his own play is a kind of appreciation of Homer – Euripides laid the foundation for the many adaptations this play has undergone, especially in the last three decades.¹¹⁹ It has always been used to comment on contemporary wars. In 1915, a production toured the US-American Mid-West sponsored by the Women's Peace Party; during the Versailles negotiations in 1919 a production was mounted in Oxford, coinciding with the Oxford Conference of the League of Nations; and immediately after the Second World War, there were several performances at the London Old Vic (Macintosh 303-4). In 1964, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote a new translation of the *Trojan Women* in response to the French war in Algeria, and between 1972 and 1974, the Romanian author and director Andrei Șerban staged in New York a distilled adaptation of Euripides' *Medea*, *Trojan Women* and Sophocles' *Electra* under the title *Fragments of a Greek Trilogy*, a work he only finished after his return to Romania in 1991, when he transformed the adaptation into a saga of the Ceaușescu family (Foley 6, Macintosh 320). Another notable adaptation was Tadasho Suzuki's 1974 production in Tokyo which applied the story to the defeated nation of Japan at the end of the Second World War (Marton 118). The play also constitutes an alternative view to Homer's war-glorifying Trojan epic. While war idolisation presents heroic deeds, this play focuses on war as a means to destroy the very institution it claims to defend: the family.

Tracing the themes touched upon in Euripides' version and how they are taken up and adapted in the contemporary productions offers insight into how far Greek tragedies might be an adequate form to represent contemporary war on stage. The adaptation to be

¹¹⁸ The quote is from a passage in Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (Benjamin 1999: 214).

¹¹⁹ For increased popularity since 1969, see Hall, Macintosh and Wrigley 2004.

considered here incorporates additional text into the translation used as a basis for the production and relies heavily on montage and the mode of testimony. *Women of Troy*. *Women of War* is an ensemble production of the Western Michigan University (WMU) drama department, the European premiere was at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August 2004.

WMU states that the play's adaptation was accompanied with research into protocols of war witnesses and other primary source texts which were then incorporated into the play (2004b).¹²⁰ The adapted text is combined with testimony by refugees from the recent European wars in former Yugoslavia, Holocaust survivors, Northern Irish civil war victims, Vietnam veterans, victims of the Rwandan civil war, Chechnyan widows, American soldiers in Iraq, Iraqis in Baghdad under bombardment, and excerpts from the Geneva conventions, speeches by the then US-American president George W. Bush and by the then British prime minister Tony Blair, with original text taken from Slobodan Milosevic's UN war crime trial, a report of a stoning in Iran and a handbook of the Al Qaeda terrorists.

In form, the play relies on the underlying Euripidean text: Hecuba is on stage throughout the play, the related time is identical with the discourse time and the action does not shift from the Greek camp. The contemporary textual elements and references added to Euripides' text are spoken by unspecified individual members of the chorus ('speakers') and have the nature of reports, without interfering with the action at centre-stage. The sequence of images of the suffering of the enslaved, mourning women widens to an epic representation not only of the distress of the defeated but also the soldiers' fear of death, the rhetoric of war-lords, the refugees' misery, the mourning of those left behind and the victims of war crimes. The adaptation thus unites all those subjects that are addressed separately in most other war plays.

The individual reports have a high recognition-value for the audience, the majority being sourced from texts that have merged into the collective consciousness of Western citizens; this applies specifically to the passages related to events around and after September 11th 2001 and to the war against Iraq and the ensuing occupation of the country which began in 2003. The description of the sacking of Troy by aid of the Trojan horse is contrasted with excerpts from a document found in the luggage of one of the airplane hijackers involved in the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States:

¹²⁰ I thank the director Joan Herrington for granting me access to the play script. The analysis of this play is based on personal attendance of the show on August 10th 2004 in Old St. Paul's Church Hall in Edinburgh.

Speaker: When the taxi takes you to the airport, remember God. When you have arrived and gotten out of the taxi, say a prayer in the place. Smile.

Chorus: ... Girls, old women, shouting for joy, tricked, doomed.

Speaker: Remember your luggage, the knife, your tools, your ticket, your passport. Before departure, let one of you sharpen his blade so that the one he butchers will be glad.

Chorus: They swarmed to the gates, ... they dragged it — pine, polished, womb of Greeks – to offer it in Athena's shrine ...

Speaker: As soon as you board the airplane, entering it and setting foot in it, say a prayer. ...

Speaker: Open your heart to death in the path of God and remember God always.¹²¹ (WMU 24-25)

As the voices are only loosely placed into a dramatic context, they evade fictionalisation and are anchored in the audience's reality. The episode quoted above indicates how the attack on the World Trade Center in New York must have been conceived by the US-American population: the airplanes, like freighters hiding enemies in their bilges, attacked the country in a sense 'from the inside', out of its own airspace and entirely unexpected. Since the Twin Towers could be regarded as iconographic symbols of the West, an analogy to Athena's temple suggests itself.¹²²

The repeated listing of objects one would like to take along in the case of suddenly having to leave home juxtaposed with the statements of young soldiers promising themselves to not 'come home in a body-bag' (15-16), the distressing reports of the citizens of Baghdad under siege, testimony of Bosnian women who were raped during the civil war and extracts from a speech given by President Bush before the beginning of the war against Iraq in March 2003 underline the central proposition of this play: that there is more than one truth in war and that differing historical accounts do not necessarily exclude each other. This features prominently in the WMU's reworking of the Helen-episode, during which Helen, whom the Trojan women see as the main culprit and as primarily responsible for the war, defends herself in front of her husband Menelaus. This mock trial, throughout which Hecuba ridicules Helen's arguments, is complemented by testimony given by the former president of Yugoslavia Slobodan Milosevic, who was charged with crimes against humanity, before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague:

¹²¹ The speaker's text consists of excerpts from a hand-written document of five pages that was found in the luggage of plane hijacker Mohammed Atta. It was published in excerpts by the FBI on September 27th 2001. The historian Juan Cole carried out an analysis of this document, which presumably also was the source for this adaptation (Cole 2003).

¹²² Incidentally, in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1590/1604) Faustus says, about Helen, 'Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships/And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?' (V.i.97-98).

Helen: ... All I and Paris did, was to benefit Greece, not Troy. ... I should be wearing a victor's crown. Instead, I'm sold for my beauty, spat upon.

Speaker: I would like to say to you that what we have just heard, this tragic text, is a supreme absurdity. I should be given credit for peace in Bosnia, not war. (44)¹²³

Menelaus' and the Trojan women's thirst for revenge is exposed by statements by US-American soldiers who see the war in Afghanistan after the terrorist attacks against the United States in 2001 as a chance for retaliation (48). Thus the play examines why soldiers would come to a foreign country potentially to die there. The question about justification of or necessity for war can never be answered conclusively; and not only in Troy but also in Iraq the price seems to have been too high:

Speaker: I've spent the last 15 minutes trying to fix my M-16. It wasn't feeding ammo correctly. ...

Speaker: Frist, Luke, 20, Bush, Charles, 43. ...

Cassandra: What did they do? For one woman's sake, one fuck, they hunted Helen, squandered a million lives. ...

Speaker: I have to do this. It's a me or you situation, an us or them problem. ... I will not go home in a body bag.

Speaker: 689 Americans dead since combat began.¹²⁴

Cassandra: So they flocked to the Scamander, lined up to die on a foreign river's banks, on a foreign plain — for what? (15-16)

Adaptation and the cultural ties of stories are considered to be either 'forms of representation and thus vary with period and culture, or ... timeless cognitive models by which we make sense of our world and of human action in it' (Hutcheon 175).¹²⁵ Ultimately, adaptations may be treated as both 'a specific cultural representation of a "basic ideology" and as a general human universal' (176, emphasis in the original) – there is, of course, something decidedly Jungian (and thus potentially outdated in theoretical terms) about this assertion, yet the above case, simplistic as some of the alterations may appear, nevertheless serves as a fine

¹²³ Interestingly enough, this passage also resonates in the final speech of the General in Crimp's *Cruel and Tender*, who states:

'And I will explain into the microphones
that my labours are at an end
that what I have done
is what I was instructed to do
and what I was instructed to do
was to extract terror like a tooth from its own stinking gums.' (67)

The difference is, of course, that Crimp's General was actually given leave to waive international law before he was accused of war crimes.

¹²⁴ This is in spring 2004.

¹²⁵ Hutcheon refers to Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001: 242-43.

example of Hutcheon's thesis. It is equally possible to appreciate the WMU's adaptation as a staging of Euripides' *Women of Troy* and thus as a ciphered narrative of the historical episode of the capture of Melos as it is possible to see the 'cognitive model' superimposed over contemporary narratives of conflict, war crimes, state disintegration, deportation, displacement and loss, which brings the structural layers of war as portrayed in the New War plays into a sharp focus.

The WMU embeds the last lines of Euripides' original drama into a montage of several war scenes, combined to an episode of epic mourning, which takes up again the image of the falling towers, symbolic for the uprooting of the Trojan people, but after 2001 also part of the collective imagination. The voices weaving through the original drama function as a mirroring sub-plot, a means of generalization (Pfister 294). It is possible to follow different threads of narrative – not always spoken by the same members of cast – and scraps of information will form the stories of individual characters, but never complete them. By denying the audience a clear subplot and thus refusing to allow unambiguous classification and interpretation, the montage becomes a projection screen for all past and present wars. As if looking down a well, one's gaze is directed through the different layers of fates and personal testimonies onto the basic story in which Hecuba passes on the responsibility to all women to tell and retell the horrific story of what happened in this first Gulf war, the battle of Troy.

Referring to the report from the frontlines in the messenger-episode in Aeschylus's *The Persians*, and the fact that the text of the play has been used as a factual account of military details of the actual battle, the critic Attilio Favorini argues that this play could be classified 'as the first surviving example of the documentary impulse in Western theatre, and as such it initiates the argument of how theatre remembers history that persists to the present' (2003: 104, 99). He points to Patrick Hutton's study on history and its roots in memory¹²⁶ to demonstrate that history commenced as repeated tradition in the form of 'collective memory'¹²⁷ and only later becomes a social science (100). He sets up a crucial difference between history and collective memory, describing the former as the 'written chronological record of significant events affecting a nation or institution' and the latter as 'a set of recollections, repetitions, and recapitulations that are socially, morally, or politically useful for a group or community'. He draws attention to history's creation by the individual voice in

¹²⁶ Hutton, Patrick. *History as an Art of Memory*, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993.

¹²⁷ Favorini points out that the term was coined in 1925 by Maurice Halbwachs (*On Collective Memory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

contrast to collective memory's group-generated, multi-vocal origin, 'responsive to a social framework' (100), stressing that

[h]istory is reinforced by rewriting; collective memory is reinforced by social occasions such as rites and commemorations (including theatrical performance), as well as by body practices such as gestural behavior and proprieties. (*ibid.*)

This understanding of memory as a process based on repetition and ritual performance, implying that artistic creation is a way of generating memory, leads towards the intertextual nature of creation as discussed by Fischlin and Fortier: since 'everything we think, say, or do relies upon ideas, words, and cultural norms that pre-exist us', all creation may be regarded as social creation and all production as reproduction (4). In adaptations, Favorini argues, the repetition associated with the mode of memory and the recollection associated with the mode of history converge, which generates an interesting criterion for consideration: the way in which contemporary adaptations of extant texts 'encounter or ignore [their] historicity' (101-102).

The question arises whether historical accuracy of an adaptation is at all relevant, given that they always paraphrase or translate another text, one specific reading of a historical episode. 'The seeming simplicity of the familiar label, "based on a true story", is a ruse,' Hutcheon argues, given that a historical adaptation is essentially 'as complex as historiography itself' (18). For the specific case of Aeschylus's *The Persians*, Favorini suggests that precisely by merging 'factual, material and tragic form; Persian and Greek; and ... memory and history' the simplification of dualisms is avoided (105). And while Taxidou stresses that the binary opposition 'between civilisation and barbarism' in times of war and empire lies at the heart of the play, she concedes that '[t]he play ... proceeds to undermine these oppositions and show them as interchangeable, in the same way as the Athenians can be the Persians' (2004: 15-16). She explains that the play 'charts through the function of mourning the barbarities inflicted by the Greeks on to the Persians, while supposedly trying to "liberate" them from a tyrannical regime' (15). At this point, the evident similarities between the Greek attack on the Persian fleet and the Western forces' attack on the state of Iraq in both 1991 and 2003 may be observed.

Aeschylus' audience was invited to empathise with the Persians mourning their losses – if without any implication that they did not deserve to be defeated – thus inviting the possibility of a change in attitude (Taxidou 2004: 16). Peter Sellars' famous production of *The Persians* in 1993 (using Robert Auletta's adaptation) follows in a similar vein. Favorini observes that the production, staged in response to the First Gulf War 1992, placed the play in the middle of the discourse of memory versus history (99). While most productions after

the Second World War, especially in the time after the Vietnam War, have cast the Persians as simplistic examples of Western militarism, Sellars' production criticised the US-American participation in the Gulf War, 'though identifying the victorious Athenians with the victorious Americans wrenchingly inverts the David-and-Goliath relationship of the original'. The negative critical reaction¹²⁸ to the production was 'instructive of how the interplay of history and memory continues to inflect contemporary performance' (110), Favorini maintains, as it

at least partly represents an attempt to overwrite a version of history on the version of American collective memory created almost exclusively by the hegemonic media images of the Gulf War. (111)

Ideally, this tension between the collective memory and an alternative narration of the same historical episode should encourage reflections on questions of 'citizenship, otherness, and nationhood', which, as Favorini suggests, might well have been invited by Aeschylus (111). Taxidou points out how exceptional it is to interpret the history of the Persian wars 'through the guise of the defeated enemy' and to allow for the resulting 'tensions between alterity and identification, distance and empathy' in the play (2004: 96-7), which, from the first scene onwards, sets up an ambivalent relationship with the Athenian audience.

Favorini asserts that the play's central theme changes depending on which figure is at the focus of the production and the analysis. If one focuses on the late King Darius, the play becomes a 'tragedy of power successfully asserted in military victory, a historical lesson for victor and defeated alike', allowing for it to be staged as a study of colonialism. If one focuses on Queen Atossa, the play turns into a tragedy of mourning and loss, with the repetitive 'naming and commemoration of the Persian dead standing in for the memory of the Athenians who perished in the battle but are unmentioned in the play' (107). He singles out *The Persians* as 'unique among extant Greek drama in that all of its characters are foreign' (104)¹²⁹, which enabled Sellars' approach in 1993 to give a voice to the Iraqis which were otherwise excluded from media reporting on the 1991 Gulf War. But by the time of the Second Iraq War, as demonstrated by Elfriede Jelinek's *Bambiland* (December 2003), a theatrical text using Aeschylus' play as a matrix, the Other has again lost its voice.

To discern how exactly the adapted text shines through Jelinek's work – closer to the imagery of an actual palimpsest, a 'manuscript' that has been overwritten but whose original

¹²⁸ Favorini refers to the following reviews: Benedict Nightingale, "Engulfed by a stylist's ideas," *The Times*, 18 August 1993, Allen Wright, "Fearsome detail lost in the noise of battle", *The Scotsman* 18 August 1993, Sylvie Drake, "Persians' Muddled East vs. West", *Los Angeles Times*, 2 October 1993: F1.

¹²⁹ *Prometheus Bound* (date of origin disputed), more often than not attributed to Aeschylus, is not included in this assertion, since the characters in this play are not human at all.

content still prevails and permeates the textual fabric of the new layer – it is useful to first consider the relevant passage in *The Persians*:

Chorus: These are the shapes of gloom
That cloak my heart in fear
For all our men gone forth,
Lest our great city hear
That man-devouring doom
Has stripped our native earth;
Lest Susa's ancient stones
And the high Kissian wall
Echo with frenzied groans
Of women for their dead,
Beating of breast and head,
While rending fingers fall
On robes of finest thread. (Aeschylus 1961: 126, v106-118)

Jelinek's corresponding passage demonstrates the almost flawless overlap of her text, which she calls an 'amalgam of media reports to Iraq' (Lücke 2004: 230) with the parts (emphasised for the purpose of this comparison) taken from Aeschylus:

Well, so I'll tell it the way it is: although not of a tribe of car owners, I still take a certain interest in oil, a principal interest. *These are the shapes of gloom that cloak my heart in fear* now; that we might not get any anymore. Or it will be too expensive for us, and indeed it is already very expensive. ... But my fear, your fear, any fear is the dirt. Principally, oil is nothing but dirt, but you can't get it off so easily from your fingers after cleaning the spark plugs We easily choke on it, that greasy dirt. *The great city hears that man-devouring doom*, but unlike *the ancient stones of Susa*, the *native earth* of this city is unfortunately not *stripped* of men. ... Meanwhile alas cry the *women* wherever you meet them, but they cry all the time anyway, whatever happens, that's all they are capable of, *the walls echo with their frenzied groans*. ... They cry out lamenting, *while rending fingers fall on robes of finest thread*, no, this they don't do because they do not have enough clothes for that. (2004b)

The monologue of one or several unidentified speakers¹³⁰ – true to form, Jelinek does not list the *dramatis personae*, thus leaving the cast of characters entirely up to the director – is riddled with references to the ongoing war against Iraq, to the invading army's interest in the oil resources in the Gulf region, the bewilderment and utter miscomprehension the occupying forces experience in confrontation with the culture of mourning they encounter on site. 'The rest is not by me either. It's lousy. It's by the media,' Jelinek says as an author's note, and the main critique presented in the play is against the poor reporting by the press, against the ruse of 'embedded journalism' and the sensationalism attached to the coverage of

¹³⁰ The critic Bärbel Lücke calls the text 'implicitly poly-logical' (2004: 230).

war which turns it into 'wartainment' (Bandhauer 2010).¹³¹ Jelinek's text openly plays with allusions to its predecessor ('but unlike *the ancient stones of Susa*, the *native earth* of this city is unfortunately not *stripped* of men'), either boldly assuming that the audience will be very familiar with the adapted text, or, and this is much more likely, not necessarily concerned with the audience's preconceived knowledge. The play presents itself as one long block of text, the online edition interspersed with photos depicting various ancient Assyrian artefacts such as several stone panels from the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (north of Baghdad), the Flood Tablet relating part of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, (found in the ruins of Nineveh close to modern-day Mosul), but also pictures showing different weapons like a Tomahawk cruise missile and a laser-guided bomb which has been nicknamed 'Deep Throat', as well as a series of photos well-known to the general public as the debasing semi-pornographic scenes from the Abu-Ghraib prison in Baghdad (2003/2004). As the literary critic Andrea Bandhauer points out, the title of the play equally refers to Disneyland – which, according to Baudrillard, exists in order to hide the 'real' land, the 'real U.S.' – and to an amusement park by the name of Bambiland outside the town of Pozarevac in Serbia, formerly owned by Slobodan Milosevic's son Marko (Bandhauer 2010)¹³². Like Disneyland as defined by Baudrillard, *Bambiland*

belongs to the realm of the hyperreal and simulation: hyperreality is not the consequence of distorting the 'real' and glossing over it; rather, the hyperreal creates the 'real' as it is perceived by its consumers. Thus, "Bambiland" is a closed universe in which the media generate circular arguments that feign diversity, but in the end only serve one purpose: to legitimise power. (*ibid.*)

The late theatre director Christoph Schlingensiefel, who directed the first production in 2003, calls Jelinek's openly cynical play a 'machine gun text against machine guns – the military ones, media-related ones, the human ones'.¹³³ The text's ambiguity as to who exactly is speaking while making it clear that it is certainly no Iraqi, that the purpose of the Aeschylean text to report the war from the Persian's point of view has been turned on its head, leads Schlingensiefel to assert that at the center of *Bambiland* lies the 'axis of the willing' (2004: 9-10). In reference to the play's reliance on the language of news features and background war reporting as known from global news channels, he points out that even the close-up report is not actually reporting on the war as such:

¹³¹ In her 2005 play *Babel*, Jelinek returns to the war in Iraq, and specifically to the torture scandal in Abu Ghraib.

¹³² Bandhauer refers to Jean Baudrillard. *Simulacra and Simulation*. 1981. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.

¹³³ This and all subsequent translations from Schlingensiefel's preface to the German edition of *Bambiland* are my own.

Right here, where it hurts, Elfriede Jelinek celebrates the grandiose, because annihilating, victory in Iraq – but whose? She quotes Aeschylus's *Persians*, the original embedded journalist, and turns the axis around: *Bambiland* now is the report not from the victor's point of view (which victor?), not from the loser's point of view (which loser?), but from the camera perspective of the 'participating' observer and the observers of the observer – us. With her, we are in the thick of it, embedded, embedded couch potatoes. We are the team mates overlooking everything, the TV spies, the humane war bonds. (10)

As 'air raids are no longer followed up by the media but introduced like a football game', he argues, the war in *Bambiland* is never of central importance but merely takes place in the background, 'just like God's pulpit on earth, the moral institution of the theatre, the locked ward of television, the informer-dynasty Dichand'¹³⁴ (10-11). The foreground is occupied by the pursuit of ulterior and not so ulterior motives for the war, as is described rather unobtrusively in a passage which makes extensive use of Queen Atossa's dream monologue which, for comparison, is here quoted first from Aeschylus:

Atossa: ... two women, finely dressed...
 Appeared to me, flawless in beauty, and in gait
 And stature far excelling women of our day.
 Sisters of one race, each had her inheritance
 One Greece, the other Asia. And, it seemed, these two
 Provoked each other to a quarrel; and my son
 Restrained and tamed them, yoked them to his chariot,
 And fastened harness on their necks. And one of them,
 Proud of these trappings, was obedient to the rein. ...
 I ... went to the altar-hearth, to pray
 For deliverance from evil, and make sacrifice
 ... And as I stood, I saw
 An eagle fly for refuge to Apollo's hearth.
 I watched, speechless with terror; then a falcon came,
 And swooped with rushing wings, and with his talons clawed
 The eagle's head; it, unresisting, cowered there,
 Offering itself to wounds. (Aeschylus 128, v179-209)

The matching passage in Jelinek's play demonstrates again how thoroughly she deconstructs the adapted text and 'remixes' it with a simplistic speculation of the nature of the negotiations between George Bush and Tony Blair at Camp David, again stressing the economic interest the war-leading countries have demonstrated in Iraq:

But they are still negotiating. *Flawless in beauty and in gait, sisters of one race*, such that the building companies will come running.
 ... As the fatherland they had – won in a draw – no, not in a draw, but through common law, connections, lobbies, family ties, tradition, whatever, anyway, they got the best of the contracts. ...

¹³⁴ The late Hans Dichand was a journalist with Austria's high-circulated right-wing tabloid *Kronenzeitung*, the semantic style of which partly informs the German version of the text.

Bush and Blair, they argue with each other in English in the summer residence Camp David, the little one with a sling shot, you know, and Goliath, Leviathan, *praying for deliverance from evil and making sacrifice*, there's no getting away from it ... the British companies have so far not had their share, but Blair wants his share, that goes without saying. That's clear. When he heard about Halliburton, he raged, then Bush soothed him and *yoked them to his chariot*, the lads, *and fastened [a] harness on their necks*, but his own companies are like a number, with lots of zeros at the end, well, not exactly a yoke, and only for his boys, and they, *proud of their trappings, were obedient to the rein* to allow the contracts to run smoothly. They keep their mouths shut. And we ours. (Jelinek 2004)

The last line paraphrases the last two lines in Aeschylus, with the Bush administration clearly cast in the role of the falcon and the coalition of the willing 'unresisting, cowered there' by the prospect of economic prosperity: the community is not 'speechless with terror' but 'keep their mouths shut' for reasons of complicity.

The adapted classical text does not emerge as 'a great piece of eternal art' as is demanded in the introductory quotation of this chapter, nor does it emerge as a text that needs to be negotiated or otherwise critically reassessed. I would argue that the transposed 'essence' of the adapted text is of a structural nature, meaning: there is a correlation of motivations, consequences, contexts and symbols, the adapted text provides a framework. In this way, *Bambiland* might be called an appropriation of *The Persians*, but not a 'hostile takeover', as Fischlin and Fortier describe the term (3).¹³⁵ In her search for a new, 'forward' terminology (as opposed to defining adaptation mainly in dependence of the adapted text), Sanders proposes to turn towards musicology. Her comparison of adaptations with Johann Sebastian Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (154-55) is very useful here as a means to describe best the structural function of *The Persians* in Jelinek's play: Aeschylus provides the *aria*, the ground line, to *Bambiland*; it is not the melody (i.e., the narrative), but the base without which the composition would remain fragmented.

Jelinek's play, which in its treatment of *The Persians* probably comes closest to Gérard Genette's subcategory of the hypertext, the travesty, refers openly and at length to many of the features of the New Wars as described by Münkler and Kaldor. While the whole play, by its abundant descriptions of the built and impact of contemporary Western military equipment, emphasizes the concept of asymmetric warfare, the passage above specifically satirises the entrepreneurial interest non-military actors bring to the conflict as the distinction between political, economical, public and private interests blurs (Münkler 2, 95; Kaldor 32).

¹³⁵ It should be noted that Fischlin and Fortier refer to Shakespeare-adaptations in a post-colonial context when they introduce the term.

In this play, there is no argument, it is an intricate network of ironies, puns, metaphors and multiple voices. The voice that is missing, speechless in this onslaught of speech, is precisely that of the Other, the non-citizen, the precarious life.

The genesis of Euripides' *The Trojan Women* exposes a colonial context, with Troy cast in the role of the barbarian city in Asia Minor, mirroring the Athenian's very recent brutal colonising of the isle of Melos, the sack of the city being told from the viewpoint of the Other and thus opening it up to a post-colonial reading. Sartre situated his 1965 adaptation explicitly 'in Europe' to bring up

the equivalent of the ancient antagonism which existed between the Greeks and the barbarians, that is, between Greece and the civilisation around the Mediterranean, and the gradual infiltration into Asia Minor where Colonial Imperialism arose. (289)

It was this Greek colonialism that Euripides denounced. At the centre of *The Trojan Women*, as in Aeschylus's *Persians* and in the modern appropriations is the Barbarian Other, deemed ungrievable in Butler's terms, yet brought to the stage and into the public realm as the quintessential *homo sacer*.

Twenty-First Century Consciousness and the Spoils of War: Guilt and Gender

At this point, it is worthwhile to consider what renders Greek tragedy specifically adaptable to the portrayal of contemporary war. Helene Foley argues that it 'permits a political response to irresolvable, extreme situations without being crudely topical.' As each play is

set in an imaginary past that offers few specifics in the way of setting or physical description, it is also amenable to both changes of venue and to multi-racial casting ... Every contemporary performance of a Greek tragedy must be an adaptation of sorts, since it involves translation of the language of the original and confronts a profound ignorance of the music, dance, and theatrical context that conditioned its first presentation. (Foley 1999: 3-4)

In his study of Greek tragedy on African stages, Kevin Wetmore suggests that in the case of adaptations, the audience does not need to understand or be familiar with the original tragedy, but must understand concerns, themes and points of the adaptation and how these are relevant to the audience (Wetmore 23). Certainly, including textual passages that anchor the ancient tragedy in the present or in a historical context the audience is familiar with, which is close enough to be recognized, encourages a strong sense of identification. But are the contemporary complementations necessary, or could and should the text stand by itself? A present-day audience would possibly see the similarities between historical, mythological and current events without being shown how to draw the connections. But the WMU's production *Women of Troy* very effectively anchors the ancient text within other texts the

audience is often quite familiar with, the passages eerily correlating and echoing each other and evoking the image of transparent layers of history, of 'one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage,' as Walter Benjamin describes the concept of history (Benjamin 1999: 249).

Of course, a major parallel suggesting Greek tragedy as the obvious choice for an adaptation referring to contemporary wars is the geography: many of the New Wars happen in the realms where several of the ancient plays are set or to which they refer. This is one of the obvious similarities Jelinek relies on in her appropriation of Aeschylus, otherwise leaving it up to the audience to discover, or fail to discover, the underwritten appropriated text. Following up from Favorini's discussion of how a contemporary adaptation of an extant text approaches that text's historicity, it is obvious that Jelinek fully acknowledges in her play *The Persian's* history as a constantly reinterpreted text as well as a quasi-documentary report of the Greco-Persian war and as a device that will instantly bridge chronological gaps between historical events. She also, however, acknowledges the apparent prevalence of media reporting over almost any other cultural form of expression; therefore, the Aeschylean text is buried beneath the overwhelming verbal assault of unfiltered palaver.

Another interest may lie in the chorus, which allows the play to give a voice to 'the general public': the Western public and the one in the war-mired country. While WMU only uses verbatim testimony or documents they edited to add more historical layers to Euripides' text, other authors such as Rosalba Clemente and Dawn Langman (and, in a way, also Crimp) use modern references to modify the translated primary text, while Jelinek hands the whole play over to a chorus of journalists, suggesting that the voice of the general public is identical with the unreflected voice of the media. In an interview, Rosalba Clemente, the director of the *Trojan Women* (2004)¹³⁶ production in Adelaide points at something she terms 'twenty-first century consciousness' as the driving force behind their production (Thompson 177). It is an interesting term. Clemente employs it as an umbrella phrase to cover 'modern' [sic.] concepts such as peace and conflict studies, feminism, social justice and human rights (*ibid.*). While one could argue about whether all of these concepts are really such recent developments, it is the concerned activist of a Global Social Movement that shines through in this statement, the relatively young political movements that are still in the state of becoming and have not yet fully shaped their conceptual ideas (s.a. Kaldor 2006: 78). This might account for the vagueness of Clemente's statement: above all, it captures a general 'concern', a momentary digression of the cosmopolitan citizen from their

¹³⁶ *Euripides' Trojan Women* was a production of the State Theatre Company South Australia in Adelaide, adapted by Rosalba Clemente and Dawn Langman in 2004. I thank Rosalba Clemente and Shelley Lush, the Artistic Program Manager of the theatre, for sending me the typescript of the play.

individualistic interests, schooled by the writings of journalist and anti-globalisation activist Naomi Klein.¹³⁷ This '21st-century-consciousness' also displays a certain helplessness of the Western citizens who become aware of the suffering they might have brought on, seemingly inadvertently but complicit by indifference, a guilt turned into activism.¹³⁸

The cosmopolitan citizen concerned with doing 'the right thing' is a resurfacing theme in Ravenhill's cycle *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat*. The cycle begins with a chorus of women and their obsession with 'being good'; several characters throughout the plays stress their self-conception of belonging to 'the good people', but by the thirteenth play, "Twilight of the Gods", Jane, who is part of the occupying forces in a post-civil war country, complains:

I brought you your freedom. We fought our way through the desert to bring you our core values and now you can't even ... what am I supposed to do? Stand by? I've got everything. I've got so much. I've got freedom, I've got democracy. I've got so many human rights. Am I supposed to just stand by when the world is in darkness? No. I have to intervene. I have to. So why does it get messy? Why does it always get so fucking messy? (165)

The first play in his cycle, equally entitled "Women of Troy", depicts yet another version of the chorus, namely that fulfilling Plato's fear of 'too much public mourning'. In bringing together the women of the Fortress West as mourning relatives ('here, behind the gates, we are good people' [8]), Ravenhill argues in coherence with Butler that overwhelming grief may lead to an extended state of war, dislocated from the cause: as the women die in a suicide blast at the end of the short play, a soldier, half-man, half-angel (and thus an echo of both Benjamin angel of history and José Rivera's angel in *Marisol* [1997]) declares:

I promise you that gun and tank and this flaming sword will roam the globe until everywhere is filled with the goodness of the good people.

There will be good everywhere.

And then, every day, peace will be war. Keeping the peace with the gun. ...

Kill the bombers. Slaughter our enemies. In the name of the good people – begin. (Ravenhill 17)

¹³⁷ Klein's most well-known works include *No Logo* (2000) and *The Shock Doctrine* (2007).

¹³⁸ An interesting manifestation of the aforementioned 'twenty-first century consciousness' may be found in the case of the "Lysistrata-Project" on March 3, 2003, a globally organised network of 1,029 communal readings of Aristophane's comedy in fifty-nine countries in protest against the impending invasion of Iraq (Thompson et al. 2008: 279). The project was organised via the internet and was made possible through activist groups and email networks, thus demonstrating 'a sense of global interdependence and a commitment to local activism' (*ibid.*: 293). It can be read as indicative of 'a global anti-war movement modelled on the alternative relationships between local and global offered by the anti-capitalist movement', suggest the critics James Thompson, Jenny Hughes and Michael Balfour (*ibid.*: 295). The project was initiated and organised by Kathryn Blume and Sharon Bower; see lysistrataproject.org.

It is, as discussed earlier, a case of *mênis*, the grief that turned to wrath, that self-perpetuating mourning which fuels the war on terror, and which in drama is often linked to the female mourner.

The female body as a place of war is central to several Greek tragic texts, and it is to this aspect that many modern adaptations may find almost ready-made analogies. In the ongoing spread of nationalism and ethno-nationalism in certain parts of the world, together with an increase in reactionary and fundamentalist politics, the role of women and the relationship between genders play central parts. While the state is mostly depicted as male, the nation is represented as female, threatened by violence or foreign governance (Neissl et al. 2003: 10, Embacher 2003: 137-140). As Lorraine Helms points out, '[w]hatever is besieged, whatever is penetrated, becomes by analogy female. Defensive warfare becomes a feminine enterprise' (Helms 1989: 30).

This is pointed at in Clemente and Langman's production *Euripides' Trojan Women*, in which Helen's defence against the accusations brought against her by Menelaus and Hecuba picks up on her position as a 'mythologized and gendered prize and scapegoat' (Thompson 2006: 129). The women's war experience, consisting of rape, uprooting and enslavement is of central concern to the adapted text and the adaptation alike. It differs greatly from the traditional male experience of combat and death on the battlefield (Helms 27):

Helen: The rules are different for women -
We are like envelopes,
Carrying messages of conquest from one man to the next.
I've been bartered between two nations,
And now I am destined to be condemned by both. ...
Look at me,
You can't blame all this on me.
This is about money, oil and power.
The Greeks hated the Trojans long before I was born.
The Greeks always wanted Trojan land and Trojan women.
The Trojans always wanted Greek oil and Greek women.
That's not my fight.
I'm only the myth men die for.
I'm the women on the porn sites you feed to your soldiers,
Before you send them in to kill.
But I am real!
Look at me, Menelaus...
I am REAL!
(Clemente and Langman 28-32)

David Rosenbloom remarks on Helen's function as 'a figure for exploring imperialist desire, appropriation, and justification', describing her as 'an *agalma*, a "treasure"'. A form of symbolic capital, it signifies 'a trophy of victory and an effigy of the defeated. ... An *agalma* embodies the pride of victory, especially in war' (2006: 248-51). This motive is also used in

Crimp's *Cruel and Tender*. Following the adapted text by Sophocles, at the narrative centre of the play lays the war hero's personal betrayal of his wife by sending his young mistress into her care. 'He's lying about the children,' the journalist Richard says to the General's wife,

not about the war – well, yes, of course about the war – but also about the children. Because these children are not what he said: 'victims' – 'survivors'. They are the spoils, Amelia. (Crimp 17)

The female body has thus become a symbol for the body of the people; accordingly, rapes in war may signify the humiliation of the male opponent and the 'desecration' and destruction of the enemy culture. Mass rape in war and in national conflicts can therefore be understood as a war strategy: the female body becomes the projection screen for the friend-foe-discourse (Neissl et al. 12, Embacher 141). The destruction of Troy and the sovereign's death are the prelude for a mass rape, marking the annihilation of the Trojan families, as the chorus states: 'Blood steams on our altars, men's blood, the blood of Troy. ... girls, widows, groan in our beds, seedbed of baby Greeks, Seedbed of tears for Troy' (WMU 26, Morrissey 9).

How the nation embraces its representation as a female entity, how defensive warfare actually becomes a female enterprise, can be observed in David Greig's *Dunsinane* (2010), which continues the exploration of female empowerment and the threat it poses to a patriarchal power structure already present in the adapted text, William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (~1606). When the conquering English army under the leadership of General Siward, in *Dunsinane* to install a satellite government under King Malcolm, captures the castle and comes across the widow of the tyrant they just defeated, they mistake her for a servant girl:

Siward: Gruach, what work do you do here in Dunsinane?

Gruach: Work?

Siward: What is your place here?

Gruach: My place here is Queen. (27)

In this play, the received knowledge about the Lady Macbeth, derived from Shakespeare's play, is revealed to be hearsay only. Her story, another instance of the story of the 'Barbarian' Other, has been redefined for us in the early seventeenth century by an English playwright, and, as the subject matter of a play written about her, she has not been given a name but is distinguished by her husband's name only, and the words she speaks in Shakespeare are not spoken in her own voice – her natural idiom in Greig's play is Gaelic. 'You told me the tyrant had lost the support of the chiefs and he had no son and his queen had died of madness,' Siward complains to King Malcolm,

and so there would be no resistance to you but on the other hand we were likely to see a swift and general acceptance of your rule and

the chance to establish a new and peaceful order. ... I understood that the Queen was dead.

Malcolm: It turns out that was a mistaken understanding. ...

Siward: I thought you said the chiefs were simply waiting for you to arrive and establish yourself before they would pledge their allegiance and crown you king.

Malcolm: Siward – do you mind if I ask – are you going to continue with this insistent literalness? 'You said' – 'He said' – you sound like a child. (27-29)

As in Shakespeare's play, Gruach emerges as the true power centre of the insurgence, using her reputation as a witch to her advantage – is it true that she eat babies, the Boy Soldier asks her at one point (59) – and is ultimately recognised as the personification of war, an unstoppable force, the 'black cloud that sucks the life out [of] the ground and leaves it frozen and hopeless' (135), who breaks the English general's will to fight and sends him away into a wasteland of ice and snow. In this instance, she is closest to how she is described, perhaps inadvertently, in *Macbeth* I.ii.5-6, when Rosse reports a victory achieved by the eponymous hero thus:

Rosse: Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,
Confronted him with self-comparisons ...

Though Rosse might have spoken metaphorically, did not mean Macbeth's actual wife, it turns out that Gruach, the historical Lady Macbeth, becomes exactly this: the embodiment of war.

Writing About Iraq Without Writing About Iraq: the War Palimpsest

'I came here to install Malcolm as king so as to secure England's northern border', explains the English general Siward in Greig's *Dunsinane* (33), a play which might be regarded as a 'sequel' to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* rather than a direct adaptation of the text, but which relies heavily on its geographical and contextual framework – and on its specific standing in Scotland. In direct opposition to the previous chapter, and specifically to Burke's *Black Watch*, the other successful Scottish play on the Iraq war, *Dunsinane* is an example of how to engage with the Iraq war without using testimony, without situating the play in Iraq, or even in the correct century. The play is instead set in a fictional past, just after the end of Shakespeare's play, and, like Brenton's *The Romans in Britain* (1980), which draws parallels between the Roman invasion of Celtic Britain 54 BC and the contemporary British presence in Northern Ireland, *Dunsinane*'s portrayal of the invading English army backing up King Malcolm's reign in Scotland points at a present war: the deployment of British soldiers to Iraq. While the place is clearly Scotland, it is doubling for Iraq, demonstrated by the similar

parameters of the operation – bringing peace, but also securing economic interests – and by the political set-up of the invaded country, which, crudely said, mirrors that of the Shia-Sunni split in present-day Iraq:

Macduff: There are many clans and families but there are two parties that sit at the heart of everything in Scotland – Alba in the west and Moray in the North. (30)

This fictional Scotland, like the actual one, is an old kingdom, perceived as 'barbarian' by its fictional and historical enemies and displaying a palimpsestic culture both in the play and in the present age. There is again a parallel to be drawn between the obliterated Celtic-Scottish past and that of Ancient Mesopotamia and Greater Persia, where now an invading army is supposed to help settle in a new government that will shift the power-structures in the country and ensure safety for Fortress West. In Greig's play, it is the northern border of the hegemonic power that needs securing against the barbarians: a minor variation in geopolitics.

As in Jelinek's *Bambiland*, the war on stage – and, by implication, in Iraq – is fought for and by different interest groups, ultimately for merchant powers and for economic gain. '[M]y father insisted – fight – [t]here's a war in Scotland – go and win us some land and a manor house', the English lieutenant Egham relates (42), and that war was supposed to be a swift and easy operation. But the invaded country has been at war for a very long time. In contrast to premature assumptions, the deployment of the English troops for a peacekeeping mission takes much longer than planned and the rebel army is fighting a gruelling guerrilla war against them. 'They're not fighting us because of their Queen,' Egham acknowledges,

[t]hey're fighting us because we're here. The Scots will fight anyone who's standing in front of them. They like fighting. In fact – they're fighting us partly because we're stopping them from fighting each other. (95)

In a deliberate attempt to evoke the form of a Greek tragedy, Greig designates the soldiers as chorus, capturing the war experiences of the young men in a more universal way than Gregory Burke's testimony-based play *Black Watch*. Here, too, there is an encounter with one of the typical features of asymmetric warfare, the ambush of a patrol, the report doubling as that of a road bomb ambush in modern-day Iraq or Afghanistan:

- What happened?
- We were patrolling.
- In the woods down near the river.
- They came at us.
- A lot of them.
- They were waiting.
- They got Tom. ...

- Don't put him down in the blood.
- He's all blood, it doesn't matter. ...
- This country.
- Stones and shitty water and the food's shit.
- You wonder why we're here.
- You wonder why we want the place.
- You wonder why we give a fuck. (57-58)

As already touched on earlier in the discussion of *Black Watch*, there is a specific line within the Scottish debate of the British deployment to Iraq which strongly criticises the presence of Scottish regiments in the Gulf region. It thus seems fitting to use the notorious 'Scottish Play' as the source for a play questioning contemporary Scotland's involvement in the New Wars. Adaptations allow for the stressing of symbolism, because the palimpsest shimmers through, because the characters are stand-ins for each other. To expand on Hutcheon's thesis of the adaptation as palimpsest, as a 'mosaic of citations that are visible and invisible, heard and silent ... always already written and read' (21), it is not only the adapted text which 'shines through', but also the cultural narratives of the adaptation's present. For *Dunsinane*, the war in Iraq is the unmentioned adapted text shaping the palimpsest, the underlying script that is just as present as the Shakespearean text providing the narrative premise for this play.

It is interesting to analyse why classical tragedies are used so often as a framework for the portrayal of New Wars. Several obvious similarities can be observed in the frequently portrayed discrepancy between the material, logistical, tactical and strategic power of the combatants, a situation which finds its counterpart in the contemporary concept of asymmetric warfare, in the inherent critique of the *polis* and thus by extension of the Western *polis*, in the portrayal of the bare life, the ungrievable life, and in the recognition of war as 'the primary organising principle of society', to quote Hardt and Negri again (2006: 7).

'Archetypal' (for lack of a better term) literary figures prove their adaptability to almost any context: in the figure of Nihad, Mouawad's *Scorched* portrays a version of *Oedipus* and the transgressions derived from myth and also depicted in Sophocles' play. But even though the inhumane violence displayed by this variation of the character Oedipus is an integral part of the narrative and an incest-crime emerges as the key unlocking the mystery of the missing father and brother, the confusion by which a son does not recognise his mother and proceeds to have sexual relations with her was not caused by this Oedipus' metaphorical blindness, nor by fate. The play demonstrates very clearly that the people are displaced within and without

their war-torn country and their identities are erased by the perpetual state of emergency. In *Scorched*, what emerges as palimpsestuous are patterns of violence.

In view of the reprisal of Heracles' warlordism portrayed in Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* and the looting and pillaging mercenary troops following Greig's General Siward through Scotland in search for the sometime Queen and fulltime freedom fighter Gruach (who declares that the objective of war is to be at war), in view of Jelinek's embedded journalist(s) openly plagiarising the original embedded journalist from *The Persians*, and of every adaptation of *Women of Troy* discussing the exclusion of refugees from the *polis*, and in view of the archaic gendering of ancient as well as contemporary warfare and above all the violence directed against civilians, it is fair to argue that the motives and themes of the adapted texts have provided an ideal structure for the portrayal of the New Wars.

I would suggest that there is a similarity between the wars portrayed in the source texts and the wars portrayed in the new plays, and that the adaptation is interested in these parallels and thus less in the characters, with whose function more liberties are taken. The 'urge to adapt' is not, I would argue, primarily prompted by the wish to update the adapted text, but by the current state of war and its characteristics, leading to the startling recognition that the classical plays had been about the New Wars all along.

The new plays on war mirror how the New Wars may be regarded themselves as palimpsests of former wars, displaying the structural framework of the old wars running through the fabric of the New Wars as a ground line (via its origin in the discussion of baroque music, the term becomes, fittingly, another reference to the cultural framework of the Thirty Years' War) underwritten by the Thirty Years War, the Greco-Persian Wars and the Trojan War, 'adapting' them to fit a globalised world. While Münkler suggests seventeenth Century Europe as reference for his analysis of the New Wars (2), these plays go further and imply the Athenian city state as a frame, reincarnated as the Fortress West. This idea of former wars providing the ground line for current wars is what is argued in Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain*, it is the direction into which Naomi Wallace's *In the Heart of America* is pointing, it is the framework for those plays set within an undefined space of perpetual war – *Blasted*, *Far Away*, *Midwinter*, *Cockroach*. The concept of war as an iteration loop, to be acted out by different characters, is the fundamental premise of *Dunsinane*, *Bambiland*, *Cruel and Tender* and the different adaptations of *Women of Troy*. The notion of a circular, rescripted history of war is evoked by Cassandra's reproachful call for Apollo in Clemente's and Langman's version of *Women of Troy*:

Cassandra: I thought to please you, God,
But made you angry instead.
You spat in my mouth,

And made me see horrors of the future.
They spew and gabble:
Chickamauga, Nek, Melos,
Gulag, Passchendale,
Rwanda, Rwanda,
Taliban, Jericho. ...
Dance with me, Mother.
History is a whirling maze.
(Clemente and Langman 12)

As the bodies of the actors stand in for both the adapted characters and those in the adaptation, for characters experiencing the old wars and those experiencing the New Wars, it is possible to portray the structural similarities of past and present wars at the same time. By drawing attention to the palimpsestic nature of the New Wars, the dramatic adaptations limn how these wars are a return to very old wars, strengthening the argument that, in fact, the modern conception of peace as the natural state and war as the exception has to be reconsidered.

Conclusion

War is a social activity.
Carl von Clausewitz

"The Coming Anarchy", Robert D. Kaplan entitled his article on civilisations on the brink of erosion in February 1994. What at the time might have sounded like a prophecy of doom has proven to be a fairly accurate calculation of how the world would develop over the next seventeen years. How contemporary this thesis would turn out to be in view of recent geopolitical events did come as a surprise, even if the beginnings of current international developments had been evident years ago and could have been deduced from several insightful studies on the evolutions of conflict zones and the erosion of states. Nevertheless, especially the notion of the *homo sacer* as discussed by Giorgio Agamben and the question of refugees gained more prevalence in this thesis than they might have done under different political circumstances. It is the theatre's underlying objective to make visible the unseen, the things we will not acknowledge, whose existence we deny.

It was the primary goal of this thesis to examine how contemporary wars and conflicts are mediated on stage. As has been argued, the contemporary wars, distinguished by the now established name of New Wars, display features that align them structurally more with the Thirty Years War than with any of the wars in the long age of the nation states, indicating that war has once again become 'the primary organising principle of society' (Hardt and Negri 2006: 7) and that the state of exception has become the rule. The individual characteristics of the New Wars, such as a blurring of the distinctions between war, organised crime and large-scale human rights violations on the one hand and between military, para-military and civilian actors, the modes of asymmetric warfare, risk transfer wars, guerrilla warfare and terrorism as more prevalent than fighting between clearly established state actors on the other, and the special structures of a globalised war-financing system all provide motives and structuring devices to the new plays on war. Timeless figures such as the child soldier, the mercenary soldier, the warlord and the refugee all appear on stage, where we recognise them as the *homo sacer*, because the structures of theatre enhance their role as those ousted from the *polis*. The prevalent fears of a world at risk are equally explored as are the parallels between New Wars and Old Wars, and the theatre emerges as the space where the palimpsestic nature of the New Wars is most apparent, because it can synchronise different historical times and spaces as well as merge literary archetypes and contemporary characters.

The plays are all haunted by war, which will sometimes come in the guise of one of the characters, sometimes remain a body-less force; it always presents itself as an utterly unpredictable antagonist: the unlisted character. This study maintains that in these new plays on war, war itself is the determining force on stage, shaping the characters and informing the action more than other conflicts or circumstances, because war has become the dominant force in private and public lives. What brings these plays together is the theatre's continuous attempt to evoke empathy for the Other, from the Siege of Miletus and the Persians to the re-emergence of the *homo sacer* on stage in the twenty-first century in the depiction of the New Old Wars.

By drawing from political and sociological theory, this thesis has addressed in each individual chapter how the state of exception and the continuous state of war permeate the new plays on war. As has been demonstrated, they display many of the attributes that characterise the New Wars and the sense of risk as displayed by the Western *polis*, allowing for war to feature as an unlisted character in the plays; the relationship between theatre, cruelty and taboo at the same time reaches back to the theatre's formal and contextual roots in the scapegoat ritual and informs the contemporary guises of the *homo sacer* in a perpetual state of exception and warfare; the debate between an authentic and an aesthetic approach to 'the truth' prompts an investigation into the implications of the function of testimony on stage and into an evaluation of the potentially pornographic connotations of public trauma, grief and mourning and the division of people into grievable and un-grievable. Finally, the contemporary adaptations of ancient plays on war serve to reveal the structures of the New Wars as ultimately palimpsestic.

Reading the New War plays through New War theory highlighted the recurring patterns of characteristic features of the wars and of the characters' function within the plays and as stand-ins for citizens of the *polis* or as outcasts swarming the fringes of the Fortress West. Approaching the plays with Beck's theory of the world risk society and Agamben's theses on the *homo sacer* and the state of exception further interrelated the socio-political premises of the New Wars and those they wash ashore with the structures and parameters of the theatre as the realm where sacrifice is negotiated in a stylised way, while Agamben's concept of the lacuna in testimony proved a valuable complement to the trauma theory by Caruth, Laub and Felman. Finally, considering the recent discussions in adaptation theory provided this thesis with a further instrument to analyse the impact of different influences and pretexts on the plays.

This thesis could, of course, only give a glimpse of the body of work that is available, as more and more playwrights bring the contemporary wars into the theatres and onto the stage.

It would probably have been possible to demonstrate the presence of the New Wars in the plays of a single playwright like Caryl Churchill alone, and while this thesis mainly concentrates on British playwrights, further research should encompass a wider range of authors from other countries in order to reflect the global prevalence of the New Wars. US-American author Sam Shepard, whose biting satires on contemporary American identity in a country under threat offer ample material for analysis in terms of Beck's theory of a world at risk, should be included in such an attempt, as well as Serbian author Biljana Srbljanović, whose early plays chronicle the genesis of ethnic violence. The Lebanese-Canadian author Wajdi Mouawad, whose *Scorched* offered valuable exemplifying material, treats the war-ridden history of his home country in most of his plays, and the US-American author Naomi Wallace, whose war-trauma play *In the Heart of America* served to demonstrate how the structures of such trauma may influence the theatrical form, equally returns to the subject of contemporary warfare time and again. Doubtlessly, there will be more plays exploring the realm of the New Wars in a permanent state of exception: both conditions, it seems, are here to stay.

It was one of the aims of this thesis to open up a space which invited research at the interface of New War theory and theatre. The more this thesis progressed, the more doors opened to the adjoining areas: many of the political and social developments in the wake of the New Wars only touched upon in this thesis offer themselves ample material to be explored in the context of dramatic production. Already the adaptation of classical plays to portray the New Wars would be a research project of and by itself, as would, specifically, an investigation into adaptations and new translations of Bertold Brecht's *Mother Courage*, the play set during the Thirty Years' War and thus a premise for a portrayal of the New Wars par excellence. Surely, the work on Verbatim drama and its wider socio-cultural implications is far from exhausted, and while there have been numerous publications on the subject already, the specific intersection between contemporary warfare, the truth as 'the first casualty of war' (Rose 2007: 163) and the demand for testimony and personalised memories on the stage, in a way a return to *The Persians* in its position as the first documentary play, has not yet been covered sufficiently.

Further research might encompass exploring the subversive aspect of protest theatre, street performance, activist theatre projects and guerrilla theatre groups connected to anti-war and anti-globalisation activism, such as The Billionaires for Bush, the protest movement Tute Bianche, the music formation Infernal Noise Brigade and the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army and theatre projects such as The Riot Group (whose *Pugilist Specialist* in 2003 explored the hunt for Saddam Hussein from a distinctively satirical angle).

The world at risk and a resurfacing of Noam Chomsky's thesis of 'Manufacturing Consent' can be observed in plays such as Enda Walsh's *The Small Things* (2005), Mark Ravenhill's *The Cut*, Sam Shepard's *The God of Hell* (2004). Following further instances of eroding nation states, the *homo sacer* in the form of the refugee is a figure which will emerge more and more on the stage, demanding the exploration of ethical questions in view of the global erosion of nation states and the large-scale wars that show no sign of diminishing. The presence of the camp, not necessarily in connection to war but as a localisation of the state of exception, as the dark side of Foucault's heterotopia, could become more prevalent as well, and future research should reflect these developments.

Theatre, in what is perhaps the original sense of mimesis, does not necessarily portray what is visible, what is perceived as reality, but explores the subjunctive, what might also be real, what is becoming, what should be visible and what simultaneously is and is not. It is for this reason that it can portray the palimpsestic wars: because it can highlight all the layers, and because it may allow a cast of characters to play against an unlisted character, which will nevertheless be manifest. The power of theatre lies in the ability to evoke the intangible.

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Appendix

The following comprises a selection of short summaries of those plays that are explicitly referred to within the main part of this thesis, in order to offer some context to the reader who might not be familiar with the individual plays.

Brittain, Victoria and Slovo, Gillian:

Guantánamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom' (2004)

Premiere: Tricycle Theatre, London, 20 May 2004.

The play centres on the verbatim account by five British detainees in the US-American extra-judicial detention camp at Bahía de Guantánamo in Southern Cuba. The five did not have any connections to terrorism, but were nonetheless detained for extended periods of time. They were released in late February 2004, the interviews conducted between the end of March and the beginning of April 2004. While the play offers ample material from the detainees themselves, their families and legal representative, statements from members of the government are missing.¹³⁹ The title cites the inscription at the gates to Camp Delta detention compound in Guantánamo.

Burke, Gregory: *Black Watch* (2006)

Premiere: Drill Hall, Edinburgh, 8 August 2006.

Centred on the deployment of the legendary Royal Highland Regiment (Black Watch) to Camp Dogwood in Iraq in 2004, the play is a biography of the Scottish infantry regiment which has been a crucial subject of identification for local communities over the last two centuries. The play is based on interviews with servicemen and ex-servicemen who served in Iraq with the Black Watch regiment, alternating between reimagined group interviews in a pub in Fife and scenes in Iraq which portray the daily routine of the regiment, a visit by embedded journalists, reconnaissance missions and ultimately the death of three soldiers who are killed by a road bomb. The play is framed by the 2004 political controversy concerning the merger of the individual Scottish regiments into the Royal Regiment of Scotland.

Churchill, Caryl: *This Is a Chair* (1997)

Premiere: Royal Court Theatre, London, 25 June 1997.

¹³⁹ The authors explain this was due to government members' unwillingness to be interviewed, (Brittain and Slovo 2004: 3).

There are eight scenes, each with a title, which the playwright insists 'must be clearly displayed or announced' (2008: 40). The titles of the scenes are seemingly unrelated to dialogue and content:

1. The War in Bosnia

(a botched date)

2. Pornography and Censorship

(parents try to coerce their daughter to eat her dinner)

3. The Labour Party's Slide to the Right

(two brothers have witnessed their sister's boyfriend commit suicide)

4. Animal Conservation and Third World Economies: the Ivory Trade

(a woman discusses her upcoming gastroscopy)

5. Hong Kong

(a lovers' spat)

6. The Northern Ireland Peace Process

(parents try to coerce their daughter to eat her dinner; text same as [2.]

7. Genetic Engineering

(a couple preparing for bed)

8. The Impact of Capitalism on the Former Soviet Union

(no dialogue or other content; leaving one third of the page blank, the play text then states: 'End.')

It is noteworthy that the book cover of the 1999 edition of the play is derived from René Magritte's painting *La trahison des images* (1928-29).

Churchill, Caryl: *Far Away* (2000)

Premiere: Royal Court Theatre, London, 24 November 2000.

The drama is divided into three acts. In the first, young Joan accidentally witnesses violent assaults outside of her aunt Harper's farmhouse: people are loaded into a truck, there is blood on the floor, and someone is being hit. Harper convinces her niece that in fact something revolutionary and good is happening on the farm. In the second act, the now older Joan works in a hat factory. She and her colleague Todd design elaborate hats, whose purpose is revealed in the middle of the act: prisoners exhibit the hats during a bizarre death march on the way to their execution. The third act is again set in Harper's house. As Joan is sleeping, Harper and Todd, who is now married to Joan, talk about the global war, in which not only all peoples but also the animals and even the elements are involved. Joan wakes up and

reports of her dangerous journey to Harper's house in the middle of a war that has long lost all dimensions.

Churchill, Caryl: *Seven Jewish Children* (2009)

Premiere: Royal Court, London, 6 February, 2009.

In seven scenes, unnamed adult speakers discuss how to explain the respective current circumstances of the Jewish people to a female child, arguing about how much information to give her, how much to keep from her, how to frame the tale to ensure the child will not be frightened by what she sees or hears, nor draw the wrong conclusions. The scenes refer to approximately the past seventy years in the history of the people, the events are only alluded to but can be identified as persecution, the Holocaust, emigration to Palestine, displacement of the Palestinian Arabs, the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, First and Second Intifada and the three-week Gaza war in the winter 2008-2009.

The play text is available online free of charge. The author relinquishes the customary charge for performing rights.

Crimp, Martin: *Cruel and Tender* (2004)

Premiere: Young Vic, London, 14 May 2004.

The play is based on Sophocles' *The Women of Trachis*. In a luxurious residence close to an international airport, Amelia waits for news from her husband, a General engaged in large-scale campaigns against the war on terror and currently deployed to Africa. Amelia is attended to by a housekeeper, a physiotherapist and a beautician who are standing in for the chorus in this play. She sends her son James in search of his father. The government minister Jonathan brings two children from sub-Saharan Africa into Amelia's house: teenager Laela and her younger brother, allegedly the sole survivors of the General's attack against a terrorist stronghold in the city of Gisenyi (Rwanda). At night, the journalist Richard explains to Amelia that the General destroyed the city because he desired Laela. Amelia sends her husband a present: a pillow into which she has sown a tube with a liquid she believes to be a love potion, but which turns out to be a slow-acting poison. James returns with the news that the General is suffering a prolonged death due to Amelia's present. Amelia then takes her own life. The General returns, heavily incapacitated by the poison. James informs him that he is accused of war crimes and will have to face an inquiry. The General attempts to bequeath Laela to James and to ensure that the little boy, Laela's son not her brother, is adopted by James. As he is led away, the General repeats that, in this war, he is not the criminal but the sacrifice.

Euripides: *Troades (The Trojan Women/Women of Troy) (415 BC)*

Premiere: Theatre of Dionysus, Athens, ~ March 415 BC.

After 10 years of siege, Troy has fallen. The city is sacked by the Greeks and burned to the ground, the Trojan women wait in a camp for their distribution as slaves among the victors. The god Poseidon laments the fate of his city, the Trojan queen Hecuba mourns her family, of which remain only her daughter Cassandra and Hector's widow Andromache with her son Astyanax. The priestess Cassandra is chosen by the Greek general Agamemnon; she prophesies death to him, herself and the remaining Greek soldiers. Hecuba is allotted to Odysseus and learns that her youngest daughter Polyxena has been sacrificed. Andromache is given to Achilles' son, her own son is killed. Menelaus arrives with a death sentence for his wife Helena, who tries to defend herself, but Hecuba and the choir of Trojan women reject all her arguments. One after the other, the women are taken away. After the burial of Astyanax, Hecuba is prevented from running into the flames. Then the women are herded to the Greek ships.

Western Michigan University: *Women of Troy. Women of War (2004)*

European premiere: Old St. Paul's Church Hall, Edinburgh, August 6th, 2004.

Clemente, Rosalba and Dawn Langman: *Euripides' Trojan Women (2007)*

Premiere: State Theatre Company South Australia, Adelaide, November 27th, 2007.

Farmer, Jennifer: *Words Words Words (2006)*

Premiere: Tricycle Theatre, London, 24 October 2006

Part of *How Long is Never? Darfur – a Response*.

This very short play depicts then UN-secretary Kofi Annan at a checkpoint just outside Darfur, trying to complete a crossword puzzle, missing only one word. A peacekeeper, an aid worker, a doctor and a journalist attempt and fail to help him. A passing young woman deduces that the term must be 'genocide', causing the others to frantically hush her: admitting to genocide in Darfur would require a humanitarian intervention.

green, debbie tucker: *stoning mary (2005)*

Premiere: Royal Court Theatre, London, 1 April 2005.

Always set in the country it is performed in which the characters are portrayed by Caucasian actors, this play presents three at first seemingly disconnected stories. One strand portrays a couple suffering from AIDS and fighting about the single prescription they can afford, the second depicts the parents of a child soldier arguing about their son and the third shows a

woman visiting her sister Mary in prison. Mary has been condemned to death by stoning for having killed the boy who murdered her parents. As the narration alternates between strands, the couple fighting about the prescription are disclosed as Mary's parents who are later assaulted by a child soldier, who emerges as the son of the second couple. After Mary's sister and her boyfriend echo the scene of her parents' fight over the prescription, the last scene brings all strands together: set moments before Mary's execution, the mother of the child soldier picks up the first stone.

Greig, David: *Dunsinane* (2010)

Premiere: Hampstead Theatre, London, 10 February 2010.

The play is set in Dunsinane, opening during the last four scenes, but mainly set in the aftermath of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. It is divided into four parts, corresponding to the seasons. In the spring, after the death of the unnamed tyrant, the English army led by General Siward installs King Malcolm in Scotland. The tyrant's widow Gruach is alive and raises a claim to the throne on behalf of her fugitive teenage son from her first marriage. The Scottish lieutenant Macduff explains the complex structure of Scotland's parties, clans and families to Siward, who comes to realise that he gravely underestimated the situation. Dunsinane is turned into a garrison for the English army. In the summer, the English lieutenant Egham negotiates a deal with Gruach: he will escort her son to safety if she ensures that Egham can conduct his trade on the local markets. When a young English soldier dies in an ambush and Siward suspects Gruach of having orchestrated the attack, she seduces him. The clan chiefs of Scotland arrive at Dunsinane for a gathering at which King Malcolm gives a speech about his leadership qualities. Gruach agrees to marry Malcolm in order to unite the different factions and ensure peace, but at the wedding, the Queen's Scottish soldiers attack the crowd and she leaves Dunsinane. In the autumn, as the English army is engaged in a drawn-out guerrilla-war against the Queen's forces, Siward becomes more and more ruthless when confronting the enemy. After he kills a boy believed to be the Queen's son, King Malcolm concedes that this death will only give rise to more claims on the throne. Only accompanied by a boy soldier, Siward sets out in the winter to find the Queen, carrying the body of the heir apparent with him. They find Gruach on an island in a frozen loch, with a baby she claims is her grandchild and thus the new claimant to the throne. Realising that he will not be able to bring peace to Scotland, Siward resigns himself to walking away into the snow.

Hare, David: *Via Dolorosa* (1998)

Premiere: Royal Court Theatre, London, 3 September 1998, performed by the author.

A monologue written in 1997, about the author's visit to Israel and Palestine and his meetings with various members of the Israeli and the Palestinian community.

Hare, David: *Stuff Happens* (2004)

Premiere: National Theatre (Olivier), London, 1 September 2004.

A mixture of documentary and fictionalised history with a dramatis personae of 49, this play begins in 2000, at the time of George W. Bush's election in US-America and then proceeds to depict the meetings, discussions behind closed doors, public addresses and behind-the-scenery plotting of the administrations both in Washington and in London that lead to the 2003 Iraq war. For the scenes featuring reproduced material, the play relies on transcripts of press conferences, UN assemblies and televised interviews. The title is derived from a remark by then US-Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld in response to the looting in Baghdad in the days after the fall of the city in April 2003.

Harris, Zinnie: *Midwinter* (2004)

Premiere: Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford-upon-Avon, 5 October 2004.

The play is set during the fragile peace between one outbreak of fighting and the next in an endless war. Deliberately avoiding any specification of time or place, it opens with middle-aged Maud feeding on a dead horse. She is approached by Leonard and his grandson Sirin, who have been lured to her by the smell of the meat. Maud strikes a deal with Leonard: she will keep Sirin alive with the meat, but in return, Leonard will give him to Maud as a replacement for her dead son. That same night, the soldier Grenville returns from the war. Maud presents Sirin to him as their child and learns that all soldiers have returned carrying a mysterious parasite that will ultimately result in blindness. Leonard comes to visit Sirin and reveals that he knows Maud: she has taken on the identity of her twin sister Magda who has drowned years ago. Grenville, realising that he is with the wrong twin and Sirin is not actually his son, assaults the boy. As Grenville goes completely blind, Maud kills him with the ointment for his eyes. In the last scene, Sirin and Maud are playing outside the house when Leonard arrives with the news that the war has started again – even without the soldiers that have all gone blind. Refusing to acknowledge this, Maud decides that her house is a peaceful zone where war does not exist.

Middle part of the trilogy *Solstice – Midwinter – Fall*.

Harris, Zinnie: *Solstice* (2005)

Premiere: The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, 30 March 2005.

Set ten years before *Midwinter*, the play portrays a community on the brink of civil war. The play begins with teenagers Sita and Adie kissing in a hideout, then discussing the recent public murder of a bride on the bridge between their and the neighbouring community. Elsewhere, Adie's father Michel learns that there are municipal plans to resettle the inhabitants of their impoverished community, then demolish the buildings to look for minerals in the ground. He and his wife Therese, who is dying from cancer, discuss whether they should move or stay. As the older generation starts to cut ties with the community on the other side of the bridge, the younger generation engages in retaliatory violence: Adie takes part in committing a terrorist act which leaves many people dead or injured. As the violence escalates, the first resettlement camps and a detention centre are built. Michel visits his imprisoned son, hands him food and a novel as presents from his mother, then shoots him dead. He returns home to see off his wife, who will move to the new settlements. In the last scene Michel and Sita decide to climb the tower of the church, knowing that it will be the first building to be destroyed.

First part of the trilogy *Solstice – Midwinter – Fall*.

Harris, Zinnie: *Fall* (2008)

Premiere: Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, 24 July 2008.

In an unnamed country which has just emerged from a civil war, Kate visits the imprisoned war criminal Evener, trying to find out more about her late husband, whose own war crimes have only recently been exposed. The prime minister Pierre considers what to do with the nation's imprisoned war criminals. Inspired by a visit of the foreign human rights activist Janine, he suggests that a member of the public should be appointed to listen to the recorded testimony, then judge whether the war criminals should be executed or not. This allegedly democratic endeavour quite suddenly rekindles the interest of foreign investors, and the prime minister's deputy, who has been devising strategies to realign the country with the international community, urges Pierre to consider proposals that might not be entirely moral or legal. Kate is chosen as an 'audio witness' and listens to the recorded eyewitness reports until she collapses, but she insists on continuing until the procedure is aborted. In shock, Kate agrees to the executions. On the eve of his execution, Evener is visited by Janine, who is appalled to note that he has been heavily abused by the prison guards. Convinced she made a grave mistake by deciding for the execution and unable to forget what she heard, Kate coerces a friend to help her take her own life. As Evener's public execution is about to begin in front of a blood-thirsty and hysterical crowd, his former guard rapes the human right activist, Pierre, who refuses to go through with the execution, is shot by his

deputy and the city descends into violent riots. Pierre's widow and Kate's friend flee to the mountains.

Third part of the trilogy *Solstice – Midwinter – Fall*.

Holcroft, Sam: *Cockroach* (2008)

Premiere: Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, 23 October 2008.

The play is set in a school which is situated in the middle of a war zone. Teacher Beth tries to instruct her students in the theory of natural selection, while the boys are conscripted one by one to fight in an unspecified 'just war'. Over the duration of the play, the boys display more and more aggressiveness and violence, while the girls, acutely aware of the diminishing pool of available men, become increasingly more interested in reproduction. As the war comes closer, the school takes on the task of cleaning used uniforms. By the end of the play, with all the men gone to war, the female students are left alone with their teacher, sorting through the bloodied and torn uniforms, while Beth collapses with grief.

Jelinek, Elfriede: *Bambiland* (2003)

Premiere: Burgtheater Vienna, December 12, 2003.

Drawing from Aeschylus' *The Persians* (472 BC), this play does not specify dramatis personae or different speakers but offers the monologic text to those staging it, quasi as 'raw material' to be moulded into any theatrical form. There is no dramatic action as such, but themes touched upon are the failure of the media's war reporting in contemporary Iraq, the relation between foreign policy and economic interests (specifically the link between Dick Cheney and Halliburton), reports of specific attacks against targets in the region and detailed description of weapons employed in the war against Iraq. Aeschylus' play is not the structural matrix as much as a textual source which resurfaces in scraps within Jelinek's text.

Kane, Sarah: *Blasted* (1995)

Premiere: Royal Court Theatre/London, January 12, 1995.

The play is set in a Leeds hotel room. Here, the cynical middle-aged journalist Ian brings the naïve young Cate, who does not wish to have a relationship with him any more. During the night, Ian rapes Cate, who flees through the bathroom window in the morning. A soldier forcefully enters the room, when suddenly a bomb explodes. In the destroyed room, the soldier reports of his horrible deeds and experiences during the civil war, and how his girlfriend has been raped and murdered. He rapes and blinds Ian, then kills himself. Cate returns with a baby. As it dies, she buries it under the stage floorboards and leaves Ian again

to find food. Ian vegetates in the devastated room, masturbates, grows desperate, digs up the baby, eats it, and finally tries to die. In the end, he is buried to his neck under the floorboards. Cate, bearing signs of having been violated, returns and feeds him.

Lichtenstein, Jonathan: *The Pull of Negative Gravity* (2004)

Premiere: Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, 5 August 2004.

The play is set in rural Wales, where a family prepares for their son Dai's return from Iraq. His fiancée Bethan works as a nurse at the local military hospital, where she cares for a badly burnt soldier who might or might not be an enemy combatant. Dai returns physically and mentally traumatised, the family receives him with embarrassment which easily turns to repulsion. Bethan still marries him, but cannot bring herself to kiss him. Dai's brother Rhys is succumbed by guilt for not having signed up instead of Dai, who experiences severe post-traumatic stress disorder. As the physical and psychological symptoms worsen, his mother kills him to end his suffering. The end of the play sees Bethan experiencing weightlessness when flying within the vacuum bubble generated by a military helicopter. Without safety device, Bethan will not be able to stay within the bubble and will either tumble into the rotors or crash.

Mann, Emily: *Still Life* (1980)

Premiere: Goodman Studio Theatre, Chicago (Ill.), October 1980.

The play is created from interviews the author conducted with three people in 1978. During the whole play, three characters sit next to each other at a table: Vietnam veteran and now creative artist Mark, his pregnant wife Cheryl and his mistress Nadine, also an artist. The characters recount their lives and the traumatic experiences of the past: Mark has abused his wife and tries to come to terms with his memories of the Vietnam war, in which he has witnessed atrocities and himself killed a Vietnamese family. Cheryl tries to forget the past and focus on the future, but she returns to her addiction to tranquillisers. Nadine denies to see how violence and fear have entered her life and excuses Mark's violent episodes. Mark projects photos he took in Vietnam onto a projector screen behind the characters. The characters are together on stage during the whole play and speak to the audience; while they talk about each other, they hardly communicate with each other.

Mouawad, Wajdi: *Scorched* (2003)

Premiere: as *Incendies*, Théâtre Ô Parleur, Montréal (Qc), 2003.

The first act opens on the twins Jeanne and Simon visiting a solicitor who reads them their mother's unusual will, which sends them out to uncover her past in an unnamed war-torn country (closely resembling Lebanon). Their mother Nawal wishes that her children deliver two letters to their addressees: one to their brother, previously not heard of, one to their father, previously presumed dead. While Jeanne researches their mother's past, the action alternates between the contemporary strand and flashbacks set in Nawal's past, which show her at age fourteen, pregnant from her boyfriend and delivering her baby which is immediately given away, then running away herself shortly after. At nineteen, Nawal returns to inscribe her grandmother's name on her grave, then meets her friend Sawda and they set off together to find Nawal's son Nihad. Nawal narrowly escapes a militia-led massacre on a bus for refugees. The second act opens on Nawal and Sawda aged forty. Nawal abandons the search for her son, assassinates the leader of the militia and is then held in a notorious prison for five years, where she gains reputation as the 'woman who sings' while others are tortured. She is herself tortured and raped by the head of the prison, Abou Tarek, and later gives birth to twins, which are taken from her and survive. At sixty, five years before the play sets in, Nawal testifies against Abou Tarek in an International War Crime Tribunal. When Abou Tarek gives his testimony, Nawal recognises him as her son Nihad. She ceases to speak and writes her will. In the present time, Jeanne has traced the man who took in the baby twins, realising that she and Simon were conceived by rape. Meanwhile, Simon reads their mother's testimony to the Tribunal, in which she describes the torture and the rapes and acknowledges the birth of the twins. A flashback shows young Nihad as a sniper, ruthlessly shooting a war photographer. Simon joins Jeanne in their mother's country to search for their brother. The twins soon realise the unity of their brother and their father. They visit him and give him Nawal's two letters, one to her rapist and father to her twins, the other to her long-lost son. In the last scene, the twins read a last, consoling letter Nawal wrote to them.

Nottage, Lynn: *Give, Again?* (2006)

Premiere: Tricycle Theatre, London, 24 October 2006

Part of *How Long is Never? Darfur – a response*.

This very short play portrays a husband and a wife discussing over the breakfast table which relief organisation to give money to.

Norton-Taylor, Richard: *Justifying War: Scenes from the Hutton Enquiry* (2003)

Premiere: Tricycle Theatre, London, 30 October 2003.

The play consists entirely of the edited transcripts taken from a choice of twelve witnesses heard at the Hutton Enquiry Investigation Into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Dr David Kelly. The evidence comes from the first part of the Inquiry and is given by a colleague of Kelly's, journalists, party officials, members of the government, a commander in the Royal Air Force, a civil servant and Kelly's widow. The individual questionings appear in chronological order, except for the testimony by Kelly's widow, which appears last in the play but would have been the penultimate in the actual chronological order. The play was produced before the official Inquiry had presented a concluding report to the public.

Pinter, Harold: *Ashes to Ashes* (1996)

Premiere: Royal Court Theatre, London, 12 September 1996.

In one act, the characters Devlin and Rebecca, whose relationship is not defined but might be romantic, marital or therapeutic, discuss past events in Rebecca's life. Rebecca recounts a sexual encounter which turns into a threatening scenario, then moves on to a witness account of having seen mothers forcibly separated from their babies on train platforms, treks of refugees traversing a dystopian urban environment and a large group of people being ushered into the sea. Devlin questions account, and she concedes that nothing had ever happened to her, though at the end of the play she merges with one of the women whose baby was taken from her.

Ravenhill, Mark: *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* (2008)

Premiere: various venues/London, 3 April 2008 (staged readings of the individual plays during the cycle *Ravenhill for Breakfast* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2007 at the Traverse Theatre).

The cycle consists of 16 short plays, all named after epics. Two characters appear in more than one play, either as characters on stage or as the subject of discussion between other characters: the headless soldier and the woman claiming to be a fallen angel with a broken wing.

1. Women of Troy

A chorus of women in an undefined first-world country communicate their shock and anger in the aftermath of a terrorist attack. A suicide bomber steps into their midst and detonates his bomb, leaving them dead. A soldier/angel announces the beginning of a perpetual global war.

2. Intolerance

Helen is having breakfast in her middle-class kitchen while discussing irritated-bowel-syndrome and her belief that she was an archangel in a former life

3. Women in Love

Anna visits her lover Dan at the hospital.

4. Fear and Misery

Harry and Olivia are having dinner while they listen to their son Alex on the baby monitor. They discuss their increasing need for security and consider moving into a gated community, while, unnoticed by them, the figure of the soldier enters their home and visits their son.

5. War and Peace

At night, seven-year-old Alex is visited by the headless soldier in his bedroom, as has happened several times before. The soldier wants to touch, then take away, Alex's head, but Alex defends himself. As the soldier leaves, Alex keeps his gun. It is insinuated that this scene takes place in parallel to "Fear and Misery".

6. Yesterday an Incident Occurred

A chorus of cast and staff members of a theatre recounts an attack on one of their colleagues by a member of the audience, demanding that a witness come forward and be branded for their failure to report the incident. News arrive that the corresponding bill to change legislation has been passed by the government. A man is dragged onto stage. Already branded, he confesses his guilt to the public. Satisfied, the speakers return to their daily routines.

7. Crime and Punishment

In an unidentified country, a soldier of the occupying forces interrogates a local woman about the day the statue of the local dictator was pulled off its pedestal. As the woman wants to leave, the soldier, trying to coerce her to enter a romantic relationship with him, threatens her with his gun, then shoots her. When she refuses to declare her love for him, he cuts out her tongue.

8. Love (But I Won't Do That)

In an unidentified country, Marion argues with the soldier of the occupying forces who has been living in her house for three weeks. He demands they have more frequent sexual relations. As he complains that she is not fulfilling her duties as an ally and threatens to withdraw his protection, leaving her vulnerable to insurgents, she promises to comply.

9. The Mikado

In an unidentified first-world country, lovers Alan and Peter spend a day in the botanic garden, discussing a move to France, the relative security of their gated community, and Peter's returning cancer.

10. War of the Worlds

A chorus of the people of an undefined first-world city reacts to the news of a terror attack in another country, expressing their empathy and grief. The scene turns into a display of recreational grieving until the chorus concedes that in fact they believe the attack to be deserved and would rather not be confronted with it any more.

11. Armageddon

Emma and Honor meet in a hotel, speaking about their belief in God, Emma's son who lost his life in the war and about their trust that by waging this war, freedom and democracy will be spread.

12. The Mother

A male and a female soldier bring Haley the news of her son's death in the war. In an attempt to evade the information, Haley attacks the soldiers, then accepts the news and continues to watch TV.

13. Twilight of the Gods

In an occupied country, Susan complains to Jane about the lack of food in her zone. Jane, who is part of the occupying forces, notes down her complaints and allows her some sustenance in exchange for her cooperation with a report Jane has to compile. As Susan eats a bread roll too fast and chokes, Jane forces her to regurgitate it again.

14. Paradise Lost

Liz asks her neighbour Ruth about screams she hears coming from her flat. Ruth is unable to answer but tries to convince Liz to take her away. Two men arrive, claiming that they are taking care of Ruth, but it transpires that they have been torturing her to extract information. As Ruth declares her hatred of Liz's world, Liz is persuaded to partake in the torture.

15. The Odyssey

A chorus of soldiers say their farewells to the country they occupied for a long time. As a final gift to the populace, they give the former dictator of the country a public trial and execution. While they are readying themselves to leave for home, news arrive that there is another country they are asked to invade to install freedom and democracy.

16. Birth of a Nation

A team of artist-facilitators comes to a country after occupation and civil war, attempting to draw inspiration from the destroyed city and offering artist workshop to the citizens. A blind

mute woman is brought forward. Confusing her collapse with a performance, the artists applaud her as she screams and convulses in anger and grief.

Rickman, Alan and Viner, Katherine (eds.): *My Name is Rachel Corrie* (2005)

Premiere: Royal Court, London, 7 April 2005.

The play stages the edited emails and diaries of a US-American activist killed in the Gaza strip in an incident involving an Israeli bulldozer. The exact circumstances leading to Corrie's death are highly disputed, and in consequence, this play caused some public controversy as well, though not necessarily in reference to the play as such.

Rivera, José: *Marisol* (1992)

Premiere: Actors Theatre of Louisville, Louisville (US-KY), 13 March 1992.

Set in contemporary New York City, the play opens on a guardian angel watching her charge Marisol on the way home from work. Marisol is attacked by a man with a golf club raving about apocalyptic events, but the angel saves her. Later that night, when a woman tries to shoot Marisol through the door of her apartment, the angel saves her live again, but then informs her that she will not longer protect her, as the war in heaven has started. The effects of the war soon spill over into the city. Marisol loses her home and wanders the streets of a war-torn urban dystopia, meeting a beaten-up genteel woman, a burn victim searching for his skin, and a skinhead who sets fire to people and who turns out to be Marisol's deranged friend June. The play ends with the people displaced on the street joining the angels' side in the war, which eventually comes to a close.

Soans, Robin: *Talking to Terrorists* (2005)

Premiere: Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds, 21 April 2005.

In two acts, the question of terrorism and the circumstances generating it is discussed in an interview-setting with various members of the public such as two former secretaries of state, a relief worker, a journalist, several members of the Luton Muslim community, an ex-ambassador, a Foreign Office Committee and private people. The interviews are intersected with longer testimony by five former terrorists: an ex-member of the Irish Republican Army, an ex-member of the Ulster Volunteer Force, an ex-member of the Kurdish Workers Party, an ex-member of the National Resistance Army, Uganda and the ex-head of the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Bethlehem.

Stephens, Simon: *Pornography* (2007)

Premiere: Schauspielhannover, Hannover (Germany), 15 June 2007.

The play portrays a fragmented London society in the days leading up to the 2005 terrorist attacks. Directors and producers are invited to shift the text around and to use as many actors as seem feasible, there is no *dramatis personae* and individual lines are not ascribed to specific characters. In seven sections, the play depicts scenes of transgression in the public and private sphere (order as given in the text):

7. an employee decides to betray the industrial secrets of his/her company to a rival company
6. a pupil stalks his teacher
5. two siblings commence an intimate relationship with each other
4. a terrorist travels through London with his explosive luggage
3. an unemployed postgraduate student and her former professor slide into a relationship of dependence
2. an octogenarian who is addicted to online pornography knocks on strangers' doors to ask whether she could have a share of their barbeque
1. a roll call of the 52 victims of a terrorist attack

Thompson, Judith: *Palace of the End* (2006)

Premiere: The NOHO Arts Center, North Hollywood (US-CA), 12 June 2006.

The play consists of three imagined monologues attributed to real people, performed in consecutive order. All three characters are on stage throughout the play.

1. My Pyramids (this monologue was first produced independently by Volcano Theatre for The Wrecking Ball in 2004)

The speaker is a heavily pregnant American soldier inspired by Lynndie England, who came to questionable fame as the young woman posing smiling for the camera on the torture- and pornography-inspired pictures taken of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib prison (later broadcast on *60 Minutes II* and published in the *New Yorker*). The scene is set in an office, some time after the pictures of the abuse and torture of the prisoners have been released. The soldier reads out what people write about her on the internet, speaks about the reasons she joined the army and about the incident during which the infamous pictures were taken.

2. Harrowdown Hill

The speaker is the British weapons inspector and microbiologist Dr David Kelly, who died on July 17, 2003 on Harrowdown Hill, presumably by taking his own life. The monologue takes place just moments before his death. David muses about the process of dying, speaks about backing the British government's lie about the possible deployment of weapons of

mass destruction from Iraq and recounts the murder of the family of a friend in Baghdad which prompted him to speak to a journalist. He finishes by singing a song for his daughter. While there is nobody else on the scene, the text also does not make a definitive statement about whether David Kelly did in fact commit suicide or not.

3. Instruments of Yearning

The speaker is Nehrjas Al Saffarh, a prominent member of the Iraqi Communist party who was tortured by Saddam Hussein's regime in the 1970s in the "Palace of the End" in Baghdad, which provides the title for the play. She retells how she and her two sons were tortured by the Baath secret police, how her youngest son did not survive the torture, how she died during the First Gulf War, when her house was hit by an American bomb and how disappointed she is by the destruction of her home country by the American troops during the Second Gulf War.

Version 1.0: *CMI (A Certain Maritime Incident) (2004)*

Premiere: Performance Space, Sydney, 26 May 2004.

Based on the transcripts of the Senate Select Committee on a Certain Maritime Incident, the play explores the 2001 'Children Overboard Affair', an Australian political debate about a particular 'Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel' (SIEV-4) and the subsequent controversy after it transpired that the government had misrepresented the event in order to strengthen support for stricter border protection measures. While the first and second act of the play are concerned with the meetings of the Committee, the third act starts with a scene of the information being spread, then returns to the Committee hearing. The fourth act uses testimony referring to the sinking of SIEV-X, two weeks after the first incident, an event during which 353 passengers drowned.

Wallace, Naomi: *In the Heart of America (1993)*

Premiere: Bush Theatre, London, 3 August 1993.

The drama consists of two acts of eleven scenes each. The Palestinian-American Fairouz Saboura attempts to find out about the disappearance of her brother Remzi, who is reported missing in the Gulf War 1990. Craver Perry, who was stationed with Remzi in the Saudi desert, claims not to remember anything. Fairouz and Craver are visited by the ghost of Lue Ming, a Vietnamese woman looking for a soldier by the name of Calley. Lue Ming claims to have met Remzi 'in a bad storm', but Fairouz does not want to admit that this signifies his death. Flashbacks show Remzi and Craver on the military base in the Saudi desert, practicing how to approach the dead body of a friend, and Fairouz and Remzi a year before, debating

their Palestinian-American identity and taking leave. On the military base in the Saudi desert, Special Forces Lieutenant Boxler trains Remzi and Craver in the questioning of prisoners without complying with the Geneva conventions. Boxler also seems to believe he is still fighting in the Vietnam War. Remzi and Craver grow closer and enter a romantic relationship, but the witnessing of gruesome scenes of war puts a strain on it. Lue Ming haunts Boxler in Iraq and when he 'remembers' the atrocities in My Lai, both Boxler and Lue Ming realise that he is Calley's dead soul which moves from war to war. Craver confronts his memory of how he and Remzi were caught 'in the act' and how Remzi was beaten to death by the other soldiers. He decides to publicise his story, while Fairouz can finally let her brother go.