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By

Ayşen Demir Kılıç and Aylin Atilla Mat

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INTRODUCTION

Ethical discussions in several disciplines have grown significantly recently in relation to the unprecedented events of the twenty-first century. Social, political, technological, and economic developments have triggered new discussions on ethics. The unprecedented atrocities of World War I have shaken the adamant trust in Enlightenment values. Furthermore, before the trauma of World War I was overcome, World War II broke out, and the world witnessed the Holocaust and millions of civilian deaths, resulting in distrust in grand narratives, including ethical philosophy. The twenty-first century, on the other hand, has brought bizarre developments in technology, including weaponry and media. Therefore, these developments have changed the concept of war. The civilians around the world became witnesses to the brutalities of the 1990s, i.e., the Bosnian massacre and ethnic cleansing in Rwanda, which were broadcast on TV. Moreover, 9/11 and the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq under the name of "war on terror" have carried the concept of war to another level by creating an image of terrorism linked with the Middle East in global media. As a result, an ethical stance grounded in normative codes that define the standards of conduct for a good life has become inadequate for recognising the alterity of the Other in the context of our globalised world. The contemporary ethical discussions have concentrated on preserving alterity, otherness, difference, uncertainty, and indefinability in the ethical relation with the Other.

Acceleration of the media technologies created a new era, adding much to the ethical discussions of the age. When *The Oxford Dictionaries* chose "post-truth" as the word of the year in 2016, the term attracted attention in terms of its focus on the lies shaping the world order and its disruptive outcomes. Although the term was first used by Steve Tesich in a newspaper article in 1992, its popularity has increased in recent years because of the excessive use of manipulations during the campaigns of Prime Minister Boris Johnson for Brexit in Great Britain and the campaigns of Donald J. Trump for the presidential elections in the USA. The dissemination of lies through technological media tools, along with their deliberate use to influence the masses to trust emotions and beliefs rather than facts, has proven to serve the aims of powerful parties.

The post-truth notion created an era in which lies and truths have intermingled. Although developments in media technologies enable us to verify the false information, in this era, people prefer to act according to the emotionally manipulated "alternative truths". When powerful parties use lies or alternative truths, they can convince the masses to justify their ends, even if they start a war. The United States and its allies launched the Iraq War in 2003 after accusing Iraq of possessing nuclear weapons and declaring a "war on terror". They justified their occupation by claiming to be the rescuers of the world from terrorism and bringing democracy to the people of Iraq. However, when the war ended, there were no nuclear weapons at hand, but thousands of deaths, including civilians.

When the world faces such devastating events, ethical studies have interrogated the traditional approaches. Theoretical approaches to ethics emphasise the moral norms that define a good life. However, with the rise of post-modernism and post-structuralism, normative rules in every area of life, including ethics, have been challenged and deconstructed. The process of establishing an ethical relationship with the Other has replaced fixed definitions that degrade the different into sameness. Recent studies on ethics concentrate on the alterity of the Other instead of its similarities with the Subject. In this respect, Emmanuel Levinas's (1906-1995) ethical approach proposes a new viewpoint by prioritising the Other with its alterity and singularity, without any definitions. As Robert Eaglestone maintains, his "work, often mediated through Derrida, has been very highly influential in discussions of the relation between ethics and literature."[1] Quoting from Nicholas Ridout, Mireia Aragay argues, "Levinas's turn from Being, traditionally the touchstone of Western philosophy, to the Other amounts to a complete overhaul of the very foundations of European civilisation and culture, of 'how Europeans had come to think about themselves and the world', a framework that appeared untenable in the wake of the horrors of the Holocaust."[2] His philosophical attitude calls for the responsibility of the Other without degrading it into sameness through categorisations based on similarities with the Subject.

The relation between ethics and literature has always been the subject of literary criticism. Consequently, paralleling several fields of study, literary criticism has witnessed an ethical revival in contemporary literary studies.

[1] Robert Eaglestone, "Ethical Criticism," *The Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory. Cultural Theory*, ed. Michael Ryan, I, II, III, (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 585.
[2] Mireia Aragay, "To Begin to Speculate: Theatre Studies, Ethics and Spectatorship," *Ethical Speculations in Contemporary British Theatre*, eds. Mireia Aragay and Enric Monforte, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 9.

Critics like Martha Nussbaum, Wayne Booth, J. Hillis Miller, and Robert Eaglestone are leading figures whose studies on ethical criticism propose varied viewpoints about ethical understanding and its relation to literary criticism. Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack point out the different approaches to the relationship between ethics and literary criticism, stating that a work of literature's ethical considerations can range from closely examining the text itself, especially in light of the moral quandaries and struggles that the characters face, to considering the ethical issues that the narrative brings up in the reader's own life outside of the text's borders. At other instances, ethical criticism focuses on the author's biography and how their moral or ethical beliefs have influenced the way that stories are created, performed, and constructed.[3] Although the Levinasian critical approach does not provide a specific methodology, it enhances awareness regarding the ethical encounter between the artwork and its receiver. In this respect, Aylin Atilla points to the similarities between the Levinasian encounter and Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory and emphasises the common approach they share, "that meaning is produced through the interaction of a text with a reader or community of readers. In other words, reading is an ethical encounter of the text without being a part of the totality and the reader. Likewise, reading improves the capacity to respond and discover the obligation for the Other."[4]

As the discussions of indefinability, infinity, difference, deference, singularity, and Otherness have increased with postmodernism, the singularity of the personal experience with the text gains more importance. In this respect, rather than analysing the actions of characters according to normative moral codes, both the text itself and the process of literary experience have emerged as subjects of ethical criticism alongside the content of the text. As every reading is the singular experience of the reader, the receiver builds his/her personal relationship with the text without being a part of totality, refraining from totality. Derek Attridge emphasises the singularity of personal response to the work of art and maintains that "[t]o respond to the singularity of the work I read is thus to affirm its singularity in my own singular response, open not just to the signifying potential of the words on the page but also to the specific time and place within which the reading occurs, the ungeneralizable relation between this work and this

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[3] Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack, preface to in *Mapping the Ethical Turn: A Reader in Ethics, Culture, and Literary Theory*, eds. Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), x.
[4] Aylin Atilla. *The Self as Trace: The Ethics of Representation in the Contemporary English Novel* (İzmir: Ege University, 2017), 20.

reader."[5] Contemporary ethical criticism recognises this relation and prioritises protecting the Otherness of the text.

Levinasian ethical criticism recognises the alterity of the Other without reducing it to the sameness in the blurred atmosphere of post-truth. For Levinas, ethical responsibility starts with an ethical relationship, which can only be achieved through a face-to-face encounter. However, this encounter must be free from any attempts to define the Other because defining involves categorisation, or, in other words, totalisation. Consequently, the Levinasian ethical approach can facilitate the challenge of the post-truth atmosphere, where lies or alternative truths, masquerading as morality, manipulate emotions. In this respect, this study will focus on revival and transformation ethics, examining how these ethical discussions are reflected in contemporary literary theory as ethical criticism, particularly in contemporary British theatre, and will discuss the significance of this ethical approach in the post-truth era.

Contemporary British theatre responds to both local and global developments, adopting an ethical stance by experimenting with its form and content. By bringing new possibilities for performance because of media technologies, it breaks representation and keeps the audience alert without letting them be engaged in the play. For Levinas, a face-to-face encounter is the precondition of an ethical relationship; therefore, theatre inherently takes on the responsibility of fostering this ethical connection with others, as its fundamental medium is the human face. Additionally, contemporary theatre challenges the hegemony of the text over the performance; thus, it ruptures representation. In this respect, it can answer Levinas's argument that representation is a barrier to an ethical relationship with the Other. The spectator in the theatre is always active in responding to the play. Helen Freshwater draws attention to "theatre's potential to be educative and empowering, to enable critical and ethical engagement, to awaken a sense of social responsibility, or to raise an audience's sense of its own political agency."[6] Moreover, contemporary theatre's experimental techniques in performance disturb traditional representation, hinder the audience's passive participation, and alienate them. Therefore, catharsis, in Aristotelian terms, is almost impossible for the audience.

The first chapter of this study will focus on the contemporary approach to ethics and ethical criticism, reflecting the ethical turn in the contemporary age. This study will first discuss the motivations behind the ethical turn before examining its reflections in literature, specifically theatre. In this respect, defining post-truth and its role in the revival of discussions of ethics

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[5] Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004), 81.
[6] Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 55.

is necessary to evaluate ethical criticism and contemporary theatre in the following chapters. In the chaotic atmosphere of the information age, a new viewpoint on ethics can propose an ethical stance against the totalisation of the Other. This discussion will focus on Emmanuel Levinas's debate regarding relational ethics and responsibility for the Other, particularly in relation to the post-truth notion and contemporary British theatre.

In the praxis part of this study, selected plays written by three contemporary British playwrights will be analysed within the framework of ethical criticism and its relation to the post-truth era in different contexts. In the second chapter, political issues at the glocal level will be the theme while examining David Greig's two well-known plays: *The American Pilot* (2005) and *Outlying Islands* (2002). In the third chapter, *Woman and Scarecrow* (2006) and *The Cordelia Dream* (2008), written by Marina Carr, will be analysed bearing the woman issue and self in mind. Finally, the last chapter of the study focuses on Martin Crimp's two unconventional plays, *Attempts on Her Life* (1997) and *The City* (2008), by taking his experimental techniques and performative innovations into consideration.

The second chapter of this study will cover the Scottish playwright David Greig's plays, *The American Pilot* and *Outlying Islands.* He is one of the most accomplished playwrights of contemporary theatre. His plays boldly interrogate identity issues at a glocal level, ethics, being the Other and staying as the Other in the age of globalisation. Nadine Holdsworth asserts that in addition to dealing with "foreign lands and cultures", he is concerned about "opening up conversations about what it means to engage across cultural boundaries and how questions of ethical accountability, human rights, and global citizenship make demands on us all—those conversations may falter and provoke intense debate but the significant thing is that they take place at all."[7] These two plays will trace Greig's distinctive attitude towards international issues and global concerns.

In the first part of the second chapter, *The American Pilot* will be analysed, taking the political lies into consideration to create global images of terrorism through the story of an American Pilot who is captivated in a Middle Eastern village. As Clare Wallace stresses, "[T]he Other here, in the shape of the pilot, is viewed only from the outside and, as it were, in translation."[8] In this reverse encounter, both the villagers' and the Pilot's ethical transformations resulting from their encounter as the others will be

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[7] Nadine Holdsworth, "David Greig," in *Modern British Playwriting: 2000-2009: Voices, Documents, New Interpretations*, ed. Dan Rebellato (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013), 189.
[8] Clare Wallace, *The Theatre of David Greig* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 142.

examined. Accordingly, Greig's experimental theatrical techniques will be evaluated on the axis of representation and ethical stance.

The second play in this chapter will be David Greig's *Outlying Islands*. In the play, Greig presents ethical encounters involving four characters, both among themselves and with the pristine nature of the island. The government sends two ornithologists, Robert and John, to an outlying island to inventory the island's natural content. However, it is revealed that the government is planning to hold anthrax tests on the island and send them to determine the possible loss. Wallace argues that "this is a play that goes beyond the esoteric thrills of birdwatching, tackling questions of environmental ethics, desire, social convention and Darwinism."[9] This section will analyse Robert and John's ethical dilemmas of responsibility that arise from their encounters with nature.

In the third chapter of the study, Irish playwright Marina Carr's two plays, *Woman and Scarecrow* and *The Cordelia Dream,* will be examined through the final encounters of two women with themselves and the main male figures in their lives. Mark Cuddy defines Marina Carr as a phenomenon and stresses that "her searing intelligence, unending imagination, and vast classical knowledge make her work a treasure trove for exploration."[10] Referring to Carr's female characters, Cuddy maintains that they share her "indignation at the world's compromises. Her women are not saints but believe that the initial wrong is far greater than any retribution. Woe to the man or woman who betrays trust. The cycle must be broken, and this fate becomes a sort of release for the heroine, who knows what she must do."[11] In these specific plays to be discussed in this chapter, Marina Carr's authentic voice concerning women who reveal their inner conflicts between betraying themselves by oppressing their desires and being free from the restrictive male power around them through an ethical encounter will be explored.

In *Woman and Scarecrow*, the main character, Woman pursues an ethical confrontation with her psyche, animated as the Scarecrow. Woman laments for her unlived life and for her children she is leaving behind with her unfaithful husband, Him. For Cathy Leeney, in the play, "[w]e see a character who is, literally, more than one individual, who is half bird, who speaks in many registers, and who, in this sense, contains multitudes. The action of the play is simple, the most inevitable yet challenging action of our lives, death. Partly, the play rehearses, in a funny and unavoidably

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[9] Ibid., 81.
[10] Mark Cuddy, "Tough, Impossible Love: The Theater of Marina Carr," in *World Literature Today* 86, no. 4, (2012): 50.
[11] Ibid., 51.

moving way, a progress toward an ending."[12] Carr's experimental presentation of Woman's psyche as the Scarecrow and the literal presence of death in the wardrobe waiting for her will be scrutinised in relation to the rupture in representation, resulting in an ethical encounter between both the characters and the audience, along with the actors.

The second play we examine in this chapter is Marina Carr's *The Cordelia Dream*. As one of the most frequent themes of Carr's oeuvre, death pervades the play. The main character of the play is named Woman, like her previous play in this chapter. Woman, a famous musician, demands a confrontation with her father, Man, who is a renowned composer and feels his ego wounded by his daughter's extraordinary success. The play will be analysed in relation to Woman's oppression and her attempts to demand recognition from Man with her Otherness. Besides, Carr's authentic style in form and performance will be examined in the framework of Ethical Criticism.

The fourth and the last chapter of the book will focus on English playwright Martin Crimp and his plays *Attempts on Her Life* and *The City*. Martin Crimp is mostly defined as one of the most experimental playwrights of contemporary British theatre. The Other and Otherness are the main issues Crimp deals with in his plays. David Edgar emphasises Crimp's attitude towards the Other, stating that "Crimp's purpose is not only to question whether we can truly know another human being, but whether we can regard other people as existing at all independent of the models we construct of them."[13] In this regard, this work will trace his unconventional theatrical methods and how they test the audience by providing an ethical encounter with the undefinable Other.

In *Attempts on Her Life*, Crimp presents seventeen scenarios whose main character is named Anne, Anny, Annie, Anya, Annushka. Clara Escoda-Agusti argues that "Anne, in sum, is fragmented into different female myths and even objects which might, or might not, be aspects or 'faces' of the same alleged person."[14] This part of the study will explore the failure of the attempts to construct a fixed identity for several Annes scattered in seventeen unrelated scenarios in the play. How Crimp uses unconventional

[12] Cathy Leeney, "Character, Writing, and Landscape in Woman and Scarecrow and Other Plays by Marina Carr," in *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 68, no. 1-2, (2007): 714.
[13] David Edgar, *State of Play: Playwrights and Playwriting* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 31, quoted in Aleks Sierz, *The Theatre of Martin Crimp* (London: A&C Black Publishers, 2010), 53.
[14] Clara Escoda-Agusti, *Martin Crimp's Theatre: Collapse as Resistance to Late Capitalist Society*, ed. Martin Middeke (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 117.

devices to preserve her Otherness and undecidability will be the focus of this part. As David Barnett asserts, "[T]here is no illumination for the spectator who pays sustained attention to the different Annes. If anything, she becomes ever more obscure as the play continues, as these new versions further complicate their referend."[15] Crimp leaves the play in an indeterminable form, and Anne stays as the Other, free from any certainty. This section of the study will discuss the ethical perspective of recognising Anne's alterity and singularity and refraining from totality. Additionally, this section will focus on how Crimp merges form and content in an unconventional manner to challenge representation and its connection to the ethical stance.

The *City*, the play by Martin Crimp that we will discuss in the second section of this chapter, also emphasises uncertainty and indefinability. Chris and Clair, the main characters are a married couple who are stuck in a dysfunctional marriage. Chris loses his job, and Clair, as a translator, meets an author, Mohamed, who gives Clair a diary. Throughout the play, unrelated, repetitive dialogues and inconsistencies are revealed to be Clair's amateur attempt to write a play in her diary. This part will examine Martin Crimp's ethical interrogations of the capitalist world order and his satirical tone regarding its relationships. Additionally, the ambiguity surrounding Otherness and the challenges in describing it will be central to our examination of Crimp's innovative techniques for creating uncertainty and undecidability in ethical relationships.

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[15] David Barnett, "When Is a Play Not a Drama? Two Examples of Postdramatic Theatre Texts," *New Theatre Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (2008): 18.

CHAPTER I

THE ETHICAL TURN AND ETHICAL CRITICISM

Transformation of Ethics and Post-Truth

Recently, the interest in ethics has grown incredibly. John Guillory draws attention to the increase in interest in ethics and states that this renewal of interest "testifies to the enduring nature of certain philosophical problems. If there has even been a 'turn to ethics' in a number of disciplines, this event raises the question of what one turns from in order to arrive at the ethical."[16] For Guillory, the answer is "the *political*."[17] Especially with the turn of the twenty-first century, the world witnessed the genocidal acts in Bosnia and Rwanda, a kind of revival of the atrocities of the Second World War. The silence of the world and reluctance to intervene to stop these genocides piqued interest in the discussion of ethics. These key events, such as the Holocaust and the fall of the Berlin Wall, accelerated globalisation and shattered the traditional ethical understanding. In this regard, as Clare Wallace asserts, the academic and philosophical attributions to ethics have been challenged by concrete concerns. She exemplifies these concrete concerns as "the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the War on Terror, Guantánamo, the ever more blatant inequalities of neoliberal globalization and corporate capitalism, a chain of financial crises and the apparent implosion of moral principles in the popular media."[18] Consequently, the concept of ethics undergoes reconceptualization and transformation. Normative ethical understanding has been replaced by uncertainty.

Under the shadow of these traumatic happenings, time has necessitated an interrogation of the ethics that are associated with goodness. Specifically, questioning the role of the Other in relation to the Subject has challenged

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[16] John Guillory, "The Ethical Practice of Modernity: The Example of Reading," in *The Turn to Ethics*, eds. Marjorie Garber, Beatrice Hanssen and Rebecca L. Walkowitz. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 29.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Clare Wallace, "Playing with Proximity: Precarious Ethics on Stage in the New Millennium," in *Ethical Speculations in Contemporary British Theatre*, eds. Mireia Aragay and Enric Monforte, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 117.

traditional ethical ideals. In *Theatre and Ethics*, Nicholas Ridout refers to Aristotle's understanding of ethics and states, "[E]thics rests in the character of an individual. The improvement of your character and the fulfilment of its potential is the aim of ethics and, indeed, of life itself."[19] The classical definition of the term suggests ethics is "[a] set of moral principles or values, as well as an understanding of moral duty and obligation. Ethics also refers to accepted standards of conduct."[20] These traditional definitions of ethics do not imply a connection with the Other with its alterity, yet demand compliance with determined standards of moral codes for a good life.

However, recent studies on ethics propose that it is "a process of formulation and self-questioning that continually rearticulates boundaries, norms, selves, and 'others.'"[21] The emphasis on its being a process and self-questioning rather than predefined standards is a result of "an intensified consciousness of ethical dilemmas and political failures" at the start of the twenty-first century.[22] This contemporary approach challenged the authoritative and normative attributions to ethics. Its focus turned from the Subject, self, or character to discussions of the Other and alterity. As Martin Middeke puts it, the contemporary approach describes ethics as "a *process in time, an absence*, a procedure of continuing negotiation and oscillation that can never be completed precisely because it remains subjected to temporality, transitoriness and irreversibility."[23] In the discussion of the Subject and the Other, the recent stance towards ethics questioned the stable, powerful place of the Subject and pulled the Other towards the centre.

The questioning of the Subject and its position is the main motive for the popularity of the study of ethics and the search for alternative standpoints in contemporary studies. Especially with the start of the Western Enlightenment and Modernity, the assumption of the superiority of man and science shattered the belief in religion and the unquestionable supremacy of God. As Alasdair MacIntyre refers to the relationship between enlightenment, ethics, and position of the subject and states, "[t]he self had been liberated from all those outmoded forms of social organisation which

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[19] Nicholas Ridout, *Theatre & Ethics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3.
[20] Julian Wolfreys, Kenneth Womack, and Ruth Robbins, *Key Concepts in Literary Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2014), 39.
[21] Marjorie Garber, Beatrice Hanssen and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "Introduction: The Turn to Ethics," in *The Turn to Ethics*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), viii.
[22] Wallace, "Playing," 117.
[23] Martin Middeke, "The Undecidable and the Event: Ethics of Unrest in Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* and Debbie Tucker Green's *Truth and Reconciliation*," in *Ethical Speculations in Contemporary British Theatre*, eds. Mireia Aragay and Enric Monforte (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 99.

had imprisoned it simultaneously within a belief in a theistic and teleological world order and within those hierarchical structures which attempted to legitimate themselves as part of such a world order."[24] This notion puts man and science at the centre as the Subject creating a contradiction. Andrew Gibson draws attention to this relationship and states, "The Enlightenment Project produces a moral culture that is snared in a profound irony: the universalism of that culture's moralities is constantly belied or set at issue by their very proliferation."[25] Though it shattered the social norms, religious beliefs, and moral codes, it created its own standardised values, putting the Subject at the centre.

The transformation of ethical understanding from the traditional form based on theoretical academic discussions towards practical relational ethics focusing on the Other is linked to the information age we are experiencing. In the introduction to *The Turn to Ethics*, Marjorie Garber et al. draw attention to the popularity of the term "ethics" in the age of information. They assert, "In the popular imagination, in the world of technology and scientific innovation, and in the contemporary political arena, in every newspaper and newsmagazine, phrases like 'ethical responsibility' (and 'ethical lapse') appear with startling frequency."[26] This call for an ethical stance is closely related to the post-truth era we are experiencing. *The Oxford Dictionaries* define "post-truth" as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."[27] Lee McIntyre comments on the definition by explaining the prefix "post." He states that it indicates "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."[28] In this respect, it is proper to separate the term from the reference to the past. Post-truth refers to the process of making the truth insignificant, manipulating it, and presenting lies as either the truth or an alternative truth in order to influence people's perception.

Steve Tesich first used the term "post-truth" in his 1992 article, "A Government of Lies," in *the Nation*. In the article, Tesich refers to the archaic tendency of politicians to lie; however, he points out the difference between post-truth by arguing the readiness of ordinary people to believe in

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[24] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 60.

[25] Andrew Gibson, introduction to *Postmodernity, Ethics and the Novel: From Leavis to Levinas*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 13-14.

[26] Garber, "Introduction," vii.

[27] Lee McIntyre, *Post-Truth* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2018), 5.

[28] Ibid.

the distorted information delivered by political leaders. He states, "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."[29] Rapid developments in information technologies like social media devices have fed people's readiness to accept lies. The ability of those technologies to spread information globally in minutes significantly affected people's attitudes and decisions regarding important issues.

In 2004, Ralph Keyes's *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* revived the term and further evaluated it by examining its reflection on contemporary life. Like Steve Tesich, Keyes attempts to differentiate political lies that people have been familiar with since the beginning of humanity from this new term, post-truthfulness, and the post-truth era. He emphasises the fact that there have always been liars, especially in politics; however, he continues:

> [L]ies 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. We live in a post-truth era. Post-truthfulness exists in an ethical twilight zone.[30]

In this "ethical twilight zone" where one cannot distinguish truth from lies, ethical responsibilities can be put aside without feeling dishonest. Ralph Keyes calls this situation "guiltless dishonesty" and stresses its devastating effects, indicating the Iraq War in 2003. The policy of President George W. Bush and the other coalition countries aimed to gain public support for the war by claiming it was necessary to free the Iraqi people from a tyrant and bring democracy to them. Keyes writes, "Wars need themes, [Bush] realized, such as Operation Iraqi Freedom. They need strong storylines. A valiant 'coalition of the willing', say, frees an oppressed people from the yoke of their evil dictator who has stockpiled horrific weapons of mass destruction which he's about to unleash."[31] Bush's theme for the war found support both from the public and other countries against Iraq. The war started, led by the United States and Great Britain, in 2003.

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[29] Steve Tesich, "A Government of Lies," The Nation, June 6, 1992, www.thefreelibrary.com/A+government+of+lies.-a011665982.

[30] Ralph Keyes, *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 12.

[31] Ibid., 181.

However, the popularity of the term "post-truth" increased with global political practices. Notably, Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his government's campaign to leave the European Union, along with Donald J. Trump's election campaign for the presidency of the United States, serve as major examples of the post-truth era. In 2016, despite the clearly false information used in the campaigns, Great Britain voted for Brexit, and Donald J. Trump won the election and became the president of the United States. Consequently, in the same year, the Oxford Dictionaries chose "post-truth" as the word of the year. Since then, the term has become more and more popular, and it has been the subject of various studies and examined mainly in political and ethical contexts.

Especially in politics, bending or completely hiding the truth has become a popular tactic to influence public opinion. Obscuring the truth makes it difficult to distinguish it in the constant flow of information. Bruce McComiskey points out, "[T]he lines between true and false, real and fake, rumour and threat are hopelessly blurred."[32] This trend has sparked discussions about ethics and its place in such an age. Ralph Keyes comments on the ethical influence of post-truth and states, "One reason we've lost our way in the ethical woods is that so many of us have adopted a therapeutic posture in which no one is held accountable for dishonesty, or much of anything."[33] Undoubtedly, lies have always been there and affected several areas of life; however, contemporary global media tools, especially social media, have intensified the spread of false information excessively.

Lee McIntyre indicates the increasing impact of lies, stating that "[i]n the past, we have faced serious challenges—even to the notion of truth itself—but never before have such challenges been so openly embraced as a strategy for the political subordination of reality."[34] This subordination shows itself even in the fields of science. In the post-truth era, even scientific findings can be put under scrutiny based on the advantage of ideological supremacy. Climate change debates, vaccination policies, or tobacco consumption issues are prime examples of bending, selecting, or shading the findings of scientific research in favour of powerful parties.

What makes the perception of truth so problematic in the post-truth era is the willingness of the people, even the masses, to believe in the manipulated or distorted truth. Ironically, as the developments in information technologies increased the dissemination of false information, they also made it easier to access the truth. People often choose not to verify the

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[32] Bruce McComiskey, *Post-Truth Rhetoric and Composition* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2017), 15.
[33] Keyes, *The Post-Truth*, 244.
[34] McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, xiv.

information they receive, despite the possibility and ease of doing so. McIntyre argues, "Deniers and other ideologues routinely embrace an obscenely high standard of doubt towards facts that they don't want to believe, alongside complete credulity towards any facts that fit with their agenda."[35] This tendency brings the production of more lies. The controlling groups distort, twist, or select facts to their advantage. About the consequences of post-truth Keyes comments, "At best, a non-judgmental attitude toward lying promotes candour. At worst, it becomes a free pass to deceive, guilt-free, with little sense of shame or embarrassment."[36] Lying becomes mundane, and among the bombardment of information, access to the objective truth is regarded as unnecessary or futile. Producing fake news and dispensing it globally through communication systems has become the easiest in the post-truth era.

In the past, media technologies such as television, newspapers, or radio had limited influence. However, in the contemporary world, data processing has turned users into targets of intended information. Bruce McComiskey draws attention to the role of social media in the increase of "misinformation and narrow-mindedness" and maintains that "[f]or an ever-growing number of people who get their information online, social media platforms both feed content that viewers already agree with and encourage ideological social grouping, limiting encounters with different ideas that may challenge settled beliefs."[37] This one-sided and limited information flow both increases the production of lies or covering the truth and creates narrow-minded subjects who ignore or deny the Other.

Representation of truth in language plays a significant role in the growth of the post-truth condition. As McComiskey expresses, "[P]ost-truth signifies a state in which language lacks any reference to facts, truths, and realities. When language has no reference to facts, truths, or realities, it becomes a purely strategic medium."[38] McComiskey regards "fake news" as a dangerous way of expressing post-truth rhetoric. Although a statement does not include any lies, excluding truth from the language is another kind of distortion. Truth is either bent or left out of the statement, depending on the speaker's aim. The important thing about the statement is not its truthfulness but the advantage it created for the aim of the utterer. If it serves the end, it is acceptable, and there is no accountability. Especially in politics, this unaccountability can lead to the excessive use of lies or alternative facts to influence public opinion. In McIntyre's words, "the consequences can be

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[35] Ibid., 10-11.
[36] Keyes, *The Post-Truth*, 117.
[37] McComiskey, *Post-Truth*, 19.
[38] Ibid., 6.

world-shattering."[39] In 2003, the George W. Bush government's rhetoric was based on liberation, democracy, peace, the global war on terrorism, and freedom. Claims for nuclear weapons in Iraq paved the way for the Second Gulf War under the name of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In the end, the war caused thousands of casualties and enormous destruction without any nuclear weapons at hand.

In the blurred atmosphere of the information flood, receivers do not realise the necessity of verifying the information or reaching out to nonconforming sources. Ralph Keyes points to the impact of visual media and its effect on the masses. He maintains, "[T]hey have so many opportunities to propagate and model their alt.ethics[40] on a massive scale, those who appear before cameras have a much broader impact on our ethical climate. That is why it's essential to understand the value system of those whom we see so often on screens large and small."[41] In this regard, those who have political and financial power influence the media tools according to their interests. They impose their value systems on the receivers and produce their own ethical codes. This plight turns the receivers into mere witnesses to the most ferocious incidents, without an evaluation.

The global media has been presenting political atmospheres, wars, atrocities, or social incidents as consumption material for entertainment, like a movie airing on TV. Mark Taylor-Batty points out, "This accelerated and exacerbated an antagonistic relationship between media and aesthetic/artistic representation of material with ethical implications, an oppositional condition that could only be augmented and further nuanced by the onset of the Bosnian War in April 1992."[42] Like the silence of the world to the Holocaust during the Second World War, this time the world watched killings and atrocities like a movie on television. Live footage of the war turned the viewers into witnesses to the war. In this respect, it is not surprising that the discussion of ethics and ethical responsibilities became a hot topic at the onset of the twenty-first century. In such an era, trying to see beyond the produced information and finding the truth gets even more

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[39] McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, 10.

[40] Ralph Keyes describes alt.ethics stating that when our behaviour contradicts with our values, we try to "reconceive our values. Few of us want to think of ourselves as being unethical, let alone admit that to others, so we devise alternative approaches to morality. Think of them as *alt. ethics.* This term refers to ethical systems in which dissembling is considered okay, not necessarily wrong, therefore not really 'dishonest' in the negative sense of the word" (Keyes, *The Post-Truth*, 13).

[41] Keyes, *The Post-Truth*, 170.

[42] Mark Taylor-Batty, "How to Mourn: Kane, Pinter and Theatre as Monument to Loss in the 1990s," *Ethical Speculations in Contemporary British Theatre*, eds. Mireia Aragay and Enric Monforte, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 63.

difficult. In this respect, an increase in ethical discussions in every area of
life in the contemporary world is inevitable.

Contemporary Theatre and Its Relation to Ethics
and Post-Truth Era

Theatre, being a social form of art, is closely related to the social and
political developments of its growing environment. Besides the dizzying
pace of technological developments, the late 1990s and 2000s were the
years in which political turmoil was overwhelming the world. Naturally,
contemporary theatre reflected these developments both in the content of the
plays and the performance itself. Regarding the theatre of the 2000s, David
Pattie articulates, a world that appeared devoid of significance in the 1990s
now appears as captivated by grand narratives as ever: observe the electoral
success of the religious right in America; the terrorist assaults on the World
Trade Centre and America's subsequent military responses in Afghanistan
and Iraq; the increasing recognition of pervasive global poverty, primarily
perpetuated by the economic decisions of affluent governments; and the
initial observable indicators of global warming. All have sought to
undermine the postmodern assertion that modern existence is devoid of
emotion, disjointed, and arbitrary. The theatre has once more demonstrated
its reliability as a "cultural barometer."[43] Theatre, the "cultural barometer,"
measures the atmospheric pressure of the society. In this sense, emerging
theatre trends serve as a gauge of societal trends.

British theatre flourished in the 2000s, both in quantity and versatility.
In particular, the incorporation of digital media technologies contributed
significantly to the growth of theatre. In "Theatre in the 2000s," Andrew
Haydon argues that "British theatre enjoyed something of a qualified
'golden age' in the 2000s, both artistically and economically."[44] He further
states that although there has not been a revolutionary moment, there has
been a steady shift in British theatre which creates "an ever-increasing
plurality in the work available."[45] Following the developments of the age,
British theatre proposed "the embrace of 'alternative' or 'upstream'
elements and strategies by the 'mainstream,' an increased internationalism
in 'British' theatre and the emergence of entirely new channels for promotion

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[43] David Pattie, "Theatre since 1968," in *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama: 1880-2005*, by Mary Luckhurst, (Malden: Blackwell Pub., 2010), 395.
[44] Andrew Haydon, "Theatre in the 2000s," in *Modern British Playwriting 2000-2009: Voices, Documents, New Interpretations*, ed. Dan Rebellato, (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013), 40.
[45] Ibid.

and criticism on the internet."[46] In this respect, theatre in the 2000s has been versatile and given voice to several groups previously ignored by the mainstream.

Interrogation of nation and nationalism is a leading topic in the political theatre in the late 1990s and 2000s. There is a challenge to traditional definitions and perceptions of the nation and belonging. In the "Introduction" to *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today*, Aleks Sierz points out the abundance and versatility of the plays in this age. He argues that the main theme of the theatre of the first decade of the new millennium is national identity. Sierz states, "At a time when the idea of national identity was being hotly debated, British theatre made its own contribution to the continuing argument by offering highly individual and distinctive visions of Englishness and Britishness."[47] For instance, Scottish or Irish playwrights put forward an examination of their nation without being nationalistic. They do not propose a pattern of Scottishness or Irishness. Scottish playwright David Greig's plays, which will be analysed in chapter two, display a significant examination of Scottishness and its relation to Britishness and globalisation. On the other hand, Irish playwright Marina Carr's plays, to be examined in chapter three, are embellished with Irish landscape and musicality without promoting them.

Contemporary political developments on a global scale complicate the question of nationality. As Amelia H. Kritzer emphasises, contemporary "political theatre addresses the problems of global citizenship with less confidence and clarity than it brings to the purely national issues. The plays about international issues in which Britain has a stake show the greatest certainty when they deal with concerns that most directly involve the British nation."[48] She exemplifies this certainty by referring to the play *Guantanamo* (2004) by Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo concerning the detainees in Afghanistan and Iraq. The play openly defends the trial and immediate release of the detainees imprisoned in Cuba by the United States. For Kritzer, this play echoes the British public's opposition to the Iraq War and detentions in relation to it. The play interrogates nationality in relation to international concerns.

Marissia Fragkou emphasises the importance of the development of political theatre and states the necessity of improving theatrical vocabulary

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation* (London: Methuen Drama, 2011), 1.
[48] Amelia Howe Kritzer, *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain: New Writing 1995-2005* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 222.

to meet "such an ethico-political exchange to take place."[49] Fragkou points to the "verbatim theatre" which has been popular since the 1990s and flourished in the 2000s, starting with the post-truth discourses and declaration of George W. Bush and Tony Blair's "war on terror." She proposes the elements of verbatim theatre as the new vocabulary and states, "[t]he uses of documents such as transcripts and interviews, and the staging of 'real' people, have become common tropes in theatrically navigating human rights injustices.[50] These elements transform the art object from a representation to a presentation of facts, awakening an ethical responsibility. The performance may take the form of a speech, announcement, or petition. Amelia H. Kritzer proposes, "The political theatre of contemporary Britain is a theatre of words. Most often, it takes the form of scripted plays. Regardless of style, these plays use dialogue and language-based scenes to convey the specifics of characters, the social and political problems they present, and the themes they introduce."[51] Contemporary political theatre's employment of documentary materials is closely related to rhetoric.

The break of the representation is best identified in "post-dramatic theatre", which has been a popular form of contemporary British theatre. As Hans-Thies Lehmann theorises in *Postdramatic Theatre*, it includes the tendencies of breaking the hierarchies in the production of performance and bringing multiple perspectives to theatre making. As Jerome Carroll et al. argue in the introduction to *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political*, Lehmann used "post-dramatic" as an alternative to the term "postmodern theatre" to "describe how a vast variety of contemporary forms of theatre and performance had departed not so much from the 'modern' as from 'drama,' that is, they no longer conformed to the idea of mimetically enacting a dramatic conflict in the form of a story (fable) and dialogue spoken by characters in a fictional universe."[52] Post-dramatic theatre shatters the hegemony of the text over the performance and enables every element of the theatre to have equal importance in the process. In the "Introduction" to *Postdramatic Theatre* by Hans-Thies Lehmann, Karen Jürs-Munby states, "[T]he text was to become just one element in the

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[49] Marissia Fragkou, *Ecologies of Precarity in Twenty-First Century Theatre: Politics, Affect, Responsibility* (London: Bloomsburry, 2019), 116.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Kritzer, *Political*, 224.
[52] Jerome Carroll, Karen Jürs-Munby and Steve Giles, "Postdramatic Theatre and the Political," *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political: International Perspectives on Contemporary Performance*, eds. Jerome Carroll, Karen Jürs-Munby and Steve Giles, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 1.

scenography and general 'performance writing' of theatre.[53] Coinciding with the developments in media technologies, theatre seeks new methods of communication other than spoken language. Post-dramatic theatre uses new technologies like films, extreme lighting, and microphones. The play interrupts audience engagement due to multiple stimuli and the distorted linearity of the text.

While discussing post-dramatic theatre's place in the new millennium, Lehmann emphasises the interest in political theatre that parallels the developments at the beginning of the twenty-first century. He argues that the rise of the political theatre in the first decade of the new millennium is obvious and surely related to the social and political developments of the time, such as "Nine-Eleven 2001, new wars, the rise of rightist populist leaders in Europe, the whole ideological and political field after the 'Wende' [the 'turning point' marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall], and last, but not least new social problems of different kinds. Theatre definitely felt and feels a need to deal more directly with political issues, even if there are no solutions or perspectives to offer."[54] Under the influence of those unconventional conditions, contemporary theatre seeks an unconventional way to address the agenda and evoke a new ethical stance that prioritises the Other.

Marissia Fragkou relates the rise of political theatre to post-dramatic theatre and ethics. She states, "Another strand of thinking in relation to the political in the theatre connects to ethics, aesthetics and politics—largely shaped by the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas."[55] She refers to Hans-Thies Lehmann's Postdramatic Theatre and argues that he "made the case that theatre may render 'visible the broken thread between personal experience and perception' by means of 'an aesthetic of *responsibility* (*or response-ability*).'"[56] Lehmann's arguments on responsibility and aesthetics are significant. In his argument, Lehmann claims the reality of theatre. He states:

> The aesthetic cannot be understood through a determination of content (beauty, truth, sentiments, anthropomorphizing mirroring, etc.) but solely— as the theatre of the real shows—by "treading the borderline," by permanently switching, not between form and content, but between "real" contiguity (connection with reality) and "staged" construct. It is in this sense that postdramatic theatre means: theatre of the real. It is concerned with

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[53] Karen Jürs-Munby, "Introduction," in *Postdramatic Theatre*, by Hans-Thies Lehmann, trans. Jürs-Munby Karen (London: Routledge, 2006), 4.
[54] Carroll, Jürs-Munby, and Giles, "Postdramatic," 1.
[55] Fragkou, *Ecologies*, 10.
[56] Ibid.

developing a perception that undergoes—at its own risk—the "come and go" between the perception of structure and of the sensorial real.[57]

As a form of art which requires bodily presence and face-to-face interaction, theatre is the closest form of representation to reality. Contemporary theatre heightened the perception of reality using new techniques and approaches.

Contemporary theatre productions often employ experimental techniques and approaches to create a direct impact on the social and political landscape, even if that is not their primary aim. In this context, theatre has an ethical responsibility. In "A Future for Tragedy? Remarks on the Political and the Postdramatic," Lehmann draws attention to the "attempts at making use of theatrical practice with the aim of realising some direct intervention in the political sphere."[58] Contemporary political theatre blurs the line between aesthetics and direct intervention in politics. He states, "Art must posit itself in this other place of non-artistic reality where seemingly there is no place for art."[59] In relation to the aesthetics and the ethical, in *Postdramatic Theatre*, Lehmann states, we see a shift in moral questions and behavioural norms through theatrical aesthetics, where the boundary between reality—where observing violence incites a sense of duty and the necessity to intervene—and the "spectatorial event" is deliberately suspended. If the nature of the circumstance dictates the importance of actions, and it is essential for the theatrical experience that audience members establish their own context, then each viewer must also take responsibility for their manner of engagement in the theatre.[60] The theatre of the 2000s is versatile in terms of forms, techniques, and topics. As aforementioned, verbatim theatre is one of the most popular forms of theatre, which also applies post-dramatic elements in the 2000s. As Amelia Howe Kritzer asserts, "Current political theatre has developed new forms and used existing styles in novel ways to interpret the issues it has brought to public attention.[61] Andrew Haydon emphasises the significance of verbatim theatre and argues that to comprehend the development of theatre in the 2000s, one needs to examine verbatim theatre.[62] He maintains, "For

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[57] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Jürs-Munby Karen (London: Routledge, 2006), 103.
[58] Hans-Thies Lehmann, "A Future for Tragedy? Remarks on the Political and the Postdramatic," in *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political: International Perspectives on Contemporary Performance*, eds. Jerome Carroll, Karen Jürs-Munby and Steve Giles (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 87.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Lehmann, *Postdramatic*, 103.
[61] Kritzer, *Political*, 223.
[62] Haydon, "Theatre," 41.

Britain in the 2000s, this theatrical form had its most immediate precedent in the tribunal plays that were pioneered by the Tricycle Theatre under Nicholas Kent in the 1990s."[63] Supporting Haydon's argument, in "Introduction: What Happens Now," Siân Adiseshiah and Louise LePage emphasise the importance of verbatim plays in contemporary theatre. They argue that to make a to-the-point summary of contemporary theatre at the beginning of the new millennium in Britain, one may examine "the story of verbatim drama, whose formal and theatrical possibilities have proliferated even into the realms of fiction and musicals, as it challenges us to consider the nature of truth, the politics of storytelling and our relation to the world."[64] In the age of post-truth, referring to documentaries or real stories has been a way to achieve an ethical stance. Thus, verbatim theatre effectively fulfilled this purpose.

Unprecedented political, social, cultural, and technological developments at the end of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first century brought radical changes in the art of theatre. Developments in digital media technologies may have the strongest impact on the transformations of contemporary theatre. As Aleks Sierz points out, the influence of contemporary digital media on theatrical creativity has accelerated and complicated narrative construction, expanded our perception of stage possibilities, and refined our understanding of communication. This is manifested in the manner playwrights formulate storylines, particularly in their transitions between scenes, concepts, or images, and in the prevalence of concise, "telegraphic" dialogue. The manipulation of time and space, particularly in concurrent situations, has become progressively prevalent. Exposure to digital media as a new language influences the conventional lexicon of theatre.[65]

In "Verbatim Theatre, Media Relations and Ethics", Mary Luckhurst describes verbatim theatre, stating that "[t]he use of the term 'verbatim theatre' is specific to the UK, suggesting that particular political and cultural factors are in operation which make it important to distinguish the working method of this form of documentary theatre from others."[66] Likewise, in *Contemporary British Drama*, David Lane exemplifies the specificity of the

[63] Ibid.

[64] Siân Adiseshiah and Louise LePage, "Introduction: What Happens Now," in *Twenty-First Century Drama: What Happens Now*, eds. Siân Adiseshiah and Louise LePage (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3.

[65] Sierz, *Rewriting*, 10.

[66] Mary Luckhurst, "Verbatim Theatre, Media Relations and Ethics." in *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Drama*, eds. Nadine Holdsworth and Mary Luckhurst (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 200–201.

developments in British theatre with the preeminent tribunal play *Half The Picture: The Scott Arms to Iraq Inquiry* (1996). He writes, "In June 1994, the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn, North London, produced a play constructed from nearly 400 hours of evidence given at the Scott Inquiry, the investigation concerning the sale of arms to Iraq under the Thatcher government."[67] Andrew Haydon argues that those plays presented in the Tricycle "were the essence of pre-In-Yer-Face 1990s political theatre: dour, grey and unimpeachably serious. They convinced through the sheer heaviness of their subject matter and the fact that every word you were hearing had really been spoken by a real person in the real world."[68] Robin Soan's *A State Affair* (2002) is accepted as the first example of verbatim theatre in the 2000s and consists of some interviews about playwright Andrea Dunbar with the residents of Buttershaw Estates, where Dunbar lived and wrote her autobiographical play *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1988). David Hare's *Asking Around* (1993) is a collection of interviews that he conducted for his state-of-the-nation plays (Haydon 42). David Hare's *Permanent Way* (2003), *Stuff Happens* (2004)*, The Power of Yes* (2009); Robin Soans's *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* (2004), *Talking to the Terrorists* (2005); Gregory Burke's *Gagarin Way* (2001), *Black Watch* (2006); Tanika Gupta's *Gladiator Games* (2005) are among the leading examples of verbatim theatre which makes political enquiries.

Interest in the non-fictional elements in the plays coincides with the efforts to find true information in the distracting and foggy atmosphere of the post-truth era. Mary Luckhurst emphasises the relationship between the rise of verbatim theatre and the social and political developments of the age, such as 9/11. For Luckhurst, reasons for the rise of verbatim theatre are complicated and linked with "widespread suspicion of governments and their 'spin' merchants, a distrust of the media and a desire to uncover stories which may be being suppressed, and a western fetishization of representations of 'the real,' perhaps most manifest in the obsession with so-called 'reality' television."[69] Furthermore, Emma Cox refers to the function of the verbatim technique and states that "[v]erbatim theatre, in particular, lends itself to explanatory, validating detail, a certain narrative taxonomy typically designed to elicit pity, outrage, shame and/or solidarity."[70]

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[67] David Lane, *Contemporary British Drama*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2010), 58.

[68] Haydon, "Theatre," 42.

[69] Luckhurst, "Verbatim," 200.

[70] Emma Cox, "The Politics of Innocence in Contemporary Theatre about Refugees." in *Twenty-First Century Drama: What Happens Now*, eds. Siân Adiseshiah and Louise LePage (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 220.