Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

THE PLAYWRIGHTS' IRONIC CRITICISM OF THE POST-TRUTH DISCOURSE OF INSTITUTIONS IN SELECTED BRITISH AND IRISH PLAYS ABOUT THE IRAQ WAR

Güven ÇAĞAN

Ph.D. Dissertation

Ankara, 2024

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ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

The jury finds that Güven ÇAĞAN has on the date of 17.01.2024 successfully passed the defense examination and approves his Ph.D. Dissertation titled “The Playwrights’ Ironic Criticism of the Post-Truth Discourse of Institutions in Selected British and Irish Plays about the Iraq War”.

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Güven ÇAĞAN

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ETİK BEYAN

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[*İmza*]

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ABSTRACT

ÇAĞAN, Güven. *The Playwrights' Ironic Criticism of the Post-Truth Discourse of Institutions in Selected British and Irish Plays about the Iraq War*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara, 2024.

The concept of post-truth, theorised by Ralph Keyes in 2004 and used to denote the normalisation of lying in modern societies, remained popular for a long time due to political discourses during the American Presidential Election and the Brexit Referendum in the United Kingdom in 2016. Its popularity led to the word being chosen as the Word of the Year in 2016 by Oxford Dictionaries. The concept is defined as the consideration of the compatibility of information with one's emotions rather than with objective facts when accepting information as truth. One of the early instances of using post-truth discourse was in the process leading to the 2003 Iraq War. In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Tony Blair was considering sending armed forces along with the US army in an operation against Iraq. To persuade the public, both he and British institutions disseminated pro-war propaganda. Although the society was not convinced by these discourses and participated in large-scale anti-war protests, the British army began the invasion of Iraq with Operation Telic in March 2003. Playwrights joined in the public response and criticised the post-truth discourses of the British institutions by quickly writing successful plays. In this context, Scottish playwright Gregory Burke, in his *Black Watch* (2006), depicts the pro-war discourse of the military institution and criticises this discourse from an anti-war perspective. Similarly, Irish playwright *Colin Teevan*, in his *How Many Miles to Basra?* (2006), addresses the pro-war stance of the media institution and criticises its discourse. On the other hand, differing from the others, English playwright Simon Stephens, in his *Motortown* (2006), opposes the anti-war discourse of the family institution and confronts his reader/audience with a pro-Iraq War discourse. This dissertation analyses how post-truth discourses of the military, the media and the family institutions are scrutinised in these plays and argues that these playwrights, ironically, use a counter post-truth discourse while presenting their arguments.

Keywords

Contemporary British Drama, Contemporary Irish Drama, Post-Truth, Discourse, The Iraq War

TURKISH ABSTRACT

ÇAĞAN, Güven. *Irak Savaşı Hakkındaki Seçili Britanya ve İrlanda Tiyatro Oyunlarında Kurumlara Ait Gerçek Sonrası Söyleme Oyun Yazarlarının İronik Eleştirisi*, Doktora Tezi, Ankara, 2024.

2004 yılında Ralph Keyes tarafından kuramsallaştırılan ve modern toplumlarda yalanın normalleştirilmesi anlamında kullanılan hakikat sonrası kavramı 2016 yılında Amerikan Başkanlık Seçimi ve Birleşik Krallık'ta oylanan Brexit Referandumu sürecindeki siyasi söylemler sebebiyle uzun süre gündemde kaldı. Bu kadar popülerleşmesi kelimenin Oxford Dictionaries tarafından 2016 Yılının Kelimesi olarak seçilmesini sağladı. Kavram, bir bilginin doğru olarak kabul edilmesinde, onun nesnel gerçeklerle değil, ona karşı hissedilen duygularla uyumluluğunun göz önünde bulundurulması olarak tanımlanır. Hakikat sonrası söylemlerin kullanıldığı süreçlerin erken örneklerinden biri 2003 Irak Savaşı'na giden yoldur. Birleşik Krallık'ta Başbakan Tony Blair silahlı kuvvetleri ABD ordusunun yanında Irak'a karşı bir operasyona göndermek düşüncesindeydi. Halkı ikna etmek için hem kendisi hem de İngiliz kurumları savaş yanlısı propaganda yapıyordu. Her ne kadar bu söylemler ile ikna edilmeyen toplum savaş karşıtı protesto gösterilerine geniş çaplı katılım sağlamış olsa da İngiliz ordusu 2003 Mart'ında Telic Operasyonu ile Irak'ın işgaline başladı. Halktan gelen tepkiye oyun yazarları da ortak oldular ve kısa zamanda başarılı oyunlar yazarak İngiliz kurumlarının hakikat sonrası söylemlerini eleştirdiler. Bu bağlamda, İskoç oyun yazarı Gregory Burke, *Black Watch* (2006) oyununda askeriye kurumunun savaş yanlısı söylemini tasvir eder ve bu söylemi savaş karşıtı bir bakış açısıyla eleştirir. Benzer şekilde, İrlandalı oyun yazarı Colin Teevan, *How Many Miles to Basra?* (2006) oyununda medya kurumunun savaş yanlısı tutumunu ele alır ve söylemini eleştirir. Öte yandan, diğerlerinden farklı olarak İngiliz oyun yazarı Simon Stephens ise *Motortown* (2006) oyununda aile kurumunun savaş karşıtı söylemine karşı çıkar ve Irak Savaşı yanlısı bir söylemle okuyucusunun/izleyicisinin karşısına çıkar. Bu doktora tezi, bu oyunlarda askeriye, medya ve aile kurumlarının hakikat sonrası söylemlerinin nasıl eleştirildiğini inceler ve bu oyun yazarlarının, ironik bir şekilde, savlarını sunarken karşıt bir hakikat sonrası söylem kullandıklarını ileri sürmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Çağdaş İngiliz Tiyatrosu, Çağdaş İrlanda Tiyatrosu, Hakikat Sonrası, Söylem, Irak Savaşı

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INTRODUCTION

With the increasing interest in democracy and human rights after worldwide political developments and globalisation in the twentieth century, in the 1970s political drama emerged as a subgenre to enhance and reflect societies' awareness of politics. Later especially the policies of Margaret Thatcher and her government were an attractive subject matter for many playwrights, which accelerated the production of political plays in the last decades of the century. Apart from socio-political strifes, the military engagements in the following years – such as the Gulf War (1991), the Bosnian War (1992-1995), the Iraq War (2003-2011) and the War on Terror (2001-present) – have become popular subjects in the works of British and Irish dramatists. These works are influential in raising public awareness through exploring the psychological depths of individuals and questioning the morality of warmongers and anti-war protesters. Although these works are relatively new, essays, articles, commentaries, critiques and reviews have been written on them. However, most plays in question are not thoroughly analysed yet, and a number of points remain yet to be studied. On the other hand, although numerous current sociological and literary theories particularly examine the issue of discourse, the narratives and discourses in these works are not adequately evaluated. Therefore, in order to contribute to the inquiries already made, this dissertation intends to study the discourses in selected contemporary British and Irish plays about the Iraq War.

This research scrutinises Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* (2006), Colin Teevan's *How Many Miles to Basra?* (2006) and Simon Stephens's *Motortown* (2006) for the reasons explained in detail below. These plays reflect assorted discourses of politicians, soldiers, journalists, family members and other layers of society. However, as individuals feeling belongingness to particular institutions may usually adopt a discourse similar to that of those institutions, these plays explore and criticise the different discourses of certain British institutions such as the military, the media and the family. The playwrights' criticism of the discourse of these institutions will be examined in this dissertation. The arguments in this research are presented in the light of post-truth which was theorised and philosophically enhanced during the course and aftermath of the Iraq War. The playwrights in question reveal and criticise the practice of institutions manipulating the

public via a post-truth discourse during the course of the Iraq War. However, the playwrights themselves use another post-truth discourse in their works to manipulate their reader/audience and disseminate their ideology, too. In addition, while criticising these institutions' gaining political success through a post-truth discourse, the playwrights achieved literary success through another post-truth discourse. Shortly, taking these contradictions into consideration, this dissertation analyses the discourses in Gregory Burke's Black *Watch*, Colin Teevan's *How Many Miles to Basra?* and Simon Stephens's *Motortown* and argues that these plays should be read from the perspective of post-truth to realise how these playwrights employ emotionally-charged depictions to advance their careers.

It may be significant to explain why the Iraq War and the selected plays related to this war are chosen for study in this dissertation. Owing to the changing approach to truth and political discourse, the twenty-first century is more fruitful in terms of theatrical works questioning the reliability of the information provided by politicians and the media. Having come to an end long before today and having become a popular subject among acknowledged playwrights, the Iraq War seems more suitable for academic research as the Afghan conflict is not as popular as the aforementioned war in British and Irish drama, and the Syrian conflict, the Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022-present) and the 2023 Israel-Hamas War are rather too recent. Moreover, the scholarly research about the plays dealing with these issues does not prove adequate for research on a PhD level.

As for the selected plays, a couple of valid reasons for choosing them can be put forward. First of all, although works of verbatim theatre – such as *Justifying War* (2003) by Richard Norton-Taylor, *Stuff Happens* (2004) by David Hare, *Guantanamo: "Honor Bound to Defend Freedom"* (2004) by Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo, *Called to Account* (2007) and *Chilcot* (2016) by Richard Norton-Taylor and Matt Woodhead – reveal (at least partly) what was actually said in relation to the Iraq War and could be more effective in challenging the post-truth discourse, they are not suitable for a doctoral study due to the fact that verbatim theatre presents facts rather than representing them; thus it is less open to interpretation. Secondly, Martin Crimp's *Advice to Iraqi Women* (2003) is too short to offer detailed analysis; and Caryl Churchill's *Iraq.doc* (2003) is not yet published.

Thirdly, as it is intended to present a panorama of *British and Irish* dramatic approach to the Iraq War, the dissertation examines plays by an English (Simon Stephens), a Scottish (Gregory Burke), and an Irish playwright (Colin Teevan). (Even though Jonathan Lichtenstein could have been included as the Welsh representative, his *The Pull of Negative Gravity* (2004) has remained a work of fringe theatre.)

While describing methods of training young theatre actors in ethics in the post-truth age, Rachel Turner-King argues that "educators have a duty of care toward young people to help 'defend objective truth' *and* to create spaces where *their* truth(s) and lived experiences can be shared, questioned and critiqued without fear" (95). Although Turner-King presents this statement within the context of youth theatres and dramaturgy, the same duty applies to academic publications and theses. Parallel to Turner-King's argument, this dissertation aims to show its readers how their minds, thought and sense of responsibility are manipulated through post-truth discourses by institutions and artists who seem to be warning them about those institutions. Today, it is essential to be aware of these manipulations in order to pursue the "objective truth," whose value is systematically and purposefully reduced by politicians in particular. In addition to this awareness-raising attempt, this dissertation aims to contribute to current literary debates by analysing the plays in the light of post-truth and presenting the self-contradicting approach of the playwrights. It also aims to contribute to the socio-political debates by detailing and categorising the theory of post-truth into two subdivisions: conceptualisation before and after 2016.

The post-truth discourse in the aforementioned plays has not been thoroughly analysed in scholarly publications yet. To date, basic source books have been written about post-truth, and several works that examine these plays have been published. The plays have been studied from different perspectives and, though not many, academic publications on them have emerged. However, the studies that bring these two issues together are quite few. Therefore, this dissertation contributes to this field of study with its novel perspective.

Although the plays written about the Iraq War are in mainstream drama, academic publications analysing them are few in number as these plays are relatively new. Since

his main subject matter is violence, Amir A. Al-Azraki, who reviews English and Arabic language plays about the Iraq War in his dissertation “Clash of the Barbarians: The Representation of Political Violence in Contemporary English and Arabic Language Plays about Iraq” (2011), does not focus on the issue of the post-truth discourse although his work is quite comprehensive. Similarly, Suman Gupta, who reviews literary works about the Iraq War in his book *Imagining Iraq: Literature in English and the Iraq Invasion* (2011), does not address the subject of the post-truth discourse. Both of the works were written before 2016, the year when the concept of post-truth was popularised and began to be studied in detail. Therefore, this dissertation offers new interpretations about the plays in question.

Before explaining what post-truth is, it is useful to understand what the “truth” in the concept “post-truth” is. Since ancient times, people have been searching for truth and have come up with many ideas on the definition of the concept. People sometimes accepted religious teachings, sometimes mythological narratives, sometimes mystic phenomena, sometimes the words of political authorities, and sometimes science as truth. In this regard, truth refers to the correlation between the thing and its expression. Aristotle explains this correlation as follows: “To say that what is is not, or that what is not is, is false; but to say that what is is, and what is not is not, is true” (201). Similarly, Thomas Aquinas states that “[t]ruth is the equation of thought and thing” (223). Voltaire’s definition of truth in his *Philosophical Dictionary* is also similar to those of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, which is “a statement of the facts as they are” (306). On the other hand, the concept of post-truth is related to the lack of honest expression of what things really are about.

Although the concept called post-truth is rather new, its perception among people has changed very quickly. In this respect, Lisa M. Osbeck and Stephen L. Antczak state that “[j]ust as there is no uniform understanding of ‘truth,’ there are different ways of defining or theorizing ‘post-truth’” (424). In its most basic and broad form, post-truth can be defined as the loss of the importance of truth. As for the first usage of the concept in this regard, Oxford Languages notes that “[*p*]*ost-truth* seems to have been first used in this meaning in a 1992 essay by the late Serbian-American playwright Steve Tesich in *The*

Nation magazine. Reflecting on the Iran-Contra scandal and the Persian Gulf War, Tesich lamented that 'we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world'" ("Word of the Year" par. 7). Oxford Languages does not quote the previous sentences in the passage as it only focuses on the concept's first use, which should be given here for a more comprehensive comparison with the later usages. Tesich very basically describes this post-truth world as follows:

> We are rapidly becoming prototypes of a people that totalitarian monsters could only drool about in their dreams. All the dictators up to now have had to work hard at suppressing the truth. We, by our actions, are saying that this is no longer necessary, that we have acquired a spiritual mechanism that can denude truth of any significance. In a very fundamental way we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world. (qtd. in Kreitner par. 5)

Tesich's description is understood as the end of the era of truth with the acceptance of "a spiritual mechanism;" thus, it can be concluded that Tesich uses the prefix "post-" in the sense of "after". In today's widespread use, this prefix has another connotation. McIntyre briefly explains this as follows: "the prefix 'post' is meant to indicate not so much the idea that we are 'past' truth in a temporal sense (as in 'postwar') but in the sense that truth has been eclipsed—that it is irrelevant" (5). Apart from this lexicological arbitrariness, post-truth has not been given much thought for a long time since Tesich did not dwell on this concept sufficiently. In his 1992 essay, he only mentioned the post-truth world as a consequence and did not refer to its psychological background and the situations that led to its emergence. For this reason, the theorisation of the concept and the awareness of people were delayed for twelve years.

Although neither Steve Tesich nor Ralph Keyes wrote their works because of the Iraq conflicts, there is a historical coincidence here. Interestingly, Tesich stated that people began living in the post-truth world one year after the 1991 Gulf War that took place between the USA and Iraq, while Keyes said that people began living in the post-truth era one year after the 2003 USA-Iraq War. When Keyes published *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* in 2004, the concept was not then that popular. In his work, he states that lies have always been told throughout history, but now lying has ceased to be a criminal act and has been normalised. He describes the

normalisation of lying, stating that "[e]ven though there have always been liars, lies have usually been told with hesitation, a dash of anxiety, a bit of guilt, a little shame, at least some sheepishness. Now, clever people that we are, we have come up with rationales for tampering with truth so we can dissemble guilt-free. I call it post-truth" (12-13). Unlike Tesich, Keyes uses the prefix "post-" in its present sense, since it does not mean that all truth has come to an end. Similar to Keyes, Ignas Kalpokas suggests that "the prefix 'post-' does not indicate that we have moved to 'beyond' or 'after' truth as such but that we have entered an era where the distinction between truth and lie is no longer important; hence, we have also moved beyond an era when a consensus about the content of truth was possible" (13). In this regard, Keyes further argues that the boundary between truth and lie is blurred, and therefore the importance of truth decreases. According to him, "rationales for dishonesty, reasons why it's okay to lie, not nearly as bad as we once thought, maybe not so bad after all. The emotional valence of words associated with deception has declined. We no longer tell lies. Instead we 'misspeak.' We 'exaggerate.' We 'exercise poor judgment.' 'Mistakes were made,' we say" (13). So, there is still some truth in this new era people live in, yet it holds little significance whether individuals choose to acknowledge or disregard its value. The virtue and ethical responsibility of accessing the truth no longer have their former importance.

The reason for the growing concerns among thinkers, researchers and theorists about accessing accurate information is the dramatic increase witnessed in the variety and number of mass communication tools in the twenty-first century, known as the information age. Alongside the advancements in the internet and social media, the widespread use of written, visual and auditory media tools makes the access to both objective and deceptive information progressively easier. Keyes, while naming and theorising about the deceptive behaviour patterns of this age, expresses in its most basic form why individuals resort to deceptive discourses, stating that "[a]mong strangers and semistrangers, what sociologists call impression management kicks in. Deception is an integral part of that effort. According to students of dishonesty, one of the leading motivations to tell lies, especially about ourselves, is wanting to 'make a good impression'" (44-45). Inventing, manipulating, overstating and understating personal stories to create a good image among people is a method people use consciously, not

instinctively. Misleading statements people make about their experiences and character are frequently seen in the field of politics and military service. For example, Glenn Kessler, Salvador Rizzo and Meg Kelly, who examined Donald Trump's statements during his presidency, state in a newspaper article that "[a]s of Oct. 9, his 993rd day in office, he had made 13,435 false or misleading claims, according to the Fact Checker's database" (par. 2). As for the misleading statements about military service, Keyes notes that "[e]very war produces pseudosoldiers. The actor Tom Mix claimed to have charged up San Juan Hill with Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders. In fact Mix never left the United States during the Spanish-American War. After returning from domestic duty in World War I, William Faulkner limped around Oxford, Mississippi, for years, faking a battlefield injury" (77-78). This effort to create a particular image of the veteran or a series of political lies can continue until the desired result is achieved. In relation to this assertion, Keyes says, "[i]f we think our stories still aren't interesting enough, we may even make up some episodes to give them some oomph. The more imaginative our personal myths become, the more 'facts' we must create to make them work" (82). Although Keyes describes such creation of myths on an individual basis, it can be witnessed that this method of manipulation has turned into a kind of policy because of the individuals who run the state. Political authorities have repeatedly created myths, as Keyes defines them, as it can be seen in the Iran-Contra affair, the Iraq War, and more recently in operations against Al-Qaeda and ISIS, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the 2023 Israel-Hamas War. In an article in 2004, Ron Suskind, a *New York Times* writer, reports that "a senior adviser to Bush" told him the following, which is an obvious manifestation of this myth-making:

> The aide said that guys like me were 'in what we call the reality-based community,' which he defined as people who 'believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality.' I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. 'That's not the way the world really works anymore,' he continued. 'We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality -- judiciously, as you will -- we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.' (par. 62)

As can be understood from these words, the devaluation of the difference between fact and fiction may be advantageous for political and diplomatic interests. The problem, however, is that this practice is repeated frequently and consciously and developed into a policy. The personal myths discussed by Keyes are now manifested as administrative or political myths.

It is difficult to find an absolutely reliable source to measure the popularity of the word "post-truth" among people. However, Oxford Languages, one of the few service providers that share data on word usages, has recently published a chart showing the frequency of the use of the word ("Word of the Year" n. p.). Although the chart does not provide information on where and how many times the word is used, it shows that its use peaked in the second half of 2016. Besides, Google Trends, another rare service provider, shows that between 2004 and 2016, the word did not attract much interest in Google searches (Google Trends).[1] However, in November 2016, the number of searches in relation to the term reached its historic peak. During this twelve-year period, apart from Keyes, Ari Rabin-Havt and Media Matters for America published a book on this topic: *Lies, Incorporated: The World of Post-Truth Politics* (April 2016). Although Ralph Keyes theorised on the subject, Rabin-Havt and Media Matters for America viewed the subject more like a case study than a thorough exploration of the theory of post-truth; and even more interestingly, the term "post-truth" is only mentioned four times in their book, excluding the title. Apart from these works, there is no other non-fiction work examining the issue of post-truth in this period from 2004 to 2016.

The use of the term on the web, the media and in publications increased in the summer of 2016, and in November that year, the term "[a]fter much discussion, debate, and research" ("Word of the Year" par. 1) was chosen Word of the Year by Oxford Dictionaries

[1] The popularity chart provided by Google Trends includes numbers from 0 to 100. The service provider explains that "[n]umbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. A score of 0 means there was not enough data for this term" (Google Trends n. p.). In November 2016, the score of the word "post-truth" is 100 while it hits only 4 in October 2016. To compare, the score fluctuates between 3 and 10 from mid-2017 to November 2023.

(hereafter Oxford Languages).[2] Oxford Languages explains why this word was chosen, stating, "[t]he concept of *post-truth* has been in existence for the past decade, but Oxford Dictionaries has seen a spike in frequency this year in the context of the EU referendum in the United Kingdom and the presidential election in the United States" (par. 3). In addition to bringing the word to the fore, another very important point here is the change in its definition. Oxford Languages defines the concept as follows: "*Post-truth* is an adjective defined as 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'" (par. 2). Keyes, the pioneer of the theory and the only acknowledgeable theorist over the past twelve years, did not mention the significance of feelings in the perception of truth, while Oxford Languages contributes greatly to the doctrine by referring to feelings. Moreover, to a large extent, the definition of Oxford Languages has led to the evolution of the theory of post-truth as many theorists who carried out subsequent research in the field started their studies by referring to this definition.

Another development similar to the popularisation of the term post-truth in the English-speaking world occurred in the German-speaking world in 2016. David Block reports that "few people outside of Germany and Austria probably know that the *Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache* (Society for the German Language) has done the same since 1971. Interestingly enough, in 2016, that word was 'postfaktisch' (post-factual), which looks not dissimilar to post-truth" (2). When GfdS introduced the word *postfaktisch*, which it put at the top of its "Wort des Jahres 2016" list on 9 December 2016, it maintained that the word comes from the English "post-truth," that social and political discussions are based on emotions rather than facts, and that people willingly accept obvious lies as the truth (par. 3). Thus, in both the English-speaking world and the German-speaking world, the concept has come to mean that emotionally charged information is considered more acceptable than undeniable facts.

[2] When the word "post-truth" was chosen the Word of the Year in 2016, the institution was called "Oxford Dictionaries." However, recently, it has been renamed "Oxford Languages." Therefore, this dissertation uses the current name of the institution.

After both the words – post-truth and *postfaktisch* – were selected as the words of the year in the same year, interest in the subject began to grow more rapidly. This interest led to the evolution of and elaboration on the theory of post-truth pioneered by Keyes. While the motives and methods of lying and cheating were examined before, now the psychological depths of the person being lied to were being investigated because "[i]n a world in which politicians can challenge the facts and pay no political price whatsoever, post-truth is bigger than any one person. It exists in us as well as our leaders" (McIntyre 15). Post-truth now also explains why deceived people voluntarily accept those lies as truth. Hence, the definition of the concept has changed in accordance with the Oxford definition. For instance, Tuukka Ylä-Anttila defines the concept as follows: "Dramatic populist upheavals are now familiar in most Western democracies. A peculiar point of interest in these developments internationally has been so-called 'post-truth' politics, which allegedly takes an ambivalent relationship to the truth and bases itself on feelings and identity rather than fact" (356). Similarly, Ignas Kalpokas also touches upon the role of emotions in the perception of truth, adding, "post-truth does signal something that is both 'post' and a return, a re-legitimation of arguments based on their emotional appeal and symbolic value and subjective rather than impersonal truth" (2). McIntyre's definition and explanation of post-truth focuses on the relation between the perception of truth and emotional and intellectual appeals, yet his approach to the subject has a distinct philosophical depth. In addition to underlying methods, concepts, aspects and examples related to the subject, McIntyre also explains why post-truth discourse is accepted among the public:

> The Oxford definition focuses on "*what*" post-truth is: the idea that feelings sometimes matter more than facts. But just as important is the next question, which is *why* this ever occurs. Someone does not dispute an obvious or easily confirmable fact for no reason; he or she does so when it is to his or her advantage. When a person's beliefs are threatened by an "inconvenient fact," sometimes it is preferable to challenge the fact. This can happen at either a conscious or unconscious level (since sometimes the person we are seeking to convince is ourselves), but the point is that this sort of post-truth relationship to facts occurs only when we are seeking to assert something that is more important to us than the truth itself. Thus post-truth amounts to a form of ideological supremacy, whereby its practitioners are trying to compel someone to believe in something whether there is good evidence for it or not. And this is a recipe for political domination. (11-13)

According to McIntyre's explanation, this denial reflex is related to the survival mechanism. People might choose to distance themselves from reality when it brings them pain, much like how they instinctively pull their hand away from a thorn when it causes emotional and intellectual discomfort. So, when the truth hurts, post-truth gives relief and provides a safe haven. In consideration of the comfort provided by wilful deception, Kalpokas further states that "[i]n fact, there is very little passivity in the visceral following of post-truth narratives displayed by audiences across different countries. In fact, the power of post-truth lies precisely in hurting optimism and action in the audiences, even if that inspiration is escapist in its nature" (3). In his opinion, accepting a post-truth discourse is not a completely passive process; there are cases where people willingly accept post-truth information. He discusses that "a claim must be true simply because people believe in it (ie it has been asserted effectively) or because people *would like* to believe in it" (11).

As explained above, post-truth was conceptualised separately in 2004 and 2016. While the Keyesian explanation maintains its validity, the theory that has evolved with Oxford Languages's definition is more widely accepted. Accordingly, today, post-truth is generally defined as information's relation to emotions rather than its connection with facts when accepting information as truth. In other words, in the perception of truth, emotionality precedes factuality. In fact, this can be seen as a belated theorisation of a long-standing practice. For example, "[t]he truth of religion is something many believers feel almost viscerally. It connects to their very sense of self, identity and belonging. It is as much, or more, *felt* than *thought*" (Baggini 18). Religious leaders appealed to the most sublime feelings of people in order to be respected among them. People also voluntarily accepted religious teachings because they were pleased to think that they would be rewarded with heaven and many other privileges after death. Similarly, for thousands of years, many monarchs have also reigned, claiming to derive their sovereignty from a divine authority, without letting folks feel the need of questioning their authority. Furthermore, the rise of nationalism accelerated the acceptance and spread of post-truth discourses among people (Redling 88-89). Today, it is still seen that nationalist discourses are accepted without their accuracy being questioned. Donald Trump's, whom Matthew D'Ancona describes as "the first Post-Truth President" (11), "Make America Great

Again" slogan is one of the most obvious examples of post-truth nationalist discourse. This discourse, which implies that the United States lost its greatness under previous presidents and will regain it thanks to Trump's presidency, was accepted by many people. As Osbeck and Antczak put forward, "[c]onsistency with our values or concern with comfort may underlie reluctance to examine the evidence base of our beliefs and to confine ourselves to communities of like-minded others that share and validate our views" (424). In this regard, whenever Trump posted a dubious assertion on any matter, it rapidly spread across the internet because many of his followers embraced the statement as fact and shared it without scrutiny. Here, "[t]he main criterion is what favors their preexisting beliefs. This is not the abandonment of facts, but a corruption of the process by which facts are credibly gathered and reliably used to shape one's beliefs about reality" (McIntyre 11). An example with regards to the scope of this dissertation is Bush's appeal to people's feelings to gain public support, calling the Iraq War a "crusade" ("Remarks" par. 17). Thus, in order to drag the masses after him, Bush embraced discourses that put forward contrasts such as Western-Eastern, Christian-Muslim, American-Middle Eastern, heroes-terrorists, in which one side was always superior to the other.

In order to focus more on the British context and to be more explanatory, it is important to give an example from the Brexit campaigns, which caused post-truth to become so popular. Especially during the Vote Leave campaign led by Boris Johnson, the campaign organisers wrote on the buses, "We send the EU £350 million a week. Let's fund our NHS instead. Let's take back control;" also, the noticeboards in the speech rooms of the campaign read, "Let's give our NHS the £350 million the EU takes every week," which is apparently an exaggeration and "a manifest fabrication of the truth" (Turner-King 95) because "as demonstrated by a 2016 report compiled by the UK Parliament's Treasury Committee (2016), the £350 million figure was 'highly misleading'" (Turner-King 95). Like Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan, Johnson's "Let's take back control" slogan appealed to the nationalist and patriotic sentiments of the voters. The campaign was so strong that even two years later there were still those who believed this £350 claim (Stone par. 2) even though "[t]he UK Statistics Authority wrote to Vote Leave during the referendum campaign to say the claim was 'misleading and undermines trust in official statistics', stating that it excluded the UK's rebate, as well as payments received by the

UK from the EU" (Stone par. 8). Thus, it can be observed that people are living at a time where pieces of facts are being used misleadingly to the extent of mobilising people. On the blurring of the line between truth-telling and deception, McIntyre marks that "[t]his is not necessarily a campaign to say that facts do not matter, but instead a conviction that facts can always be shaded, selected, and presented within a political context that favors one interpretation of truth over another" (5-6).

As mentioned above, post-truth can often be perceived as "lies" and "false news." However, such definitions are rather simplistic and misleading. The deception in the post-truth era is not just about feeding people incorrect information, but it also involves manipulating them to a point where they become indifferent to the truthfulness of the information. As for this misidentification, Waisbord states that

> '[p]ost-truth' communication lays bare the crashing down of the modern, rationalist model of a well-defined, accepted model of truth-telling as a shared communicative enterprise grounded in reason and science. Post-truth is not about whether specific statements accurately represent or twist reality, such as news and declarations by corporations, journalism, organized publics, and individual citizens that brazenly or insidiously misrepresent and fabricate reality. The current moment should not be seen as particularly unique in terms of lies and deception. Post-truth is not about individual events and specific trends that suggest the eclipse of a better time for truth. […] To suggest that post-truth means the triumph of sophisticated lying or the dawn of an era of absolute fantasy is bad history and foolish analysis. (19-20)

Based on all these definitions, it can be briefly said that in the post-truth era, people decide what the truth is by giving priority to emotions, without making any distinction between scientific explanation and rumour, fact and opinion or interpretation, fictitious and non-fictitious dichotomies, and without caring about the virtue of making the ethical choice. In short, "[a] post-truth era is an era of willful irrationality, reversing all the great advances humankind has made" (Levitin 14).

Scholars and theorists also point to postmodernism in relation to the emergence of post-truth. Postmodernism propounds the rejection of narratives that are accepted as the only truth and teaches that truth is plural and can vary by people, time and situations. Matthew D'Ancona says, "[t]he subversion of truth as an attainable ideal is as old as philosophy itself. What the 'po-mo' theorists did was to present a new kind of relativism, fit for, and

inspired by, its times. […] Lyotard proposed 'an incredulity towards meta-narratives' – the 'grand narratives' that had underpinned philosophy since the Enlightenment – and the very idea of 'truth-value'" (94). Unshakable truths that have been going on for thousands of years have become questionable with postmodernism. Today, the effect of this change continues, and even in positive sciences, situations occur where the understanding of singular truth can be viewed with suspicion. Similarly, "[i]f there is no truth, and it is all just perspective, how can we ever really know anything? Why not doubt the mainstream news or embrace a conspiracy theory? Indeed, if news is just political expression, why not make it up? Whose facts should be dominant? Whose perspective is the right one?" (150) questions McIntyre, and concludes, "[t]hus is postmodernism the godfather of post-truth" (150). This confusion applies to most people, regardless of which side they are on during the process of deception and manipulation. Those who wish to manipulate masses appeal to people's emotions when their claims do not reflect a singular undeniable truth or an unquestionable fact.

The rise of post-truth in the last decades can be attributed to the emergence of nationalist right-wing politics in certain European countries and the United States, and the extensive use of social media. Political parties with authoritarian and discriminatory tendencies hold significant positions in many key countries, whether in governance or as the opposition; and "even representatives of more established parties can show leanings towards such nationalism in order to gain voters and may also use nationalistic slogans and fake news to work deftly with the economic fears and anxieties that a large number of people have" (Redling 89). Masses in those countries began to be governed with emotional manipulation more and more, rather than reason and common sense; and "[p]art of this development seems due to the power of fake news which enables certain movements, such as right-wing populist groups, to gain momentum fairly quickly" (Redling 87-88). Social media is one of the most effective means of mass communication in the dissemination of deceptive information among the public. As McIntyre notes, "[t]he rise of social media as a source of news blurred the lines even further between news and opinion, as people shared stories from blogs, alternative news sites, and God knows where, as if they were all true" (93). Social media platforms are utilised not only by

political figures and organisations, but also by regular individuals. A single social media post from a leader can rapidly be circulated by tens of thousands of users. Therefore,

> [d]eception is no longer only a top-down, Machiavellian exercise in power. It is not just a toxic brew of state propaganda, corporate public relations, and political spin by self-serving politicos. It is also the accumulated, daily drip-drip of banal lies spread in digital life by ordinary citizens who, intentionally or not, use and share false information as if it were true. Lies flow in multiple ways in today's digital ecology. (Waisbord 24)

Political figures and parties benefit from their followers' frequent use of social media. Their supporters, who either genuinely believe in or are persuaded to support their policies, willingly spread political messages and propaganda to a broader audience through social media activities. Therefore, the politicians' viewpoints and information can reach more people as their followers share and promote these ideas online.

An interesting example, in line with current views, comes from Barack Obama. At his Farewell Address at the beginning of 2017, the former President said, "increasingly, we become so secure in our bubbles that we start accepting only information, whether it's true or not, that fits our opinions, instead of basing our opinions on the evidence that is out there" (par. 34). The former President is obviously referring to the post-truth situation although he does not name it. Perhaps he was pointing at the deceptive and manipulative discourses he witnessed in the last term of his presidency.

As for the Iraq War, any comprehensive study on the war within the framework of post-truth studies has not been carried out yet. While Ralph Keyes was theorising about post-truth, conflicts continued in Iraq, and individuals and institutions were trying to direct the masses with manipulative discourses. However, neither researchers of post-truth have sufficiently addressed the discourses concerning the war, nor have those who have studied the war adequately addressed post-truth. As the course of the Iraq War, along with pro-war and anti-war discourses about the war, are related to the scope of this dissertation, a very short history of the war and how the post-truth discourses were employed in relation to the war will be mentioned in the following section.

The Mesopotamian region, which includes Iraq, has been under the control of the dominant powers of the region such as Greek, Roman, Persian, Arabic, Mongolian and Turkish forces across centuries. With Suleiman the Magnificent's conquest of Baghdad in the early 1530s, Iraq came under the rule of the Ottoman Empire (Hunt 47; Nissen and Heine 144) and remained under Turkish control for nearly four centuries. During this perriod, the region witnessed frequent local conflicts due to its diverse ethnic and religious composition. In the early 20th century, with the emergence of regional and global military competition, tension escalated in the Middle East. In order to settle military cooperation in the upcoming great war (the First World War), a secret alliance agreement was signed in 1914 between Said Halim Pasha, authorised by the Turkish Sultan Mehmed V, and Baron Hans von Wangenheim, authorised by the German Emperor Wilhelm II (Özgüldür 483). The alliance between the Turks and Germans led to opposition from the British (Sluglett 3-4). In this respect, the activities by British intelligence officers such as Thomas Edward Lawrence (also known as Lawrence of Arabia) and Gertrude Bell organised the Iraqi people and leaders for a rebellion against the Turks (Lyon qtd. in Holden 75-78). During the First World War, with the support of British forces, the Iraqis broke away from Turkish rule and "the British governed Iraq by proxy and set Faisal I as king of Iraq in 1921" (Hunt 57); thus, Iraq came under British Mandate. In 1932, the Iraqis gained their formal independence from the British Mandate (Hunt 69). Iraq's population was divided by ethnic identities such as Arab, Kurdish, Turkmen and Assyrian, as well as religious identities such as Sunni and Shiite (Dawisha 69). Because of the political and religious rivalry among these groups, stability could not be achieved in the kingdom even after gaining independence in 1932. After numerous conflicts and coups, the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown by the coup plotters in 1958, and a republic was declared (Hunt 76). However, due to the ethnic and religious diversity of the region, turmoil continued and wars broke out between Arab and Kurdish forces over the years. Following the failures of the Arab Ba'ath Party leaders in governance and during the wars, and the resignation of Iraqi President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, Saddam Hussein seized power (Dawisha 213). Saddam Hussein, himself a member of the Ba'ath Party, promoted Iraq's territorial claims and was wary of the threat of an Islamic revolution by Iran's Shia regime that would have been initiated in Iraq (Holden 229). Therefore, Iraq entered into wars first with Iran and then with Kuwait. As a result, Saddam

Hussein faced condemnation from the international community for his role in perpetuating instability in the region (Dawisha 225). As Saddam shook the political and economic balances in the Middle East and posed a threat to British and American interests in the region, he became a suspect in global terrorism. After the 9/11 attacks, he was overthrown and executed by the US. Post-Saddam Iraq was tried to be rebuilt and allegedly democratised with the efforts of the invading countries, especially the US. However, since the Arab-Kurdish-Turkmen and Shiite-Sunni balances were not meticulously observed by the Western and Iraqi policy-makers, ethnic and sectarian-based conflicts and attacks still continue in Iraq.

Humanity faced a new world order when two hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Center buildings on 11 September 2001. Similar to the political and military status quo of the Cold War, a bipolar world emerged; but this time these poles manifested themselves in different forms: good-evil, Western-Eastern, Christian-Muslim, and civilised world-uncivilised world. For example, just nine days after the attacks, during a speech at the Congress, George W. Bush announced an imaginary coalition led by the United States, saying, "[t]his is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom" ("Address" par. 35). The President's rhetorical strategy appears to be built on patriotic sentiments. A similar approach was adopted by then-UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. Bush's biggest supporter in this war was Blair, which is why he was accused of being a "poodle" (Porter 6).

Blair's government, seeking to go to war alongside the United States, published two dossiers to legitimise a military operation. The first of these, *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government* (or shortly, the *September Dossier),* presents "the claim that the Iraqi military could deploy chemical or biological weapons within forty-five minutes of an order to do so and the claim that the Iraqis sought to purchase uranium 'yellowcake' from Niger. Both claims were later proven false" (Davidson 138). When the government failed to gain sufficient public trust to legitimise a military operation against Iraq, they immediately released the notorious *Iraq – Its*

Infrastructure of Concealment, Deception and Intimidation. This document is also called the "dodgy dossier" since "four of its nineteen pages were exposed as having been copied almost word for word from the Internet" (Davidson 138). The failure of both justification efforts reinforced the public view that the British government had no reasonable explanation for the operation.

Blair's rationale for military action in Iraq may contain some reasonable points. However, the rhetoric he used appealed more to people's feelings. The first of his allegations was that Al Qaeda, which carried out the 2001 terrorist attacks, had close ties to the Iraqi administration. The tactical and technical support that Iraq would give to Al Qaeda could have resulted in a terrorist attack in Britain as well. The government tried to arouse fear in the public by bringing to the fore the threat of terrorism. However, "[m]any—including Britain's Defense Intelligence Service—have pointed out that Al Qaeda viewed Hussein as an infidel and thus the two entities were not likely allies" (Davidson 140). By openly ignoring intelligence information, the government distorted the facts and deliberately deceived the public.

Another post-truth view frequently circulated before the war was that Iraq posed a direct threat to world peace. Bush, who forced all countries to support themselves militarily and ideologically, created an enemy cluster that included Iraq, saying, "[s]tates like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States" ("President" par. 21). Asserting that North Korea, Iran and Iraq – namely the axis of evil – endorse terrorism, Bush suggested that he would hold accountable those nations that did not back the United States if the axis of evil engaged in military action against the US and its allies. McIntyre discusses the objective behind such propagandistic rhetoric, stating that "[i]n a recent radio interview on NPR, Stanley made the point that the goal of propaganda is to build allegiance. The point is not to communicate information but to get us to 'pick a team'" (113). Bush's attitude can be cited as an example for building an allegiance through propaganda because he had previously shown his intention in this regard by

saying, "[e]very nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" ("Address" par. 30). A discourse that portrays two countries like Iraq and Iran, known for occasional hostile engagements, alongside North Korea, an unrelated country, as a collective defies logical explanation; however, it aligns with the concept of post-truth. The President aimed to gain global support by instilling fear, anxiety and hesitation without even allowing people to question the accuracy of his statement. The people who supported the coalition forces were also able to accept themselves as individuals serving a great cause and had the opportunity to boast about it. This group, which was formed as a consequence of George W. Bush's insistent demand, was ironically called "Coalition of the Willing."

Another rationale for the military action was the brutal acts attributed to Saddam. The widely circulated yet later debunked allegation that Iraqi soldiers removed babies from incubators and abandoned them to die in a Kuwaiti hospital during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991, along with the Halabja incidents in 1988, were often reiterated as the war drew near (Rampton and Stauber 69). The purpose of repeatedly highlighting incidents of violation of human rights is to awaken people's sense of morality and responsibility. Gustave Le Bon expresses the importance of repetition in rhetoric as follows: "The thing affirmed comes by repetition to fix itself in the mind in such a way that it is accepted in the end as a demonstrated truth" (77). Bush and Blair claimed to save the world from such chaotic incidents that wounded the collective conscience of humanity. Accordingly, they promised hope and a bright future in their speeches. For example, "Bush told the US military that 'the peace of a troubled world and the hope of an oppressed people now depend on you' ; while Blair told the Iraqis 'we will liberate you. The day of your freedom draws near" (Hammond 92). Instead of merely promising that they will stop violations of human rights, these leaders preferred to use a dramatic language to captivate the emotions of their own citizens and those of the Iraqi people. Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber comment on putting rational thinking aside and using expressions appealing to emotions as follows:

> Whereas democracy is built upon the assumption that "the people" are capable of rational self-governance, propagandists regard rationality as an obstacle to efficient indoctrination. Since propaganda is often aimed at persuading people to do things

> that are not in their own best interests, it frequently seeks to bypass the rational brain altogether and manipulate us on a more primitive level, appealing to emotional symbolism. (135)

Blair in particular had a hard time convincing the public because his explanations were rather weak in terms of rationale. He was also nicknamed "Bliar" because the dossiers contained false information and were "sexed up" (D'Ancona 26).

The United Nations Security Council urged Iraq to cooperate with appointed experts, observers and researchers; nevertheless, this did not mean the authorisation of any member state to take military action (Davidson 143-44). Therefore, as well as being unlawful, any unauthorised operation in Iraq meant the violation of universal principles. Although the public in the United States was in favour of the war, the citizens of the United Kingdom were largely against it. Opinion polls revealed the British public's reluctance for military attack, one of which "published in early November 2002 showed British public support for a military attack on Iraq down to 32%" (Betts and Phythian 90). This paved the way for a high British and Irish participation in the global protests against the possible war with Iraq.

The idea that the United Kingdom was joining a war on Iraq caused the emergence of both pro-war and anti-war discourses among the British public. Similarly, there is no consistency between the approaches of certain British institutions with regards to the upcoming war. While the British government, especially Blair, adopted a pro-war stance, the public was on the anti-war side. The military made relatively few statements. Media organisations, on the other hand, were divided into two. Indeed, the media in particular played an important role in sharing different views with the world. Rampton and Stauber explain the importance of mass communication in relation to ideologies and discourses, noting, "[p]ractically speaking, a democratic country cannot wage war without the popular support of its citizens. A well-constructed myth, broadcast through mass media, can deliver that support even when the noble cause itself seems dubious to the rest of the world" (118). Regardless of whether the discourses about the Iraq War were supportive of or opposed to the war, their common point was that they contained the post-truth elements. Since the facts were inadequate, persuasion efforts were made in the form of

deceptive manipulation and appeal to emotions. Some discourses highlighted heroism, some victimisation, some fear and some hope.

As for the discourse of the institutions, it would be useful to begin with the media. Perhaps the media is the instrument that contributes the most to the spread of the post-truth discourses. Media organisations not only convey the news and the views of others to the reader/audience, but at the same time disseminate their own views. It is even seen that sometimes they cherry-pick objective facts and deliver them to the masses. In this respect, "[d]espite an attachment to norms of journalistic objectivity, newspapers tend to be opinionated and politically partisan" (Goddard et al. 12). Recently, it has been observed that alongside fake news, manipulative news has also become widespread. Among the reasons for this concurrent increase are the rising surge of nationalism and the simultaneous expansion of the media's sphere of influence. Regarding the use of the media for their own benefit by nationalist movements, Ellen Redling notes that "the media are employed to spread anxieties that drive nationalism – for example, the fear of foreigners" (89). The emergence of social media and its rapid transformation into an effective mass communication tool has led to the unavoidable rise of post-truth, and therefore alternative facts/truths. When the Iraq War began, the public was informed through mainstream media organisations in the process leading up to and during the war as the current major social media platforms were not yet established. These organisations, which undertook the task of directing the public as well as informing them, experienced differences of opinion among themselves - and sometimes even within themselves. Before and during the war, "newspapers choosing unconditionally to support the war against Iraq risked alienating segments of their readership, while those mounting strong opposition to it risked appearing unpatriotic" (Goddard et al. 10). As Goddard and his co-authors point out, one of the issues that the press paid attention to while presenting the events to the reader was the nationalistic tone of the news. The news reports that were free from emotions and did not glorify war and the position of soldiers were considered risky by politicians. Most of the press and broadcasting organisations in the United States took a pro-war stance. However, "[w]ith its greater diversity of approach and competitiveness, we might expect the coverage of the Iraq War found in the British press to be less monolithic and, instead, to offer a wider range of perspectives to its readers"

(Goddard et al. 12). On the other hand, most of the British dailies such as *The Sun*, *The Times*, The *Daily Mail* and *The Daily Telegraph* took a pro-war stance, while *The Daily Mirror, The Guardian* and The *Independent* largely contained anti-war rhetoric (J. Brown 104; Goddard et al. 21-22). Regardless of their approach to the war, statements arousing particular sentiments were seen in the headlines and news contents of these newspapers. For example, before the war, statements like "action is risky, but turning away could be even risker," "the dangers of inaction are probably greater than the dangers of action," "this war is going to be terrible—but leaving Saddam in place would be even more terrible. . . . There will be horrible deaths either way we leap" were challenged with counter-arguments like "an American–British 'imperial' invasion of Iraq will increase the chances of Arab terror attacks in Europe and America" and "a war against Iraq is not just a foolish diversion from fighting terror, it is a sure-fire way to push fuel" (qtd. in Hammond 91-92). As these examples show, just like politicians, newspaper editors and columnists used expressions that instilled fear and hope.

Breaking away from the British media, the stance of the press in the Republic of Ireland regarding the Iraq War depended on varying parameters. The Republic of Ireland preferred to remain neutral on the war, and there was a consensus in the country against any military action against Iraq. However, the Irish government decided to allow American troops to use Shannon Airport in County Clare as a transit point, claiming to protect the national interests (O'Regan 447). Thus, the government of the Republic of Ireland indirectly supported the Western coalition in the war. This support was not welcome by the Irish public, who expressed their reactions through protests. The media supported the protests of the opposition parties and the public, too. For instance, *The Sunday Tribune*, *The Irish Daily Star* and *The Irish Independent* argued that the government's decision could expose Shannon Airport to terrorist threats (Browne et al. 98-99). However, peaceful anti-war protests began to take a radical turn with raids on Shannon Airport and attacks on American aircrafts (Coulter et al. 123). The radicalisation of the protests led the media to criticise the protesters as well. Leading media institutions were particularly discussing the economic consequences of these attacks (Coulter et al. 115). These economic consequences could include not only the costs of repairing the damaged aircrafts but also the stopping or reduction of the American investments in the

Republic of Ireland. In this regard, *The Irish Independent* and *The Sunday Times* were drawing attention to concerns about the economic consequences of such violent protests by emphasising the amount of American investments in their country (Coulter et al. 127-28). However, this shift in the stance of the Irish media did not lead them to a pro-war attitude. Their primary priorities were maintaining the country's neutral position and protecting the national interests. Therefore, as explained below, it was the British media, not the Irish media, that was criticised in the selected plays regarding the Iraq War.

Apart from being biased, the words used by the press and broadcasting organisations when criticising each other and warning their target audiences against their opponents were such that they appealed to the emotions of the people, rather than to their reason. Even if they were talking about objective facts, the way they expressed them proves that they wanted to benefit from the power of post-truth discourse. They predicted that criticisms including strong adjectives instead of strong arguments could manipulate the public more easily. For example, American media tycoon Rupert Murdoch was a devout supporter of Blair's war-prone attitude. *The Sun*, his UK newspaper, "attacked the 'Anti-American, anti-Tony Blair press', describing critics of the use of force as 'traitors', 'fools', 'wobblers' and appeasers. The *Observer*, *Independent*, *Mirror*, and prominent *Mirror* columnist John Pilger received special recognition" (Strong 39). Similarly, in order to influence the general public, *The Daily Telegraph's* criticism of the anti-war media included robust adjectives and descriptions such as "inveterate anti-Americans, pacifists, alarmists who we are all about to be killed by Anthrax, Muslim fundamentalists, anti-Semites, Continental European adventurers, and broadcasters, like the BBC, whose sense of self-worth comes chiefly from lacerating the society which pays their wages" (qtd. in Strong 39-40). In addition, the tone of the response from the anti-war media was not much different from these. *The Daily Mirror*, for example, employed akin expressions, accusing *The Sun* of being "'an offensive, racist, sexist, misogynistic, tawdry, lying little rag' and 'a Pravda-like government propaganda sheet'" (qtd. in Strong 40). As these examples indicate, the arguments of the newspapers were not always based on a rational basis; as a result of the post-truth period, it was essential not to convey truth, but to manipulate the perception of truth.

After the Iraq War began, there was a slight change in the attitude of the media. Whether they supported the war or not, media outlets published news and opinion articles supporting the soldiers on the ground. As Goddard and his co-authors state, "[a]s might be expected in any nation that sends its forces into battle, support for British troops was universal among British newspapers […]. Understandably, there was a consensus that the responsibility for the invasion of Iraq lay with politicians and not with those carrying out military orders, who were portrayed as highly skilled, efficient and, at times, heroic" (26). The post-truth discourses about troops became more frequent in this period due to the rising feelings of patriotism and nationalism. When the truth was different from the stories that people wanted to believe, the media's rhetoric was focused on the latter. A lot of disproportionate force was used throughout the operations and innocent people were also killed, but media outlets were unanimous about heroicising the soldiers despite the war crimes committed. For example, even the anti-war *The Daily Mirror* preferred to distance the fighting soldiers from the war policy and defend their dignity, writing, "Troops are heroes, the war's insane" (qtd. in Goddard et al. 25). The media was also conducting a psychological war. Some newspapers used negative portrayals of enemy forces to create an emotional contrast between the allied forces and them. Judith Brown exemplifies this, saying, "[t]he Iraqi military used surprise tactics against a better-equipped army. The *Times* made this seem 'less honorable,' especially when combined with high emphasis on reporting Western casualties. Iraqi soldiers were described as 'concealed' and attacking American forces 'from behind' giving the impression that Iraqi soldiers were not fighting fairly" (104). As can be inferred from these examples, the truths about military achievements were evaluated not according to objective criteria, but according to the state of the appeal to the sentiments of one side.

Despite contributing to the transmission of news from the field, one of the biggest obstacles to impartial reporting was embedded journalism. Approximately 775 journalists were embedded in the coalition forces to report news from the battlefield during the Iraq War (Powell par. 1). The objectivity of these journalists' views was questionable as they were often only able to observe the field to the extent that military and administrative officials allowed them. In relation to the British embedded journalists in Iraq, Judith Brown conveys that

> BBC journalist Clive Myrie agreed that embedded journalists were spoon-fed information although he tried to check facts. He added, ‘I didn’t wear a uniform, but I lived in the same way as the marines, looking at the tiny window of life inside combat, in a prison provided by the marines …’ Another embedded journalist became so close to the troops that he even acted as a lookout for suspicious vehicles. Reporting the war from this angle meant that Iraqi troops were seen from the perspective of “the enemy” and would be difficult for journalists to retain full objectivity. (102)

Due to the restrictions imposed by military officials, some media organisations, struggling to practice objective journalism, preferred to send independent reporters, cameramen and photographers to Iraq. However, high-ranking politicians and commanders opposed this choice, arguing that these reporters, being outside the protection of military units, could face security issues. For instance, criticising the employment of these non-embedded journalists, Secretary of State for Defence Geoff Hoon once suggested that “having journalists have the protection, in fact, of our armed forces is both good for journalism, and it’s also very good for people watching” (qtd. in Gopsill 255). Hoon’s statement implied not only a concern for the safety of the journalists but also an intent to secure the delivery of state propaganda to the public. Therefore, independent journalists who presented the realities of the war contradicting the official statements were not welcome by authorities. As to this ongoing conflict between multi-perspective journalism and state authorities, Judith Brown notes that

> Rageh Omaar of the BBC had stayed in Baghdad for several months prior to the war and empathetically stated: ‘The people of this country did not appear to matter either to the Iraqi government or to the press conferences of the coalition.’ In the war the propaganda was from the other “side” and reporters were taken to bombed civilian areas and visited injured people in hospital. Omaar’s sympathetic accounts provoked Downing Street to ask for his removal, which the BBC refused. Various disagreements between Downing Street and BBC about Iraqi coverage eventually caused senior BBC staff to resign. (103)

The strife between the BBC and the authorities stemmed from the latter’s commitment to the post-truth discourses. The BBC’s search for objective facts was confronted by the government’s desire to spread alternative facts.

It may not be right to expect completely accurate official explanations from the administrators dealing with military affairs because they must not make explicit

explanations in order not to cause any security weakness. In cases where military strategies should not be disclosed, military officers provide partial information. Sometimes it can also be observed that inaccurate information is deliberately leaked so as to mislead enemy forces. In relation to such deceiving leaks, Rampton and Stauber convey that

> [a]t a press briefing two weeks following the terrorist attacks of September 11, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld had an exchange with a reporter that deserves to be quoted in some detail. In the context of the "war on terrorism," a reporter asked, 'Will there be any circumstances, as you prosecute this campaign, in which anyone in the Department of Defense will be authorized to lie to the news media in order to increase the chances of success of a military operation or gain some other advantage over your adversaries?'
>
> Rumsfeld replied:
>
> Of course, this conjures up Winston Churchill's famous phrase when he said—don't quote me on this, OK. I don't want to be quoted on this, so don't quote me—he said, sometimes the truth is so precious it must be accompanied by a bodyguard of lies […]. (qtd. in 66)

These views can be explained by the Keyesian theory of post-truth. However, as mentioned above while explaining the theory, there are several types of lies. One of the deception strategies used in the military is psychological operations. According to a military definition by US Air Force, psychological operations "are designed to convey selected information and indicators to foreign leaders and audiences to influence their emotions, motivations, objective reasoning, and ultimately their behavior" (qtd. in Rampton and Stauber 69). In this respect, the discourse of the US military aimed to defeat enemy forces through deception and emotional destruction, while glorifying and heroicising friendly forces. It also claimed that "federal civilian employees and military personnel were told by the White House to refer to the invasion of Iraq as a 'war of liberation' Iraqi paramilitary forces were to be called 'death squads'" (Rampton and Stauber 127). In addition, the UK military had a similar attitude. The UK Ministry of Defense intended to reward not only soldiers but also civilians involved in the war one way or another. After the completion of the major military operations, Adam Ingram, the UK Armed Forces Minister, offered the participants medals "recognis[ing] the collective bravery and achievements of the military and civilian personnel who risked so much to remove Saddam Hussein's oppressive regime" (qtd. in Norton-Taylor par. 2). The strong

expressions used here prove that the explanation expresses what people *would like* to hear.

One of the most devastating effects of the war is seen on the family institution. The fact that family members who are taken to lands far from their homes and sometimes injured or killed there destabilises this institution. For this reason, individuals who were not convinced about the *casus belli* of the Iraq War started protests around the world. The largest of these, "[t]he protest against the war in Iraq held on the 15th of February 2003 remains to this day the largest demonstration organised on a global scale: around ten million people took to the streets in nearly six hundred cities across the globe to oppose the military intervention of the coalition forces in Iraq" (Coste, "'Let's'" 1). In London, police estimated 750.000 people, and organisers estimated two million people attended the Stop the War Coalition protests (Betts and Phythian 99). Most of the participants carried banners reading "Don't Attack Iraq" and "Not in My Name."

As it can be understood from the statements and comments above, institutions were clinging to the post-truth discourses during the Iraq War, long before the 2016 US Presidential Election and the Brexit Referendum. However, in democratic countries, institutions rather than individuals are expected to pursue truth and inform individuals. Matthew D'Ancona states that

> [w]e live in an age of institutional fragility. A society's institutions act as guard rails, the bodies that incarnate its values and continuities. To shine a bright light on their failures, decadence and outright collapse is intrinsically unsettling. But that is not all. Post-Truth has flourished in this context, as the firewalls and antibodies (to mix metaphors) have weakened. When the putative guarantors of honesty falter, so does truth itself. (41)

Due to this distrust of institutions stemming from the post-truth claims, 68% of the British society did not believe in the necessity of the war (Rampton and Stauber 118). However, all those protests could not prevent the UK from going to war against Iraq alongside the US.

Indeed, the military intervention against Iraq was not technically a war. The last time the US Congress formally declared war on any country was with the 1942 declaration of war for World War II ("Power" par. 15). The US intervention in Iraq is therefore officially named Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Similarly, the British intervention to capture Basra is officially named Operation Telic (Op TELIC). For this operation, 46.000 British military personnel were deployed to Iraq (Davidson 134). In the course of the intervention, 179 British soldiers were killed (Betts and Phythian 2) and around 6.000 wounded (Betts and Phythian 2). The war cost approximately 9.2 billion British pounds to the UK citizens (Betts and Phythian 3).

The lies, deceptions and emotional manipulations of the institutions were also officially exposed when it was seen after the operation was completed that Iraq did not have any weapons of mass destruction; thus, it can be argued that the path to war was paved with claims that could be described as post-truth discourses. In the United Kingdom, the Secretary of State for International Development Clare Short, unconvinced of the justifications for the invasion of Iraq, resigned from the government soon after Operation Telic was launched. In her memoir, Short says of the government's deceptions that "[t]he obsession with presentation of course leads to putting the best face on things. But it has moved beyond that, beyond being economical with the truth, to having no respect for the truth, only the danger of being caught out" (180-81).

The invasion of Iraq was also closely followed and discussed by literary circles. As not all of the people were against the war, not all the writers were against the war, either. The war was challenged via "[p]ronouncements by Pinter, poems by Seamus Heaney or Andrew Motion in newspapers, plays by David Hare etc. which seemed directly relevant to the invasion" (Gupta 12). Yet, David Hare was not the only playwright to draw attention to the war. With regards to the context of this dissertation, the post-truth discourses adopted by institutions were acknowledged and harshly criticised by other British and Irish playwrights. In relation to the recognition of the post-truth discourses in the plays by those playwrights, Marion Coste states that "[t]he plays about the war in Iraq truly come into their own when they marginalise the otherwise hegemonic institutional discourse to make way for voices and perspectives that are usually silenced by the

political institutions. Grieving parents, victims of the war, and discordant voices within the government can then finally be heard on stage" ("'Let's'" 8). In this context, in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, though subscribing to different views, the following plays emerged: *The Madness of George Dubya* (2003) by Justin Butcher, *Iraq.doc* (2003) by Caryl Churchill, *Advice to Iraqi Women* (2003) by Martin Crimp, *US and Them* (2003) by Tamsin Oglesby, *The Pull of Negative Gravity* (2004) by Jonathan Lichtenstein, *Black Watch* (2006) by Gregory Burke, *Motortown* (2006) by Simon Stephens, *How Many Miles to Basra?* (2006) by Colin Teevan, *Days of Significance* (2007) by Roy Williams and *The Vertical Hour* (2008) by David Hare. In addition, playwrights have also produced works of verbatim theatre, such as *Justifying War: Scenes from the Hutton Inquiry* (2003) by Richard Norton-Taylor, *Guantanamo: "Honor Bound to Defend Freedom"* (2004) by Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo, *Stuff Happens* (2004) by David Hare, *Called to Account* (2007) by Richard Norton-Taylor and *Chilcot* (2016) by Richard Norton-Taylor and Matt Woodhead. It can be observed from the lists that verbatim plays are not heavily outnumbered by the others. Ariane de Waal explains the increase in the number of verbatim plays as follows: "The resurgence of documentary theatre in the UK in the new millennium has often been attributed to a desire for authenticity, facts, and truthful accounts in the 'war on terror' era" ("Staging" 16). Verbatim plays can convey their subject matter more objectively because they can reflect the truth as it is.[3] However, other plays have no claims to reveal the objective, unmanipulated and unfiltered truth. Playwrights can behave the same way when criticising the rhetoric of politicians or other prominent people. With this regard, this dissertation aims to analyse Gregory Burke's *Black Watch* (2006), Colin Teevan's *How Many Miles to Basra?* (2006) and Simon Stephens's *Motortown* (2006) in relation to

[3] Similar to the way Verbatim Theatre brings real-life events onto the stage, Theatre of the Real seeks to bring together the actual and the fictional for the sake of authenticity. In this regard, there is a connection between both subgenres (Martin 5). Due to the blurring of the boundary between real and narrative, the audience/reader's perception of the fictionality of the performance is disrupted (Martin 5). Apart from that, as Carol Martin further explains in her book *Theatre of the Real* (2013), "theatre of the real does not necessarily document the real with complete historiographic accuracy. Creators of performance reinterpret history and represent it according to their fascination, proclivities, imagination, and individual convictions about whether or not a definitive truth can be known, all the while using the archive as source material. The result is not the truth, but a truth, that many times conflicts with other narratives" (12). However, unlike playwrights of Theatre of the Real, the writers of the plays studied in this dissertation claim to convey the irony of using post-truth, as explained in the following chapters. Therefore, since this dissertation focuses on the playwrights' post-truth discourses and manipulation rather than the truth-fiction boundary and the performative aspects of the plays, to avoid any digression, the plays will not be examined from the viewpoint of Theatre of the Real.

political theatre and post-truth, and argues that although these plays criticise the post-truth discourse of institutions like the military, the media and the family, the depiction of the institutions in the plays should be viewed from the perspective of post-truth to reveal the self-contradictory approach of the playwrights.

The first chapter of the dissertation studies the approach towards the Iraq War in Gregory Burke's *Black Watch*, which tells the story of a group of relatively undisciplined soldiers in the famous Scottish regiment Black Watch. In the play, the soldiers sent to the battlefield are falsely dignified with exaggerated nationalism. The notion that the Scottish are born natural warriors is thoroughly satirised by the depiction of a handful of soldiers who join the regiment not for glory and heroism but for personal interests. The depiction of the low-rank army members in the play contradicts the official statements adopted by the military institution, which is demonstrated as myth-making. Nevertheless, the approach of the playwright himself, quite ironically, is not based on facts, either. While challenging the militarist post-truth discourse, he appeals to the reader/audience's sentiments, rather than their logic. The play employs an officer and Lord Elgin – both to be performed by the same actor – as the representatives of the military institution and a group of individual soldiers to voice discontent with the post-truth statements. Although privates are the most basic units that constitute an army, the play puts forward an institution-individual conflict through which the reader/audience is expected to sympathise with the latter.

It is intended in the second chapter of the dissertation to probe how the position of the media in the Iraq War is represented in Colin Teevan's *How Many Miles to Basra?*, a play which tells about the adventures of a group of soldiers on the way of rescuing a kidnapped mother and her children. Although the play was commissioned by BBC Radio 3 to be broadcast, the British media is treated with disfavour in the play. Yet the institution is not portrayed from a simplistic viewpoint. The conflict within the institution, mainly between Tariq,[4] an editor or manager in the news agency, and Ursula, an embedded journalist working under Tariq, adds more depth to the issue of the morality of truth-

[4] In the 2004 radio play, the character is originally called Gus, but in the 2006 play text, his name is altered to Tariq.

telling. The play criticises the manipulation of truths by the media by creating a contrast between Tariq's prioritising the interests of the government and his institution, and Ursula's devotion to reporting facts. Tariq prefers to cover shocking and interesting news reports that can arouse particular feelings in viewers. On the other hand, Ursula is severely against filtering, hiding, and manipulating the truth. The depiction of the media in the play, quite interestingly, reflects a post-truth discourse as Tariq's attitude towards Ursula and the soldiers could cause discontent and even antipathy among the reader/audience. On the other hand, Ursula's dedication to her profession and her effort to console Stewart's widowed wife would make the reader/audience feel admiration and sympathy for her. Yet, although Teevan critically approaches the media's strategy of conveying the truth, his own views and approach towards the institution in the play are not entirely based on facts. He handles the media's news reports with a post-truth approach to manipulate the reader/audience's thoughts about the war. Therefore, the portrayal of the media, whether represented as an institution or by an individual journalist, is rather problematic and partial in terms of truth-seeking.

The third chapter of the dissertation examines the family as the basic unit constituting society and its relation to the Iraq War in Simon Stephens's *Motortown*. This play is different from the others on the grounds that it tells about the domestic experience of a soldier, unlike the others which picture the experience in Iraq. Also, this play is not an anti-war play. Rather than objecting to the supporters of a destructive war, it criticises the opposition to the Iraq War; and this criticism is made via the family institution. Also, the discourse of the mass anti-war demonstrations is not treated with favour in this play; and those protesters are represented by the families at present as well as prospective families. Due to the political conflict between man and society, the protagonist's relations with his parents, brother, former girlfriend, the tourist couple and the like are troubled. Especially the tourist wife and husband who actually joined the anti-war march are portrayed as corrupt people; objecting to the war is associated with immorality. Although Stephens criticises the family institution for their post-truth anti-war discourses, he himself also benefits from post-truth by appealing to the emotions of the reader/audience and presenting his pro-war messages as truth.

After in-depth analyses of these three plays and discussions on the playwrights' discourses within the context of post-truth, this dissertation reveals that the playwrights sidle into self-contradiction. Besides being about the Iraq War, another common aspect of Burke, Teevan and Stephens's above-mentioned plays is that they criticise the post-truth discourse of particular institutions. In their plays, selected military officials, media workers and family members representing their institutions employ a discourse that appeals to the reader/audience's emotions so as to imbue them with their own ideology. The post-truth discourse grants these institutions supporters, privileges and socio-political success as the public tends to accept the information as truth that touches their feelings rather than objective facts. Ironically, the playwrights themselves adopt a post-truth discourse in their plays, too. Regardless of their attitudes towards the war, Burke, Teevan and Stephens make their depictions of institutions not based on objective facts, but in such a way that the reader/audience could easily accept their views as truth. Thus, like the discourses adopted by the institutions they criticise, these playwrights aim to gain supporters among readers/audience through post-truth discourses.

CHAPTER I: *BLACK WATCH* BY GREGORY BURKE AND THE MILITARY

Given that Fife, Scotland has long served as a major recruitment region for the Black Watch Regiment (Smith par. 4), it is quite understandable that the region would produce a playwright capable of thoroughly depicting the experiences and perspectives of the Black Watch soldiers and their families - both in their civilian and military roles - through intimate knowledge and understanding. Similarly, Milena Kaličanin asserts in this context that "[b]orn in 1968 into a Fife family that had already experienced continuous recruitment of its men into the British armed services, Gregory Burke was a perfect candidate for writing a story of the Black Watch regiment" (304-05). Whether Burke is the perfect candidate for the job is debatable, but it is clear that he successfully fulfilled the task of describing the soldiers' experiences in Iraq because he was familiar with such poor working-class people. He was also born into a working-class family and grew up in resembling communities (Pattie 22). Although the whole family moved to Gibraltar for six years due to his father's naval profession, they returned to Scotland in 1984 (Pattie 22), and Burke continued his formal education in his homeland. He began studying politics at the University of Stirling but was banned from the university after attacking a student ("No Honour" par. 2-3). Upon abandoning his studies at the university, he commenced a series of employment opportunities. However, despite lacking any formal training or background in the field of drama, he was able to compose and produce his inaugural dramatic work, entitled *Gagarin Way* (2001) (Pattie 22), which proved to be a success and won "the Critics' Circle Most Promising Playwright Award, Best New Play at the TMA Barclays Award, was joint winner of the Meyer-Whitworth Award and was nominated for the South Bank Show Theatre Award and Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Play" ("Gregory Burke" par. 1). Then he oriented himself from part-time jobs to a career as a playwright and wrote other plays; the most acknowledged ones being *The Straits* (2003), *On Tour* (2005), *Liar* (2006), *Black Watch* (2006) and *Hoors* (2009). His tendency to use the theatre, rather than prose or poetry, as an instrument to express his thoughts was due to linguistic reasons; as David Pattie quotes, "he has said that he found himself writing drama, rather than prose, because he couldn't be bothered describing

things (a typically ironic self-judgement)" (23). Even if he was not educated and experienced in drama, Burke wrote many more works and proved his merit.

Of the many plays that the prolific playwright Burke wrote in a short time, the most notable is *Black Watch*. The play describes the experiences of former soldiers of the Black Watch Regiment, which was deployed to Iraq in 2004 and amalgamated with other Scottish regiments in 2006 (Gupta 100). As Ariel Watson states, "[b]y examining the dissolution of the Scottish Black Watch regiment in the contemporary moment of British and American war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the play uses military occupation as a premise for reflecting on the conflicting experience, both political and psychological, of a nation within a nation-state" (227). These political and psychological experiences of the nation to which Watson refers creates a strong sense of Scottishness in the text, as the majority of the characters in the play are Scottish, and the play deals with the inner worlds and experiences of the Black Watch soldiers. Considering the fact that the play was assigned and staged by the newly-founded National Theatre of Scotland (NTS), it is not surprising that the play moves away from the phenomenon of Britishness and displays nationalist sentiments. About the success of the play making a mark on the first season of the National Theatre of Scotland, Robert Leach notes that "[p]robably the most powerful, as well as the most telling, impact made in the theatre's first year was the production of *Black Watch*, first staged at the University of Edinburgh Drill Hall beneath the city's castle, as part of the 2006 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and billed as an 'unofficial biography' of Scotland's most famous regiment" (179-80). After the first performance at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the play toured the world and caught the attention of academic researchers as well as critics.

Black Watch was commissioned by Vicky Featherstone, the "founding artistic director of the brand-new National Theatre of Scotland, the brainchild of the Scottish government's National Cultural Strategy" (C. Robinson 11). Even before giving the assignment to Burke, Featherstone had already devoted herself to a purely national theatre. She was interested in creating productions that "would be uniquely Scottish, departing from traditional English forms and traditions. Finally, they would be risky, relevant, and

provocative, positioning Scotland on the cutting edge of artistic innovation" (C. Robinson 11).

The idea for *Black Watch* arose from Featherstone's desire to create a play about the Iraq War; but even though she did not have any specific subject to base a play on, she was sparked by a chance encounter with a Glasgow newspaper that covered the controversy surrounding the Black Watch regiment (C. Robinson 11). The regiment was to be amalgamated with other Scottish regiments as a result of an imminent army reorganisation and lose its historical identity as a national symbol. Hence, she assigned Burke to follow the story of the amalgamation in accordance with the common practice among the creative team of the NTS as Featherstone explains, "[w]e have about ten assignments a year where we ask playwrights and artists to follow something – anything from huge stories to fleeting moments – not needing to know where they will end" (xvi). Having been assigned by the artistic director, Burke, with the aim of interviewing, began searching for former Black Watch soldiers who had served in Iraq. Upon being unsuccessful in his duty, he sent other researchers to find an interviewee who would be willing to tell about their story in Iraq. Finally, among the researchers Burke assigned, only a female one was invited to a local pub by a former soldier in Fife who also encouraged his brothers in arms (Beck 132) to recount their experiences and the impact of the Iraq War on them.

Expecting to meet a female researcher, the soldiers were disappointed when Burke appeared for the interview. However, albeit reluctantly, they agreed to proceed with the interview with Burke, provided that it was not tape-recorded, which was "an obstacle that would shape the overall structure of the play" (Beck 132) because in the absence of the records, Burke "limited verbatim material to work from and began writing fictional scenes based on the pub session" (Beck 133). In addition to being unable to record the interview, Burke encountered limitations due to the soldiers' reluctance to elaborate on specific details about Iraq and their storytelling style, about which he says,

> I kind of wrote down all of the things they were telling me and whenever I got to a part about Iraq, whenever I got to a bit about Iraq I'll just write that, rather than write them telling me about that, I'll write that scene happening. So when they arrived at

> Camp Dogwood—when we first arrived it was a shit hole, it was this it was that, I'll just write that with them arriving. It's a shit hole. (qtd. in Beck 133)

Moreover, the former soldiers' recollections, which featured various, undetailed and unsophisticated narrations, resulted in the emergence of "loosely connected scenes" (R. Robinson 395) rather than a fully-developed play. In relation to the difficulties the playwright experienced at this stage, Milena Kaličanin adds that "[t]he lack of sentimentalism and philosophical accounts of the war in Iraq on the part of the Black Watch ex-soldiers made Burke rather inventive in his fictionalized narratives" (309). However, despite all the adversity, the unfinished script represented a positive advancement in terms of the tone, message and style of the play since, as Vicky Featherstone did, Gregory Burke and John Tiffany, the director, "wanted to avoid replicating English dramas, and turned instead to Scottish traditions like vaudeville and music-hall revues for inspiration" (C. Robinson 11).

Receiving the help of the former Black Watch soldiers, during the rehearsals, Tiffany also brought to the workshop other soldiers who had real war experience to help the actors understand their experience (Beck 138). Apart from all these efforts, the actors had a huge role in the shaping of the final script, too. Regarding their contribution to the play, Robert Leach conveys that "[t]he actors worked on this raw material, helping to shape it, discovering possible dramatic rhythms, seeking out focuses, which Burke used as he scripted the final piece. Seeing actors as more than just interpreters of scripts seems to be an integral part of the company's creative approach" (176). Eventually, with the collaboration of Burke, Featherstone, Tiffany, the actors and the former soldiers, the scenes were merged into a fully developed play to be staged at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2006.

The success the play brought to Burke and the NTS can be seen from the fact that it has been staged several times in numerous countries. The play, which was first staged at the 2006 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, was performed in the following years at "London's Barbican Centre, the Sydney Festival, the New Zealand International Arts Festival, Toronto's Luminato Festival and several runs in New York" (Oliver and Walmsley 96). Apart from Scotland, England, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, the play toured the

United States four times at least (Zerdy 189). Its two-year tour to the above-mentioned countries was a great achievement, and the production was praised by almost every critic who viewed the performances (Jack par. 1). In addition to several other awards, the production won four Olivier awards, being at that time "the most Olivier awards for an individual production, including best new play and, for John Tiffany, best director" (M. Brown par. 2). The demand for the play was so extensive that upon Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond's invitation, a special performance was given at the opening session of the Scottish Parliament in 2007 (Jack par. 1; Oliver and Walmsley 97; R. Robinson 393; Watson 227). Moreover, besides being performed on the stage, "[t]he production was also adapted for radio and a televised version of the production – alongside a documentary [*Black Watch: A Soldier's Story*] about the show's making, combined with footage of soldiers and their families' responses to the production – was sold as a DVD after its airing on BBC Scotland in 2007" (R. Robinson 393).

The title of the play is derived from the Black Watch, which is one of Scotland's national assets and is one of the most emblematic and prominent regiments of the Scottish army. When the work was first announced; it had a subtitle which was "An Unofficial Biography of a Regiment" (Cummings 104). The subtitle was removed later. Although the subtitle suggests a biography, the subject covered only reflects an extremely short part of the regiment's nearly three-hundred-year history, or more accurately its last days. Indeed, the eponymous regiment "was formed in 1739 and has been part of working-class family life in recruiting regions such as Fife and Tayside for generations" (Hauthal 163). Initially, the Black Watch was formed by six of the respected clans from the Scottish Highlands and consisted of a total of 540 people (Rubin 17). Its number subsequently increased, eventually becoming one of the elite units of the British army. Burke seems to be inspired by the names of these clans when naming the characters in the play. The names Cammy, Granty, Rossco, Macca, Stewarty, Nabsy, Fraz and Kenzie respectively evoke the Campbell, Grant, Ross, MacAlister (or perhaps Mackay or MacAulay), Stewart, Macnab, Fraser and Mackenzie clans. Since its inception, this regiment, which has served in many parts of the world, has not only become a national symbol of Scotland, but has also been an integral part of the military power of the United Kingdom and an

important element of the Scottish-English collaboration. In relation to the significance of the Black Watch in the British army, Rebecca Robinson explains as follows:

> Following the defeat of the Jacobite army at Culloden and the introduction of the Disarming Act of 1746, which outlawed the wearing of tartan and the carrying of arms, the Black Watch, along with the other Highland regiments of the British army, were exempted from the act. The construction of the separate identity of the Highland regiments was inextricably bound up in their identity as British institutions. The regiment had come into being as an agent of the British Crown and government and had thus acted as a military symbol of the historical alliance between England and Scotland. Therefore, the Black Watch regiment itself has an ambiguous role in terms of British and Scottish identity and is emblematic of the complex relationship between and within the countries of Britain. (398)

The fate of the regiment, which holds such a special and respected position within the British army, changed with the Iraq War. They were assigned a very difficult mission, became agents of international policy-makers, were subjected to a suicide bombing attack, and were transformed from a regiment into a battalion. *Black Watch* reveals the effects of all these unfortunate developments on individual soldiers. In other words, the title of the play refers to the individuals who make up the regiment, rather than the regiment itself as a military structure.

As the initial subtitle of the play suggests, the storyline of the play covers the last phases of the regiment's history. Based on former soldiers' accounts, Burke portrays the experiences of a group of Black Watch soldiers in Iraq, or rather at Camp Dogwood, around 40 kilometres south-west of Baghdad. Before the deployment of the regiment to the camp, British troops had taken control of Basra and made it safer for themselves. Nevertheless, as the US presidential elections was approaching in 2004, there was a need for a relief in the areas under US control. Therefore, as a political manoeuvre requested by the US, "in order to reduce casualties leading up to the US presidential election, the 800-strong Black Watch temporarily replaced 4,000 US Marines" (Midgley 151) in Camp Dogwood. The camp was located in a dangerous region which is also known as the "Triangle of Death." As the controversies and political debates were continuing, Scottish soldiers were subjected to constant rocket attacks. In November of the same year, there was a suicide attack in which three Black Watch soldiers and their Iraqi interpreter lost their lives; moreover, the regiment's amalgamation with other Scottish regiments

resulting in the Royal Regiment of Scotland also coincided with these incidents (Jack par. 6; Hauthal 163). The play depicts the discussions during the amalgamation process and the suicide attack which Matthew J. Midgley defines as a "betrayal of the soldiers during one of their toughest engagements" (151), implying that the regiment was betrayed by high-ranking commanders in the army and the Ministry of Defence who planned and implemented the amalgamation of the Scottish regiments. The process was considered a betrayal because it resulted in the loss of historic regiment names and roles in the army.

The play basically is based on the interviews with the former soldiers in a pub in Fife, Scotland and the experiences in Iraq recounted by these soldiers. Therefore, *Black Watch* is a synthesis of real events, the soldiers' testimony about these real events, and the staging of both events and testimonies. In other words, "[e]ssentially *Black Watch* is a storytelling of a storytelling of real events, creating an impressionistic layering of experiences" (Lane 41). Thus, Burke attempts to manipulate the perception of reality among the reader/audience by presenting imaginary events and dialogues alongside actual ones.

The play has a total of twelve characters, including eight privates named Cammy, Granty, Rossco, Macca, Stewarty, Nabsy, Fraz and Kenzie, two ranked soldiers – the Sergeant and the Officer – a Writer and Lord Elgin, a historical figure. Among the soldiers, Cammy is the most level-headed one. In contrast, Stewart is quick-tempered and struggles to control his nerves. Fraz is intelligent but mischievous, often bringing about lively moments. Kenzie is the least experienced member of the group, so the more experienced soldiers like to tease him. Among the ranked soldiers, the Sergeant is tough, disciplined and devoted to the army and the state. The Officer, on the other hand, is a thoughtful character caught between loyalty to the army and contemplation of the harsh realities of the war. Lord Elgin is similar to a government spokesperson tasked with recruiting for the army.

The play opens with Cammy delivering a welcoming speech directly addressing the reader/audience. In this speech, Cammy's words, "It's no right. It's illegal" (4), reveal the play's anti-Iraq war stance. The next scene begins in a pub in Fife, Scotland. When

the Writer replaces the female researcher Sophie for the interview, the soldiers are initially reluctant to talk to him. However, they accept the interview after the Writer offers them beer. Subsequent scenes depict conversations in the pub and show the soldiers' experiences in Iraq. The working-class soldiers are convinced to join the army by Lord Elgin and head to Camp Dogwood in Iraq. In the camp, they face constant mortar fire and explosions, but they have become accustomed to it. They spend their days watching porn or American bombardments. There is also a scene featuring an embedded journalist's attempt to interview the soldiers to show the public the conditions in the battlefield from a filtered perspective. After days of idle tasks, their military vehicle is hit by mortar fire while traveling on a road. Unable to move, they await help when another vehicle arrives and carries out a suicide bombing attack. In the explosion, the Sergeant, Fraz, Kenzie and an Iraqi interpreter lose their lives. In the next scene, the Officer tries to persuade Cammy, who wants to leave the army, to stay in the regiment but fails to convince him. The final attack order is given, and the play concludes with a military parade accompanied by bagpipe and drum music, in which the choreography represents the fallen soldiers.

Although the play initially created a wave of excitement among national and international readers/audiences in its early years, subsequently, some writers began to criticise it after considering it critically. In particular, as the play focuses too much on individual soldiers, some points between the lines started to seem problematic for scholars and columnists. As mentioned in the Introduction, the majority of the British and Irish people were united against the Iraq War; at such a time, a play depicting the catastrophic events experienced by the soldiers would have further increased the anti-war sentiments of the reader/audience. But within a few years, people who put their emotions aside and turned to reason began to question the play's attitude towards the war. Among them Alex Sierz argues that "*Black Watch* is not 'an anti-war play, by which I mean an anti-Iraq war play. What it is is pro-soldier.' As such, it is a slap in the face of the theatrical convention of liberal anti-war plays" (*Rewriting* 90). As Sierz maintains, it is very difficult to speculate that the play is against war because the characters' dialogues do not criticise war as a broad concept, but rather the flawed policies and statements of the government and the military institutions regarding the Iraq War in particular. In addition, the play celebrates the achievements and the military operations carried out by the Black Watch in several

regions of the world for centuries. These successive military achievements and the history of recruitments are referred to as the "Golden Thread" (Burke 25, 71). In this respect, it may be inferred that Burke's play may not be against war as long as it brings fame and glory. Similarly, in relation to the controversial Golden Thread myth, David Archibald adds that,

> [t]he success of *Black Watch*, in part, relies on erasure, not just of Ireland, or of Iraqis, but the erasure of the past itself, or, at least, its transformation into an abstract notion of 'history' or 'tradition'. The Golden Thread is a history which has no past, only a glorious story. Unfortunately *Black Watch* does not deconstruct that story: on the contrary, and particularly in its closing scene, it contributes to it. (12)

In addition to extolling the regiment's controversial military history, there are also those who discuss that the play favours British imperialism. Rebecca Robinson, for example, approaches this issue sceptically, saying, "Tiffany aimed to challenge liberally minded audiences on their 'preconceptions of the army and what soldiers were like'. As such, the play offered an unashamedly one-sided, male, western perspective on Iraq and, for some critics, by doing so implicitly reinforced and glorified Britain's imperial history" (396). As can be understood from the critiques, Burke wrote *Black Watch* in a rather militaristic style, despite being against the policies of the Iraq War. While reading/watching the play, the reader/audience may feel a certain coldness towards the military as an institution (or perhaps even the Ministry of Defence), but at the same time, with nationalist and militaristic feelings, may feel pride in the soldiers. In addition to these, another problematic aspect of the play from an ideological standpoint is its synthesis of society, military service and masculinity. On this subject, Sierz marks as follows:

> Like *Stuff Happens*, *Black Watch* seemed to be a definitive Iraq War play. It did what all contemporary theatre aspires to do: in Greig's words, 'It caught the mood of the nation in a way I have not seen before.' But although the show felt emotionally true, with braveheart performances, some aspects of the play were unsettling. For a start, it gave soldiering a battered glamour which did nothing to question the equation of national identity with military might. By excluding the families of the men, especially their wives, it also presented war as a delirious festival of masculinity. And because it felt like a triumph for Scottish manhood, Scottish theatre and Scottish national pride, few were brave enough to raise an eyebrow about its implicit militarist ideology. (*Rewriting* 90)

Although these reviews and critiques approach the play from different angles, they have a common point which the critics do not specifically name or focus on and that is the play's manipulative style where its post-truth discourse stands out. As analysed and argued below, Burke appeals to people's emotions in order to make the reader/audience accept his ideological orientations as truth. While reading/watching the play, the reader/audience sees the devastating impact of the war in the ambush and explosion scenes in the final part of the play, but they can still be proud of the Black Watch's Golden Thread. The truth is hidden mainly by Lord Elgin with lies and emotional manipulations; however, Burke also adopts the same strategy for his own counter-arguments, not only with dialogue but also with visual and auditory dramaturgical elements to increase emotional intensity.

Burke's attitude towards the truth is a matter that deserves to be examined in detail. While it seems more reasonable to assume that he is after the truths about the Iraq War and the Black Watch soldiers, it should be questioned through which filters he conveys these assumed truths. First of all, the play can be partly thought to be a piece of verbatim theatre. Verbatim plays are usually built on "a central, or exclusive, reliance on the exact words of real people that have been gathered during a prolonged research phase and then creatively edited" (Garson 5). Since the real words of real individuals are enacted on stage by actors and actresses, verbatim theatre is quite useful in bringing the reality to the stage. Burke aims to create a sense of authenticity in his play by partly utilising this technique of verbatim theatre. He interviewed the former soldiers at the very beginning of the play's conceptualisation process and he wrote the pub scenes based on the interviews he held with the former soldiers. Nevertheless, considering the fictional scenes, academic circles, reviewers and researchers cannot reach a consensus on whether the play can be considered completely a work of verbatim theatre or not. For instance, although Mary Luckhurst considers *Black Watch* as a work of verbatim theatre (200), Andrew Haydon believes that "[t]he most successful verbatim response [*Black Watch*] to the Iraq war was not really 'verbatim theatre' at all" (44). It is not possible to fully understand why Haydon thinks this is so as he does not elaborate on the matter, but the opinions of other researchers who agree with him may be indicative. Sarah Beck, who shares the same view as Haydon, describes the play as an "internationally celebrated documentary play" (131).

She also explains why the play is not a work of verbatim theatre, saying, "[f]using documentary materials based on interviews with fictionalized scenes, *Black Watch* departed from the hyperrealist trend of verbatim plays of the post-9/11 era, infusing music, projection, movement and song to contextualize the accounts of local soldiers caught amidst a foreign policy disaster" (131). Besides the addition of fictional scenes, the use of music, bagpipes, choreographic movements and the use of video material in the performance of the play also leads scholars to question its verbatim aspect. To exemplify, James Oliver and Ben Walmsley argues that "[c]ombining documentary drama with political theatre, stylised movement, bagpipes, film, surround sound, and military songs and laments, the play engages with its audience on a range of levels and provides them with a multi-sensory experience, not only of what it's like to fight a modern war but also of what influences people to join an army – a reflexive and situational analysis of war" (96). As can be seen, Oliver and Walmsley define the play not specifically as verbatim, but more generally as documentary drama. On the other hand, Nicholas J. Cull, who assumes the play as a more enhanced and animated version of verbatim theatre, maintains, "[t]he team took 'verbatim theatre' to a new level. The verbatim approach had long since demonstrated its ability to bring major contemporary issues to the stage, but *Black Watch* showed that the technique could transcend mere reportage and bring its dialogue alive in a truly theatrical world of movement and physicality" (6). Utilising the techniques and philosophy of verbatim theatre, which is to create a sense of truthfulness, draws the reader/audience further into the play. While the reader/audience can read/watch verbatim theatre plays objectively and alienate themselves from the text/performance, they may also find themselves involuntarily feeling empathy towards the soldiers while reading/watching Burke's play arousing certain emotions. Since Burke's play contains both fictional elements and verbatim components, classifying its genre in a broad category is risky. Perhaps the safest assessment of the play's genre belongs to David Lane who describes it as "drama-documentary or 'faction' – fictional material based on (very recent) historical fact, gleaned from research and interviews" (41). All these views demonstrate that the genre of Burke's play is problematic. Burke's use of verbatim elements is actually a reaction against the post-truth discourse of the military institution. Verbatim theatre is somehow didactic, it appeals to the mind and common sense of the reader/audience, teaches them

to assess events and situations from different viewpoints and to think analytically. However, a truthful discourse may not be very effective against a post-truth discourse. Perhaps that is why Burke prefers to appeal to people's emotions and convey subjective truths that are emotionally charged, rather than objective truths, with a genre that attempts to create an impression of truthfulness while also being fictional.

As the attitudes of the criticised institutions towards the truth are discussed in this dissertation, the relationship between the presented truth (or the truth perceived by the reader/audience) and the truth hidden between the lines will be analysed and argued within the scope of Burke's *Black Watch*. Although, as mentioned above, the play includes fictional scenes, the perception of the reader/audience may not entirely correspond to the playwright's imagination. Both the content of *Black Watch* and its marketing strategies create the perception that the play is very closely related to the truth and reality. While Burke was assigned the task of following the story of the Black Watch regiment, Tiffany claims to have told him as follows: "I told Greg *not* to go away and write a fictional drama set in Iraq, but that instead we should try and tell the 'real' stories of the soldiers in their own words" (xii). This claim is not Tiffany's only attempt to convince people of the authenticity of the play's narrative; in another speech, he states as follows:

> I had never really worked on anything based on interviews, we very quickly realized, how limiting it was so it's not verbatim *Black Watch*, we realized how limiting it was because, just because it's true isn't to say it's dramatic. And our responsibility is to tell their stories in a resonant way to a large audience, so although the kind of texture, the content of the stories and anecdotes of the interview are true, I would say the language—which is all Greg. (qtd. in Beck 136)

In these two remarks, Tiffany is implementing a marketing strategy independent of the content of the play, implying that *Black Watch* reflects the truth by establishing a connection between the play and reality. The fact that the actors who play the soldiers received military drill training and the videos used during the performance are also elements that obviously contribute to the director's implication. However, even though the play appears to bring the experience of war to the reader/audience, a conversation in

the first pub scene, purposely or not, advises the reader/audience to pursue visible and objective reality from the very beginning:

> Cammy: What day you want tay know?
> Writer: What it was like in Iraq.
> Cammy: What it was fucking like?
> Stewarty: Go tay fucking Baghdad if you want tay ken what it's like. (7)

Stewarty's exclamation is probably a reaction to the post-truth discourse and statements that are incompatible with the reality maintained by the institutions in the homeland. Indeed, one who wants to see the truth about the Iraq War must observe the war on the spot and not be exposed to the interpretation or discourse of any intermediary. However, it is quite self-contradictory that *Black Watch* is one of these intermediaries with its own discourse and claims to the truth. Cummings relates this to the play's being a work of documentary theatre, and puts forward that "[t]his is a conceit adopted by a great deal of documentary theatre, including *Black Watch*, which mocks embedded reporting in a way that suggests that it is the play, not the newspapers, where we can find the *real* true stories of the war" (101-02). As Cummings states, the NTS and Burke, through *Black Watch*, denounce the stories told by other institutions as untrue and offer an alternative perception of truth. In this regard, the creative team of the play is quite successful in creating an alternative discourse. In a similar assessment of Burke's success in creating the perception of the allegedly genuine truth, Robert Leach explains that,

> [t]he cast of ten had been drilled by a real army sergeant to achieve the utmost precision of movement, and this, as well as the fact that their performances took place under huge video screens, inevitably recalled Joan Littlewood's *Oh What a Lovely War*. Also like *Oh What a Lovely War*, this play was not a conventional documentary bound by the need to use 'authentic' words: it preferred to recreate 'real' people as fictional characters. (180)

Considering the accounts above, it can be safely claimed that the authenticity of Burke's story is rather questionable. However, these interpretations should not lead one to think that the play has no element of reality. It should always be kept in mind that both objective or subjective truths may be found in the play.

Since the Iraq War did not bring glory to individual soldiers, but rather brought death, great psychological breakdown, and loss of reputation at the regimental level, the war was not a subject that Burke could celebrate. Therefore, he chose to depict the war zone and the discourse of the decision-makers with anti-Iraq War sentiments, and "found himself on an artistic quest to recreate the raw truth of the Black Watch regiment, without any attempts at softening or beautifying its burdensome bits and pieces" (Kaličanin 308). Pro-Iraq War governments and institutions were already fulfilling the task of softening and beautifying the experience of war. While they were terrorising people about Iraq, Saddam Hussein, Al-Qaeda, the WMDs and terrorism in order to send their armies to the front and to gather public support for the war, they were also trying to make people support the justification of the war by using concepts such as heroism, glory, world peace and democracy. In response, Burke found the solution by following the same method to challenge the post-truth discourses of the Prime Ministry and the military institution. He preferred to appeal to the emotions of the people himself rather than politicians, bureaucrats and generals. As a result of this preference, "the play seeks to 'bring the war home,' that is, make the experience of war conceivable for the audience. Initially, the home audience lacks the firsthand experience of war and thus fails to understand the soldiers. But the emotive musical and physical performance of the actor's bodies on stage brings them closer" (Wierzoch 143). If Burke's aim had been to impart to people the factual realities without any alteration, he could have composed the entire play as a piece of verbatim theatre and provided the reader/audience with audio and video recordings, photographs or re-enactments of actual events. Nonetheless, although these practices would have appealed to the reader/audience's reason, they might not have been sufficient to fully engage them in the play because "the expectations of audiences of verbatim plays as described by Soans have to be re-formulated, as audiences not only expect not to be lied to, but also want to be emotionally engaged" (Hauthal 171). Therefore, for Burke, it would have been more effective if the reader/audience felt emotionally connected to his perspective in the play rather than comprehend the objective truth. There is an instance in the play that could be perceived as referencing this strategy. In the fourth pub scene, when the Writer requests further information about the soldiers' war experiences in Iraq, Stewarty, becoming extremely agitated and losing control, twists the Writer's arm and threatens to break it, stating: "If he wants tay ken about Iraq, he has tay feel some pain?"

(65). Although Stewarty talks about feeling physical pain, the pain that Burke aims for the reader/audience to feel possesses a deeper significance. According to Burke, even though those who want to fully understand the inner world of the soldiers cannot go to Iraq to observe their experiences, they can grasp the experience to some extent by undergoing emotional outbursts through *Black Watch*. In this respect, in accordance with the framework of post-truth discourses, emotion alternates with knowledge and feeling with knowing in the play.

A person who employs a post-truth discourse may not expect the addressees to adopt an objective stance towards the discourse. The purpose of the post-truth discourse is to deceive and direct the person towards a certain viewpoint. The manipulation technique used for this purpose mostly relies on stating things that are in line with the person's visceral status and already existing ideas, rather than outright lying. In relevant dramatic works such as *Black Watch*, even though it is claimed that the truth is being displayed, the post-truth discourse is quite functional in mobilising the reader/audience and leaving them under ideological influence. Burke, who criticises the post-truth discourse of the pro-Iraq War military institution in his play, might have been unsuccessful in winning so many readers/audiences if he had expressed his anti-Iraq War discourse in a rational and objective manner utilising real facts. Therefore, he prefers to stimulate the reader/audience's sentiments instead of presenting reasonable arguments. Hauthal explains the arousing of the reader/audience's emotions in such works of theatre as follows:

> Bignell et al. refer to the strategies that verbatim plays employ in order to engage audiences 'in an active response to the factual material […] [as] emotional enlistment'. These serve as 'a means of aligning audiences with particular political perspectives on recent events and controversies that are expressed in the plays (and which, of course, inhere in the interview material that feeds the plays)'. It is therefore not surprising that audiences' responses to pieces of verbatim theatre are rarely neutral.[5] (171-72)

Even though the citizens recognise the existence of soldiers returning from the war wounded or fallen and may be conscious of what they are going through, they may remain

[5] The alterations in the quotation within the quotation are made by Hauthal herself.

more neutral towards them because there is a significant difference between being aware of their existence and being in direct contact with them. Just as in in-yer-face theatre, the message becomes even more striking when the reader/audience finds themselves in the moment. In the case of *Black Watch*, Burke invites the reader/audience to that atmosphere by depicting the violent and psychologically destructive world of the war for the reader/audience. Boll briefly explains why this representation affects people more, saying, "[i]t 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" (105). Especially the suicide bombing scene, which is staged towards the end of the play, is quite effective in this regard. A couple of dramaturgical techniques are used in this scene in order to affect the people who sympathise with the individual soldiers. These techniques are given in the stage directions as "Music. The Sergeant, Fraz and Kenzie are propelled into the air by the blast wave. They fall to the ground one by one during the following voice-over, as if in slow motion" (68). The music played in this scene is not an ordinary dramatic music; in order to appeal to the Scottish reader/audience, a particular folkloric music that stirs national feelings is played. On the importance of this choice, Boll says, "[o]ver a scene in which three soldiers die in a suicide bombing, a Gaelic lament is played, 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" (106). Although this short scene does not contain any actors' lines, it can be evaluated within the framework of post-truth in terms of the narrative it contains. It is intended to activate certain sentiments in people, and Burke seems to have achieved this goal.

As previously expressed, Burke's sole aim is not only to attract more readers/audience and make money, but also to warm people up to his own ideology. Sarah Hill also says in this regard as follows:

> By taking the 'real-life' stories of the Black Watch regiment or the Highland Clearances and 'cooking' them in this way, the performers not only make them more accessible but offer a very particular and persuasive interpretation of each situation. It is this mixture of efficacy and entertainment which makes performance such a useful tool not only for exploring political issues but also for persuading the audience to take a side. (45-46)

Hundreds of thousands of British citizens who opposed the Iraq War before it even started and organised large-scale protests already appear to be thinking in the same way as Burke. According to the theory of post-truth, these people are more prone to learn the truths about the Iraq War from discourses that are parallel to their own thoughts and which they feel emotionally close to, rather than from objective truths concerning the war. Accordingly, Burke delivers his anti-Iraq War discourse not by informing his reader/audience, but by manipulating their thoughts on the Iraq War by appealing to their emotions.

Along with Cammy's statement, "It's no right. It's illegal" (4), about the Iraq War in his welcoming speech at the very beginning of the play, particularly the destructive bombardments and airstrikes carried out by the American forces in the play could be considered as anti-Iraq War depictions, which Cammy defines as "[t]his isnay fucking fighting. This is just plain old-fashioned bullying like" (40). Bullying is a practice that can be applied not only to the American army but also to the British army. In the opening monologue of the play, Cammy states that people consider bullying as the army's duty:

> And people's minds are made up about the war that's on the now ay?
> *Beat.*
> They are. It's no right. It's illegal. We're just big bullies.
> *Beat.*
> Well, we'll need to get fucking used tay it. Bullying's the fucking job. That's what you have a fucking army for. (4)

This attitude within the army is so widespread and soldiers who are exposed to this discourse internalise it to such an extent that they seem to be inclined to bully each other and others. In the scene of the American bombardment, for instance, when Granty takes on a more humane demeanour, they silence him and express their own aggressive instincts:

> Granty: Fucking cowboys.
> *More explosions.*
> You kinday feel sorry for the cunts that are stuck in the middle ay that.
> Kenzie: Day you fuck.
> Rossco: I hope there's some left over for us.
> Kenzie: Aye. I want tay get some fucking action at last. (40)

Considering these examples, it is possible to argue that the play may have anti-militaristic features. However, as explained above, while Burke sympathises with individual soldiers, he directs his criticism at the military as an institution. The military institution is portrayed as so corrupt in the play that the workings within it sometimes seem pretty nonsensical. Another example of Burke's criticism on this issue is the scene in which Rossco, aware of the corruption and absurdity within the institution, holds a piece of paper to appear busy:

> Cammy: Have you got anything written on the piece ay paper?
> Rossco: I was just getting tay that. It's no actually essential tay hay anything on the paper ay.
> Kenzie: No?
> Rossco: It's much more important that you just have the piece ay paper. Either in the hand where it can be seen - (*He demonstrates both moves.*) or tucked away, ready to be whipped out when you're challenged.
> Kenzie: Will nobody check if there's nothing on it?
> Rossco: No.
> Fraz: Not a chance ay anybody checking a piece ay paper.
> Cammy: A piece ay paper is official.
> Rossco: See, if you check a piece ay paper, then you might end up having tay day something.
> Kenzie: Right.
> Rossco: Cos if you've got time tay be checking some other cunt's bit ay paper then you're obviously no fucking busy enough yerself. (15-16)

Near the end of the scene, when the Sergeant arrives and scolds the soldiers for their idle actions, Rossco exhibits the piece of paper he is holding and successfully evades any reprimand. As it can be deduced from these examples, Burke does not glorify the military institution to the extent that it is criticised. On the contrary, with the words in the play "[y]ou're here because Her Majesty's Government has decided that there's no way we can sit down in Basra topping up our tans when our allies are getting ten types ay shite knocked out ay them by the *mujahadin*. […] It's our turn tay be in the shite. But we've had three hundred years ay being in the shite" (17), he criticises the institution and its discourse for victimising individual soldiers.

Burke's criticism of the military institution's use of a post-truth discourse can be discussed under several headings. The main ones can be categorised as the institution's exploitation of Iraq, its exploitation of individual soldiers, the deception of soldiers, and

finally the deception of the entire British society through the media, which will be discussed below. Based on the depiction of the institution's actions and discourses, it is possible to infer that the playwright takes an opposing stance against the war. As previously mentioned in the Introduction, the Iraqi government led by Saddam Hussein and extremist terrorist groups supposedly harboured in the country were perceived as a threat to Britain and the western civilisation, leading the British government to decide to send troops to Iraq. The main argument of the government and the Ministry of Defence was that Iraq had the potential to use weapons of mass destruction and was aiding and abetting terrorists. Burke, who opposes this discourse, sarcastically reflects Operation Telic as a "theatre,"[6] not as a defensive operation in the play:

> Rossco: It's the importance ay having a piece ay paper in your hand.
> Cammy: Very important.
> Fraz: You should always carry a piece ay paper way you.
> Cammy: It's fucking crucial tay survival in the modern theatre ay operations. (15)

In Burke's play, neither Saddam, nor Al-Qaeda, nor any weapons of mass destruction are mentioned. Moreover, the characters representing the military institution do not use expressions that justify the war. Thus, Burke not only criticises the institution's discourse, but also ignores it from time to time. In this regard, his play seems to be aiming to "chang[e] people's views by critiquing the whole premise and operation of the Iraq War" (Oliver and Walmsley 97). According to Burke, the Ministry of Defence cannot direct this operation as professionally as it should. Although the transfer of the Black Watch troops to Camp Dogwood to replace four thousand American soldiers is announced as a heroic event, Burke argues that the ministry made strategic mistakes in this transfer. Even the Officer, who oscillates between two opposing discourses and sometimes defends the ministerial discourse and sometimes the opposing view, touches upon that flaw in an email he writes to his beloved as follows: "So thanks to all the prevarication at ministerial level about the most media-friendly moment for the deployment to be announced, the chances are the insurgents will know more about us than we do about them" (12). The Officer actually admires his profession and regiment, but he is extremely disturbed by the

[6] "Theatre" is also a military term for "an area in which operations are being carried out" ("theatre"). Yet, by specifically calling the area of operations "theatre," instead of battlefield, battleground, combat zone or front line, Burke seems to criticise the British and American policy of war.

government's and ministry's wrong decisions. He expresses this through one of the lines that has become a maxim in the play: "It takes three hundred years to build an army that's admired and respected around the world. But it only takes three years pissing about in the desert in the biggest western foreign policy disaster ever to fuck it up completely" (71). It should be noted that the word "army" is used interchangeably in the play to mean both the Black Watch and the whole British army. The Officer is referring to the regiment in this quotation. However, the word "army" is also used in a broader sense and may refer to the authorities in the command hierarchy as seen in the following example:

> Nabsy: I thought they said we were gonnay be home by Christmas?
> Cammy: You didnay believe that shite, did you?
> Stewarty: This is the fucking army we're talking about here. (11)

When assessing the play, it is necessary to carefully distinguish what is meant by "army." Although the Black Watch is formally a part of the British army, for Burke it is still a distinct national Scottish army. Regarding this distinction, Steve Wilmer marks as follows:

> It sets out a distinctive Scottish agenda in opposition to British military policy, although this is complicated by the Scots being part of the British army. According to Joyce McMillan, the production of Black Watch reveals the "National Theatre as a force that can reassert a strong grass-roots Scottish perspective on parts of our story which, until now, have been filtered mainly through institutions of the British state." (82)

A simple way to illustrate this distinction within the context of the play is to examine whether the sentence containing the word "army" conveys a positive or negative connotation. Whenever the play presents an anti-militarist discourse about the army, it is observed that this word "army" generally pertains to all military forces. If the play uses the word in a more narrowed and positive sense, as the Officer does, then the word signifies the regiment.

Burke also portrays the military institution as a colonial structure. The institution exploits both Iraq (and Iraqi people) and its own members from the lowest to higher ranks in the military hierarchy. In relation to the exploitation of Iraq, İmren Yelmiş puts forward that

"[t]he Black Watch or Western countries like the UK and the USA have started where Lawrence had left off, and that they are continuing Lawrence's imperial mission once again given to them by the U.K. administration" (492). The British army, and therefore the Black Watch within it, was sent back to Mesopotamia a century later by policy-makers with post-truth arguments. This deployment seems to be a part of an imperial mission. However, as Yelmiş relates, while there is a reference in the play to Thomas Edward Lawrence visiting the same region, Burke does not imply that the Black Watch was an active part of such a mission. The dialogue referring to Lawrence's being in the same region is as follows:

> Cammy: […] He was here, you know?
> Fraz: Lawrence ay Arabia?
> Cammy: Right fucking here.
> Fraz: (*looks around*) Lucky bastard ay.
> Cammy: Aye.
> Fraz: And what did he do, when he was here?
> Cammy: What did he do?
> Fraz: Aye. What's it about?
> Cammy: It's … eh, well, he kinday …
> Fraz: You dinnay ken what it's about? (13)

As seen in the dialogue, the soldiers are unaware of what activities Lawrence carried out in Mesopotamia. Cammy, who has read part of Lawrence's book *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and lost half of it, is not interested in either espionage or international relations. Since half of the book is missing, Fraz calls the book the "*Three and a Half Pillars ay Wisdom*" (14) and thus mocks the spy and his imperial mission.

For Burke, the biggest target of exploitation by the military institution apart from Iraq is the unemployed Scottish youth, and this exploitation is clearly expressed in the play. In the play's opening monologue, Cammy declares as follows: "They poor fucking boys. They cannay day anything else. They cannay get a job. They get exploited by the army" (4). Young people who see serving in the army as a job opportunity are easily hunted by the army. The one who recruits them in the play is Lord Elgin, another Scottish person who has become the Anglicised spokesperson of the British military institution. As Kieran Hurley notes: "We see the exploitation of generations of young working-class men seduced by the army's false promises, through the appearance of the character of Lord

Elgin" (275). Lord Elgin is a very interesting character in that he shares the same discourse as the UK government and the Ministry of Defence. He, too, was recruited and exploited by the military at an early age, but he has internalised this exploitation and become an agent of the military institution. Due to their social class and lack of sufficient education, the Scottish young men are unable to speak standard English. Their colloquial language presents a heavy Scottish accent. Lord Elgin, unaware of their situation, initially attempts to communicate with them using flawless English. However, since he acts like an upper-class English person, he cannot convince the working-class youth of recruitment. During his attempts to persuade them, he asks them where they work, and upon receiving the answer "[t]he pit" (27), he realises that they are from the working class and asks in a Scottish accent, "[a]nd you dinnay want tay join the army?" (27) in an attempt to appear like one of them. Thus, he exploits not only the bodies and minds of the characters, but also their identities.

Lord Elgin recounts how he joined the army at a young age through the Scottish folk song titled "The Forfar Sodger." The narrator in the song is born in Forfar as the child of a very poor family. Following the common practice, he attends school for secular education and the Kirk for religious education, but he becomes inspired by a different idea:

> Fan I was six I gaed tae school
> Because it wis the fashion
> An ilka Sunday tae the kirk
> Tae save me o' a thrashin.
> […]
> They learntit me tae read an write
> An coont the rule o' three, sir
> But a nobler thocht cam tae ma heid
> An a sodger I wid be, sir. (29)

Serving in the army was seen as a nobler thought than receiving an education or practising a religious faith in the time of Lord Elgin. Therefore, it is seen that post-truth statements, which beautify and prioritise military service over formal education and religion, were used to manipulate young men and recruit more soldiers. In the continuation of the song, Elgin expresses how the institution treated and supported him:

> They gied me claes tae hep ma back
> An mittens tae ma hands, sir
> An swore I wis the brawest cheil
> In a' the Heilan clans, sir. (30)

The presentation of Elgin as "the bravest child in all the Highland clans" serves as evidence of the institution's post-truth discourse, akin to the Golden Thread myth, being both old and traditional, as the British army continues to encounter such displays of encouragement. However, this ballad is not limited to just the part told by Lord Elgin. In the continuation of the song, the narrator who becomes a soldier is later sent to fight in Spain and becomes lame after being shot in the leg and starts living in Forfar. Elgin may be deliberately omitting this part in order not to discourage the soldiers.

The scene narrating the three-hundred-year history of the regiment, spanning from its formation to the Iraq War, is particularly significant in revealing the exploitation of soldiers. Cammy, starting from the first quarter of the eighteenth century to the twenty-first century, illustrates the various locations where the Black Watch served, while a group of soldiers attire him in the military uniforms worn by the regiment throughout its history. Meanwhile, Cammy remains in a rather passive position, in a manner reminiscent of an individual soldier being dragged from one place to another. Regarding this scene and the exploitation of soldiers, Rebecca Robinson asserts that "the staging of the scene as a fashion show suggests that spectators are invited to view this story as presentation rather than representation, as superficial spectacle rather than truthful depiction. On top of that, Cammy's physical manipulation throughout the scene draws the reader/audience to reflect on the soldiers' own disempowerment and manipulation by the institutions of war" (397). As Rebecca Robinson points out, the soldiers are so disempowered that they never fire a shot in the play. They are only forced to defend themselves at Camp Dogwood, where they are brought to replace the American soldiers due to the approaching US Presidential elections. They become mere targets themselves in the army they have entered to attack targets. Feeling deceived, Cammy complains to the Officer about this setback:

> Cammy: I enjoyed the war fighting, sir. I really did. That's why I didn't get out after the last tour, sir. I thought, I've got to give it a fucking chance. But this isnay the job, is it, sir?
> Officer: It's all the job.
> Cammy: This is pish. Sitting about daying camp security. Getting mortared all the time. Getting fucking ambushed. Getting killed by suicide-bombers. And for what? (69-70)

Not only Cammy, but other surviving soldiers are disappointed, as well, for they "are aware of the unpopularity of this war, are conscious of being perceived as 'big bullies', and are shown at the end as variously traumatized or disenchanted" (Gupta 100) rather than returning home as heroes as promised by the army.

The military institution not only exploits the bodies and identities of its soldiers, but also plays with their emotions. Burke illustrates various manipulation techniques used by the army in the play, revealing how this institution utilises a post-truth discourse. Perhaps the scene where manipulation techniques are used most diversely is the scene in which Lord Elgin, who represents the institution, enters the pub. While the former soldiers are giving an interview to the Writer in the pub, when the subject comes to the recruitment for the First World War, Lord Elgin suddenly appears and the scene turns into the moment when the former soldiers are recruited. Holding the sword of the famous Scottish leader Robert the Bruce, Elgin claims that the Scottish King "led his men at Bannockbum and is buried nearby at Dunfermline Abbey. He led his men in a fight for freedom from the tyranny of a foreign power and the need then, as now, for Scotsmen to serve their country in its hour of need is as great" (25-26). In fact, Robert the Bruce fought against the English to gain his country's independence, and his sword "symbolises his historic deeds throughout the efforts to gain independence for Scotland against England and his success and heroism in doing this at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, all of which are used to call the Black Watch soldiers to the Iraq War" (Yelmiş 495). In other words, Lord Elgin is not calling on young Scots in order to fight to liberate their country from an invading power, but to wage war on another independent country. But, since he cannot manifest this fact directly, he must manipulate them with post-truth statements.

As explained in the Introduction, political and military authorities tried to justify the intervention in Iraq by appealing to both negative emotions such as fear and anxiety, and

positive emotions such as hope, patriotism and heroism. Similarly, Lord Elgin strives to stimulate first the negative and then the positive emotions of the people in the pub. When the unconvinced soldiers demand payment for joining the army, Elgin attempts to intimidate them with xenophobic imaginations:

> Granty: We're still wanting fucking paid.
> Lord Elgin: Paid?
> *Beat.*
> Fucking paid?
> *Beat.*
> Our country faces the gravest peril, the Hun threatens our very civilisation.
> *Beat.*
> D'you think you'll be getting fucking paid when the Kaiser bowls up the road and takes over? (27)

When Granty responds, "[m]aybe" (27), Elgin realises that his false threats do not work. Nonetheless, the truth he needs to convince them of is pretty clear, and that is it is necessary and enjoyable to join the army and fight the enemy. When Elgin figures out that the financial status of the young men is not very pleasant, he begins to promise them things they can hardly dream of to convince them. He starts with travel to France (27) and then, as a result of the demands from the young men for more, promises them plenty of meals, football, guns, drinks and exotic sexual experiences (28). Yet, these promises alone are not enough to convince the young men, who, due to their financial needs, are thought to be satisfied only with material prizes. Rather than asking for material gains, they surprise Lord Elgin by desiring a pleasure that will gratify their souls:

> Cammy: What about glory?
> Lord Elgin: Glory?
> Cammy: Aye?
> Lord Elgin: Oh aye ... aye ... the glory.
> *Beat.*
> The glory of returning, at Christmas, a hero. (28)

It can be inferred from Lord Elgin's hesitation here that he has never considered the issue of glory previously. As a result, it is observed that even he himself does not believe in glory when he announces that the soldiers will return home as heroes. While interviewing the men in the local Fife pub, Burke realised that, rather than the political issues about

the causes and progress of the war and its futility, the former soldiers are concerned about "the lack of glory upon their return home, the betrayal of 'the golden thread', the promise of glory and tradition, a 'lie' repeated throughout history that Burke was familiar with growing up near Dunfermline, an area with a high recruitment rate" (Beck 133). The glory that the young men value above all else is nothing more than a false promise given by the military institution as a part of their post-truth discourse. Thus, these deceived soldiers in the play turn into the "children ardent for some desperate glory" (line 26) whom Wilfred Owen describes in his poem "Dulce et Decorum Est."

In addition to Lord Elgin, another character who possesses a similar post-truth discourse is the Sergeant. While Lord Elgin strives for recruitment in his homeland, the Sergeant is with the soldiers on the battlefield, trying to keep their enthusiasm alive. Like Lord Elgin, he also promises that the soldiers will be granted sexual experience. However, while Elgin claims that soldiers will receive their reward when they leave the country with the army, the Sergeant states that they will receive it upon completing their tasks and returning to the homeland:

> Sergeant: […] Have you even telt him how much fucking fanny he's gonnay get when he gets home? Have they telt you?
> Kenzie: No yet, Sergeant.
> Sergeant: Fucking war heroes, you boys. Who the fuck gets tay say that any more? Million quid? (18)

The morale of the soldiers at Camp Dogwood, who are not assigned any task or responsibility they had dreamed of in terms of military service, deteriorates significantly with the final suicide attack. The responsibility of keeping the morale of soldiers high, who no longer have any enthusiasm for staying in the army, and preventing them from leaving falls on the Officer this time. Like Lord Elgin and the Sergeant, he also tries to say something that will boost Cammy's pride: "You're going to get stuck up for a medal for that today. You're the type of man this regiment needs, Campbell" (69). After all the attempts by the representatives of the military authority prove unsuccessful, Cammy asks the Officer why he still stays in the army. Even though the Officer realises that the soldiers can no longer be deceived by any false promises, he does not completely abandon his discourse and once again highlights the Golden Thread myth:

> Officer: Some of us ... It's in the blood.
> *Beat.*
> And I always thought ... well, it's not like any other job, is it?
> *Beat.*
> It's part of who we are, where we come from. It's the reason you join up in the first place. The Golden Thread. (70-71)

It can be inferred from the presence of the surviving soldiers in the more recent pub scenes that the Officer's final attempt also fails.

The military institution aims to deceive not only individual soldiers but also the entire British society through its post-truth discourse, using the media as a tool. In the play, this pursuit is portrayed in the scene where journalists visit Camp Dogwood to film the soldiers for the evening news. The reporter seems to be sent by the military authorities to restore the tarnished reputation of the institution. As part of the military hierarchy, the Sergeant also says regarding the propaganda shoot that "[t]his war's unpopular efuckinough wayout that. (*To Cammy.*) Just smile and reassure the great British public that you are happy in your job" (36). Frustrated with all this deception and propaganda, Cammy, when asked about the controversies surrounding the deployment, tries to enlighten the public in all honesty and bring the truth to light, saying: "It's a buzz, you're in a war ay, but you're no really doing the job you're trained for but it's no like they're a massive threat tay you or tay your country, you're no defending your country. We're invading their country and fucking their day up" (38). Yet, most likely, because these statements are in conflict with the official discourse, the journalists collaborating with the authorities discard this footage and prefer to re-shoot it. At that moment, several explosions occur and, taking advantage of the chaos, Fraz gets in front of the camera and starts talking about irrelevant things, so the British society cannot learn about the unfiltered truths.

From the analyses and exemplification above, it is clear that Burke is immensely critical of the post-truth discourse of the military institution. He describes in many scenes how the institution deceives the soldiers and the civilian population by lying to them and appealing to their emotions, and by making propaganda. However, it is quite ironic that even though Burke challenges the post-truth discourse of the military institution, he

himself prefers to use a counter-post-truth discourse instead of presenting only objective truths to the reader/audience. Similarly, on the playwright's strategy of presenting the truth, Hauthal says, "combining (auto-)biography and historiography, the play's documentary approach makes both objective and subjective truth claims." (163). Maybe Burke makes such a choice because he desires for the claims made by soldiers, rather than those made by the institution, to be accepted as true by the public and to leave a deeper impact. For all their effort, Burke may also be aiming for these individuals to be immortalised, rather than being lost to history in military reports or news articles. Even a dialogue between Fraz and Cammy hints at such an intention:

> Fraz: Do you think they'll make a film about this war?
> Cammy: They fucking better. I didnay fucking join the army for it no tay get immortalised on the big fucking screen. (14)

With *Black Watch*, Burke does not immortalise the soldiers through a film, but rather, through a play. However, in doing so, he also imposes his own anti-Iraq War ideology.

In the play, there is little or no description that can be considered as negative about the soldiers, except for their undisciplined behaviour. Yet, it is implied that soldiers are often portrayed negatively in the media, particularly by journalists. In the last pub scene, when the Writer asks the soldiers how many people they killed in Iraq, Stewarty suddenly becomes quite irritated:

> Stewarty: This cunt wants tay make a name for himself by telling every cunt how we're all a fucking shower ay cunts.
> […]
> That's how these cunts day it though ay?
> *Beat.*
> They're only fucking interested if they think they're gonnay get some fucking dirt on you.
> Cammy: Well, that's what the public want ay?
> Writer: Usually. (60)

The crimes committed during the Iraq war, such as torture, civilian killings, looting, and so on, were heavily criticised following the early stages of the war. In the United Kingdom and the United States, many soldiers were tried for these accusations, providing

the media with content that attracted the audience's interest. In the play, Burke already makes very careful choices in order to avoid similar and possible defamations. Furthermore, he seems to be taking it upon himself to clean up this "dirt" because the soldiers are not promising enough in cleaning it themselves, as their own voices are not strong or convincing enough to impress people. Regarding the soldiers' inadequacy to express themselves, Burke states that "I think that's what made the play ['Black Watch'] successful, to tell you the truth. Working-class people are inarticulate when you ask them about momentous experiences. They don't tell you those emotional things, the big kind of things. They'll tell a great vivid story, but almost in a rehearsed, practiced way"[7] (qtd. in Pressley par. 15). On the other hand, as an accomplished playwright, Burke is able to utilise post-truth in order to make a striking impression on people. Thus, it seems that another reason for Burke's intentionally adopting an emotionally-charged discourse is to fulfil the need for neglected sympathy for the individual soldiers.

When problems concerning the entire country arise, grand narratives such as nationalistic ideologies aim to put aside people's personal concerns and address the nation as a whole. An example of this instilment can be seen during war times, where public opinion is shaped around inclusive notions such as country, nation army and so on by governments. Therefore, during such times of crisis, individuals may be viewed as insignificant, as the interests of the country are prioritised over personal interests and above all else. However, it is usually expected to make personal sacrifices for the welfare of the homeland and nation during nationwide crises. In the case of the Iraq War, realising that the self-sacrifice of individuals remains unnoticed, Burke, through *Black Watch*, aims to evoke sympathy towards those individuals and establish empathy with them. In relation to this intention, Cummings states that "[t]his play, based on interviews with former Black Watch members, promises a kind of intimacy and access not available through more 'impersonal' media accounts. In other words, it promises an opportunity to empathize" (78). When one of the soldiers Burke had interviewed watched a performance of the play, "he said, 'I didn't think anybody cared about us. About me.' […] That's why it affected him cause he just thought, you know, this is about me, and my pals. And it was just that

[7] The addition in the square brackets within the quotation belongs to Nelson Pressley.

kind of thing, he felt that someone was acknowledging his life"[8] (Burke qtd. in Beck 147). The soldier's remark implies that the play also contributes to the recognition of the soldiers' pains, sacrifices, thoughts and feelings. Thus, the intense interest shown in the play seems to have pleased both the playwright and individual soldiers.

In the play, the Writer, who is positioned as an outsider through his clothing, stance, approach to soldiers and London accent, lacks empathy towards the former soldiers. Like the ordinary reader/audience, he is unable to grasp what they experienced and felt in Iraq. Frustrated by the Writer's lack of empathy, Stewarty reproaches him –and indeed anyone who does not share the same experiences as the soldiers but speaks authoritatively about them– with the following questioning:

> Writer: What was it like getting fired at?
> Cammy: It's weird ay.
> Stewarty: It fucks people up. Big time.
> *Beat.*
> Rips them apart.
> *Beat.*
> You seen the size ay the bullets we use in a chain gun?
> *Beat.*
> You seen what happens when a bullet that size hits somebody?
> Writer: Well ... no ... I haven't.
> Stewarty: So how the fuck are you gonnay explain it tay folk, then? (59)

Stewarty's rhetorical question addresses anyone who has something to say about a war. A person should choose their discourse carefully, which they use to convince others of the correctness of an opinion or fact. As theorists of post-truth explain, rational explanations are not as effective in moving the masses as emotional engagement. For example, a suicide attack may be a fleeting event and may not have profound impact on people when it occurs far away. However, Burke and the NTS team, through *Black Watch*, not only make the reader/audience visualise the attack that happened in Iraq, but also use slow-motion technique to prolong the sensation of victimisation, making it even more

[8] The omission in the quotation belongs to Sarah Beck.

impactful. With regards to the team's choreography done to embrace the audience viscerally, Hauthal argues that,

> [t]he choreographies' 'corpo-reality' facilitates realist effects which depend both on the actors' emotional and physical investment in portraying characters from 'real life' as well as on the audience's somatic empathy and emotional engagement with the performance. This strategy is most palpable in the image of regimental community and *esprit de corps* in the final scene. Here, the actors' physical exhaustion after the climactic suspension of the music puts their physical investment on display and strongly encourages emotional contagion. (171)

Burke and the NTS aim to pull the reader/audience further into the play in order to create a perception of reality in them. The strategy mentioned in the Officer's first email seems to be indicative of the objective of the creative team, which reads, "[o]ur orders are to apply our own tactics and, in contrast to the 'firepower and force protection first' style of the Americans, get out among the local population and win hearts and minds" (12). The letter can be interpreted as follows: just as commanders order the Officer to win the hearts of people, Burke also wants the actors and the text to win over the reader/audience.

As Hauthal comments above, the reader/audience is not only won over by the characters' speeches, but also through theatricality, both intellectually and viscerally. In this respect, besides the choreography, also musical instruments are used to impress the audience: "As the pipes and drums are used to raise the hairs on the backs of the necks of young men and women preparing for battle, so in *Black Watch*, the pipes and drums combined encourage the audience to switch off intellectually and go 'over the top' in solidarity with 'our boys', and in celebration of the Black Watch" (Archibald 12). As a result of the emotional enlistment caused by the bagpipe and drum music, the audience feels an affinity with the soldiers. If this affinity is further supported by more sound and light effects, the audience may feel as if they were one of the soldiers. In such a scenario, the effect of the following scene is likely to be much stronger:

> Cammy: That's what we joined the army tay day.
> Rossco: Fight.
> Cammy: No for our government.
> Macca: No for Britain.
> Nabsy: No even for Scotland.

> Cammy: I fought for my regiment.
> Rossco: I fought for my company.
> Granty: I fought for my platoon.
> Nabsy: I fought for my section.
> Stewarty: I fought for my mates. (72)

All this emotional intensity caused by Burke's post-truth narrative hinders rational thinking. Under the influence of this psychological state, the reader/audience is inclined to accept as true not the official statements of the military institution, even if they reflect the truth, but the statements of the characters to whom they feel close.

The play employs a number of techniques to engage the reader/audience emotionally and intellectually and offer an alternative notion of the truth as to the soldiers' experiences in Iraq. Janine Hauthal skilfully lists some of those techniques:

> *Black Watch*'s strategies of enlistment constitute a theatricality that uses the resources of performance to encourage emotional contagion. Music, lighting, movement, and *coups de théâtre* create an immediacy that draws spectators' attention to the 'here and now' of the theatrical performance. In particular, the emotionally charged accompanying music and the actors' investment, which come to the fore in the five choreographies, ranging from the tenderness of the second to the energetic physicality of the fifth, address audiences emotionally and tend to align them with the characters. This combination of documentary and theatricality constitutes the production's critically acclaimed realist effect. (172)

To elaborate on some of these techniques Hauthal notes, first of all, one way that *Black Watch* employs emotional engagement to offer an alternative truth about the soldiers' experiences in the Iraq War is through the use of choreography. The play uses movement and ensemble work to convey the soldiers' experiences in a way that is both visually striking and emotionally impactful. Hauthal conceptualises the discrepancy between the reality and its overdrawn representation on the stage, saying, "the apparent contradiction in *Black Watch* between the realist representation of the soldiers' experiences and the overt theatricality of the choreographies unravels as the emotional effects coincide in what Reinelt has called the 'promise of documentary'" (171), and adds that "[f]ollowing Reinelt, Bignell et al. stress that theatrical realism is not achieved by verisimilitude, but 'underwritten by the veracity of an experience, a recognition of a shared understanding which is at least partly found in an emotional response to a situation, which 'feels'

connected to the experience of the spectator'" (qtd. in 171). Consequently, physicalising the soldiers' involvement in chaotic incidents can help bring the reader/audience into the world of the play and create a deeper emotional connection with the characters and their experiences. The play also makes use of dramatic lighting and set design to help create a sense of place and bring the reader/audience into the world of the soldiers. The choice of a drill hall for the premiere of the play, for instance, is significant in this sense.

In addition to creating an impression of military drill through choreography and light and sound effects, *Black Watch* also uses music and sound design to create an immersive and emotional experience for the audience. Musicality helps to set the mood and create an emotional atmosphere through military music and soldiers' songs. The play begins with a tattoo music with bagpipe and drums that reaches a climax before the Voice-Over is heard, which forces the audience to be possessed by the military atmosphere. In a couple of situations, the individuals' mindset is revealed through songs sung by the soldiers, the Sergeant and Lord Elgin. In addition, the following stage direction of the closing scene demonstrates how music and actions effectively cooperate to attract the audience:

> Music. The bagpipes and drums start playing 'The Black Bear'. The soldiers start parading. The music intensifies and quickens as the parade becomes harder and the soldiers stumble and fall. The parade formation begins to disintegrate but each time one falls they are helped back onto their feet by the others. As the music and movement climax, a thunderous drumbeat stops both, and the exhausted, breathless soldiers are left in silhouette. (73)

The play particularly incorporates traditional Scottish music and compositions by Scotsmen to create a unique and evocative soundscape that helps to convey the emotions and experiences of the soldiers.

Black Watch received criticism for presenting a positive portrayal of the military and the colonial history of the Empire. This criticism was often based on the inclusion of the Golden Thread myth in the play, which is a story that celebrates the achievements and traditions of the Black Watch. Some reviewers, such as David Archibald, believe that the play ignores or downplays the negative aspects of the regiment, such as any atrocities that may have been committed in Kenya and Ireland, and instead highlights the positive

aspects. These reviewers feel that the play is idealising the regiment and its imperial past, while at the same time criticising those who were involved in the decision-making process for the Iraq War. Mark Brown, a reviewer who is critical of this discourse of the play, comments on this issue as follows: "[T]he production [. . .] lacks political courage. The overwhelming tenor of the piece [. . .] is one of criticism of the politicians who ordered the Iraq War, but something dangerously close to glorification where the imperial history of the Black Watch regiment is concerned"[9] (qtd. in R. Robinson 396). Likewise, Lib Taylor states that the play presents the regiment in an impressive way, but at the same time ignores its controversial history. Lib Taylor argues that

> [c]ertainly *Black Watch* could be open to accusations of sentimentality in its representation and idealization of the Black Watch Regiment as heroes/anti-heroes, made all the more poignant by its pending disbandment and amalgamation into The Royal Regiment of Scotland (in 2004 when the research took place). In its performance style, through the use of language and music it evokes a feeling of Scottish autonomy to which the audience responds emotionally. But the vivid explanation of the Black Watch's history as a 'golden thread' that 'connects the past, present and future of the regiment', for example, sidesteps problems of politics and identity raised by the regiment's service in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. (234)

Adopting ideas similar to but much severer than those of Mark Brown and Lib Taylor, David Archibald, who is one of the harshest critics of the Golden Thread myth and the positive portrayal of the operations (or rather atrocities abroad) of the Black Watch in the play, describes the harsh treatment carried out by the Black Watch especially in Kenya and Ireland, and reacts to the omission of these events when the play narrates the history of the regiment (9). He undermines Burke's discourse, scrutinising the celebration of the imperial history and the regiment's role as the agent of the Empire in the play:

> So there is space, if not to construct an alternative history, then at least to read the one that is presented against the grain; nevertheless, the historical narrative that is privileged is the official one, the myth of 'The Golden Thread'. Henry Kissinger observed, rather shrewdly, that 'history is the memory of states'. *Black Watch* slots unproblematically into an official (Scottish) state version of the past. It has issues with Iraq, but not with the previous three centuries of imperial subjugation. (9-10)

[9] The omissions in the quotation belong to Rebecca Robinson.

Although Archibald delivers his arguments in a logical order, the sarcastic implication in the last part of the quotation about the play justifying the state's discourse on the Iraq War is open to question as the play clearly characterises the decision for the Iraq War as a political disaster. Regarding this debate, Ian Jack has a different perspective from Archibald, considering the possibility of seeing the play as presenting the politics of war and the regiment's involvement in the war as distinct from each other, declaring, "[t]his is the story that Burke tells. It could have been told as an anti-war polemic or a fresh enshrinement of a glorious military legend. Both elements are present in the play and the tension between them is never resolved – 'good regiment, bad war' is the message that some in the audience might take home" (par. 8). Considering these views, it is possible to conclude that the play is not entirely anti-war, but rather anti-Iraq War due to the political and military decisions and bitter events that tarnish the history and prestige of the Black Watch regiment.

Ordinary readers and audience members and columnists have often expressed the feelings the play aroused in them and how they were captured by the narrative. For example, on the audience reactions, Oliver and Walmsley report as follows: "[A]udience members consistently reported feelings of pleasure and captivation, employing adjectives such as 'magnificent', 'fantastic', 'moving' and 'intense', while critics found it 'thrilling', 'spectacular' and 'compelling'. Many spectators spontaneously communicated their increased understanding of and empathy with the soldiers, whether physically (by laughing and crying) or verbally" (97). To exemplify more specifically, Ben Brantley, the former chief theatre critic of *The New York Times*, notes that "[e]very moment in 'Black Watch' seems to bleed from the previous one in an uninterrupted river of sensations" (par. 11), and adds that "[i]n the final marching sequence, as the men moved forward and stumbled in shifting patterns, I found to my surprise that I was crying" (par. 15). It is a frequently reported situation that audience members fall into crying as a result of dramatic purgation and emotional outbursts. This immersive effect on people demonstrates both the playwright's and the creative team's theatrical and manipulative skills. Aware of his talent and the play's subsequent success, Burke states that "[t]here seem to be two different audiences for the play. Those who are thrilled by the theatricality of the play and show their appreciation immediately and the people who take a little bit of time to give

you a reaction, particularly if they've been crying" (qtd. in Pattie 32). It can be deduced from all these accounts that utilising post-truth in *Black Watch* has brought Burke success and international recognition.

In conclusion, from an ethical standpoint, post-truth is a highly controversial communication method as it manipulates people's emotions and mindsets and prevents them from reaching the truth through rational thinking. In *Black Watch*, Burke criticises the post-truth discourse used by the military institution to mislead people before and during the Iraq War. According to the playwright, the military institution tells lies or tries to create a sense of truth among the public by manipulation and emotional engagement, both for the purpose of exploitation and deception of individuals. Rather than informing people about facts related to Operation Telic carried out in Iraq and convincing them with reasonable arguments, the institution highlights the assumption that the war will bring heroism and glory. Burke criticises how individuals are deceived by these statements and recruited into the army.

Although Burke criticises the pro-war post-truth discourse of the military institution, his own discourse in the play is problematic. Just like the military institution tries to create a sense of truth using deceptive statements and offering false dreams, he presents views that the reader/audience is inclined to accept as truth by manipulating their minds and appealing to their emotions. For this purpose, he portrays the military as disorderly, irresponsible and indifferent to people's sufferings. Additionally, he attempts to arouse the sentiments of the reader/audience by offering nationalist rhetoric and symbols that would make them proud of their history and national assets. While the military institution tries to recruit soldiers with its own discourse, Burke attempts to engage and win over the reader/audience to disseminate his own anti-war views among the public and to attract more readers/audiences for his plays. In short, despite critiquing the military institution's post-truth discourse, ironically, he himself uses a post-truth discourse for his personal ideological, literary and financial interests.

CHAPTER II: *HOW MANY MILES TO BASRA?* BY COLIN TEEVAN AND THE MEDIA

Like the military institution, the media in the United Kingdom had its own opinions about the Iraq War. Although British media institutions had the responsibility of providing objective and accurate information, they often used post-truth statements to present emotionally-charged views. Through their frequent use of post-truth discourse, they played an important role in shaping public opinion. It was witnessed many times prior to and during the war that many newspapers and television channels acted as government spokespeople, presenting particular perspectives in order to gain public support for the war rather than engage in anti-war propaganda. The media organisations' attempts to manipulate the public, similar to that of the politicians, led to questions about their credibility. As a response to the media's use of post-truth language, many plays were written, one of which is Colin Teevan's *How Many Miles to Basra?* (2006). The play takes a critical view of the media's post-truth narratives and their role in shaping public opinion about the war. However, ironically, Teevan, who criticises the manipulation of truth through post-truth, also presents his own counter-arguments using yet another post-truth discourse.

Colin Teevan is a contemporary Irish playwright, screenwriter and academic who was born in Dublin in 1968. He graduated from Belvedere College and continued his education at Edinburgh University, studying English (Dewhurst 246). Upon graduation, his journey as a writer and lecturer took him to various places, including "the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the USA and England" (Dewhurst 246).[10] Currently residing in the United Kingdom with his family, Teevan has embraced the unique opportunities the country has to offer, such as his position as the Northeast Literary Fellow at the University of Newcastle (Lynch 7). Additionally, he teaches creative writing at the University of East Anglia (Lynch 7).

[10] As noted in Madeline Dewhurst's interview with Colin Teevan, he was working in England in 2004 (247), the year when *How Many Miles to Basra?* was broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Teevan's works challenge traditional categorisations based on national identity alone. Clare Wallace's observation that "although Irish playwrights are acknowledged (though frequently only with an eye on national identity politics), where to place Northern Irish playwrights remains a perennial problem" (qtd. in Sierz, *Rewriting* 4) is useful in understanding the diversity of Irish playwrights' background. In this regard, Aleks Sierz notes that "[a]s ever, reality plays a wicked game with any attempt to impose a rigid taxonomy: Martin McDonagh writes about Ireland, but was born in south London; Colin Teevan lives and works in Britain, but was born in Dublin; Conor McPherson lives in and writes about Ireland, but has built his career in London" (*Rewriting* 244). However, Teevan has a more extensive career than Sierz mentions. Wei H. Kao describes his work experience, stating, "having worked for extended periods in Paris, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, New York, and for six years in Northern Ireland, Teevan is different from many fellow playwrights who have lived mostly in Ireland" ("Transnational" 8). As can be observed in Sierz's and Kao's remarks, Teevan's career is just one example of the variance of contemporary Irish playwrights and their works. With all his experience acquired in different countries, Teevan has made significant contributions to the theatrical world, and his works are appreciated for their strong style and universal themes.

In consideration of the complicatedness of the issue of cultural identity, Teevan remains hesitant to be defined merely as an Irish playwright. He explains, "I am very wary of being put in a box marked Irish playwright... and the expectations that engenders" (Lynch 7). Nevertheless, he acknowledges the influence his Irish roots have on his writing, stating, "[a]t the same time I am Irish, and my Irishness is an essential part of my identity as a writer" (qtd. in Lynch 7). The UK has provided him with opportunities that he believes might not have arisen in Ireland, such as the chance to collaborate with renowned director Peter Hall, an experience he describes as "amazing" (qtd. in Lynch 7). Teevan's multicultural experience has greatly enriched his work, allowing him to defy categorisation on ethnic basis and contribute to the world of the theatre, TV series and literature with acknowledgeable success.

As for Teevan's literary style and influences, Suzanne Lynch states that the playwright's "own interest in classical literature stems from his time as a secondary-school student at

Belvedere College, where he studied Latin and Greek for the Leaving Certificate" (7). This education was highly significant for his career as a playwright. He asserts that "[t]ranslating Greek line by line is an extraordinary way of learning how drama works. Theatrical writing is a craft, a discipline. There is a romantic preconception out there that writing is about expressing what you feel, but as a playwright you also need to work within a formal structure" (qtd. in Lynch 7). His appreciation of classical literature can be seen in his works, which, besides original works, include "adaptation, translation and reinterpretations that relocate ancient stories and forms, most often from classical Greece, in the modern context" (Dewhurst 246).[11] He believes that classical drama has been popularised again in the recent decades due to "the fact that we are living in what we might call a post-Christian age. In Greek drama, there is no set right and wrong, no definitive answers or moral highground. In a world where we are re-examining moral questions that at one time would have been taken for granted, Greek drama is of particular relevance" (Teevan qtd. in Lynch 7). He also attributes the revived popularity of Greek drama to "its ability to communicate across boundaries of nation, creed and class" (Lynch 7).

The playwright has made a significant impact on the world of the theatre, with "twenty plays and adaptations produced in Britain since 1999" (Lonergan "Re-Imagining" 3). His plays, such as *The Walls* (2001), *The Bee* (2006), *How Many Miles to Basra?* (radio broadcast: 2004, stage performance: 2006), *The Lion of Kabul* (2009), *The Kingdom* (2012), *The Emperor* (2018) and *The Seven Pomegranate Seeds* (2021) have been appreciated by readers/audiences worldwide, which proves his ability to create fascinating narratives. In addition to his success in the theatre, Teevan has made considerable contributions to radio drama by having "written more than 10 plays for BBC Radios 3 and 4" ("Professor Colin Teevan" par. 8). His talent for writing absorbing stories has been recognised with prestigious accolades such as "the Tinniswood Award for Best Radio Play at the Radio Awards for *Marathon Tales*, which he co-wrote with Birkbeck Associate Lecturer Hannah Silva" ("Professor Colin Teevan" par. 8). The diversity of his

[11] For instance, his *Iph…* (1999) is a translation and adaptation of Euripides's *Iphigenia in Aulis*; he translated Euripides's *The Bacchae* as *Bacchai* (2002); and his *Alcmaeon in Corinth* (2005) is a reconstruction of Euripides's play with the same title. He also worked on *The Odyssey* and *Lysistrata* (Dewhurst 246).

works proves his versatility as a playwright. Whether it is a stage production or a radio play, Teevan's style consistently engages his readers/audiences.

Teevan's approach to the 2003 Iraq War is quite critical, as evidenced by his play *How Many Miles to Basra?*. In an interview with Madeline Dewhurst, he explains that the play was conceived as "a response to the US and British invasion of Iraq in spring 2003" (249), a conflict that triggered him due to the suspect reasons for the invasion and the recurrent "suspicion of darker agendas" (249). The play focuses on an Irish journalist embedded with the British army during the invasion and "asks troubling questions about where Ireland stands in the global 'War on Terror'" (Lonergan "Digging" 13). The play basically examines the manipulation of the news about the Iraq War in the United Kingdom and interrogates Blair's Middle East policy (Kao "Transnational" 8). According to Kao, the play "parallels the perspectives of different ethnicities and nationalities, in order to reflect on the imperial rule that once dominated Ireland and was now seen in another form in Iraq" ("Transnational" 8). Considering this view, it can be claimed that Teevan uses his Irishness as a lens through which he views and criticises the events unfolding in Iraq. His understanding of Ireland's historical struggles with imperialism and colonisation provides him with a unique point of view to analyse the multi-layered dynamics in the Iraq War. This approach allows him to explore broader themes of power, control and the consequences of such actions on the people affected.

Additionally, it is important to touch upon Teevan's reaction to the Iraq War briefly. As he states in the interview with Dewhurst that "this is simply an emotional and political reaction, it might be the impulse to write something such as I wrote about Tony Blair's use of English in and around the Hutton Inquiry but it is not necessarily the starting point for a play" (qtd. in Dewhurst 249). Why the play does not strongly criticise the launching of a military operation in Iraq but rather the manipulation of the public about the war can be understood from his statement. It seems that the waging of a war on Iraq at the beginning did not affect Teevan deeply.

In the writing process of *How Many Miles to Basra?*, Colin Teevan found inspiration in ancient Greece and specifically, Xenophon's *Anabasis*. He states that

> Xenophon's *Anabasis* tells the story of 10,000 Greek mercenaries who find themselves lost in Babylonia (modern day Iraq, then a province of the Persian Empire) having set off to support the usurper, Cyrus against his brother Darius. This misadventure of regime change (a debacle though one, ironically, that is always hailed in the West as a great triumph of Western democratic and military genius over Eastern barbarism) was my point of departure. (qtd. in Dewhurst 250)

Teevan uses this ancient story as a point of departure for his play, highlighting the similarities between the historical event and the contemporary situation in Iraq. Ancient myths hold the power "to speak across time and space" (Lynch 7), as they "can provide a key to understanding our society" (Teevan qtd. in Lynch 7). He believes that "[t]he collision between East and West, for example, is something that was happening 3,000 years ago. Reclaiming these mythic tales, and making them relevant for our present time, can enable us to make sense of a sometimes senseless present'" (qtd. in Lynch 7). Therefore, Teevan's *How Many Miles to Basra?* demonstrates his unique approach to using ancient myths as a foundation for exploring and critiquing contemporary political and social issues. By connecting Xenophon's *Anabasis* with the Iraq War, Teevan invites his reader/audience to reflect on the cyclical nature of history and the recurring themes of human struggle.

How Many Miles to Basra? made its debut as a radio play, and it was first broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in July 2004 (Potter 246). The play's success in this medium led to its development into a stage play, which later premiered at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in 2006 (Cotterell 181; Lonergan "Re-Imagining" 4). This progression from a radio play to a stage play may be seen as an evidence of the adaptability of Teevan's work and its capacity to engage readers/audiences through various forms of media.

The play's being developed into a stage play allowed for a richer visual experience and provided an opportunity for the reader/audience to connect with the characters on a deeper level. The stage play premiered in 2006 at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds, where "[t]he show's month-long run in the 350-seat theater means that there was the opportunity for more people to see *How Many Miles to Basra?* […] though its location outside of London means that the play invariably received less attention" (Potter 246). The production, directed by Ian Brown, featured an effective set designed by Jeremy Daker,

with "[s]liding walls of shattered glass, a shimmering backcloth on which are variously projected broken pylons, the skeletal outline of a city, a rosy desert mirage and a heap of rubble" (Walker par. 7). At this performance, Flora Montgomery's portrayal of the protagonist (Ursula) received some criticism for not capturing the emotional depth and intelligence intended by Teevan. For instance, *The Times* theatre critic Jeremy Kingston, not enjoying the play, expresses his dissatisfaction especially with Montgomery's acting, saying, "[g]amely played by Flora Montgomery, but with never a hair out of place, she failed to make me feel a moment's sympathy with her urge to report the truth, since her attempts to do so endanger the soldiers at almost every turn. She comes across as having the intelligence of a small soap dish, entirely unfitted to represent the troubled teller of truth that Teevan presumably intends" (par. 6). Nevertheless, Kevork Malikyan's successful performance as Malek, the Iraqi guide, earned praise and contributed to the production's initial success (Kingston par. 7).

In the United States, the production history of *How Many Miles to Basra?* includes a notable performance at the Stoneham Theatre (now known as Greater Boston Stage) in 2008. The play was brought to the US by Producing Artistic Director Weylin Symes, who "has again shown a knack for bringing lesser known but powerful works to Stoneham Theatre" (Sardella par. 10). Symes travelled to Britain to find a play "put[ting] a human face on the soldiers and avoid[ing] preaching to the audience" (Sardella par. 10). The production at the Stoneham Theatre was appreciated for its minimalist but strong set design. Cristina Tedesco's set design consisted of "sand-colored carpet and fabrics, which, along with lighting, effectively convey the barren Iraqi dessert" (Sardella par. 9). The modesty of the scenery allowed the reader/audience to focus on the characters and the performance which were described as "impressive across the board" (Sardella par. 9). By employing minimalistic set design and powerful acting, this production successfully drew attention to the human aspects of the story.

In addition to the performances in the UK and the US, the play made its way back to Teevan's birthplace, Dublin, where it was presented at the esteemed Abbey Theatre in 2009 (Lonergan "Re-Imagining" 4). Although it was not a full production, the play "received a rehearsed reading" (Lonergan, "Re-Imagining" 4), which allowed Irish

audiences to have a taste of Teevan's work and explore its themes in relation to their own cultural context. The reading at Abbey Theatre further proved the international appeal of Teevan's play.

The transformation of *How Many Miles to Basra?* from a radio play to a stage play brought about notable differences in style, tone and characterisation. One eminent difference between the two versions lies in the opening lines of the successive texts. While in the radio play (2004), Ursula's speech begins with the line "[a]nd the truth" (4), the stage play (2006) begins with another character's exclamation, "[s]hit!" (7). This contrast in the opening lines is significant as it indicates a shift in tone between the two texts. The opening words of the former emphasise the importance of truth-seeking, a major theme of the play, while the opening line of the latter creates a sense of urgency and chaos. This shift in the opening lines may suggest that the stage play text aims to create a more immersive experience for the reader/audience, putting them directly into the chaotic world of the story. Moreover, the change in the opening lines also implies a more critical – or even cynical – view of the pursuit of truth. By replacing the word "truth" with a rude expletive, the stage play seems to equate the concept of truth with something nasty, which may be emphasising the difficulty of uncovering the truth in such a difficult and morally-ambiguous situation. Another significant difference is in characterisation, particularly of Ursula. In the radio play (2004), Ursula appears more career-driven and seemingly prioritises her own ambitions over the pursuit of truth. For example, when the Iraqis are being shot, Ursula's main concern is to get the story recorded, as evidenced by her lines: "What the fuck! You getting this, Gus? You still there, Gus? Where are you, you bastard! Minidisc. Where's my fucking minidisc?" (13). Her indifference to human suffering suggests that, for Ursula, the incident is mainly an opportunity for a news content rather than a moment to realise the human cost of war. In contrast, in the stage play (2006), Ursula appears somewhat more humane. While she is still ambitious and focused on her career, the stage play adds layers to her character which make her more relatable and complex. Furthermore, another noteworthy distinction between the two versions lies in the portrayal of truth and deception. In the radio play, Ursula tells a lie in the last scene, and it is left unclear whether her addressee believes her or not. However, in the stage play, the addressee openly tells Ursula that she is aware of the journalist's lie,

thus confronting her deception directly. This shift in the stage play reinforces the main criticism of the play and the theme of truth and its elusive nature, as well as the ethical dilemmas faced by the characters.

How Many Miles to Basra? has received a mixed response from critics; some have praised the play's effect on the reader/audience while others have found it lacking in depth and originality. Aleks Sierz, for instance, observes that while the stage performance directed by Ian Brown had a significant impact on the audience, the play is "mild compared to the sheer verbal drive of other testosterone-soaked outings" (*Rewriting* 86). This commentary implies that although the play may have been successful in catching its reader/audience, it may not have been as powerful or stimulating as other plays about the war. More harsh critics of the play include Jennifer Bubriski, who calls it "a tedious plod through the sand with nothing fresh to say about the human condition or about the war in Iraq beyond 'war sucks'" (par. 7). Bubriski's criticism suggests that the play falls short in providing a new perspective to the opinions about the war, failing to dive into the depths of people's experience. She argues that "Teevan reaches for the big themes with his continent and time-crossing echoes of the current conflict and seeks to focus on the human tragedy of the war by focusing on a small military unit and a single Iraqi civilian, but never applies enough heat to this stew to bring it to a boil" (par. 7). Despite these criticisms, the play has been praised for its impactful performances and creative set design, as can be seen in the US production at Stoneham Theatre and West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds. However, it must be also noted that there are not many reviews or secondary sources on the play, which may limit the scope of analysis and understanding of the play's broader reception. In any case, the play has received a mixed reception from critics, who have praised some aspects of the production and noted its effect on the reader/audience while also criticising its lack of character development, depth and originality.

The play was written in the aftermath of the controversies about some news in the British media about the Iraq War.[12] The way that politicians were able to influence the British

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[12] As stated in the Introduction, the Irish media emphasised the importance of maintaining the neutral position of the Republic of Ireland regarding the Iraq War and protecting its national interests. As the Irish media institutions' stance on the war was not as controversial as that of the British media institutions, Teevan, who was working in England then, criticised the latter.

media during the war led to those controversies. False information and manipulative opinions were disseminated by the media to support the justification for the war. One such instance is the British government's misleading assertion that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, which was used by politicians to justify the war. Later it was shown that this assertion was unfounded. However, the media emphasised the government's assertions and fabricated stories which presented Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, as a threat to international security. For instance, the headline "Brits 45mins from Doom: Cyprus within Missile Range" (Pascoe-Watson 4) from *The Sun* newspaper pointed at the alleged direct threat posed by Iraq. The news read, "British servicemen and tourists in Cyprus could be annihilated by germ warfare missiles launched by Iraq, it was revealed yesterday" (Pascoe-Watson 4), proving the post-truth discourse of the media. In another example, Dr David Kelly, a weapons inspector, debunked the official statements concerning the so-called WMDs in Iraq. The oppression from the government and media became evident with his eventual suicide (Dodd par. 6; Grice par. 2-3, 6). Similar examples demonstrate how certain British publications employed post-truth strategies to support the Iraq War, including fabrication of fake information, disseminating it and ignoring opposing viewpoints. In addition, the media's post-truth discourse was characterised by the demonisation of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi people. The media often portrayed Iraq as a country filled with terrorists and fanatics who posed a direct threat to the Western world. As explained in the Introduction part of this dissertation, the media played a significant role in purporting the idea that there was a connection between Saddam Hussein's regime and Al-Qaeda, despite the lack of concrete evidence supporting this claim.

Apart from the misinformation, before and during the invasion of Iraq, many British and Irish journalists were embedded with the military forces, which meant that they had limited access to independent sources and were subject to censorship and propaganda. These limitations affected their ability to report objectively and critically on the war and its consequences. For example, some embedded journalists uncritically repeated the claims that Iraqis were welcoming the coalition forces as liberators, while ignoring or covering the civilian casualties, human rights abuses and severe violence which resulted from the war.

The play depicts the story of a British sergeant who, driven by his sense of conscientious duty, drags his fellow soldiers into a dangerous and ill-advised mission based on lies. Teevan explains that the sergeant's actions reflect his (Teevan's) view of Tony Blair's decision to engage in the Iraq War in 2003, stating that the play "tells the story of a British sergeant who leads his troops into a suicidal misadventure on false pretences, in an attempt to 'do the right thing' as he sees it, much as I feel Tony Blair did in Iraq in 2003" (qtd. in Dewhurst 250). By drawing this parallel, Teevan also emphasises the consequences of pursuing misguided goals based on misinformation and distorted truths.

The play is about four British soldiers who, along with an embedded female journalist, find themselves in an unexpected adventure in Basra, Southern Iraq where the armed forces of the UK carried out Operation Telic. The play is set a week after the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in April, 2003, and during a time when the BBC is pressurised by the government due to Andrew Gilligan's revealing the government's false claims to justify the invasion of Iraq. The soldiers search a car with three Iraqi Bedouins at a checkpoint and find huge amounts of Iraqi dinars; the amount is worth around four hundred US dollars, though. Assuming that it might be Saddam Hussein's missing millions, the soldiers try to seize the cash. In the struggle, the Bedouins are killed by one of the soldiers. Upon learning the fact that it is one of the Bedouins' blood money to save his family from a tribe, the Sergeant takes on the moral duty to deliver the money. In order to convince the team for the journey, he deceives the others with a made-up order from the headquarter. On the way, an ambitious Irish female journalist, Ursula, joins the team to find some content for her documentary project on the Iraq War. The journalist, unlike the institution with which she is affiliated, desires to engage in honest reporting about the soldiers fighting in Iraq, free from government pressure, censorship and filtering. She is motivated to pursue independent and objective journalism after the media covered up the death of her brother in a street demonstration in Ireland. While Ursula and her translator, Malek, follow the team, they encounter bandits and are saved by the same soldiers from a possible violence. The soldiers take on the responsibility of protecting them, and they continue the quest of delivering the ransom. When their vehicle gets stuck on a landmine buried in the sand, they abandon it before which Ursula asks one of the soldiers to bring her bag from the car. As the soldier closes the car door, the mine

explodes, resulting in his death. Due to these problems caused by Ursula, another soldier attacks her, leading to his expulsion from the group. Despite a series of unfortunate and troublesome incidents, the survivors eventually reach the rendezvous site, but the site is accidentally bombed by an American jet.

Each of the main characters in the play represents different perspectives and experiences during the Iraq War. Sergeant Stewart McDonald, the head of the team, struggles with internal conflicts stemming from accidentally killing an innocent Irish girl in the past. His desire to compensate for the death of the Bedouins and save other innocent people is driven by this regret and his guilty conscience; yet his decisions ultimately end in the other soldiers' deaths. Stewart's character has been compared to Tony Blair's, as both engage in morally-questionable actions based on misguided beliefs (Lonergan, "Re-Imagining" 7). Ursula, an Irish embedded journalist working for the BBC, is motivated by a personal loss to uncover the truth after the government covered up her brother's being killed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. However, her devotion to the truth is controversial as it causes various problems throughout the play. In relation to her involvement in the distraction of the Sergeant during the killing of the Bedouin, the accidental killing of a soldier by a landmine and the disputes among the soldiers, Lonergan states, "Stewart makes the decisions that lead to his men's death – but Ursula's interference makes those decisions necessary" ("Re-Imagining" 10). Besides, she is the one who triggers the action for the unauthorised mission. Through her, the play challenges the notion of embedded journalists; as Lonergan notes, "[r]efuting strongly the notion that an embedded journalist is an objective and disinterested observer, Teevan shows how this character drives most of the play's action forward. Given her behaviour, it is not surprising that he chooses to give his heroine a militaristic name: she is called Ursula Gunn" ("Re-Imagining" 6). Malek, the Iraqi translator and driver of the group, adds a local perspective to the play. His family was killed by the coalition forces' bombing. He is "a dominating and scathing theatrical voice that combined with the military and media characters, resolutely implicates the government" (Cotterell 183). Through his critical and cynical approach, Teevan presents dissenting voices regarding the war. Dangermouse is an obedient soldier with a strong sense of duty, who is tragically killed by an American shell while fetching Ursula's bag at her request. As Ursula describes him, "he's

programmed to obey orders" (62). In contrast, Freddie is a disillusioned soldier who is tired of the war, deceitful journalism and irresponsible leadership. His lack of morality is evident when he attempts to rape Ursula as an act of revenge for Dangermouse's death during their journey. Geordie, an inexperienced soldier, struggles with the reality of taking a life for the first time, albeit the wrong person, and is frequently mocked by Dangermouse and Freddie.[13] Ursula's senior, director, or boss, known as Tariq, represents the BBC. In the radio play broadcast in 2004, the character is named Gus, while in the stage play in 2006, he is called Tariq.[14] He puts aside his professional ethics due to both a thirst for ratings and fear of the government.

One of the main themes of the play is "how definitions of truth and responsibility become blurred in times of war" (Kingston par. 1). During a war, there is a lot of confusion and chaos that causes soldiers to have low morale. As a result, they act according to their own assumptions and beliefs without fully thinking about what their actions might result in. As Kao states, it is due to the "overstress and low morale" that the soldiers in the play are involved in the "accidental killing at the checkpoint" ("Peace" 123). This incident raises questions about who is responsible for the death of the Bedouins and who should be held accountable for their actions. The play explores these questions within the context of the war and the difficult circumstances.

The play also spotlights the clash of cultures between the British soldiers and the Iraqi people as an important theme. The soldiers' biased notions about the Bedouins and their way of life cause them to act disrespectfully towards them. This irresponsible manner is especially observed in Freddie's calling Malek a "raghead" several times. Moreover, the soldiers' inability to understand the Bedouins' language, behaviours and motives creates a lack of communication and leads to misunderstandings about the Bedouins' intentions. Thus, the play presents the challenges that arise when two different cultures collide.

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[13] Geordie is a nickname for the people residing in North East England ("Origins" par. 7). The name may connote that the character is a lower-class man who may be lacking proper education and manners.
[14] This dissertation refers to the character as either Gus or Tariq, depending on whether it is referencing the radio play or the stage play.

The title of the play, *How Many Miles to Basra?*, has not been thoroughly studied in secondary sources. Lonergan suggests that the title may be "an allusion to the 1974 Jennifer Johnston [an Irish novelist] novel *How Many Miles to Babylon*, which concerns two Irish soldiers in the First World War" ("Re-Imagining" 8). Considering that Babylon was located in present-day Iraq and the soldiers in both Johnston's novel and Teevan's play are Irish, Lonergan's comparison sounds quite reasonable.

In light of the media's use of post-truth discourse to manipulate the public's emotions and perception of truth regarding the 2003 Iraq War, Teevan's play can be seen as a critical response to the media's role in the pro-war campaign. In this respect, the play features "a critique, presumably, of BBC Radio, as well as the broader BBC journalism" (Potter 246), pointing out the media's responsibility in shaping the public's perception of the war. As Sierz notes, the play is "mainly about different definitions of truth" (*Rewriting* 86). The play was written "in the immediate aftermath of the dispute between Tony Blair's government and the BBC, about Andrew Gilligan's reporting on the 'sexed-up' dossier that falsified the case for going to war in Iraq" (Lonergan "Re-Imagining" 4). On the BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme on 29 May 2003, BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan claimed that some information in the September Dossier had been altered. Gilligan attributed his allegations to an unnamed British official, stating that the official said, "[i]t was transformed in the week before it was published to make it sexier. The classic example was the claim that weapons of mass destruction were ready for use within 45 minutes. That information was not in the original draft. It was included in the dossier against our wishes, because it wasn't reliable" (qtd. in "Full" par. 6). The revelation of government manipulation of the dossier to justify the Iraq War put the BBC in a difficult position. Although later disproven claims, such as the 45-minute allegation, seemed to vindicate Gilligan, the media institution faced pressure from the government due to his statements on the programme. As a result, the BBC began to criticise Gilligan and attempted to take him under strict control (Wells par. 2-8). After a period of editorial pressure, the institution accepted Gilligan's resignation and launched an internal investigation (Johnson par. 1, 9). This context underlines Teevan's, though being an Irish playwright, intention to examine the British media's role in shaping public opinion and presenting a distorted reality of the war.

Given that the play's "primary concern is with the ways in which the media is used to affect public opinion about war" (Lonergan "Re-Imagining" 4), it is important to study the post-truth discourse in the play. The following dialogue between Ursula and Geordie in the radio play version (2004) clearly reveals the problematic nature of truth and how truth – as a concept in people's mind – is manipulated by the media:

> Ursula: And the truth… (SHE SCRATCHES AN AMENDMENT TO HER NOTES) …and the truth of war, is that there is no single truth. No single experience of war. The truth, if there is a truth, is that the experience the victors deem most suitable. (SHE WRITES A NEW LINE) …most suitable for their story. (BREAKING OFF) What a pile of bollocks!
> Geordie: I thought it was interesting, Ma'am.
> Ursula: Thanks, Geordie, but it is bollocks. I've got to say something though. Justify my existence. (4)

Ursula's statement points out the idea that the perception of truth about the war is often constructed and shaped by those who are in authority although it is supposed to represent an objective reality. Her need to "justify her existence" as an embedded journalist further emphasises the pressure on journalists to come up with interesting and challenging stories, even if it means distorting or hiding the truth. By presenting this critique of media manipulation and the subjectivity of truth within the context of the Iraq War, Teevan reacts to the media's use of post-truth discourse.

Teevan focuses on the media's emotional and intellectual appeal in his play and demonstrates the power of post-truth discourses in shaping the perceptions and reactions of the reader/audience. Although he condemns the media's use of the post-truth discourse to orientate people to a pro-war mindset, he also utilises a similar tactic within the play to direct his reader/audience towards an opposite stance. As he explains, the play "is not only a story about this war, the papers and TV did that well enough, it is about our interaction with other cultures and history and the (Anglo) American Imperial attempt to obliterate or at best, rewrite that" (qtd. in Dewhurst 250). By drawing attention to this mass deception, Teevan challenges the narratives presented by the media. In this context, his use of post-truth discourse in the play serves as a counter-narrative to the media's pro-war perspective. While he criticises the media for their manipulation, he skilfully crafts

an emotionally-charged story that emphasises the negative consequences of the war, thereby pushing his reader/audience to question the credibility of pro-war narrative.

In the play, the character of Ursula serves as a powerful example of how a post-truth discourse can be used to evoke an emotional reaction from the reader/audience and to shape their perception of truth. As George Potter maintains, as an Irish journalist embedded with British soldiers, "Ursula, like Hare in his portrayal of Powell challenging, but inevitably promoting, the Bush Administration policies, sees the soldier's struggle, rather than their idealization, as the true heroism, a story that at once promotes their bravery, while challenging the sensibility of the war they have been asked to serve in"[15] (249). By doing so, Ursula presents another visceral narrative that shows their bravery while simultaneously challenging the official account of the war. This emotionally-charged narrative has the potential to affect public opinion about the conflict. However, Ursula's reporting is not without flaws. Kao argues that "[a]lthough the play challenges the rightfulness of the invasion under Tony Blair's leadership, it is Ursula, a woman journalist from Ireland, who initiates a series of journalistic assignments that would potentially embarrass the British government, despite her reporting being, to some extent, questionable due to her insufficient research, biases, assumptions and personal emotions" ("Transnational" 9). By presenting an account that is both emotionally-engaging and critical of the war, her journalism demonstrates the power of the post-truth discourse even when the reporting may not be completely reliable. Through the character of Ursula, the play underlines the complex relationship between media, emotions, manipulation and public perception of truth. Therefore, Teevan's deliberate use of a post-truth discourse in *How Many Miles to Basra?*, exemplified through the portrayal of Ursula and the BBC, reveals the media's utilisation of post-truth manipulation techniques in shaping people's perception of the war. Through the presentation of an anti-war discourse that is both

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[15] Potter refers to David Hare's depiction of the US Secretary of State Collin Powell in *Stuff Happens* (2004). Nevertheless, it should be also noted that "Sir David Hare changed the Colin Powell character in his play about the run-up to the Iraq war between productions, because he became convinced that the former US secretary general, far from being an honest broker, had not told the truth" (Higgins par. 1). Hare noted that "[t]his is, I admit, very contentious, and is in the face of repeated denials by Powell […]. But I think he had grave reservations about whether the 45 minutes claim was true ... he was tricked into going to the UN by George Bush" (qtd. in Higgins par. 3).

critical of the war and emotionally-engaging, Teevan effectively demonstrates, criticises and utilises the power of post-truth discourse in influencing public opinion.

In relation to the BBC's method of social engineering through post-truth, Kao adds that "[t]he news agency that Ursula approaches, which is an embodiment of the western media, should be seen as partly responsible for popular images of the Middle East crisis" ("Transnational" 9). The media's deceiving journalism creates questionable impressions about Iraq and the causes of the war. Kao explains that this leads to a distorted public perception, stating that "[i]ts biased reporting prompts misleading impressions about the Iraqi government supporting al-Qaeda and harbouring 'weapons of mass destruction', despite there being no clear evidence of a connection or of such weapons being held" ("Transnational" 9). As a response to the media's tactical move, Teevan presents particular scenes to expose the media's role in shaping public opinion and emotions about the war. By displaying the contrast between the real events and the media's version of the story, he reveals how the media manipulates facts to support a particular narrative. This visceral manipulation of truth affects people's understanding of the war, leading them to believe false information and form opinions based on emotional appeals rather than factual evidence. Showing the consequences of this post-truth discourse, Teevan encourages his reader/audience to question the media's portrayal of events and seek the truth for themselves.

The playwright exposes the manipulative tactics employed by media institutions through the discrepancy between the truth and the narrative presented by the media through cynical dialogues between the characters. For instance, when Tariq asks Ursula about the story they have, she brings up the distinction between the real story and the one the Ministry of Defence puts forward:

> TARIQ: […] Can you give me a taste of what we've got? See what the story is.
> URSULA: The real story?
> TARIQ: What other story is there?
> URSULA: The one the MoD have told the world. (59)

This dialogue reveals how the media can reshape the truth to fit a predetermined agenda under the influence of political and military powers. It also implies that the characters are aware of this manipulation and Ursula is determined to follow the ethical responsibility of reporting the true accounts of the events. Thus, Teevan here shows how media institutions can be a "communications apparatus" of the state which serves the political and military authorities' purposes and demands by "cramming every 'citizen' with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc." (Althusser 250)

In the play, the media's distortion of facts is not limited to the war itself but extends to other issues concerning the characters' personal lives. To exemplify, Ursula's reason for becoming a journalist is related to her personal experience with the media's manipulation of the truth. Ursula's brother, Dominic, was killed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, but the authorities did not launch a proper investigation of the incident; on the contrary, they lied about his activities to cover up their mistake. Ursula shares the story of losing her brother and the aftermath of the incident with Freddie as follows:

> URSULA: I lost my brother. Dominic.
> FREDDIE: To an American cluster bomb shell?
> URSULA: No, to an RUC bullet. An accident. I mean, they're not even meant to kill anyone, rubber bullets. Nor the police, they're not meant to kill either.
> FREDDIE: These things happen.
> URSULA: He was going to a school disco.
> FREDDIE: Sometimes you've got to make snap decisions. Mistakes can be made.
> URSULA: But there was no inquiry into the mistake. They didn't even apologise. They just told lies about him, what he was doing, who he was friends with, to cover up their mistake. (63)

This dialogue unveils the harm caused by the media's distorting or hiding facts and their lack of accountability. Ursula's personal loss illustrates the devastating consequences of the media's post-truth discourse and drives her to seek the truth. Therefore, as a journalist, she is determined to expose the real and factual truth and challenge the media's manipulation of facts. She explains to Freddie her motivation for this ethical struggle as follows:

> FREDDIE: Sometimes the truth must be sacrificed to a greater end.

> URSULA: No, the truth must be known. That's why I became a journalist. To tell things as they really are. It's the least we owe those upon whose suffering our world is built. (63-64)

This statement emphasises the importance of honest journalism and principled journalists in challenging the media institutions' post-truth discourse. Ursula's dedication to telling the truth highlights Teevan's critique of the institutions' role in the manipulation of the public about uncommon events like the Iraq War. As for Freddie's responses to Ursula's story in this dialogue, they sound like a politician's spin on a tragic event. He tries to downplay the seriousness of the incident by saying "these things happen" and justifies the lack of inquiry by suggesting that "sometimes the truth must be sacrificed to a greater end." Freddie's approach to the tragic event is similar to the language that politicians and media institutions use when they need to hide undesirable facts and avoid criticism. By using an evasive language and avoiding accountability, Freddie here utilises another form of post-truth discourse criticised in his play. With these elements in the play, Teevan demonstrates the power of the media's post-truth discourse and the need for reliable journalism to counteract its harmful effects on society.

By revealing the inconsistencies between the media's portrayal of an incident and the actual situation on the ground, Teevan scrutinises the media's role in creating a false perception of the objective reality. This idea is supported by George Potter, who states that works like Teevan's play serve as "a counter metanarrative for the representation of the failure of journalism in fictional British drama" (234). Potter's statement reflects the critique of the media's use of post-truth statements in the Iraq War drama. In his play, Teevan demonstrates how the media often manipulates the public perception by prioritising sensationalism, propaganda and pre-existing beliefs over the objective truth. Hereby, Teevan presents a counter-narrative that reveals and scrutinises the unethical approach of the media in covering the developments about the Iraq War. This counter-narrative is mainly represented through the scenes of Ursula, who is determined to find the real truth in opposition to the truth constructed by the media. For instance, in a dialogue with Sophie, Ursula states that "Tariq told me Iraq was old news four weeks ago" (8). The way Tariq presents the situation implies that the war is no longer a concern and the focus should now shift to the aftermath of the operation, despite the fact that the

war still continues, which demonstrates how the media creates a false perception. This statement is an example of post-truth discourse, as it is not completely based on the reality of the situation in Iraq. Teevan uses this dialogue to demonstrate how the media manipulates public opinion in relation to the war to fit the politicians' claims. Furthermore, he aims to make the reader/audience question the media's credibility and to warn them of the media's post-truth discourse. Similarly, in another dialogue between Malek and Ursula, the playwright exposes the obvious contrast between the media's portrayal of the conflict zone and the reality observed by the locals. The conversation emphasises the media's attempt to shape the public perception through post-truth statements. When Ursula tells Malek that her editor believes the war is over, Malek responds sarcastically:

> MALEK: It's a long way.
> URSULA: How long?
> MALEK: Hundred and fifty kilometres. And it's dangerous. There's a war on, didn't you hear?
> URSULA: It's over, according to my editor.
> MALEK: Tell your editor I will gladly swap houses with him. (30)

Malek's sarcastic reply indicates the gravity of the situation in Iraq, which is exactly different from the media's claim that the conflict is over. In a way, he stresses the loose connection between the media's narrative and the reality.

As stated previously, Ursula is used by Teevan as an agent to challenge the post-truth discourse of the media institution. In this regard, Kao argues that "[t]hrough this Irish woman journalist, the play challenges the convention of reporting which often distorts war news for either propagandism or sensational headlines" ("Peace" 122). Ursula is determined to present the real and objective truth concerning the war, one that does not avoid the harsh realities on the ground, as opposed to the filtered and misleading version presented by her institution. Thus, the play marks the need for journalists like Ursula, who are committed to pursuing the truth and challenging the imposed discourse. In this respect, the dialogue below between Geordie and Ursula further features Ursula's struggle to find a content that honestly illustrates the truth. Besides being tired of the lack

of a story that reflects the reality on the ground, Ursula expresses her dissatisfaction with the media's ardent narrative:

> URSULA: Yeah, the documentary is coming along great. Lots of interviews, background. In fact, I've got everything except a fucking story.
> […]
> URSULA: (*Into phone*.) What's that?
> […]
> URSULA: (*Into phone*.) I know you've got your budget to think of, but I want to stay on until I do have a story, otherwise it will have been an even bigger waste of time and money than it's already been.
> […]
> URSULA: (*Into phone*.) I don't know, something that's closer to the truth than the gung-ho crap the TV channels are putting out. (15)

Her part in the conversation reveals Ursula's commitment to providing an accurate account of the war, despite the difficulty in finding reliable information. Her determination to expose the truth contrasts with the media's post-truth discourse.

The play also demonstrates how media institution's discourse commodifies people's suffering. This discourse manipulates the mindsets of people and appeals to their emotions and pre-determined beliefs to sensationalise the stories, and boost their ratings. Regarding this approach, Zaineb Raad Mohsin states that "[t]he Labor government and the BBC witnessed innocent individuals being sacrificed for the ambitious people who abuse their power for the sake of their ends through using ethical and civilized speeches to justify unethical and uncivilized actions" (81). Mohsin's remark on Teevan's criticism of the media's exploitation of people's pain in the play emphasises the negative effects of prioritising power and ambition over the well-being of innocent individuals. The media's indifference towards the sorrow for the deaths of the Iraqi civilians and the British soldiers and their preference for stories that suit their discourse prove this exploitation. The selective reporting by the BBC is, therefore, another point criticised in the play as a news content is considered valuable only when it serves the media's purposes. Teevan illustrates this through the character of Ursula, who wishes to bring attention to the stories of the casualties. The media institution's lack of interest in these stories and their focus on more sensational topics reveal their benefitting from people's suffering. For instance, when Ursula wants to report on any casualties of the conflict, her

superior, Tariq, shows no interest in the story unless it contributes to their post-truth narrative. His dismissal of the story about the dead Iraqis and his demand for a story on dead British soldiers can be taken to substantiate the media's real priorities:

> URSULA: (*Into phone*.) Okay, an Iraqi with four hundred dollars might not be a story - […] What about three Iraqis shot dead by British soldiers? […] Well perhaps it's not news to you, but it's what's happening here… What? Three dead Iraqis is old news? […] But three dead Brits and I can have top spot, I suppose? […] I'm sorry if the news doesn't fit your agenda. (24-25)

This dialogue supports Mohsin's point that the media institution is indifferent to the plight of innocent people as long as they serve the interests of power-holders. By commodifying people's suffering, the media exhibits unethical actions that are justified through seemingly-ethical speeches and narratives. In this respect, Kao states that "Ursula's reports about the killing of civilians are certainly not welcome to the right-wing media, whereas such killings can be common but are often strategically covered up or by the authorities" ("Transnational" 9). According to Kao, the media selectively reports the incidents that align with the official discourse, while deliberately ignoring or deviating from the suffering of others.

Teevan also criticises the media's post-truth discourse through Tariq's collaboration with the government. Tariq, as "a smooth-tongued, self-centred executive" (Walker par. 8), is more concerned with protecting his own interests, maintaining the institution's image and following the official discourse than revealing the objective truth or exposing the government's lies about the events in Iraq. This collaboration between the media and the government, as Kao notes, is an example of the "interdependence" between the two institutions (9). By also focusing on this mutual relationship, Teevan exposes the media's role in the manipulation of the public perception of the Iraq War. Tariq represents the media's preference for a narrative that supports the government's agenda and justifies the war, even at the expense of accuracy and truth. His reluctance to challenge the official statements shows the media's complicity in the government's post-truth discourse. By choosing to support the government's version of the events in Iraq, Tariq and the media institution take part in the manipulation of the public. This cooperation with the

governmental discourse aligns with the government's interests as it helps the justification of the operation, and also maintains their positive image.

The media institution contributes to the government's justification of the Iraq War by presenting the soldiers' deaths as a heroic end rather than as the result of an accidental airstrike by their American allies. As Lonergan states, "the British Ministry of Defence later falsifies the circumstances surrounding their deaths for propaganda purposes" ("Re-Imagining" 5), and Tariq's willingness to circulate this propagandistic version of the incident, despite knowing the truth, demonstrates the media's contribution to the government's post-truth discourse. In this context, Tariq says that "[t]he MoD issued a statement saying how these four servicemen died, under friendly fire, escorting three Bedouin through the British zone in order to deliver blood money to save a Bedouin's family" (87), hence describing how the media and the government work together to shape public opinion about the war.

Ursula's insistence on reporting the truth, on the other hand, is met with resistance from Tariq. To restrict her reports from the field which are closer to the truth, he adopts preventive strategies. For instance, in his conversation with Ursula, he questions her objectivity due to her closeness with Stewart:

> TARIQ: So, it could be seen to compromise your objectivity.
> URSULA: What?
> TARIQ: In some quarters. If we are to put out material that contradicts the official version, we must be seen to be whiter than white.
> URSULA: What are you saying?
> TARIQ: All I'm saying, Ursula, is that your closeness to McDonald could raise questions, in certain quarters, about the objectivity of the piece. Much of it relies on your word. (86-87)

By raising doubts about Ursula's objectivity, Tariq attempts to justify his decision to support the official version of events that supports the government's point of view on the happenings in the conflict zone. Thus, the media's adoption of a post-truth discourse, which prioritises a particular narrative over principled journalism, proves the institution's mutual relationship with the government.

Tariq’s support for the government’s pro-war propaganda is an evidence of the post-truth discourse of the media. The institution’s preference for a discourse appealing to the emotions of their audience is clearly observed in Tariq’s dialogue with Ursula in which he argues that the official version of the incident, which portrays the soldiers as heroes, is more important than Ursula’s more accurate and honest account:

> TARIQ: Your version tarnishes the reputations of four military heroes.
> URSULA: They were heroic, but in a much more human way. The public are not idiots. They understand moral complexity.
> TARIQ: The discrepancies you wish to expose strip the men of the dignity the official version affords them. And the Government would be only too happy to seize upon your contradicting of the official version of events to sidetrack us and the public from the real issues. (88)

In this dialogue, Tariq argues that by exposing the truth about the soldiers’ deaths, Ursula would damage their reputation as heroes. He is more concerned with creating a positive public opinion rather than revealing the complex and morally ambiguous truth. The manipulation of the facts would be useful in maintaining the government’s image and justifying their decisions, even if it means disregarding the objective reality. Furthermore, he believes that contradicting the government’s narrative would distract the public from the real issues. It may be understood from his statement that a manipulative journalism which does not deal with such minor issues is necessary for higher purposes. Even with such philosophical justifications, the media effectively controls the discourse in relation to the Iraq War and ensures that the government’s decisions and actions remain unchallenged. As a result, with intellectual manipulation, emotional appeals and readily-accepted beliefs gaining more importance in shaping the public perception about the war, the truth becomes secondary.

The media’s heroisation of soldiers in Iraq through post-truth discourse is another point of Teevan’s criticism. One can find out how heroising soldiers can create pro-war sentiments among people in his play. The media’s effort in this process is marked by Kao, who states, “how the violence is used is ‘classified information’, as the (accidental) killing of Bedouin civilians in the play is immediately covered up, while the number of British casualties is soon made public through the media” (“Transnational” 10). Any account that would overshadow the heroic image of the soldiers in public opinion is disregarded by

the media. The media institution, therefore, shares cherry-picked information to create an image of the soldiers that positively appeals to the emotions of the audience, rather than presenting a comprehensive and truthful account of events. In this respect, the following dialogue between Ursula and Sophie exemplifies Teevan's critique. In the conversation, Ursula warns Sophie about the official version of the story presented by the media and the Ministry of Defence as follows:

> URSULA: No. No, I should start with the VCP.
> SOPHIE: VCP?
> URSULA: Vehicle checkpoint.
> SOPHIE: That's where the Unit helped out the Bedouin?
> URSULA: Helped out? Is that what the MoD said?
> SOPHIE: That's what they said on the news.
> URSULA: You shouldn't believe everything you hear. (10-11)

Ursula's comment, "[y]ou shouldn't believe everything you hear," apparently scrutinises the media's role in shaping the perceptions of people. The institution's playing with the truth to create an emotional response is seen in the portrayal of the soldiers as heroes who "helped out the Bedouin." Through presenting an image of helpful soldiers, the media institution aims to build a sense of patriotism and support for the allegedly-righteous operation.

Teevan's work is mentioned among the "[p]lays that explore the issue of responsibility and relationship between the American and British soldiers/personnel and the Iraqis" (Al-Azraki 178). The relationship between these parties is based on their ethnic and cultural differences. Teevan depicts the representation of the Iraqi civilians by the media in a negative manner in order to emphasise the contrast between the two sides. On the other hand, alongside the heroisation of the British soldiers, he also criticises the media's demonisation of Iraqi civilians to justify the war in Iraq through the post-truth discourse. One way the media does this is by selectively reporting the developments on the ground. As Kao observes, "in contradiction to Ursula's on-site observation, the cause of the deaths of the Bedouin civilians receives no mention in the British media, while the British military vehicle which is accidentally blown up by a British soldier is presented in the news as a result of terrorist action" ("Transnational" 9). This biased journalism aims to gain public support for the war by portraying the indigenous people as dangerous enemies

and the British soldiers as victims. Kao also points out that "[i]ndividual experiences, which Ursula thinks are more worthy of report, are often ignored or manipulated to suit political agendas, so as to solicit public support and to demonise the religious and cultural Other as potential terrorists" ("Transnational" 9). The media prioritises specific stories that support the war and demonise the Iraqi people, and neglects or distorts individual experiences that might challenge this discourse. This manipulation of information creates a post-truth discourse that justifies the war in Iraq, and plays a significant role in shaping the opinions of the public by appealing to the emotions of the audience rather than providing objective facts.

Moreover, it can be observed that the media is prejudiced about Iraqi people regarding their outfits. Some soldiers' othering the Iraqis is manifested by Freddie's calling Malek a "raghead" several times, to which Malek responds quite sharply by saying "[y]ou reduce a country to rags, and then you call us ragheads" (50). Similarly, Iraqi women are reduced to veils and othered by the media without consideration of their religious practices. De Waal points at such cultural misunderstandings, specifically regarding the veil worn by women in the Middle East, as follows: "While in media discourse the veil commonly signifies the oppression of Muslim women and images of unveiling connote progress and liberation […], it is Ursula's removal of the veil that makes her body accessible to humiliation by the hypermasculine, hypersexual Western aggressor" ("(Sub)Versions" 139-40). De Waal's words can be taken as a standpoint for the opinion that the media often simplifies complex cultural practices and symbols, like the veil, to create a contrast between the 'civilised' West and the 'uncivilised' East. In this case, the British media sees the veil as a symbol of oppression, and its removal as liberation. However, Teevan's play shows that this simplified narrative may not be correct as the removal of the veil leads to Ursula's humiliation.

In the analysis of Teevan's play, an ironic contradiction emerges regarding his approach to the post-truth discourse. Although Teevan criticises the media's use of a pro-war post-truth discourse to manipulate public opinion, he simultaneously employs a counter post-truth discourse to manipulate his reader/audience. This contradictory approach raises questions about the playwright's intentions and whether he adheres to the principles he

advocates. As Lonergan puts forward, "[t]he play concludes with a consideration of whether there can sometimes be morally acceptable reasons to tell a lie: it may be better, the argument goes, to pretend that the soldiers died heroically rather than revealing the futility of their actions" ("Re-Imagining" 5). This statement implies that Teevan acknowledges the intricacy of truth-telling and recognises that, in certain cases, concealing the truth might serve a higher moral purpose. However, by using a counter post-truth narrative to challenge the media's pro-war narrative, Teevan seems to undermine the very notion of truth and transparency he seeks to promote. In doing so, he takes the risk of disregarding what he preaches, which weakens the impact of his criticism. This ironic situation raises the question of whether Teevan's use of a counter post-truth narrative is justifiable, or whether he falls into the same ethical trap as the media institution he criticises does.

While Teevan censures the utilisation of post-truth for pro-war propaganda by the media in *How Many Miles to Basra?*, he simultaneously employs post-truth elements to manipulate his reader/audience. In an interview with Madeline Dewhurst, Teevan explains his stance on the relationship between reality and drama, stating, "[d]rama is drawn from the real, you have to experience the real, but that doesn't mean you have to put the real on stage, or write in a naturalist or social realist form. What needs to be lived is the emotional and imaginative reality" (qtd. in Dewhurst 250). This statement unveils Teevan's belief in the importance of incorporating imaginative and emotional aspects in drama, even if they diverge from what is considered "real." Nonetheless, his approach raises serious questions regarding his own employment of post-truth tactics. He expresses his concern about "the pretentious, the pretend for the sake of the pretend, the evasion of truth rather than the exploration of truth" (qtd. in Dewhurst 250), but also cautions against eliminating imagination from the process. In doing so, Teevan seems to suggest that there is a delicate balance between manipulating the reader/audience and staying loyal to reality, at the same time. Although Teevan criticises media manipulation, his own play could be seen as participating in a similar practice. He uses post-truth depictions, statements and opinions in the play to shape his reader/audience's perception of the events. This contradictory stance challenges Teevan's ethical approach to tackling post-

truth and raises concerns about the potential for manipulation, even within works that seek to critique the concept of post-truth discourse.

Teevan's use of post-truth in the play is observed in his addressing the controversy surrounding the September Dossier, which played a significant role in justifying the war in Iraq. The September Dossier, officially titled *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government*, was a document published by Blair's government to justify military action against Iraq. It controversially claimed that Iraq had the military capacity to deploy chemical or biological weapons within forty-five minutes and also planned to possess nuclear weapons. These claims in the dossier were later disproven. By contextualising this real-life event in the play, Teevan manipulates his reader/audience by appealing to their emotions and scepticism towards the war. For instance, in the play, Ursula and Sophie discuss the revelation that the government lied about the war. The conversation reveals the manipulation, with Ursula's sarcastic remark which also alludes to the media institution's already known collaboration with the government:

> URSULA: So what is this news?
> SOPHIE: The Government lied to us.
> URSULA: That's news?
> SOPHIE: About Iraq. (8-9)

This sarcastic expression implies Ursula's awareness of the government's deceitful practices. Moreover, Sophie's following account underlines the government's attempts to control public opinion, even when their deception is exposed:

> A source in the Intelligence Service told Andrew Gilligan that the Government asked Intelligence to sex up the dossier on Saddam's weapon capabilities. And the Government then published the dossier knowing it to contain false claims. And Andy went on air with it earlier in the week, and since then the place has gone mad. The Prime Minister's office has been piling the pressure on the Head of News, and they've been putting the pressure on the heads of departments, and so we're having to go through everything with a fine-tooth comb. Even Tariq's under pressure and he'd nothing to do with it. That's why he asked me to log your recordings. I wasn't really listening to them, just dates and places and interviewees. (9)

Through this conversation, Teevan demonstrates how post-truth tactics were employed by the government and media to build a case for war, and how those in power sought to control public opinion and suppress dissenting voices. In this regard, Teevan's inclusion of the September Dossier controversy into his play is a noteworthy example of how he uses post-truth to indoctrinate his reader/audience. By alluding to real-life events and difficulties faced by journalists and the media institution, Teevan aims to initiate an emotional response from his reader/audience, leading them to question the reliability of the government and media.

In addition to the September Dossier controversy, Teevan also alludes to the Dr Kelly issue, which further proves his use of post-truth. Dr Kelly, a Welsh scientist, was one of the sources of Andrew Gilligan's story regarding the "sexed-up" dossier. The media attack on him and his suicide became a significant scandal that led to questions about the media's role and responsibility in handling sensitive information. In the play, Ursula and Tariq discuss Gilligan's source and the potential consequences of the story:

> URSULA: […] Is Gilligan's source not sound then?
> TARIQ: Excuse me?
> URSULA: The 'sexing-up' claim.
> TARIQ: Not my source. Not my story, I'm glad to say.
> URSULA: But now your problem?
> […]
> TARIQ: I understand from my colleagues that their source is reliable.
> URSULA: But do you think it is?
> TARIQ: What I think is neither here nor there. I have no evidence that leads me to believe that my colleagues are anything other than committed to fairness, accuracy, and impartiality in all their reporting.
> URSULA: But do you suspect there's an agenda?
> […]
> TARIQ: […] What I do know, Ursula, is we've got to be careful, and some of us more than others. (58)

Teevan's portrayal of Tariq's cautious stance and his reluctance regarding accuracy and impartiality in journalism discloses the ethical dilemmas faced by the media. It encourages the reader/audience to consider the difficulties of maintaining objectivity and truthfulness in the field of journalism.

By creating a character like Ursula, Teevan engages in the very practice of post-truth that he critiques. Through this character, it can be realised how personal biases and agendas can shape narratives and bend the truth. Her actions throughout the play reveal the difficulties experienced in the pursuit of truth, which might make the reader/audience question their own understanding of what is real and what is not. Ursula's controversial devotion to the truth raises questions about the ethics of using post-truth to manipulate the reader/audience. Despite her claims of being committed to the ethics of journalism and reporting facts, her actions in the play reveal a more intricate and morally-questionable character. As Sardella marks, "Ursula's commitment to being a truth-seeking journalist stems from the murder of her own brother by British soldiers in Northern Ireland and the subsequent cover-up of the facts" (par. 7). Thus, her relentless pursuit of the truth has a strong connection to her personal issues. As Kao argues, "the truth that Ursula insists on is made more problematic by involving personal biases, in that her mission to the front line in Iraq was aimed, as she admits, to revenge her deceased brother" ("Peace" 122). Therefore, it can be safely argued that Ursula's determination to uncover the truth is driven not only by her professional principles but also by her personal history. However, her insistence on exposing the truth is often overshadowed by her need to portray the army as the villain in her stories; as Freddie claims below, and she "—with her preconceived agenda—is eager to testify to her own version of the truth" (Kao, "Peace" 124). This approach to journalism creates a character who is driven by a personal agenda rather than an unbiased commitment to truth. Ursula's agenda-driven approach can be found in her interactions with the soldiers. For instance, her strategy in this regard is exposed in the following dialogue with Freddie:

> FREDDIE: Because all you lot are interested in is the story. And to make your stories suit your agenda, you have to have goodies and baddies. And the agenda dictates that the army is always painted as the baddy. Yet we didn't choose to be here –
> […]
> URSULA: What is our agenda, then?
> FREDDIE: Well, look at yourself. I knew what the story was going to be the minute I met you.
> URSULA: And that was? Because I'm a woman?
> FREDDIE: I'm not sexist.
> URSULA: Because I'm Irish?
> FREDDIE: I'm not racist –
> URSULA: I report the truth. The facts. What happens. (54-55)

Her agenda becomes more apparent in this conversation with Freddie, who accuses her of depicting the army as the "baddy" to suit her narrative. He questions her commitment to reporting the truth, revealing the contrast between Ursula's alleged values and her actions. Furthermore, even in other scenes, Ursula's actions point out the fact that her pursuit of truth is not as noble as it initially appears. She resorts to manipulation and deception to gain exclusive access to the soldiers' stories; as Lonergan puts it, "[t]he problem, however, is that Ursula never lives up to the values she espouses. She constantly lies to the soldiers in order to progress her own story – lying, that is, in order to expose a truth" ("Re-Imagining" 11), demonstrating that her commitment to the truth is not as sincere and principled as she claims.

Ursula's devotion to her profession becomes even more complex as she confronts the consequences of her actions and ambition. In the scene of the explosion of an American shell, which results in Dangermouse's death, she is the one responsible for the soldier's going back to the site where the explosion takes place. Reflecting on the situation, she laments:

> It was my fault, Dominic, my stupid fault. I shouted at him to get the sat-phone and my discs. It's a reflex. I'm programmed that way. The story is all that counts. Just like he's programmed to obey orders. I shouted to him to get my things, Dom, he heard and obeyed. Remember we used to sit on the sofa together after school, like two peas in the pod, watching 'Dangermouse', and now he's lying on the red sand, his blood draining from the stump of where his arm once was. Jesus, Dom, what price the truth? (62-63)

In this moment of realisation, she acknowledges that her main goal of uncovering the story led to the unfortunate event. She likens her pursuit of the truth to a soldier's obeying orders, pointing at the risks of blindly following professional rules without considering the consequences. Ursula's awareness raises the question of whether seeking the truth is worth the harm it may cause individuals.

Ursula's character also exposes another ethical dilemma in relation to the use of post-truth as a narrative strategy. By the end of the play, ironically, all the soldiers and Malek are killed by a friendly airstrike, and Ursula bears the responsibility of telling their story,

“or her perception of it” (Potter 246). Yet, her testimony is based on her own biased version of the truth (Kao, “Peace” 124). To exemplify, although she knows that Stewart was not so fond of Jeanine, his wife, Ursula tells her that her husband loved her, to which Jeanine replies, “[t]hank you for saying that, Ursula. Even if it’s not true” (93). Ursula’s instinct to tell a white lie to comfort the widowed woman raises important questions about the responsibility of storytellers and the challenges they face when trying to convey complex truths. While she claims to be a truth-seeker, her actions demonstrate a willingness to bend the truth and manipulate others for various reasons. This portrayal of Ursula, therefore, leads the reader/audience to question the nature of truth and the ethics of narrating the truth, such as Ursula’s journalism and Teevan’s narrative.

Teevan’s exploration of post-truth discourse extends to his portrayal of the British soldiers, as well. As discussed above, the media often presents soldiers as heroes in order to evoke positive emotions from the public. However, Teevan’s depiction of the soldiers in the play is not free from a post-truth manipulation. Kao points out that in the play the soldiers are likened to “the Greek mercenaries, many of whom did not wholeheartedly swear fidelity to Cyrus but had their own agenda about how to benefit themselves in the army” (“Peace” 122). This comparison stresses the undesirable defects in the soldiers’ actions and motivations, which is in line with the post-truth discourse that Teevan aims to promote. Therefore, it can be claimed that Teevan’s own portrayal of the soldiers is a self-contradiction since he himself adopts a similar post-truth discourse that he criticises by presenting the soldiers in a way that aims to evoke negative emotions in the reader/audience. The following dialogue between Freddie and Stewart, for instance, can be used to challenge the alleged heroism of the British soldiers:

> FREDDIE: And I say you have misled us. I say the platoon commander did not order this. Or at least if he did, you misled him sanctioning something he never would have if he’d been in full possession of the facts. Whichever, we are out here in the middle of nowhere risking our necks for a lie.
> STEWART: How dare you!
> FREDDIE: Well then, was this action ordered by Platoon HQ or not?
> Pause.
> Fucking bastard. Why?
> STEWART: Because it’s the right thing to do. Because I believe it is the right thing to do. (45)

Freddie here accuses Stewart of misleading the team, putting their lives at risk for a lie. Stewart, in turn, justifies his actions by asserting that he does believe it is the right thing to take this journey. This conflict between the two soldiers presents the subjectivity of truth, even within the military context. Teevan's depiction of the soldiers, therefore, challenges the traditional heroic portrayal of military personnel in the media, while at the same time embracing another form of post-truth discourse.

Following the discussion on Teevan's depiction of British soldiers, it is crucial to examine how he presents Iraqi civilians within the context of the post-truth discourse, as well. The media often portrays Iraqi civilians as uncivilised or as terrorists in order to evoke negative emotions from the public. Although Teevan is against such post-truth depictions, he himself also engages in post-truth discourse when representing the Iraqi identity. One example is the character Malek, who is described as "the voice of moral authority in the play" (Lonergan "Re-Imagining" 6). In this respect, Lonergan suggests that the play "presents us with soldiers who believe that they are bringing civilisation to Iraq – but that belief is challenged by the presence on stage of an Iraqi character who is far more civilised than any of the Western invaders" ("Re-Imagining" 6). In the play, Malek introduces himself as follows:

> URSULA: […] And you, who are you?
> MALEK: I am a no one too. I am your rafiq. Desert guide.
> URSULA: Should I call you rafiq?
> MALEK: No. (Beat.) I am Malek. (33)

The name Malek literally means king ("مَلِك") or owner ("مالِك"), signifying that Iraq is his own country. He does not want to be defined merely as a desert guide; he rejects the orientalist definition imposed by the Western media. However, by including this character and emphasising his moral authority, Teevan contributes to the post-truth discourse. While attempting to challenge stereotypes and preconceived notions about Iraqi civilians, Teevan's portrayal may still be seen as a form of post-truth manipulation because although his portrayal may be intended to counteract the negative stereotypes built by the media, this character may still be interpreted as a romanticised version of the Iraqi identity. In this sense, Teevan's portrayal of Malek contributes to the post-truth

indoctrination by reinforcing certain narratives, albeit more positive ones, about Iraqi civilians.

It is also useful to examine the role of Irishness and Teevan's use of post-truth strategy in the play. Teevan employs Irishness as a nationalist post-truth strategy to create the impression that he can understand the Iraqi people better than the English. This is witnessed when Ursula emphasises her Irish background to establish a connection with Malek, saying, "I come from a colony too" (34). As Lonergan points out, "[w]hile of course Ursula could describe herself as both British and Irish, she later chooses to highlight certain elements of her Irish background in order to ingratiate herself with Malek" ("Re-Imagining" 12). Thus, Ursula tries to find common ground with Malek, presenting herself as someone who can empathise with the colonised. However, this nationalist post-truth strategy can be seen as problematic. In this regard, Lonergan argues that, "Ursula might believe that she is from a country that is postcolonial, and might believe that as a journalist she is neutral. But she has money and power and the ability to influence her audience's understanding of the truth, and that makes her one of the colonisers rather than one of the colonised, in Malek's eyes anyway" ("Re-Imagining" 12). Furthermore, Teevan's handling of Irishness as a nationalist post-truth strategy raises some questions for the Irish reader/audience. By using the Irish identity as a way to connect with the colonised Iraqis, the play exploits and commodifies Irishness and Ireland's colonial past as a means to establish common ground between the two nations and captivate the reader/audience by touching on their nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiments. Due to the international anti-imperialist reader/audience's keen interest, Teevan has been able to spread his anti-war messages and also ensure that his play is watched and sold more. This strategy raises ethical concerns about the utilisation of a nation's identity and history for personal or political gain.

In conclusion, Teevan's play, *How Many Miles to Basra?*, explores the media institution's using a pro-war post-truth discourse during the Iraq War. The play reveals the media's attempts to shape public opinion by manipulating facts, sensationalising stories and prioritising pre-existing beliefs over objective reality. By doing so, the play probes the role of ethical journalism in uncovering the truth. The embedded journalist

character, Ursula, serves as a key figure in exposing the media's tactics and emphasising the need for honest reporting to challenge the post-truth narratives. Through Ursula, the play sheds light on the complex relationship between the media, emotions and the public perception of truth, illustrating the power of post-truth discourse. However, while Teevan critiques the media's unethical approach in covering the Iraq War, ironically, he also employs a counter post-truth discourse within the play itself. This raises the question of whether Teevan's tactics are justified or whether these tactics cause the same problematic approach he criticises. Directing the reader/audience towards an opposite view through appealing to his reader/audience's emotions, he encourages them to question the credibility of the pro-war discourse of the media institution. This emotionally-charged depiction of the war pushes the reader/audience to reconsider their understanding of the conflict and make them aware of the media's manipulation and deception. While Teevan's work emphasises the importance of truth and the role of principled journalism in resisting media manipulation, his own use of post-truth discourse complicates this fact. Therefore, the playwright's decision to employ a counter post-truth discourse ultimately undermines his criticism of media manipulation and call for ethical journalism.

CHAPTER III: *MOTORTOWN* BY SIMON STEPHENS AND THE FAMILY

The attitudes and statements of families who participated in the large anti-war march in London in 2003 left Simon Stephens with a sense of disturbance. He felt that these families were too quick to judge the war and its participants, without considering the circumstances that led to the military involvement. In this respect, *Motortown* is a response to their unwavering anti-war views. Rather than siding with the protesters, the play even seems to contain statements that justify and necessitate the war. In other words, as Jacqueline Bolton argues, "*Motortown* refrains from condemning the war, displaying instead a distinctly ambivalent attitude towards the arguments constructed by anti-war rhetoric" ("Simon" 112). On the other hand, there are also critics who claim that the play has an anti-war attitude (Günenç 131; Spencer par. 4) because it portrays the negative effects of war on soldiers and other people around them. Regarding the two opposing interpretations of the play's view of the war, Stephens says, "[t]he play was at various times, by various critics, received as being a criticism of the [Iraq] war and a criticism of the anti-war campaign" (qtd. in Sierz, *Rewriting* 7-8). As examined in this chapter, both Stephens's statements and the ideological framework of the play show that the playwright and the play do not illustrate an anti-war discourse. On the contrary, the play questions and even openly challenges the post-truth discourses of anti-war individuals representing the family institution. In this context, this chapter analyses the use of post-truth in *Motortown* and argues that Stephens also benefits from such deception and manipulation even though he criticises the post-truth discourse of the family institution in relation to the Iraq War.

Stephens was born on 6 February 1971, in Stockport, Cheshire, as Simon William Stephens (Tschida 3; Innes 445). His early years coincided with the final three decades of the twentieth century, a period marked by significant socio-political transformations and transitions both in Britain and across continental Europe. Prior to and during the initial stages of his career, he witnessed international conflicts such as the Falklands War (1982), the Gulf War (1990-1991), the Bosnian War (1992-1995), the War in Afghanistan (2001-2021) and the Iraq War (2003-2011). During this period, he was also exposed to

the controversial economic, social and international policies and discourses of Margaret Thatcher, Conservative Party politician and Prime Minister of the UK between 1979 and 1990, and Tony Blair, Labour Party politician and Prime Minister of the UK between 1997 and 2007. Stephens saw both Thatcher's sceptical approach to an "instinctive affinity with the US" ("What" par. 14) and Blair's pro-American policies. His witnessing such intricate events and politics has undoubtedly shaped his career in the theatre. However, his path towards the theatre did not involve a formal training in drama; instead, he studied history at the University of York (Tschida 3; Stephens qtd. Devine 256), which endowed his plays with distinct and interdisciplinary perspectives. Interestingly, Stephens had not developed a particular interest in the theatre until he attended university. He candidly admits how his attraction to the theatre was initially sparked by the allure of attractive girls – as he admits – he encountered at the University of York, an encounter that would also lead to the first steps of his writing career (qtd. in Devine 256). His introduction to becoming a playwright was primarily based on screenwriting for television and cinema; however, instead of venturing into screenplays, he began his career by writing plays to be staged (qtd. in Devine 256).

The initial steps of Stephens's career were modest; his works were first performed at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. This experience and the opportunity to see many other plays in the same venue allowed him to critically evaluate his own plays (Stephens qtd. in Devine 258). His play *Bluebird*, performed at the Royal Court Theatre in 1998, marked Stephens's true debut on the professional stage (Innes 445) and represented his transition from an amateur playwright to an acclaimed one. The Festival Fringe led Stephens to move to Edinburgh, and subsequently London, where "[a] schoolteacher, he then, following the success of *Bluebird*, became writer-in-residence at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester, and in 2000 was appointed Resident Dramatist at the Royal Court" (Innes 446).

A crucial experience in his career was the project for which he was commissioned by Ian Rickson, the artistic director of the Royal Court, to collaborate with prisoners on a play based on their experiences, resulting in *Country Music* (Innes 447). This unique initiative required Stephens to engage directly with the prisoners who were serving life sentences.

At Wandsworth Prison and Grendon Prison, "[h]e also brought in actors and a director to stage extracts from the plays the prisoners had written" (Innes 447). Thus, it can be thought that the workshops he conducted in the prisons not only assisted in providing the prisoners with an education on the theatre and aided their psychological rehabilitation but also provided Stephens with an insight into the diverse aspects of human nature.

Stephens's deep connection with the theatre extends far beyond merely playwriting. He perceives the theatre not only as an artistic occupation but also as an industry. In this respect, he expresses that "really central to my work […] I like the machine of the theatre […]. I love the idea of being a theatre worker, infinitely more than I like the idea of being a writer" (qtd. in Bolton, *Theatre* 2). Therefore, he does not confine himself merely to writing plays, he also gives lectures on the theatre in various institutions. Jacqueline Bolton acknowledges Stephens's contributions to the theatre as follows:

> Since being appointed as Writer in Residence at the Royal Court Theatre, London, in January 2000, Stephens has also held residencies at the Royal Exchange, Manchester (2000), and the National Theatre, London (2006), and between 2001 and 2005 was Writers' Tutor for the Royal Court's Young Writers' Programme […]. In 2009 he joined the board of the new writing company Paines Plough, and in 2014 became an Associate Playwright of the Royal Court. Between 2009 and 2014 Stephens also served as Artistic Associate to Seant Holmes at the Lyric Hammersmith, London, during which time he was instrumental to the design and launch of 'Secret Theatre' in 2013. (*Theatre* 2)

Additionally, Stephens's impact on literature and education is observed in the fact that "his plays *Motortown* (2006), *Pornography* (2007), *Punk Rock* (2009) and *Morning* (2012) routinely feature on college and university Theatre Studies syllabi throughout the UK and beyond" (Bolton, *Theatre* 1). The fact that his plays are not only performed but also studied and analysed in academic contexts proves that Stephens pursues a successful career. His journey from a history student at the University of York to a respected playwright is indicative of his passion for the theatre.

As explained above, over the years, Stephens has not only written and staged successful plays but also academically contributed to the theatre, for which he has been recognised by both the artistic and academic communities. This acknowledgement has been

manifested in the form of numerous awards. *On the Shore of the Wide World*, staged at the Royal Exchange in Manchester in 2005, for instance, brought him the prestigious Olivier Award (Innes 447). However, this is not the only major award he has won. He later won the 2015 Tony Award for Best Play for his *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Svich 392). Stephens's work has also been acknowledged outside of the United Kingdom and the United States, attracting significant interest in Germany. As for the awards granted by German critics, Alexander Tschida states, "For *Motortown* (2007), *Pornography* (2008) and *Wastwater* (2011) Stephens received an award for Best Foreign Play by the German theatre magazine *Theater heute*. The annual polls conducted by German critics in *Theater heute* voted him Best Foreign Playwright of the Year in 2008" (10). Additionally, he also received the 2001 Pearson Award for Best New Play for *Port* (Bolton, *Theatre* 1).

Despite being a relatively young playwright, Stephens's influence is not limited to the British stages. As Bolton points out, his plays have been performed in Germany, the United States, and even Japan, and translated into at least twenty languages (*Theatre* 1). Additionally, "[i]n the period from 2003 to 2015, for example, 20 plays were produced 96 times [in the German-speaking countries]. He has also enjoyed productions in Spain, France, Hungary, Scandinavia, and a host of other European countries" (Barnett 305). Furthermore, as previously mentioned, his role as a tutor at the Royal Court Theatre and other institutions, and his involvement in training new playwrights, is further indication of his influence.

It would be an oversimplification to categorise Stephens's work under one umbrella. As Vicky Angelaki notes, the playwright's repertoire is extensive and diverse: "Stephens is prolific, and his plays range from esoteric monologues and dialogical pieces where characters intersect but fail to connect, to large-cast naturalistic expositions of humanity and hard-hitting social critique" (159). In his plays, he successfully examines the difficulty of forming genuine connections in a world where individuals feel increasingly isolated, a sentiment that even extends into the family institution. So much so that, in works such as *Port* and *Harper Regan*, the family institution, traditionally a safe haven of stability and comfort, is depicted as a fragile structure in the face of "societal pressures

and internal dissatisfactions" (Angelaki 176). For similar reasons, the protagonist's family is torn apart physically and ideologically in *Motortown*.

In relation to the broken family, the themes of travel, home and homecoming are also commonly studied in Stephens's plays. For the playwright, travel is not merely a physical journey; it provides a fresh perspective and a sharpened vision through which one perceives their home ("Skydiving" par. 14). Travel unveils perspectives previously ignored with regards to one's self and the environment. Also, the concept of home and the set of values it represents is a recurring motif in Stephens's works. He is interested in examining what the concept of home means and how it shapes people. In this context, travel offers Stephens various perspectives on what home means. On the relationship between travel and the perception of the concept of home, he states:

> All of the plays I've written have in some way been about travel. As a writer I'm fascinated by an interrogation of the idea of home. What it is to be at home. What it is to live at home or to leave home or to damage a home or reinvent a home or leave a home and return back to it. […] When we travel abroad we see our home with a clarity that we may never have been offered before. This has happened to me in my work as much as in the lives of the characters I've created. ("Skydiving" par. 14)

Considering his views, it may be proposed that Stephens's works serve as a mirror to a world in search of meaning and connection amid the collapse of traditional norms and values. With his impressive narratives, he invites his reader/audience to confront the difficulties, disappointments and contradictions surrounding individuals.

Stephens has made a name for himself in modern theatre with his plays deeply influenced by the socio-political climate of the time encompassing his professional career. However, it would not be entirely correct to claim that his inspiration for writing plays came solely from the eras in which they were written. The political and intellectual knowledge he acquired in his childhood and youth has contributed to his interpretation of the social, political, economic and intellectual environment of the 1990s and the new millennium. As Innes marks,

> Stephens had his political awakening during the 1984–85 Miners' Strike. This became the defining moment of his political consciousness, although now Stephens sees himself as part of a generation defined by Thatcher's reign as prime minister, believing in the value of the individual rather than the collective identity and communal action embraced by the previous generation of British political playwrights such as David Hare or Howard Brenton. Instead he sees himself as continuing the tradition of intense individualism celebrated in the plays of John Osborne. (445-46)

Stephens's focus on individuals in his works does not imply an indifference to social issues. His plays represent social and political corruption as well as the people affected by this corruption. In this regard, Angelaki argues that "Stephens's theatre is as much representative of British culture as it has the capacity to translate culturally. His texts reflect our world of crisis back unto us, tracing how it is being inscribed into collective mentalities and performed through mobile bodies" (159). The playwright is particularly concerned with the problems faced by young people. As Marissia Fragkou marks, Stephens attributes his sensitivity for children and young individuals to "his double position as a parent and witness of real-life events which for him generate an acute sense of anxiety about the world which children inhabit today" (71). *Motortown*, examined in this chapter, also reflects Stephens's concern for young generations.

The abusive language and intense violence of Stephens's plays aim to unsettle the reader/audience. From this perspective, his "playwriting strives for a degree of discomfort; it stands at the sharp edge […] and where it might move next is anyone's guess" (Angelaki 159). The intense level of physical and psychological violence presented in his plays may lead him to be compared with contemporary in-yer-face theatre playwrights. For instance, Stephen Watt, who implies that he finds Stephens even more shocking than in-yer-face generation playwrights, states that "if Stephens's career as a dramatist began in the late 1990s in the wake of 'In-Yer-Face Theatre,' then he might be considered as part of an incipient 'In-Yer-Head Theatre.' And, like Pinter's audiences, Stephens's routinely hear intimidating and aggressive language" (50). Similarly, Aleks Sierz classifies Stephens in a more encompassing category known as New Writing, which also includes in-yer-face theatre. Stephens is featured in the list of New Writing playwrights on Sierz's *In-Yer-Face Theatre* website ("New Writing A-Z" par. 106). Sierz, who evaluates the works of contemporary young playwrights in this category as

their plays that emerged in the 1990s and later periods are not similar to those of previous movements, describes New Writing as follows:

> New Writing (in capital letters) can be defined as plays by young writers put on by subsidised theatres. These plays are usually contemporary in language, urgent in theme and preferably […] experimental in form. […] What aficionados look for is evidence of an individual writer's personal voice. A unique and distinctive language. The term New Writing also has several agendas: it implies that the writer is at the centre of the theatrical process, but leaves unresolved the question of exactly when new writers become old hands. ("New Writing A-Z" par. 82)

As Sierz points out, these playwrights differ from their predecessors due to factors such as their ages, the contemporary subject matters of their plays, the language used, the minimalism of stage decor, the stages on which their plays are performed, and the authority of the playwright in the performance. Simon Stephens is also considered by Sierz in this category for these same reasons.

After having discussed Stephens's literary style, it would be appropriate to move on to *Motortown*, which aligns with the aforementioned characteristics that define New Writing. *Motortown* is a crucial piece in Stephens's body of works. It displays the psychological impact of the Iraq War, which was a current issue then, on individuals in society, the ideological conflict it caused among people, and how one ideological pole perceives the other within a divided society with regards to the necessity of the war. Since the play takes its subject from the political climate of the period, Gülşen Sayın writes that "[i]n this context, Stephens is similar to other New Writing playwrights who bring the social and political agenda of the contemporary world to the stage"[16] (125). In addition to the characteristics acknowledged by Sayın, the play has a harsh language and shocking scenes, similar to the features of the New Writing. As Tschida puts forward, "[i]n Stephens' work, *Motortown* with its vulgar and filthy language and its depiction of violence, murder and insanity may be the closest of all his plays to in-yer-face theatre" (67). Thus, it can be safely maintained that although Stephens is not an in-yer-face playwright, he is partly influenced by the in-yer-face plays of his early contemporaries.

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[16] The translation from the Turkish text belongs to the author of this dissertation.

Motortown revolves around a former soldier's problems in his own country and his personal struggle to survive there. Focusing on themes such as anger, disappointment and alienation, it offers a critique of the moral issues in English society, particularly in regard to its attitude towards the Iraq War. As Wolf describes, the play is "marinated in rage with its own take-no-prisoners fury" (par. 6). This anger is depicted as a result of the trauma and social exclusion experienced by the protagonist, Danny, who left the army and returned to his homeland following the Iraq War. In relation to Danny's mental state, Katerina Ziaka points out that the play "demonstrates how the already impaired mental state of the traumatized soldier deteriorates due to social indifference and social marginalization, and conducts a national and cultural introspection of the pathogeny of contemporary British society" (138). In this context, Danny, who defended his fellow citizens against global threats abroad, realises that he must also fight against ideological threats in England. He was accustomed to enmity and being alienated in Iraq, but being alienated in his own homeland disappoints him. Although he has to fight against himself, his family, his society and global terrorism, the protagonist "has neither the inner resources nor the external support network to cope with his enraged sense of alienation" (P. Taylor par. 3). This lack of support leads him to resort to violence to solve problems, just as he did while fighting in Iraq, in his attempt to fix a society which he perceives as increasingly dangerous. As the danger that began on a global level extends to the domestic sphere, he carries his battle from Iraq to England, both ideologically and physically. Considering this transfer, it can be stated that "[t]he play indeed creates a continuity between war and home" (Wierzoch 156). To narrow it down from the general to the specific, Danny initially struggles with terrorism in a broader sense, and then with the anti-war views of families that constitute society in England.

Leaving the army after the Iraq War, Danny, the protagonist, returns to Dagenham, the town where he grew up. The Dagenham which Danny was once used to has undergone so much environmental and socio-political changes that he perceives himself as being in the middle of immense moral, psychological and ideological dangers. The support that society gives to this change further increases the protagonist's anxiety about both the present and the future. While at his autistic brother Lee's apartment, he is told by Lee that his ex-girlfriend Marley does not want to see him anymore. However, Danny meets with

Marley and both frightens and disturbs her with his insistent behaviours to be granted a second chance for their relationship. Grasping that he cannot be lovers with Marley again, Danny pays a visit to his friend Tom and buys a replica gun from him. Upon Tom's advice, he goes to Paul's shop to have the replica gun converted into a real one. Paul and his fourteen-year-old black girlfriend, Jade, do not treat Danny coldly, but the protagonist sees them as corrupted members of society. After leaving Paul's shop, Danny visits Marley again with the intention of shooting her, but he cannot bring himself to do it and gives up this plan. Then, he goes out with Jade and takes her to Foulness Island, where soldiers receive military training. He tortures Jade, whom he sees as the real misfit in the society from which he is becoming increasingly alienated, and ultimately murders her with shocking brutality. His techniques of torture evoke the inhumane treatment of the Iraqi prisoners by the American and British soldiers during the invasion. The dialogue in the first scene of the play can be interpreted as a foreshadowing for this murder, in which Lee says, "I'm reading a true-life book about ghosts and haunted houses," and Danny responds "You're a big inspiration to me, Lee" (10). Danny loads Jade's body into the boot of his car and drives back to the city. Moreover, an image in the book about ghosts and haunted houses Lee has been recently reading can also be assumed as a foreshadowing for Danny's loading Jade's body into the boot of his car, which Lee describes as follows: "Have you seen this one? Back of the car. The car is a hearse. On the way to a funeral. And that woman, it's her funeral. Fake or real? Do you think?" (11). When Danny returns to the town with Jade's body, he meets a couple named Justin and Helen in a hotel bar. The couple offers Danny threesome sex, but they are scolded by him for participating in the anti-war march and are humiliated both psychologically and physically. Realising that his "view of England is scarcely that of a patriotic homeland" (Sierz, *Rewriting* 130), he escapes from the society from which he now feels alienated, takes refuge in his brother's house and desperately asks for his help. As Wierzoch briefly summarises, "[f]ollowing Danny through his day, the play embarks on a trip that reenacts his life's journey from home to military service, the battlefield, and back" (158).

There are fundamentally three main events that have influenced the emergence of the play: the Iraq War, the anti-war movement and the 2005 London bombings. Stephens believes these are related to the moral decline of English society. While the play does not

directly address the London bombings, as explained below, the event contributed to Stephens's perspective on the war and the anti-war community, and triggered his writing of the play. As previously touched upon, the playwright witnessed several wars in his childhood and youth. Considering this, in an interview with Aleks Sierz, he talks about his admiration for soldiers in his childhood, and specifically mentions how the public's reaction towards soldiers, particularly because of the Iraq War, inspired him to write the play (qtd. in Sierz, "Playwright" n. p.). Essentially, the playwright chooses not to depict the soldiers' actions in Iraq, but instead, conveys their experiences through dialogues scattered throughout the play. He also approaches the anti-war march in the same way, but intellectually defends the war against its opponents and challenges their moral grounds. In this respect, Bolton expresses that "[t]he contradiction Stephens explores in *Motortown* confronts the unpalatable but unavoidable fact that a fundamental condition of sustaining the economic framework of Western capitalist democracy is secure access to this oil. If oil is a global resource, then war is a global responsibility" ("Simon" 113). In other words, the perpetuation of the economy's functioning and the sustainability of the accustomed living standards of people in the West make the war an inevitable reality. To desire the continuation of the same decent lives while also opposing war is inherently a contradictory attitude. Ramin Gray, the director of the play, similarly critiques the double-standard mentality of the anti-war protesters, saying, "[a]ll these people [on the 'Million' march against Iraq, 16 February 2003] walking down the road holding their lattes and wearing their t-shirts and saying 'no war, no war'. Don't they realise that their lattes and all the wealth they have comes from the oil that is being pumped out of the Middle East? Don't they see the irony of that position?" (qtd. in Bolton, "Simon" 113). Both the playwright and the director point out the same contradiction, but Stephens makes the situation more confusing. In addition to the criticism of the anti-war movement, the play also contains elements and discourses that could be interpreted as pro-war. The playwright, acknowledging his pro-war tendency as a state of confusion, explains his feelings at that time, stating as follows:

> I was confused by why I felt nervous about the anti-war campaign and the marches on Hyde Park. I was confused by why I felt angry about the moral didacticism of that campaign's spokespeople. I was confused about why I felt more sympathy towards Fusilier Gary Bartlam, convicted in Osnabruck of several unspecified crimes in his dealings with Iraqi prisoners, than I felt for Harold Pinter or Damon

> Albarn. It was especially confusing when many of their arguments resonated with sense. (qtd. in Gupta 99-100)

Gupta further adds that the playwright's confusion did not stem from the war, but it was rather an expression of scepticism about achieving any moral certainty in the polarised debate (100). Thereby, Stephens harbours a specific intent: to unsettle, challenge, and perhaps even confront his reader/audience. He wants his play to push the boundaries, to defy expectations, and to encourage deeper contemplation about the nature and social consequences of the war.

It is difficult to claim that Stephens approaches the Iraq War and the anti-war demonstrations with common sense and in fairness. What might have led him to go beyond the limits of common sense could be attributed to the fact that the writing process of the play coincided with the 2005 London bombings, which seems to have compelled him to write the play very quickly and with emotional intensity. In fact, the play had been on Stephens's mind for six months, but the actual detailed writing took only four days (Stephens, Introduction xvii), a period which witnessed important socio-political events for the English. As Bolton reminds, "the week in which Stephens wrote *Motortown* was the week of the London bombings – a week that also saw London stage the Live 8 Concert and win the bid for the 2012 Olympics" ("Simon" 111). The immediate emotional aftermath of such a series of events –from celebration to grief– might have had an impact on Stephens's writing. The playwright views these bombings as part of a much broader process and series of events that signify a change in England's socio-political and military position. In his assessment for the Greek newspaper *Eleftherotypia*, he depicts England's transformation in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the 2003 Iraq War and the 7/7 London bombings, noting,

> [i]t has been changed by 9/11. It was changed by 7/7. It was changed by the [Iraq] war. It has become more scared. It has become more fractured. It has become more alienated. There are stronger currents of racism. There are higher levels of paranoia and surveillance and secrecy. These two phenomena exacerbate one another. I wanted to dramatize this moral chaos. (qtd. in Bolton, *Theatre* 53)

Considering his given statements, the 2005 London bombings, along with other major global and domestic incidents, had a significant influence on his *Motortown*. Thus, throughout the play, the playwright draws the attention of the English reader/audience to the collapse of humanity and morality both outside and within the country.

Stephens wrote *Motortown* in an atmosphere of confusion and emotional reaction caused by events mentioned above that had a significant impact on English society. While the play was being created, as Innes states, the playwright was inspired by three main works: "[T]his play was influenced by Georg Büchner's fragmented nineteenth-century classic about a cruel and vicious military system, and its effect on a soldier who kills his woman. And indeed, it echoes the major elements in *Woyzeck*'s action. Other influences Stephens has pointed to are films: Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976) and Mike Leigh's *Naked* (1993)" (452). One common aspect of these three works is their explicit presentation of raw violence. Since violence is a phenomenon inherent in human nature, its representations in artistic works may show similarities. Inspired by the stories and depiction of violence in Büchner, Scorsese and Leigh's works, Stephens presents another disturbing act of violence, but in his own style. For instance, regarding one of these inspirations, Cotterell draws a parallel between *Motortown* and Büchner's *Woyzeck*, stating, "we can almost see Danny as a version of Buchner's *Woyzeck*, where a working–class soldier loses his girlfriend and family to become socially isolated and, being schooled in violence, evolves into an alienated killer" (147). Inspired by wars, demonstrations, plays and films, Stephens reflected his own discourse through his creative imagination, which resulted in the writing of *Motortown*. As explained above, even though the brainstorming and designing process of the play took a considerably long time, the writing itself only took four days and coincided with both pleasing and shocking events. The playwright describes below how the calm atmosphere during the writing process was overshadowed by the terrorist attacks, stating:

> Four years later I was writing *Motortown* […] at home in east London. […] I'd had a good day's work the previous day, punctuated, or energised rather, by the news that London's bid to host the Olympic Games in 2012 had been successful. […] I put the radio on. The morning phone-in on 5 Live had been interrupted by discussion of a power surge all over the London Underground. […] A bus had exploded. It

> wasn't a power surge that was affecting the Underground, […] it was a terrorist attack. (Introduction x)

The unexpected bombings on that chilling day must have deeply affected Stephens, who did not share the same views as those against the war. He was quite disturbed by the attacks of religious fundamentalists and radical terrorists. Driven by his conviction that engaging in warfare is essential to prevent such attacks, he sought to provoke thought and reconsideration among the anti-war faction. In relation to this aim, he states that "I wanted *Motortown* to be a play that troubled its audience. It was important to me that a play that looked at such a brutal, ghastly war should take a position that maybe undermined the expectations of the Court's largely liberal regulars" (Introduction xvii). It is evident from the reviews written by critics who watched the play, as exemplified below, that Stephens has been successful in unsettling especially his anti-war reader/audience.

Although Stephens wrote the play in a very short time, the preparation process for the staging of the play took quite a long time. The play was written in mid-July 2005 but could only be staged nine months later. It premiered at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs on 21 April 2006, under the direction of Ramin Gray (Gupta 99; Innes 452; Wierzoch 156). One of the aspects that was taken into consideration regarding this performance was that there was very little decor on the stage, because, as Stephens also states at the very beginning of his play text, "[*t*]*he play should be performed as far as possible without décor*" (4). Thus, the principle of New Writing, which holds that the focus should be on the playwright's word, was also applied in the first performance. As Bolton reports, the play was simply performed "on a spare stage that exposed the Royal Court's Theatre Downstairs' imposing brick wall. Starkly lit by an overhead bank of bright white lights, a square of white tape on a grey dance floor demarcated 'onstage' and 'offstage'" (*Theatre* 55). This stage arrangement highlighted the play's striking themes, dialogues and the psychological depths of its characters, which meant that the audience's attention was not to be distracted by objects or exaggerated performances. Furthermore, since the play prioritises message over aesthetic concerns, the audience was seated very close to the stage and even the backstage. In order to achieve this involvement, Gray utilised a minimalistic design with plastic chairs, so that, as Bolton notes, "[a]ctors remained visible throughout the play; when not engaged in a scene they sat around the

edges of the square, watching the play unfold. The set consisted of a dozen plastic chairs, arranged by the actors to suggest different locations" ("Simon" 114). However, a significant amount of blood was used for the murder scene in the play (Sierz, *Rewriting* 131; Gardner par. 9). The director, thus, created a stark contrast between these minimalist sets and the abundance of blood, which seems to aim to shock the audience. Sierz marks this disturbing scene as "the most memorable image was when, after Jade's sickening murder, a wide pool of blood was quietly mopped up by the actors. As well as being a searing moment in the play, this scene gave them trouble" (*Rewriting* 131).

In accordance with Stephens's abovementioned intention, the scenes of physical and psychological violence in the play and the critical opposition to the anti-war movement indeed made even the "Court's largely liberal regulars" uncomfortable. As *The New York Times* theatre critic Matt Wolf reports, "Gray blurred the boundaries between art and life to such a disturbing extent that audiences at the end had to pause a moment before applauding. On opening night the leading man, Daniel Mays, even spun himself quickly around before taking his bow, as if that action might in an instant shed the scar tissue in which so scary a play is steeped" (par. 6). Charles Spencer, another critic from *The Telegraph*, who witnessed the audience being annoyed by the performance, reports on their reaction, stating "*Motortown* proves a deeply unsettling piece - so unsettling that several members of the first-night audience walked out - and one that taps potently into the troubled spirit of the times in which we live" (par. 5). The playwright Caridad Svich, expressing her own personal feelings instead of commenting on other viewers' reactions in an epistolary publication addressed to Simon Stephens in 2016, marks as follows: "The play made me angry. Risibly. In ways I could not quite name. At moments, I would put it down, and just try to put it out of mind, but I couldn't quite" (392). As understood from the notes of the critics, not all the audience shared the same view about the play and did not react in the same way. Similar to the varied audience response, theatre critics and researchers also have different approaches towards and interpretations of the play. One of the issues they disagree on is the source of Danny's tendency for physical and psychological violence. For example, Svich argues that Danny suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and exhibits violence accordingly (392). However, unlike Svich, *The Guardian* critic Lyn Gardner contends that Danny is inherently a violent individual,

and opposes establishing a connection between the Iraq War and his personal violence, saying "although the play is recklessly brave, its aim is sometimes that of the scatter gun, and in suggesting that Danny was a psychopath long before he went to Iraq, or perhaps even joined the army, Stephens undercuts the connection between personal violence and violence perpetrated in the name of the state" (par. 7). Similarly, Spencer emphasises the psychopathy that is already settled in Danny's character before the war, and argues that it is the character, not the message of the play, that is pro-war; therefore, contrary to Gardner, he does not find the play brave enough (par. 3-4). Spencer, who went to the theatre with the expectation of watching a radical play that deviates from the norm, expresses his disappointment, saying "[a] preview piece on *Motortown* suggested that Simon Stephens's new drama might turn out to be something rarer than the fabled unicorn - a genuinely Right-wing play" (par. 1). Despite being satisfied with the talents of the playwright and the performance of the actors and actresses, Spencer, who criticises certain aspects of the play, from "the silly choreographed routines with chairs between scenes" (par. 7) to Danny's characterisation, concludes his review by expressing his dissatisfaction, by noting, "[t]his is not an evening one is likely to forget in a hurry, though for all Stephens's undoubted talent, I fervently wish I could" (par. 13).

The setting of the play is kept quite simple. The exact time when the events take place is not clearly specified, it is only known that they occur after the Iraq War. Unlike the time, the places are clearly defined. Dagenham and Foulness Island are the named locations. Lee's apartment in Dagenham, whose exact location is not mentioned, and the hotel bar where Danny encounters Helen and Justin, are other places where the action of the play takes place.

Although the play possesses many elements of the Freytag's pyramid, its plot structure is not complete. The conversations in Lee's house in the first scene are the part where the problems are exposed. The visits to Marley, Tom and Paul constitute the rising action. The torture and murder of Jade constitute the climax of the story. Following the murder, encountering Justin and Helen and arguing with them are expected to be the falling action. Since the problems do not reach a resolution and Danny's journey ends open-ended, there is no resolution at the end of the play.

The play basically addresses three conflicts: Danny's internal conflict, his conflict with his family and his conflict with other established or potential families. The first of these refers to Danny's being torn between right and wrong due to his psychological problems and traumas. For example, in the fifth scene, he is determined to shoot Marley and has completed his preparations, but he cannot bear the possibility of losing her, lacks the courage, and ultimately gives up on this plan at the last moment. The conflict with his family stems from a mutual lack of love and attention. It is also possible to infer that they blame Danny for the actions he is alleged to have committed during the war.

The play does not deal with cheerful and colourful themes. The most prominent theme in the play is war and how war creates separations among people. Intermingled themes such as alienation, trauma and loneliness emerge as a result of the divisions caused by the war. Apart from that, "[t]he play is as much about class war as the Iraq War" (Sierz *Rewriting* 130). The lavish lifestyle of the young generation in England that is criticised from time to time in the play, especially through Paul, does not align with Danny's lower-class life. This is best observed in Danny's encounter with Helen and Justin, a middle-class couple. They are set apart from Danny both in terms of their financial means and their ideological differences.

The play features eight characters. The protagonist, Danny, as mentioned above, is a former soldier with psychological issues and gets involved in violence due to his feeling of alienation from society. His brother, Lee, who has autism and homosexual tendencies, is quite calm and mindful compared to him. Danny's ex-girlfriend, Marley, does not contribute much to the pro-war ideological background of the play but plays a functional role in addressing family issues. Tom, who sells the replica gun to Danny, represents society's detachment from national identity. He, unlike his mother who listens to English songs, is a fan of American rap music. He also mentions that Danny looks like American actors such as James Cagney and Leonardo DiCaprio when talking about his handsomeness. He offers Danny two American, one German, and one Taiwanese brand of guns, which further indicates his xenocentrism. Even though Paul has no action and is a paedophile, he is the character that reflects the criticism of the play on the social decay in England. He can be seen as the primary agent of Stephens's ventriloquism. He both

experiences the moral decline of society and explains it in long speeches. Paul's fourteen-year-old black girlfriend, Jade, represents both the irresponsible and insensitive young population and the changing demographics of England. The middle-class couple, Justin and Helen, are the most immoral people in Danny's eyes because they both participated in the anti-war protest and have a marginal relationship that is contrary to the traditional family structure. Except for Danny, the other characters appear in only one or two scenes, hence there is no character development observed in them.

The play is named after Dagenham, also known as Motortown, where Stephens once worked as a teacher, in Essex, "whose existence was historically dominated by the thriving Ford Car Factory" (Cotterell 148). The factory provides employment opportunities for the local people; hence its condition significantly affects their living standards and preferences. As in real life, the city's facilities are closely connected to people's lives in *Motortown*. Dan Rebellato explains, Stephens's works "are set in recognisable, contemporary, usually urban environments. *Herons* (2001) takes place beside a canal in East London, *Christmas* (2003) takes place in real time in an East London pub. *Country Music* (2004) follows its main character in and out of prison. *One Minute* (2003) is set in various locations across London, and indeed the city is in some ways its lead character" (174). Similarly, there is a resemblance between the city and the characters in *Motortown*. The general decline of Dagenham is attributed by Tom to the closure of the factory (26). The local people also get their share of this deterioration and begin to experience a moral collapse. Danny, who distinguishes himself from the rest of society in terms of morality, benefits from the war just like the city does. Innes describes the city as "the centre of the British auto industry, which ties in with the war-for-oil aspect of Iraq" (452). The functioning of the factory, the operation of the vehicles produced there and the earning of wages by the workers depend on waging war in Iraq and securing its oil. Just as the town needs the war, Danny also finds himself compelled to fight in Iraq to exist as an individual and express himself, protect his country and loved ones and earn money.

Alongside the anti-Iraq War view opposed by Stephens, political messages reflecting the alternative view he wants to convey can also be observed in the play. When the language

of the play is carefully examined, it is possible to infer that the play utilises some manipulation methods to impose that alternative view. In this regard, Watt refers to "Stephens's endorsements of minimalist stagecraft and lean dramatic narratives punctuated by gaps. These strategies are not intended to distance the audience for political reasons, but rather to encourage it to fill such gaps imaginatively" (50). Stephens does not fully allow the reader/audience to fill these gaps on their own; instead, he directs them using post-truth methods.

In *Motortown*, the English institution Stephens chooses to criticise is the family. On 15 February 2003, alongside individuals, many families participated in the anti-war march with great concern for possible losses. That is why Tony Blair, in a speech he made in the middle of the same year upon receiving a Congressional Gold Medal, used quite soft expressions to pacify the protesters. The Prime Minister, stating that their children did not die in vain, particularly paid tribute to the families of the fallen soldiers and those who risked their lives in this speech, saying "[a]nd our tribute to them should be measured in this way, by showing them and their families that they did not strive or die in vain, but that through their sacrifice future generations can live in greater peace, prosperity and hope" (qtd. in "Tony Blair" par. 2). Like the Prime Minister, Stephens, too, acknowledges the role of families in the anti-war movement, thus, he directs criticism at the post-truth discourses of the family institution while denouncing this movement.

The only voice in the play advocating the justness and necessity of the war belongs to Danny. Therefore, it can be safely argued that he is Stephens's spokesperson in terms of the ideological stance towards the war. Families, couples and individuals, on the other hand, oppose the war and the alleged horrific actions of the soldiers in Iraq, such as the cases of torture and maltreatment of the Iraqi prisoners. The families' discourse centres around the destruction caused by the war, its criminal nature and the hindrance of freedoms. No one asks Danny about what he went through in Iraq or the motivations behind his participation in the war. Therefore, the opinions of the families from Dagenham about the war are based not on objective facts but on rumours and distorted media reports. Parallel to the slogans of the anti-war march, their discourse also reflects views with which they feel an emotional affinity; that is, they embrace post-truth

discourses. Thus, Stephens criticises the families' indifferent attitudes towards the reasons for the involvement of the British army in the process, as well as the families' post-truth anti-war discourses. According to him, it is not the war that should be criticised, but the people who do not understand and internalise the necessity of the war. Therefore, it can be said that "[w]hile many critics were content to read *Motortown* – and specifically the murderous violence of its protagonist, Danny – as a standard critique of the dehumanizing effects of war, Stephens is clear that any criticism espoused by the play is directed less towards the army than the culture of which it is an extension" (Bolton, *Theatre* 54). Stephens has significant issues with the aforementioned culture and wants the reader/audience to confront these problems and view them from his perspective. In other words, the playwright aims to present his personal truths to others. His subjective views are most clearly interspersed in the long social criticisms made by the paedophile Paul, one of the most morally-lost characters in the play. Paul, aware of the role of post-truth in manipulating the public, comments on the use of post-truth, saying, "[t]he notion of a War on Terror is completely ingenious. It is now possible to declare war on an abstraction. On an emotional state" (35). Paul, who argues that post-truth political discourses have become widespread, sometimes appears to be Stephens's spokesperson. Paul's critique of people's lavish lifestyles is similar to Stephens's views about society above. Stephens complains about the moral decline in society, about politics, about the aimlessness of youth; so does Paul. Similarly, Stephens criticises the families for their roles in the anti-war movement; so does Paul. Considering the similarity between Stephens's criticism and that of Paul, it is quite useful to pay attention to the character's following description of the decline of the family institution: "The family unit seems like an act of belligerence. *All* long-term relationships are doomed or ironic. Therefore sexuality must be detached. But, because of fucking AIDS, detached sexuality is suicidal" (35). In the play, the family institution is criticised not only through Paul's words but also by other means. The play utilises a post-truth discourse in presenting the playwright's views. Stephens aims to impose his subjective truths as if they were objective facts, and for this purpose, he presents views in his work with which his reader/audience may feel an emotional affinity. For instance, before making an exaggerated post-truth portrayal about the poor, Paul begins his speech with the rhetorical question that "[y]ou want to know the truth about the poor in this country?" (36). Yet, his description of the poor is

based not on objective facts but on his emotional biases, much like the definition of post-truth by Oxford Languages and the arguments of Lee McIntyre and researchers who share his views.

The participation of families in the protests pushes Stephens to question the nature of the family institution. The notion of family, which traditionally encourages communal living based on mutual assistance, solidarity and protection, loses its functions in the play. The families that Stephens has in mind tend to protect their children in the domestic sphere rather than against global threats. However, they seem to ignore the condition that international military intervention in Iraq is inevitable for domestic security. Thus, families who believe they are protecting their children by protesting this operation are depicted as mistaken. Moreover, families can no longer protect their children even at the home. According to the playwright, the crimes allegedly committed in Iraq are not the soldiers' own faults, but the fault of the environments in which they were raised. In this context, he states that "I think it is easy to imagine the military as being hermetically sealed and separate from our culture, to view military atrocities as being something that are not our fault [. . .] but it is a myth. If those boys are violent, chaotic or morally insecure, it's because they are a product of a violent, chaotic and morally insecure culture. It's inaccurate to dismiss them as being part of something else" (qtd. in Bolton, "Simon" 113). Based on this statement, it can be concluded that Stephens blames not the individuals who exhibit violence – in this case, an ex-soldier who fought in Iraq – but the families who raised them. Therefore, what Stephens criticises in the play is the attitudes of the families towards the Iraq War and their post-truth discourses.

One of Stephens's criticisms of the family institution is the prejudice of Danny's parents against him, which stems from his being a soldier. The mother and father figures, who already show no signs of love or respect for their son, have trust issues with Danny. For instance, the following dialogue between Lee and Danny is an indicator of this distrust:

> Lee: I spoke to Mum.
> Danny: Right.
> Lee: I told them to tell anybody who asks that you were with them all day.
> Danny: Right.

> Lee: She said she would. She said that Dad would too. She said it's not a problem. They've not been out. They've not spoken to anybody.
> Danny: Which is lucky.
> Lee: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. It is. Yes. They won't ask.
> Danny: What?
> Lee: Mum and Dad. They won't ask why they've got to lie for you.
> Danny: No.
> Lee: They'll just do it. They'll do whatever I ask them to. (67)

When Lee simply asks his parents just to tell people that Danny was with them all day, they do not ask if there is any problem because the person in question is Danny, whom they believe might really have committed a crime. Danny is now an untrustworthy person in their eyes because he chose to participate in the war instead of protesting it. Their discourses are shaped by this post-truth view because the possibility of Danny's involvement in trouble is more in line with their preconceived thoughts and sentiments about the war and soldiers.

It is evident in the play that Danny and his parents have been having disagreements for a long time, which is why they rarely see each other. The war has driven them even further apart. Danny, who believes in the virtue and necessity of fighting against global terrorism and international threats, joined the war. However, his parents do not support his decision due to the unpleasant nature of the war and do not embrace his views. The inability of the family members to get along causes Danny to no longer tolerate his parents' words, as seen in the following dialogue:

> Tom: Nice. You not going see your folks?
> Danny: I don't think so, Tom, no.
> Tom: They still up in Becontree, are they?
> Danny: They are mate, yeah.
> Tom: How come you're not gonna go and see them?
> Danny: 'Cause they do my fucking head in, Tom. (23)

The traditional family structure that supports each other is now facing destruction. Approximately half a year after the British forces' involvement in the war, Tony Blair acknowledges this ideological divide in a speech, saying, "I know this course of action has produced deep divisions of opinion in our country. But I know also the British people will now be united in sending our armed forces our thoughts and prayers. They are the

finest in the world and their families and all of Britain can have great pride in them" (qtd. in "'Britain Has Never'" par. 3). Blair here invites parents to embrace their soldier children because the loss of family unity will disrupt the operation and lower the morale of soldiers fighting on the front. However, these divisions continue due to the lack of common public support. Even Danny's compassionate brother Lee is affected by the divisive power brought by the war. Lee, who thinks he once shared similar characteristics with his brother, now believes they are no longer alike. He explains this situation metaphorically, suggesting as follows: "We've not got the same hair. Or the same bone structure. Or the same eyes. Or anything. We did once. But now we don't" (15). Even though Lee is more embracing towards Danny compared to the other characters, he now begins to see him as a different person. He has even formed this perspective before Danny murders Jade. Therefore, it is possible to claim that he believes what changed Danny is the war, and that all members of the family, except the protagonist, view the war as a divisive factor.

Apart from Danny's own family, the attitude of Marley, a member of the family he dreams of having, is also a point of criticism for Stephens. Although Danny misses the opportunity to be a couple with Marley, it is possible to consider her as a member of a potential family. Similar to this attribution, Wierzoch states that "[h]e meets his ex-girlfriend Marley, friend Tom, and the dubious Paul, who represent home on familial, local, and national levels" (158). However, even the opening sentence of the play shows that the concept of proper family does not and will not exist in the play. In the first line of the play, Lee, speaking of Marley, says to Danny that "[s]he doesn't want to see you. She told me to tell you" (5). Despite Marley's indifference, Danny sees her as potential family. As can be understood from their dialogues, the two were lovers only three months years ago (19-20). Marley has detached herself from the negative effects of this relationship, but Danny has managed to maintain his hope and loyalty to her over the years. Although he sent letters to Marley while serving in the military in Iraq, he says she never responded to him (16). In fact, her indifference is not only towards Danny, as a soldier, but also towards the entire phenomenon of war. While Danny believes he fought for his nation and families, Marley, with whom he dreams of establishing a family, is not interested in the war at all. Throughout their conversations spanning two scenes, she does

not show any curiosity about Danny's experiences in Iraq and never asks any questions about the conditions there. Moreover, she does not identify the war in any way with positive concepts such as heroism, virtue, liberation or glory. On the contrary, as can be seen in the following dialogue, she has a disparaging view of military experience:

> Marley: Don't they sort you out with somewhere?
> Danny: No. I paid myself out.
> Marley: So they just leave you?
> Danny: They do, yeah.
> Marley: To fend for yourself?
> Danny: Yeah.
> Marley: Well, you should be good at that, shouldn't you? You're trained for that, aren't you, Danny? You could go to the Marshes. Dig a hole.
> Danny: I could, yeah.
> Marley: You'd love that, you, I bet. (20-21)

Her notion of a soldier connotes primitive behaviours and instinct of personal survival. She fails to understand that Danny went to Iraq to pursue honourable ideals, and considers soldiers as worthy of living in marshes. Thus, along with the actual family institution, the post-truth discourse also becomes a target of Stephens's criticism.

Glenn Frankel from *The Washington Post* conveys his observation about the participation of families in the march at Hyde Park as "[t]he demonstrators seemed to represent a cross-section of modern British society. There were entire families -- fathers and mothers with small children in tow -- and elderly people moving slowly but deliberately" (par. 8). The reason why Stephens criticises the anti-war view through the institution of the family is the large-scale participation of families in the massive march on 15 February 2003 and the subsequent ones. The playwright, who opposes the self-contradictory attitude of the families participating in the demonstrations, as mentioned above, rejects the protesters' portrayal of themselves as peace-loving and virtuous and the army going to Iraq as malevolent. He advocates the view that society should be seen as a whole with its rights and wrongs: "I think it is easy to imagine the military as being hermetically sealed and separate from our culture, to view military atrocities as being something that are not our fault [. . .] but it is a myth. If those boys are violent, chaotic or morally insecure, it's because they are a product of a violent, chaotic and morally insecure culture. It's inaccurate to dismiss them as being part of something else" (qtd. in Bolton, *Theatre* 54).

Although Danny tries to reintegrate into the society he is a part of, he feels greatly disappointed and alienated. The reason for his disappointment is the change in society, demographically, ideologically and morally. For him, "it's not the Government but the anti-war protesters who are the enemy" (P. Taylor par. 4). He attributes all the matters he hates about this transformed society to the protesters. In the play, the protesters are depicted not through truths, but through overgeneralisations and emotionally manipulative statements. In other words, just as the family institution uses post-truth discourses in favour of the pro-war view, Stephens criticises this anti-war movement with a counter post-truth discourse. His manipulation is obvious in Danny's following outpouring beside Jade's corpse:

> They're shrivelled up home counties kids and they march against the war and think they're being radical. They're lying. They're monkeys. They're French exchange students. They're Australians in London wrecked on cheap wine and shite beer. They're Hasidic Jews in swimming pools. They're lesbian cripples with bus passes. They're niggers, with their faces all full of their mama's jerk chicken, shooting each other in the back down Brixton high street until the lot of them have disappeared. They're little dickless Paki boys training to be doctors or to run corner shops and smuggling explosives in rucksacks onto the top decks of buses. It's not funny, Jade. I'm not joking. I fought a war for this lot. (53)

This hate speech, which is not objective in any way, aims to appeal to the sentiments of the reader/audience. The mention of many nationalities in Danny's xenophobic statements indicates his belief that the English national identity is beginning to disappear. His implication that minorities are engaged in frivolous activities points to a moral collapse in society. Danny opposes all these allegedly corrupt communities ideologically and associates them with the anti-war march. This multi-layered change in English society, which he fought for and tried to protect, leads him to a great disappointment.

The critique of the family institution in Stephens's play extends from Danny's own family to potential families, and then to a completely stranger couple. He targets all of them to strengthen his own argument as they represent people from different layers of society with anti-war views. It is possible to interpret the playwright's depiction of families as appealing not to the reader/audience's pure intellect and reason, but to their emotions. First of all, stemming from Stephens's stance that can be described as pro-war, the play

suggests that Danny's psychopathic behaviour is not a consequence of the war. As Sierz argues, "Danny's deprived background, and his own family, are the cause of his problems. If this seems like amoral cop-out, it is also a powerful image of a morally chaotic nation. When the middle classes have nightmares, they feature characters like Danny" (*Rewriting* 131). Danny's own family is not the only source of his problems, but they are the fundamental source as his parents are depicted through post-truth discourse that may evoke negative sentiments in the reader/audience. The aim here is to defame these people and to encourage the reader/audience to distance themselves from the characters' ideas. As in Stephens's other plays, the parents in *Motortown* are defined by their absence. The playwright comments on this choice as follows: "In my plays the family is quite central [. . .] If you look at the 'blood-and-sperm' plays, as the German critics call them, the family is defined by its absence. Apart from Martin McDonagh's plays, where the bonds are perverse, you never see parents and children on stage together in those plays" (qtd. in Innes 445). In addition to never appearing together on the stage, Danny does not communicate with his parents directly through any means of communication. It is left to Lee to convey their messages.

Another characteristic of the parents is their lack of sincere pride in their children and their non-embracing attitude towards them. Besides keeping Danny under psychological pressure, their relationship with Lee is not as good as it appears, even though they are in contact with him. The feelings of the family members towards each other are presented both explicitly and implicitly in the following conversation:

> Lee: She would never have married you, would she though, Danny? You were completely deluding yourself.
> I'm so much cleverer than you, in real life, it's embarrassing.
> When you were on television. I was incredulous. You couldn't even finish your sentences.
> 'It's important to think that we're making a difference. People have no idea what life was like here under Saddam's regime.'
> Thing is. Mum and Dad were extremely proud of you. They had arguments. Over which one of them you took after and which one I took after.
> He's ashamed of me, Dad. Which is ironic. People used to say I was a paedophile. Largely because of my glasses. I think he used to believe them. (71)

According to Lee's claim, their father thinks Lee is a paedophile largely due to his glasses, but he does not mention other reasons that he perceives as minor ones. Allegedly, the absent father figure judges his son by his appearance and rumours, rather than forming an opinion by knowing him closely himself. However, Lee's opinions are not entirely reliable as there is a high probability of errors in his judgment due to his neurological and developmental condition characterised by its impact on his social interactions, communication skills and learning abilities. One indication of this probability is Lee's belief that their parents are extremely proud of Danny. Danny's interview on the television is mentioned in three other scenes besides this one. These scenes focus on the fact that the interview has created a negative impression of Danny. Yet, lacking the ability to judge their thoughts accurately, Lee marks, "Mum and Dad were extremely proud of you. They had arguments. Over which one of them you took after and which one I took after" (71) although Danny was not in a position to be proud of. In relation to Danny's interview on the television which tarnished his image, Lee states: "It didn't look anything like you" (8) in the first scene; in the third scene, Tom comments, "[o]ther people said they thought you looked a bit odd. […] Said it looked nothing like you" (24); and in the fifth scene, Marley remarks, "I heard you could barely speak. Didn't look anything like you" (41). The fact that the reporter who did the interview was Paxo – that is, Jeremy Paxman – seems to have put Danny in a difficult situation because Paxman's statements and programs targeted Blair's policies regarding the Iraq War (Mesure par. 1-10; "BBC Rewind" n. p.). Given Paxman's confrontational style and critical stance, it is unlikely that Danny's parents would be extremely proud of the negative image Danny portrayed on screen. The arguments between their mother and father about which child takes after which parent – mentioned in the block quotation above – are probably negative disputes where they blame each other. This poor judgment of Lee is also noticed by Danny. In the same scene, by asking, "[d]o you think it's Mum and Dad's fault, what's happening to you? Is it genetic, do you think?" (70), Danny implies that Lee's neurological disorder might also be caused by their parents.

Another negative point in the portrayal of Danny's family is their irresponsibility and sudden deviations regarding ethical values. While Danny was defending his country and

nation, the very individuals who left him alone begin to protect him when he commits murder. Considering this dishonest attitude of the family, Wierzoch states that

> [h]e claims that he will call the police and turn Danny in but proves too weak to follow his alleged moral sensibility. When Danny returns home, all family members effectively back him—either through wilful ignorance or deliberate inaction. Thus, the family emerges as a space of complicity to the violence enacted by the returned soldier. The family is not apprehended as an affirmative ideal; instead, the familial community reappears as the 'act of belligerence' that the suspicious character of Paul had proclaimed earlier. (167)

Both Danny's parents and Lee, in a sense, become partners in crime. As previously explained, his parents do not even question why they need to lie for Danny. Thus, with this negative presentation of the family members, Stephens tries to prevent the reader/audience from viewing the families with sympathy.

The character of Marley, too, is depicted with negative traits to ensure that the reader/audience does not sympathise with her. Stephens intends for his reader/audience to feel cold towards the character in response to her indifferent attitude towards the war. Thus, since they do not harbour positive feelings towards the character, they may also distance themselves from her ideology. To achieve this, Stephens portrays Marley as an insensitive, cowardly, overly defensive and cold character. Although Danny sent her multiple letters while he was in the army, she never responded and left him alone in his challenge. When Danny returns to his country, she threatens to call the police on him and take him to court if he insists on seeing her. However, it is quite natural that the woman wants to protect herself from the physical and emotional violence of a psychopath like Danny. While opposing the anti-war views ideologically, Stephens drifts away from the realities of life. Presenting Marley's natural defensive reflexes as cowardice or wickedness can be seen as an expression of Stephens's anti-anti-war or pro-war sentiments. Additionally, the following dialogue is also indicative of Marley's negative characterisation:

> Danny: I can lie awake at night and imagine what it's like to kiss your face.
> Marley: Don't.
> Danny: You can too, I bet.

> Marley: This is ridiculous. You couldn't even get it up half the time. Could you, though? When you think about it. Came in about two seconds when you did. (21)

In traditional patriarchal societies, military service is often associated with masculinity. Therefore, Marley's rejection of male chauvinism and her sexual humiliation of Danny are significant in the playwright's post-truth attitude in presenting her anti-militarist mindset.

Although Paul is the one who most clearly expresses Stephens's social criticism, this character's view of the war does not coincide with that of Stephens. Paul sees terror as an abstraction and denies its existence. About his critical approach to the Iraq War, Watt says, "Paul's world view is cynical to say the least, and he contends, sounding a little like Jean Baudrillard when theorizing media simulation and the ascendance of the image, that at present a 'war on abstraction' is being waged (2009, 170). In his vernacular, the term 'abstraction' denotes an ideology, discourse, or social institution traditionally invoked to justify violence" (51). Since Paul represents the sceptical approach to the war in society, Stephens presents Paul with negative traits in order to undermine his credibility in the eyes of the reader/audience. Apart from personal issues such as his inclination towards alcohol, sexuality, pornography and wastefulness, Paul also has a negative image at the familial level. Stephens depicts this anti-war character as a paedophile; thus, he exploits the public sensitivity to convey his ideological messages. Paul's paedophilia is revealed both in his mindset and in his relationship with his fourteen-year-old girlfriend Jade. He asks Danny, "Can I ask you this? Do you ever get that feeling? When you're in, you're in, you're in say a, a, a, a bar or a restaurant or walking down a street, and you see a girl. A teenage girl. You see the nape of her neck. In her school uniform. With her friends. All pigtailed. And you just want to reach out and touch. You ever get that?" (33). Paul's having perverted thoughts can be linked with Stephens's attempt to manipulate people by irritating them. Moreover, Paul's perversion is not merely a fondness for little girls; Stephens diminishes his image in the eyes of the reader/audience by depicting him as someone who actually abuses a fourteen-year-old girl.

Jade, who forms an incompatible couple with Paul, is the target of xenophobia and misogyny in the play. The anti-war community included in Danny's hate speech over

Jade's dead body also includes her. Therefore, she becomes a victim whom Danny "terrorises, tortures in a replay of searching female suicide bombers in Basra, pours petrol over, and finally shoots, photographing each turn with his cell phone" (Innes 452-53). Danny's maltreatment of Jade resembles the tortures inflicted by soldiers on the detainees in Iraqi prisons. As stated in a stage direction (51), Danny even imitates the notorious thumbs-up gesture used by Lynndie England, who became well-known for her photos with naked and tortured prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison ("Symbol" par. 3). Coste explains the controversial discourse concerning the treatment of Jade, arguing, "[t]hrough the staging of terror and humiliation, Danny imprints on Jade's body his need for dominance over other minorities. The homophobic and misogynistic stance that pervades Danny's discourse throughout the play also points to a violence stemming from a toxic representation of masculinity" ("Frames" par. 18). By torturing and murdering Jade, Danny not only purifies the nation from a misfit, but also eliminates someone he perceives as a social threat, and punishes Paul, who denies the existence of terror and the necessity of the war.

As Jade is of non-English origin and underage, Paul and she lack the legal, ideological, traditional, moral and biological qualities to form what is considered a decent English family. Stephens, thus, seems to convey the message that possessing traditional family values is not possible in this society. In a similar example, Danny also lacks the qualities to establish a family due to his poor sexual performance. He has the replica gun, a phallic symbol, turned into a real weapon but takes no action regarding his own unhealthy phallus because he finally gives up on any familial relationship due to the corruption in the contemporary society. His inability to secure a relationship with Marley, his only hope in this regard, fuels this thought.

Justin and Helen are the only characters indicated to have participated in the anti-war march at Hyde Park. For this reason, Stephens's characterisation of this couple is different from the others. As these characters are the most obvious representatives of the view that the playwright is against, they are presented through more diverse post-truth discourses. In relation to the couple's role in the play, Cotterell notes that "the strongest hint of innate social decay seems when Danny meets a pair of middle-class and middle-aged swingers

in Southend" (148). Helen finds Danny attractive and is eager to have sex with him. Her husband, Justin, is the one who brings this invitation to Danny and is willing to both take part in and watch the intercourse. Their openness to unconventional sexual experiences despite being a married couple with children makes them immoral in Danny's opinion. Their lifestyle, which undermines the traditional family structure, leads Danny to disillusionment. The homosexual relationships with other soldiers which Danny fabricates, as if he had experienced in Iraq, are met with tolerance by Justin, which in Danny's eyes, makes Justin not only a cuckolded husband but also gay:

> Danny: In our platoon. You could go, sometimes, into downtown Basra.
> Justin: Really?
> Danny: Or not even bother. You could just stay in the barracks. Fuck each other. That would happen. You can't blame people, can you?
> […]
> Danny: Smell of a nice bit of aftershave. Nice bit of stubble on a chin. All the same with your eyes closed, isn't it? There is a certain attraction, I think.
> Justin: I think so, too.
> Danny: I thought you would. I was lying. Yer gay cunt. (64)

Homophobic Danny mocks the characters based on their sexual identities as well as their sexual preferences. When he realises that they are a liberal couple as they are open to both threesome sex and gay relationships, he asks them if they participated in the anti-war march, because he categorises as anti-war all the groups that are in the minority in society and that he despises. Upon learning that they did participate in the march, as he suspected, he spews hatred at them:

> Danny: Did you go on the march?
> Justin: On the –
> Danny: On the anti-war march, up Hyde Park, did you two go on that?
> Justin: Yes. We did.
> […]
> Danny: I wish I'd been there.
> Justin: Do you?
> Danny: With my SA80. Sprayed the lot of yer. Stick that up yer arse and smoke it, Damon Albarn, yer fucking pikey cunt.
> […]
> Danny: I come back home. It's a completely foreign country. (64-65)

The couple maintains their calmness in the face of Danny's rage, but the protagonist is unable to quell his anger. What really triggers him, as Wierzoch notes, is not their openness to extramarital sexual relationships, but their participation in the anti-war march (166). Danny, perceiving the couple's calmness as insensitivity, which further infuriates him, wants to show them the videos of Ken Bigley and Nick Berg on his mobile phone. The videos he refers to show the murders of the named individuals by extremist groups in Iraq. By incorporating the names of these real victims of terrorism into his play, Stephens reminds the reader/audience of why the soldiers were sent to Iraq. Thus, he helps remove the suspicions about the torturing soldiers, thereby promoting the post-truth discourses such as the liberation of Iraq, the fight against terrorism and the protection of the homeland and nation. Justin and Helen's refusal to watch the videos of the murders – perhaps due to their sickening content – implies that the opponents of the war prefer to turn a blind eye to the stories of the victims.

Having achieved psychological and moral superiority, Danny then seeks to establish physical dominance by challenging Justin to arm wrestling. Although he is weak in terms of sexual power, he wants to prove himself in physical strength, as the play aims to restore his masculine image. While holding Justin's arm, he acquits himself as a soldier and claims his manliness, exclaiming, "I'm not apologising for anything. See me. I'm as innocent as a baby. I'm a fucking hero! I'm a fucking action hero. I'm John fucking Wayne! I'm Sylvester Stallone! I'm fucking James Bond, me!" (66). Danny gains every advantage over the anti-war advocates by defeating Justin in arm wrestling. He then further demeans Justin, saying, "[t]hat was fucking easy" (66). The scene's conclusion at this point is one of Stephens's post-truth strategies, as he aims to leave the reader/audience with a memory of this couple, who represent the anti-war stance, as defeated and diminished. Additionally, despite mentioning the march, the play does not allow the characters to explain their reasons for participating in it. The couple is thus denied the opportunity to present and defend their own anti-war arguments.

After settling old scores with everyone who he sees or believes is against the war and punishing them, Danny returns to Lee and seeks peace at home. For him, the outside world is no longer the old England that he remembers, with its national identity,

traditions, way of thinking and moral structure. As Gardner describes, "[i]t is an England where the 'war on terror' has become a war waged using the tactics of the terrorists. It is also a place of dubious moralities, small-time arms dealers and middle class swingers and anti-war protesters" (par. 3) any more. Danny regrets not having fought in the war, but having fought for this changing society. In relation to this view, Stephens reserves an undeniably pro-war manifesto for the end of the play. By implying that the torture cases were isolated incidents, Danny tries to justify the war and whitewash the notorious British soldiers who took part in the tortures in Iraq as follows:

> In Basra, when it all kicked off with the prisoners, I didn't do any of it. I never touched nobody. I had the rules, pinned above my head. My idiot's guide to the Geneva Convention pinned to the head of my bed. They used to call me a pussy cunt. It never used to bother me. I wish I'd told somebody. I might, still. I wish I'd joined in. I would've liked that.
> I don't blame the war.
> The war was all right. I miss it.
> It's just you come back to this. (74)

After emphasising how virtuous a soldier he was by not mistreating prisoners, Danny laments that being such a good person for this society is no longer necessary. He regrets not participating in the tortures. This situation can also be interpreted as a shift to a right-wing mindset for a moment by Stephens due to the London bombings while writing the play. As explained above, he himself already expresses feeling confused during that period.

In conclusion, in *Motortown*, Simon Stephens criticises the post-truth discourse of the family institution about the Iraq War and presents his own discourse to the reader/audience. His criticism is directed at those who are against the war and participate in the protests. Especially in the shadow of the terrorist attacks, Stephens cannot understand the opposition to a war one of whose primary purposes is said to be to eradicate terrorism. Due to his ideological confrontation with families, he challenges the post-truth narratives that families propagate, such as the war being evil, bringing destruction to individuals and societies, and being built on lies. In doing so, he primarily depicts the negative attitudes of families and couples, beside individuals, towards the war and soldiers, personified in this case by Danny. However, while conveying his pro-war

messages, quite ironically, he prefers to utilise a counter post-truth narrative. Therefore, his strategy in the play is self-contradictory because he uses post-truth as a counter-weapon, the very thing he criticises.

CONCLUSION

From the analyses and argumentations regarding *Black Watch* by Gregory Burke, *How Many Miles to Basra?* by Colin Teevan and *Motortown* by Simon Stephens, it is understood that the paradoxical approach to post-truth discourses in contemporary British and Irish plays, particularly those addressing the Iraq War, should be revisited for a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes of the playwright towards the war. In this context, Burke, Teevan and Stephens ostensibly aim to criticise particular institutions' manipulative post-truth discourses and strategies in relation to the Iraq War; however, ironically, they utilise their own post-truth narratives to disseminate their own opinions on the war. This ironic duality raises a significant question: does art imitate life, or does life imitate art? In pursuit of the answer to these interconnected questions, this dissertation critically analyses how Burke, Teevan and Stephens demonstrate the power of storytelling and creating alternative truths through post-truth, and also how they aim to exert their influence on personal beliefs and perception of reality. Regardless of where they position themselves in terms of their stance on the war, their plays are not passive reflections of contemporary politics but aim to be active participants in shaping public discourse. This political intention is where the idea of art imitating life and vice versa gains prominence. Their plays are emotionally-charged and ideologically manipulative. Thus, while reflecting the actual manipulation of truth, they also contribute to it by imbuing their reader/audience with their own discourses through post-truth.

The plays of Burke and Teevan aim to manipulate the mindset of their reader/audience by highlighting feelings of sympathy and compassion, against the pro-war institutional discourses of the military and the media. Due to their socio-political messages reinforcing the anti-war sentiments prevalent among the majority of the public and their being compatible with the public's existing views on the war, their plays, *Black Watch* and *How Many Miles to Basra?*, effectively use counter post-truth discourses as a tool to disseminate their views. On the other hand, Stephens aims to challenge the reader/audience's preconceived opinions and beliefs by criticising the anti-war discourse of the family institution. Although he has a pro-Iraq War stance, unlike Burke and Teevan, who oppose the war, he similarly utilises emotional appeal and post-truth

ideological manipulation techniques to advocate pro-war views. This reliance on emotional and ideological appeal is not incidental but rather a key feature of post-truth. By imposing manipulative and subjective views on the reader/audience rather than focusing on factual accuracy, these playwrights are not merely presenting a narrative; they actually prioritise a counter stance and aim to establish their own ideological supremacy. The post-truth engagement becomes a powerful tool for them to fortify their ideological views, be it anti-war or pro-war. Thus, they demonstrate the potency of post-truth as a tool for shaping public perception of the Iraq War.

Art holds a mirror to society, yet it also holds the power to reshape what it reflects. It is through their plays' power of influencing masses that these playwrights assert their authority – or "author/ity" – in the cultural discourse on truth. The authority of these playwrights comes not only from their ability to create interesting works of art, but also from their willingness to engage in politics. In drama or on the stages, the monopoly of conveying a message, refuting opposing views, informing people, deceiving or persuading them is entirely in the hands of the playwright. This authority places the playwright in a position of influence, especially in plays addressing political matters. In the post-truth era, as the clash of political ideologies is intensified, artistic narratives are increasingly weaponised to serve political ends. Therefore, the role of the playwright becomes even more critical. They encourage – or even force – the reader/audience to question the discourses presented by those in power in the political arena and to recognise the potential for manipulation in their rhetoric. Burke, Teevan and Stephens engage in a power struggle against the above-mentioned institutions by using the tools of the art world they dominate, namely plays. They imply that they warn the reader/audience against the manipulations of power-holders. However, since those power-holders and their discourses are also the product of these playwrights' own creativity, the real authority that needs to be criticised is the playwrights themselves.

Burke, Teevan and Stephens present their narratives as counter-myths to the institutional myth-making that either glorifies or denounces the war and its impact on individuals and society. By satirising the myth of the Scots being natural-born warriors, Burke deconstructs the discourse of the military institution. Similarly, Teevan exposes the

media's myth of noble deaths of the Irish soldiers in Iraq. Stephens's stance towards the war is different from theirs; he questions the myth that war is a source of evil. These playwrights seem to be strongly against established myths concerning the war; however, they create their own counter-discourses that could be seen as a new form of myth-making. This raises a critical question: Can any narrative truly escape becoming a myth? Is it possible to subvert established myths without creating new ones? The plays in question encourage the reader/audience to reconsider the authenticity of institutional discourses by presenting a discourse that is both a critique and a reimagination. This act of counter-myth-making is not merely a rejection of the old ones but a creation of an alternative view that invites the reader/audience to question and redefine their perceptions of truth and fiction. While Burke, Teevan and Stephens aim to scrutinise the mythical approach to warfare, their approaches do not exempt them from the criticism that they, too, are involved in a form of myth-making. Their plays have a significant and influential role in the construction of reality as they shape and reshape the myths that define people's perception of the realities of the war.

In the contemporary era, the traditional supremacy of factual accuracy over sentiments and belief systems has been inverted. Through their stories and themes, plays reveal this shift and provide their reader/audience with a commentary. In this regard, the plays studied in this research are not just fictional stories about the Iraq War; they are also a manifestation of how political discourses are constructed, and how truth is often subordinate to emotional and ideological appeals. They uncover the strategies in which public opinion and perception are shaped and manipulated in contemporary society. By exposing the post-truth methods of the selected institutions, Burke, Teevan and Stephens draw attention to institutional mass deception. It is clear that in the post-truth era, the power to persuade often outweighs the pursuit of objective truth. However, it is not suggested in this dissertation that the playwrights are involved in deliberate deception or manipulation. Rather, they take the advantage of the obscure distinction between truth and fantasy, reality and perception, and factual and visceral. This controversial situation raises difficult questions about the role of the playwright in the world of the post-truth era. Should playwrights merely reflect the behavioural patterns of society and individuals? Or do they have a duty to comply with certain standards of truth and

objectivity, even at the risk of diminishing the emotional and intellectual impact of their work? This dissertation does not aim to provide definitive answers to these questions, but as illustrated in the main chapters, the statements of the writers and directors indicate that they have taken on the duty of conveying the truth. Yet, whose truth are they presenting? The plays are means of expression for the ethical choices of the playwrights regarding their different attitudes towards the war. Due to their claims of presenting the truth against post-truth, the playwrights in question are expected to be extremely cautious while showing both the elasticity of the truth and the ethical issues of its presentation. In a world where post-truth discourses are frequently used to manipulate the emotions and mindset of the public, especially on sensitive issues like war, the ethical responsibilities of playwrights in trying to influence the public are an important topic of debate. Of course, playwrights are free to exercise their art, determine the content and messages of their plays, and decide on their discourses. However, trying to impose personal views through post-truth with the claim of conveying the truth to the reader/audience is quite problematic. Therefore, the employment of post-truth discourses by Burke, Teevan and Stephens requires a thorough scrutiny of the ethical limits of artistic expression. The playwrights' reliance on emotional and intellectual appeal to challenge or reinforce specific perspectives on the war presents an ethical dilemma: Does the end justify the means? Is it acceptable to adopt the very post-truth strategies and techniques to reveal the mechanisms of institutional deception and manipulation? This performative contradiction – the simultaneous condemnation and utilisation of post-truth – places an ethical burden and responsibility on the playwrights.

As the military, the media and the family institutions have a significant impact on public opinion through their post-truth discourses, the post-truth discourses of these selected plays about the Iraq War have similar consequences. Burke, Teevan and Stephens aim to replace the views instilled in the reader/audience by means of these institutions with an alternative view in accordance with their own personal beliefs. Consequently, the reader/audience is trapped in a cycle of criticism and acceptance of subjective information as truth. They are left to ponder: if the institution's narrative is a construct, can an alternative narrative claim any greater truth? A careful reader/audience approaches both the institutional and artistic discourses from a critical perspective, knowing that objective

truths are attained not through emotionally-appealing post-truth discourses but through information that appeals to reason. However, this ideal situation does not always occur because people tend to accept views that comply with their established beliefs as true. The varying reader/audience reactions to *Black Watch*, *How Many Miles to Basra?* and *Motortown* illustrate people's selective attitude towards post-truth discourses. While Burke and Teevan achieved great success by means of post-truth, Stephens did not, as he saw post-truth only as a one-way tool of communication. However, post-truth usually implies a mutual relation, involving not just the willingness of the speaker but also that of the addressee in the process of manufacturing consent. Stephens ignored the reader/audience's role in the acceptance of post-truth. As his play presented views that challenged the reader/audience's established beliefs rather than views they were inclined to accept, it did not draw as much interest as the others.

Another point to consider when discussing the attitudes of Burke, Teevan and Stephens towards the war is the connection between their national identities and their views on the war. Burke, a Scot, and Teevan, an Irishman, adopt an anti-war stance, while Stephens, an Englishman, adopts a pro-war stance. Burke and Teevan emphasise the themes of Scottishness and Irishness in their plays and do not criticise institutions belonging to their own nations. Instead, they criticise the British army and the BBC guided by the command echelon, the Parliament and the ministries located in England. In relation to this criticism, *Black Watch* and *How Many Miles to Basra?* refer to the English colonial history, indicating that Burke and Teevan consider the Iraq War as a new phase of English colonialism. Due to the painful experiences of the Scots and the Irish in the distant and recent past, Burke and Teevan oppose the war in their plays. On the other hand, by highlighting the English national identity in *Motortown*, Stephens does not oppose the war but supports it. According to him, war is necessary to maintain the standards of accustomed life. He seems to believe in a sort of new English imperialism and colonialism, just as his nation did in its colonial history. Consequently, it can be safely assumed that the political stances of these playwrights on the Iraq War vary depending on their national identities and histories.

The last point that needs to be discussed is whether objective truth is possible. Before the post-truth era, in which lies and manipulation were normalised, perhaps visible reality or official statements could be considered accurate and objective. However, in this post-truth era, it is observed that fragments and manipulation of objective truth can distance people from a greater truth. In addition, the rapidly increasing state-sponsored disinformation, irresponsible and widespread use of social media, recent emergence of deepfake, artificial intelligence models and ultra-realistic image generators are dragging humanity from the actual reality to a virtual reality. Therefore, the possibility of the existence of objective truth and accessing it are decreasing day by day.

Finally, in *Black Watch*, *How Many Miles to Basra?* and *Motortown*, Gregory Burke, Colin Teevan and Simon Stephens try to lead the reader/audience to certain views under the cover of revealing the truth; however, they present these views, which are based not on objectivity but on personal beliefs, through post-truth. Therefore, as the reader/audience can be manipulated and deceived by the playwrights themselves, this dissertation focuses on showing how to recognise the post-truth traps in these selected plays. The Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022-present) and the Israel-Hamas War (October 2023-present) may also be the subjects of plays in the near future. If some new plays attempt to criticise these parties' post-truth discourses and use a counter post-truth discourse in their assessment, the analyses, interpretations and arguments in this dissertation may prove useful.

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APPENDIX 1. ORIGINALITY REPORT

	HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ	Doküman Kodu *Form No.*	FRM-DR-21
		Yayım Tarihi *Date of Pub.*	22.11.2023
	FRM-DR-21 Doktora Tezi Orijinallik Raporu *PhD Thesis Dissertation Originality Report*	Revizyon No *Rev. No.*	00
		Revizyon Tarihi *Rev.Date*	

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞINA

Tarih: 05/02/2024

Tez Başlığı*: **Irak Savaşı Hakkındaki Seçili Britanya ve İrlanda Tiyatro Oyunlarında Kurumlara Ait Gerçek Sonrası Söyleme Oyun Yazarlarının İronik Eleştirisi**

Yukarıda başlığı verilen tezimin a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 142 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 02/02/2024 tarihinde şahsım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda işaretlenmiş filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı %4'tür.

Uygulanan filtrelemeler**:

1. ☒ Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç
2. ☒ Kaynakça hariç
3. ☒ Alıntılar hariç
4. ☐ Alıntılar dâhil
5. ☒ 5 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tezimin herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumlarda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

Tarih ve İmza

Öğrenci Bilgileri				
Ad-Soyad	Güven ÇAĞAN		**Öğrenci No**	N16146764
Enstitü Anabilim Dalı	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı			
Programı	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Doktora Programı			
E-posta/Telefon				
Statüsü	**Doktora**	☒	**Lisans Derecesi ile (Bütünleşik) Dr**	☐

DANIŞMAN ONAYI

UYGUNDUR.
Prof. Dr. A. Deniz BOZER

*Tez **Almanca** veya **Fransızca** yazılıyor ise bu kısımda tez başlığı **Tez Yazım Dilinde** yazılmalıdır
**Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orjinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları İkinci bölüm madde (4)/3'te de belirtildiği üzere: Kaynakça hariç, Alıntılar hariç/dahil, 5 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç (Limit match size to 5 words) filtreleme yapılmalıdır.

	HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ	Doküman Kodu *Form No.*	FRM-DR-21
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	FRM-DR-21 Doktora Tezi Orijinallik Raporu *PhD Thesis Dissertation Originality Report*	Revizyon No *Rev. No.*	00
		Revizyon Tarihi *Rev.Date*	

TO HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT O ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Date: 05/02/2024

Thesis Title (In English): **The Playwrights' Ironic Criticism of the Post-Truth Discourse of Institutions in Selected British and Irish Plays about the Iraq War**
Thesis Title (In German/French):……………………………………………………………………………………

According to the originality report obtained by myself by using the Turnitin plagiarism detection software and by applying the filtering options checked below on 02/02/2024 for the total of 142 pages including the a) Title Page, b) Introduction, c) Main Chapters, and d) Conclusion sections of my thesis entitled above, the similarity index of my thesis is 4%.

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I respectfully submit this for approval.

Date and Signature

Student Information				
Name-Surname	Güven ÇAĞAN		**Student Number**	N16146764
Department	English Language and Literature			
Programme	PhD in English Language and Literature Programme			
E-mail/Phone Number				
Status	**PhD** ☒		**Combined MA/MSc-PhD** ☐	

SUPERVISOR'S APPROVAL

APPROVED
Prof. Dr. A. Deniz BOZER

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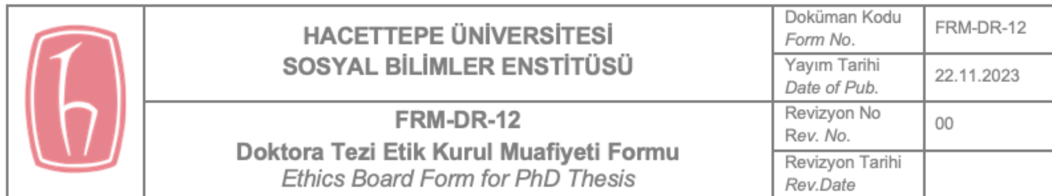
APPENDIX 2. ETHICS COMMISSION FORM



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		Yayım Tarihi *Date of Pub.*	22.11.2023
	FRM-DR-12 Doktora Tezi Etik Kurul Muafiyeti Formu *Ethics Board Form for PhD Thesis*	Revizyon No *Rev. No.*	00
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HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞINA

Tarih: 05/02/2024

Tez Başlığı*: **Irak Savaşı Hakkındaki Seçili Britanya ve İrlanda Tiyatro Oyunlarında Kurumlara Ait Gerçek Sonrası Söyleme Oyun Yazarlarının İronik Eleştirisi**

Yukarıda başlığı gösterilen tez çalışmam:

1. İnsan ve hayvan üzerinde deney niteliği taşımamaktadır.
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Hacettepe Üniversitesi Etik Kurullarının Yönergelerini inceledim ve bunlara göre çalışmamın yürütülebilmesi için herhangi bir Etik Kuruldan izin alınmasına gerek olmadığını; aksi durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

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Öğrenci Bilgileri				
Ad-Soyad	Güven ÇAĞAN	**Öğrenci No**	N16146764	
Enstitü Anabilim Dalı	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı			
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DANIŞMAN ONAYI

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Prof. Dr. A. Deniz BOZER

* Tez **Almanca** veya **Fransızca** yazılıyor ise bu kısımda tez başlığı **Tez Yazım Dilinde** yazılmalıdır.

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HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Date: 05/02/2024

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Thesis Title (In German/French):...

My thesis work related to the title above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on people or animals.
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I respectfully submit this for approval.

Date and Signature

Student Information				
Name-Surname	Güven ÇAĞAN		**Student Number**	N16146764
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Programme	PhD in English Language and Literature Programme			
E-mail/Phone Number				
Status	**PhD** ☒		**Combined MA/MSc-PhD** ☐	

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APPROVED
Prof. Dr. A. Deniz BOZER