
Between *Stuff Happens* and *Ishtar in Baghdad* Justifications and Results of American War on Iraq

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Abstract

Theatre was and still is one of the pioneer literary genres in recording and presenting history, past and present. It is a tool and a means utilized by playwrights-intellectuals to document real life events, in addition to its role in entertaining and producing fictional literature.

As a part of its enlightening mission, drama served as a lively method in presenting the truth to the public, a truth that might be hidden or twisted by media, news broadcasts, or public speeches in accordance with certain political agendas.

In this sense theatre played a great role in dramatizing the American-led war against Iraq in 2003. Many plays tackled the events and incidents related to this war. Among those plays are David Hare's *Stuff Happens* and Rasha Fadhil's *Ishtar in Baghdad*.

When the British playwright dramatizes the events leading to waging a coalition war on Iraq in his documentary play, the Iraqi dramatist conveys a grim picture of the country in the aftermath of that war, mixing images of the mythical golden history of Iraq with its most recent images of destruction and chaos, yet giving hope in a brighter and more peaceful future.

Key words : British and Iraqi drama, documentary play, American-Iraqi war

Documentary Theatre :

Stuff Happens is a political play that combines fiction with reality concerning world policies and diplomatic processes leading to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. It premiered at the National Theatre in London, on September 1, 2004, a year and a half after U.S. led forces' attack on Iraq on March 2003. David Hare (1947-), in an introduction to his play, refers to it as a history play drama that is concerned with recent history (vi). He mixes dramatic fiction with what is known in drama as documentary theatre. Hare's play captures different perspectives and opinions of international leaders and viewpoints held by actors who address the audience directly. All the political figures are taken from reality and some of their speeches are borrowed from public records, such as the term "axis of evil" used by the American president George W. Bush to refer to Iraq,

Iran and North Korea. Yet Hare invented the private conversations of the play to complete the ugly picture of the world leading powers uniting against Iraq.

Carol Martin, in an essay entitled, "Bodies of Evidence" states that documentary theatre is "created from a specific body of archived material: interviews, documents, hearings, records, video, film, photographs, etc" (9). In this sense, she emphasizes that documentary theatre both relies on and portrays history that has been recorded in the archive. Yet while portraying history, documentary theatre undoubtedly alters as well as adds to it. Martin points to four historical functions for documentary theatre: "to reopen trials; to create additional historical accounts; to reconstruct an event;" and "to intermingle autobiography with history" (*Ibid* 12-13). She also refers to two representational tasks for the genre, the first is "to critique the operation of both documentary and fiction" and the second is "to elaborate an oral culture of theatre" (*Ibid* 13). In other words, documentary theatre investigates the connection between reality and representation by means of incorporating repetition (through re-enacting, reconstructing, or retelling) with addition (through including untold or excluded stories, or incorporating the repertoire, in addition to the archive). What makes documentary theatre so compelling and sophisticated for Martin and for many others, is the paradoxical pairings it holds of the actual and the representational, the genuine and the fictional, and the personal and the political (*Ibid* 15).

Theatre critic, Michael Billington, highlights the importance of documentary theatre by saying: "At a time when there is enormous public scepticism not only about politics but about the media, the theatre can offer a source of (relatively) uncontaminated truth..... [documentary] theatre offers us the bracing stimulus of fact" (2012).

Derek Paget affirms that there is no one fixed form of documentary theatre, yet different forms have some common functions and he identifies the following five functions as indicators of the genre:

They reassess international/national/local histories; They celebrate repressed or marginal communities and groups, bringing light to their histories and aspirations; They investigate contentious events and issues in local, national and international contexts; They disseminate information, employing an operational concept of pleasurable learning – the idea that didactic is not, in itself, necessarily inimical to entertainment; ...They can interrogate the very notion of documentary (qtd Wilmer 74-75).

Critics and scholars use several different terms to describe contemporary documentary theatre. Verbatim theatre is the most used term, in addition to theatre-of-witness, testimonial theatre or theatre of testimony, theatre-of-fact, and docudrama, those markers has been used sometimes interchangeably.

Judy Maamari explains that the term documentary was coined by John Grierson in 1926 who used it in relation to film, and was adopted by Bertolt Brecht who linked it with the epic theatre of the German theatre director Erwin Piscator (1). She argues that documentary theatre holds "two paradoxical elements; the freedom of expression and the restriction to represent factual information" (*Ibid* 30), in this line, John Tusa affirms that Hare's work "combines documentary realism with imaginative reconstruction of the arguments behind the publicly known facts" (1).

Hare, in writing his play *Stuff Happens*, resorts to this genre because he believes that it "does what journalism fails to do" (Hammond and Steward 62).

Stuff Happens: Lead-up to War against Iraq

The play consists of 24 scenes divided between two acts, most of the scenes begins with an unnamed actor who narrates and specify the location and time of the scene. The action moves between behind-closed-doors meetings to press conferences that pave the way to the U.S.-led coalition's war on Iraq. There is a reference to the events prior 9/11, how the world had changed after the attacks, the political points of view of the various leaders post 9/11, and the arguments of various leaders for and against the invasion of Iraq. The play concludes with a monologue about the state of Iraq after the war related by an Iraqi exile.

The narrator, who serves as a chorus, at the beginning of the play explains that its title is borrowed from Donald Rumsfeld's response when he was asked about the pillage following the strike on Baghdad, he coldly replied, justifying the looting as a part of the freedom process: "Stuff happens and it's untidy, and freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things. They're also free to live their lives and do wonderful things" (Hare *Stuff Happens* 3-4)¹. Hare starts the play quoting Rumsfeld, explaining that coalition forces' invasion of Iraq has started. Then he introduces the main characters of that political event including George W. Bush, Condoleezza Rice, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, Tony Blair, Paul Wolfowitz, and Kofi Annan highlighting the personality and perspective of each one of them and the roles they played in waging the war.

Hare declares that his play is, "about power, and it's about the exercise of power, and it's about people who think they can make an accommodation with power" (Mckinley 2006). It explores the power shifts among the leaders of the world behind closed doors and within their own cabinets and how Bush ultimately imposes his power on everyone else. Hare draws a comprehensive image of President Bush throughout the play, an image that affirms his belief that Bush "loves being president; he loves the office," Hare said. "And he uses the authority of the office

¹ References to *Stuff Happens* will be abbreviated as *SH*.

and the sort of grandeur of the office to frighten, dominate, express power. He's brilliant at using it" (qtd. *Ibid*). Questions related to power in political structures, shifting powers, the power of words (press, media), the power of the people are all explored in the play as well (*Ibid*).

After the attacks of 11th September on sensitive and important locations in the United States of America, The president, George W. Bush, becomes obsessed with the idea of striking back. The discussions of linking Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, who develops weapons of mass destruction, to terrorist organizations and preparing for appropriate military action to stop them, dominate his meetings with his cabinet and advisors; almost everyone in his cabinet is in favour of a military option, especially Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, while Colin Powell, his Secretary of State, is the only advisor who opposed war on Iraq and called for seeking diplomatic resolutions, he wholeheartedly believes that "War should be the politics of last resort" (*SH* 4). He warns the UN community by saying: "If anyone's stupid enough to think this is payback time for whatever grudge they happen to be nursing against the US...then what they'll be doing in effect is condemning Iraqi women and children to the sort of bombardment which is going to make them wish they'd never been born. And possibly civil chaos after" (*Ibid* 76). It is Hare's way to highlight conflict in the play, by portraying Colin Powell as the only stern realist in a cabinet full of deluded fantasists who support war. Based on documented facts, Powell passionately pushes the case of treating war as a last resort when diplomacy has been exhausted. He even points out the hypocrisy of American attitudes: "People keep asking," he says of Saddam, "how do we know he's got weapons of mass destruction? How do we know? Because we've still got the receipts" (*Ibid* 77) Peter Ansorge argues that "Powell displays a conscience about the morality of war that is clearly absent from the thinking of Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz" (93) While for Billington "Powell emerges as a tragic figure: the one key player in the administration who sees the folly of invasion but who, in a climactic encounter with Bush, bites the bullet and goes along with the Cheney-Rumsfeld line... in ... a form of self-betrayal" (2004) by presenting the case of war at the UN.

Hare gives a short account about each one of the political figures who inhabits his play. In the United States of America Secretary of State, Colin Powell, an anti-war former soldier in Vietnam war. Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, "one-time champion wrestler" (*SH* 5) who tends to be violent. Vice President Dick Cheney, is "rock-hard, bland", "who has achieved a total of five student deferments in order to avoid being drafted to Vietnam" (*Ibid* 3). Secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice suffers from an issue of mistrust as "In her office [she] keeps two mirrors, so she can see her back as well as her front" (*Ibid* 6). Deputy Secretary of

Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, thinks that Vietnam war is "An over-expenditure of American power" (*Ibid* 7) he is described by one of his colleagues as a "velociraptor"¹ (*Ibid*). In England, Prime Minister Tony Blair, "a fledgling lawyer at Oxford University has founded a rockband called Ugly Rumours" (*Ibid* 9). In Sweden, the head of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission Hans Blix, "is finding his way in Liberal party politics" (*Ibid* 10).

At the head of this group of politicians there is "a snappish young man, seeking his fortune in the oil-rich Permian Basin of West Texas, who will, one day, like forty-six percent of his fellow Americans, say he has been born again" (*Ibid* 8). In describing Bush, as "snappish", "young" "seeking his fortune" in oil, Hare paints a picture of a narrow-minded privileged leader with a selfish agenda that cannot be trusted. George W. Bush, who "is considered the joke of the family" admits that he had "a drinking problem" (*Ibid* 9). He shows and brag about his power: "I'm the commander - see, I don't need to explain. I don't need to explain why I say things. That's the interesting thing about being president. Maybe somebody needs to explain to me why they say something. But I don't feel like I owe anybody an explanation" (*Ibid*). Right from the very beginning, in a meeting with his cabinet, he declares that he is different from previous presidents of The United States. His new administration prefers Israel over peace in the middle east, he believes that "sometimes in my experience, a real show of strength by just one side can clarify things. It can make things really clear" (*Ibid* 22). Billington commends Hare's play in helping with "reassessment of character", he says: "Bush, in many British eyes, is seen as some kind of holy fool or worse. But, through Hare's writing ... he emerges as a wily and skilful manipulator who plays the role of a bumbling pseudo-Texan but constantly achieves his desired ends" (2004). Lyn Gardner also observes that the play "shows us a Bush ... whose bumbling comic persona disguises steely intent as he manoeuvres towards war under the hawkish eyes of Donald Rumsfeld ... and Dick Cheney ..., and a fawning Blair ... who sees Iraq as an opportunity to secure his place in the history books" (2016).

After a short argument, where he decides to side with Israel against Palestine, Bush moves quickly to discuss Iraq. George Tenet, Director of American CIA, shows them a grainy photograph, taken by surveillance planes, of what "MIGHT [emphasis added] well be a plant which produces either chemical or biological materials for weapons manufacture" "And if they were producing such weapons - if - if they were, if such weapons were being produced, then this - seen here - would be the kind of factory, this looks just like the factory from which such

¹ Velociraptor: A type of dinosaurs.

weapons would come" (*SH* 78), they are basing their case upon mere speculations.

In its "war on terror" America is seeking to make of Afghanistan a "demonstration model" or "a kind of example" (*Ibid* 19).

Rumsfeld puts "a list of countries who ... [he] considered were eager to exploit any lapses in US capability. China, North Korea, Russia, Iran. My conclusion was we should take any actions necessary to dissuade nations from challenging American interests. Top of that list was Iraq" (*Ibid* 21). Wolfowitz supports Rumsfeld stating that it is easier to attack Iraq than Afghanistan since "It's doable" (*Ibid* 22) and they can still send a message to the world through attacking Iraq on the pretext that "there's a good percentage chance Saddam Hussein was directly involved in the attacks on the World Trade Center" (*Ibid*). Powell wants "to assemble an international coalition. A coalition of countries who want to show their support for us and for the values we share in common" (*Ibid* 25). Yet Rumsfeld affirms: "The coalition will not determine the mission. The mission will determine the coalition" (*Ibid* 26). Bush in his speech announcing war on Afghanistan warns the world "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists" (*Ibid* 27). He is dividing the world into two camps; the first camp is of the terrorists and their allies, and the second one is America and its followers.

Hare skillfully dramatises the struggle for power in this play, one time between individuals, Rumsfeld and Powell, and another time between nations, the bloodthirsty U.S.A and the more prudent U.K, and mostly between political ideologies, the alleged right to retaliate (Bush and most of his cabinet) and the responsibility to maintain peace (Powell).

The announced reason of waging war on Iraq is Saddam Hussein's possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), failure to cooperate with inspectors, and secret alliance with terrorist organizations, yet no MDWs were found in Iraq and people around the world started questioning American motives. ***A British Labour Politician announces: "I can't put my hand on my heart and say things are going to work out in Iraq. A dictator was removed. Reasons were offered for that removal which have proved, with hindsight, not to be justified"*** (*Ibid* 26). Alan Simpson, a member of British Parliament, affirms that: "Bush will hit Iraq much the same way that a drunk will hit a bottle - to satisfy his thirst for power and oil. I must tell the Prime Minister that the role of a friend in such circumstances is not to pass the drunk the bottle!" (*Ibid* 77). The French minister of foreign affairs, Dominique de Villepin, states that "nothing justifies [this] American adventure" (*Ibid* 79). A Palestinian academic wonders: "Why Iraq?" and he continues:

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

Chris J. Westgate, therefore, sees that the play can be "described or celebrated as delivering truths the Bush administration had long since denied" (405).

Tony Blair's primary reason to join the war stems from his belief in "*a responsibility - to intervene against regimes which are committing offences against their own citizens... That's a force for justice*" (*SH* 55). Although his country is part of the coalition forces assembled by America to stop Saddam from using his WMD before it is too late, Blair has some reservations in regards to instigating war against Iraq without a U.N support, and "Even with UN support, any invasion will still be illegal unless we can demonstrate that the threat to British national security from Iraq is ... 'real and imminent'" (*Ibid* 56), for America "**The United Nations has no power, nor is it meant to**" (*Ibid* 66), **therefore, and** in spite of the fact that no evidence of "real and imminent" threat was provided, U.K was dragged by American twisted tactics and coercive diplomacy to take part in the second Gulf war, Blair becomes certain that "There's one rule. With the Americans there's one rule. You get in early. And you stay loyal. The one thing we've learnt: if for a moment, if even for a moment, we come adrift from Washington, our influence is gone. It's gone!" (*Ibid* 88).

In spite of the fact that inspectors found no WMD in Iraq, and more than ten million protestors from countries around the world led the largest anti-war demonstrations, on 15th February 2003, demanding that inspectors should complete their work, "on March 20th 2003 air raid sirens announce the beginning of war just before dawn in Baghdad" (*Ibid* 116).

On September 7th 2003, Bush admits that the reconstruction of Iraq, which they estimated to be "Self-financing", "Will, in fact, cost at least 87 billion dollars... The true figure is now likely to be nearer a trillion" (*Ibid* 119).

The play ends with an Iraqi exile who left Iraq with his family 17 years ago and worked against the dictator in exile, says that because of the war:

A vacuum was created... They came to save us, but they had no plans. And now the American dead are counted, their numbers recorded, their coffins draped in flags. How many

Iraqis have died? How many civilians? No figure is given. Our dead are uncounted. ... Iraq has been crucified. By Saddam's sins, by ten years of sanctions, by the occupation and now by the insurgency (*Ibid* 120).

Hare's play craftily dramatises the ugly and ruthless game of ambitions and manipulations that follows its inexorable course towards a war whose atrocious consequences are still looming over Iraq and the whole area. None of the zealous politicians in the play, except for Powell, thinks about the fate of soldiers who will sacrifice their lives, or about the Iraqi people who will suffer from the American invasion. War for them is just another step in their game of power. Hare's play brings to light the limitations of diplomacy and frustrations of power. He satirizes and criticizes the selfishness and self-centrism of both the United States and United Kingdom, and how the politicians of these two countries refuse to consider the consequences of their fatal decisions.

Ans, as Critic Michael Billington asserts that "No play about Iraq can tell the whole story" (2004), an Iraqi playwright takes the responsibility of finishing the story of the aftermath of the American invasion in what can be considered a sequel to *Stuff Happens*.

Ishtar in Baghdad and the Consequences of War

Ishtar in Baghdad is one of nine plays that constitute an anthology edited and translated into English by Amir Al-Azraki and James Al-Shamma under the title *Contemporary Plays from Iraq*. For them, these plays represent "a theatre of trauma, reflective of the Iraqi experience under invasion and occupation" (xi), and they "offer Iraqi perspectives on a way and occupation that had, and will continue to have, a significant and long-lasting impact, not only on the Middle East, but on the world at large. Iraqi dramatists have long had much to say about political developments in their country" (*Ibid*).

Rasha Fadhil (1975-), an award-winning contemporary Iraqi playwright, novelist, and poet, wrote her play *Ishtar in Baghdad* in 2009 to reflect upon and document the immediate aftermath of the American invasion of Iraq, where she "deposits a Mesopotamian goddess into battle-ravaged Baghdad, where she and her consort are captured and tortured by American soldiers" (Al-Shamma 2017). Salih Al-Badri asserts that this play "is a documentary play that chronicles and documents the events of the American occupation of Iraq in 2003" (2009). He sees in the play a bloody documentary theater, inspired by the spirit of the tragedy of the American invasion of Iraq, where the playwright portrays the bitterness of explosions, the spread of devastation and the cultivation of death in its alleys and streets, and where she documents the images of suffering and trapping of lives and bodies in the prisons of the barbaric occupation. All that is done by invoking the Sumerian cultural symbols,

such as the goddess Ishtar, who rushed to the rescue of the Iraqi males and females and decided to go down to earth from her heavenly terrace, to bless them and give them the herb of life. In spite of the warnings of her beloved Tammuz, the god of fertility and plant who tries to prevent her from going down, yet he will not let her go down alone (*Ibid*).

Like Hare, Fadhil mixes facts with imagination, combining photos, news excerpts, and reports released to the public after the war to make her story where she brings mythical deities to the front to talk about an Iraq that Ishtar and Tammuz can hardly recognize as their land of love and fertility.

Ishtar and Tammuz, two Mesopotamian deities^{1,2}, look from their celestial balcony down to Baghdad "the land of Sumer" of 2004. What they see is a "rising tide of blood engulfs the green earth", where "the desert has swallowed everything" (*IIB* 39)³. They also see American soldiers "the ones who scorched the earth and spilled the blood of people across the valleys, laying a swelling carpet of anemones⁴" (*Ibid*). Ishtar emphatically expresses her belief that the "country that gave birth to civilizations will never die", and therefore decides to go down to earth to "bless them again ...to charm them from death...to grace them with the plant of life" (*Ibid*).

When she descends to earth "with all its contradictions, turbulence, and energy" (*Ibid* 40) accompanied by Tammuz, they face darkness and ruins and are greeted with the "stench of smoke"; there was an explosion in the middle of a very crowded place. People around them are panicking and screaming, while she is trying to console a little school girl and reassure her, she loses Tammuz. She keeps looking for him and asks people who think that she lost her mind. One man tells her that he saw him taken to interrogation.

A saleswoman on the street where the car bomb went off tells Ishtar: "Don't be scared! He won't die. They'll ride on his back for a little while, then they'll fasten a leash around his neck, a leash borrowed from their dogs, to kill the time that passes so slowly. Perhaps they'll teach him the lion of Babylon exercise" (*Ibid* 42). Here, the woman's comment is a tragic reference to Abu-Ghraib prison in Baghdad, where Iraqi detainees were tortured and humiliated by American soldiers. Al-Shamma argues that "Fadhil references the Abu Ghraib scandal while promoting a

¹ Ishtar is an ancient Mesopotamian goddess associated with love, war, and fertility.

² Tammuz (or Dumuzid), Ishtar's husband, was associated with shepherds and was known as the guard of the heaven's gate. He was responsible for the cycle of the four seasons where he was reborn every six months, in the month of tammuz (April) the fourth month in the Babylonian calendar.

³References to *Ishtar in Baghda* will be abbreviated as *IIB*.

⁴"In the myth, anemones symbolize the blood of Ishtar's subjects" (The author's notes 48).

resilient Iraqi national identity by way of the deities, who resist in the face of adversity" (2017).

The woman warns Ishtar from following Tammuz, yet she decides to look for him, her quest is similar to that of the myth, where the goddess wanders the earth searching for her consort then rescuing him from the netherworld.

In act two there are American officer and soldiers interrogating Tammuz. They torture and humiliate him. Ishtar, tired of looking for Tammuz, snoozes for a while in the street breaking the curfew; American soldiers arrest her too, accusing her of being a terrorist.

Scene three from the same act shows naked Iraqi prisoners, including Tammuz, maltreated by the American soldiers who put leashes around their necks and ask them to bark like dogs. By including Tammuz with other Iraqi prisoners Fadhil highlights the necessity of evoking the Sumerian gods to reflect the tragic reaction of the occupational tragedy and the destruction of the homeland, and reflects the brutality of the occupier, who leads the sacred symbols of Iraqi civilization to death, uncaring about them and working hard to despise them, treating them in the same manner as the Iraqi citizens in Abu Ghraib, Boca prison, and others (Al-Badri 2009). And since, as Al-Azraki and Al-Shamma explain, "the Iraqi national identity is at least partially built upon the nation's pride in its territory being roughly coterminous with that of ancient Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization" ("Iraq's Ancient Past" 2), this humiliation of Ishtar and Tammuz shows that the occupier is not only depriving people of their freedom and dignity, but also it severs them from their roots, culture and history, and that can be seen clearly in destroying and looting of the artifacts of the Iraqi National Museum, as Al-Azraki and Al-Shamma accurately observes "In juxtaposing the myth with the prison scandal, and indirectly referencing the pillaging of the Iraq National Museum, Fadhil depicts the invasion and occupation as an attack upon both the modern-day populace and the ancient heritage of the Iraqi nation" (*Ibid* 4).

Tammuz, under torture and humiliation outcries:

We didn't think that the Earth would reject us even though it was us who planted its soil with fertility and love. We didn't know that Wadi al-Salam¹ had turned into a cemetery whose gate is open only for death and that you brought down the Ziggurat² and cut down the umbilical cord which connects the Earth with heaven (*IIB* 47).

¹Wadi al-Salam (Valley of Peace) is an old large cemetery in Najaf in Iraq. According to some beliefs, Noah built his ark over there.

² Ziggurat is a type of temple built on top of a massive structure in ancient [Mesopotamia](#).

In scene four, Ishtar refuses the accusations of her interrogators, announcing that her mission is "to renew the gift of life to my people, my country, my sons and daughters who were cut down by your iron weapons. I am the goddess of their fertility, joy, and growth ...I am the goddess of heaven" (*Ibid* 45). Instead she accurately accuses her detainers as being "those who shed the blood of my people and extinguish the flame of life in them" (*Ibid*).

Act four opens in a prison full of women who shocked Ishtar with their nakedness, those miserable women were raped by American soldiers and were hoping to die soon to get rid of their shame. When they hear the sound of mortars outside the prison they rejoice because they know that salvation becomes near; they shout together: "They are coming. We will join the martyrs in heaven. We will judge our tormentors before Allah's throne. We will go from here and be free of shame and of the children of adultery who are feeding on our bowels. Welcome death! Welcome our beloved. You have been slow in sending your purifying light" (*Ibid* 47). Those women see in death their salvation of shame and of imprisonment.

Ishtar, in alliance with those distressed women, concludes: "this is not our land. Our dynasty is overthrown, conquered by those who are armed by death. We must die with our people to be faithful to them and to our noble civilization, which will be reborn after our death. This is what the prophesy say" (*Ibid* 48). Tammuz affirms "let us die now to share with the plants and animals their return to the womb of the Earth, which perpetually creates life from death" (*Ibid*). Tammuz seeks to revive his mythical cycle of death and rebirth for an Iraq which has been the cradle of civilizations. In this final scene, Fadhil mixes sacrifice, which Tammuz represents one of its greatest examples in mythology, with implied satire of the ignorance of his ancestors and their negligence of the land of Sumer. In the myth, Ishtar's descent from the glorious land of Sumer into the netherworld, the world of the dead, is similar to her descent, in this play, from her celestial balcony to Baghdad of 2004, which has become, because of the American invasion and its consequences, also another world of the dead, but it is different from that mythical world in that it is resisting to restore freedom, fertility, and life.

The play ends with a "rumble of the rain" (*Ibid*), rain which is the symbol of change, renewal, fertility, and even revolution, and foremost it symbolizes life. In the myth, Ishtar is revived from the netherworld by a sprinkling of life-giving water. The sound of rain accompanied by detainees and gods surrender to death with the promise of rebirth, suggests an inevitable resurgence. Ishtar and Tammuz, as fertility gods, are used to lead seasonal journeys that are synchronous to that of the earth around the sun; after winter comes the spring. The play suggests "that Iraqis will find strength in reconnecting with their ancient cultural

heritage in the face of a barbarism visited upon them by an impertinent, imperialist America" (Al-Azraki& Al-Shamma 10). This strength found in the soil itself: in the first scene, Ishtar tells Tammuz, "I want you to observe how greenness pushes back the tide of blood" (*IIB* 39), so the land itself will give strength to its inhabitants. Fadhil implies that Iraqi people, like the gods of fertility, are resilient and they will restore their former glory.

In *Ishtar in Baghdad*, Fadhil "suggests a more enduring aspect of Iraqi culture, rooting it in an ancient past. She advances the notion that the Iraqi nation will outlast the passing cruelty of foreign invaders and one day recover the splendor of ancient Mesopotamia" (Al-Azraki&Al-Shamma 10), and by ending her play with rainfall, she is giving her audience and readers a hope in a better future, a future that embraces freedom and dignity, where Iraq is ruled by independent sovereignty, and its people work together to rebuild their country. Therefore Fadhil's play, in the words of theatre professor Marvin Carlson, is one of the many Iraqi plays that show "the power of theatre to provide a voice of humanity and hope even in the ongoing tragic circumstances of this long-suffering country" (*Contemporary Plays from Iraq* vi).

Conclusion

As part of the theatre enlightening mission, dramatists seek to convey the truth to their audience through their writings. They take no side but the side of utter truth. History, political, and documentary plays have become a means and a tool for these dramatists to give the audience and readers a clear and unbiased picture of what is going on in the world around them. They disclose wrong practices and secret agendas that are kept behind closed doors, and by this they help their audience with self-discovery in relation to the world at large.

David Hare revisits one of the most important events in the turn of the century, 9/11 attack on America and its consequences, and American pretext in fighting terrorism and "axis of evil" through invading Iraq in 2003. He shows the American coercive diplomacy in making the whole world follow them in their target.

Rasha Fadhil continues where Hare stops and give her audience a dark picture of the consequences of this war. She focuses on the American brutality in dealing with Iraqi people after the invasion especially at Abu-Graib notorious prison. She walks her audience through insurgency, explosions, torture, humiliation, and destruction. Yet by bringing glorious cultural inheritance back to life through the characters of Ishtar and Tammuz, she brings back with them a hope and a promise of rebirth and resurrection for Iraq and its people.

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المخلص :

كان المسرح ولا يزال أحد الأنواع الأدبية الرائدة في تسجيل وتقديم التاريخ ، ماضيهِ وحاضرهِ. إنها أداة ووسيلة يستخدمها المتقنون والمسرحيون لتوثيق أحداث الحياة الواقعية ، فضلا

عن دوره في الترفيه وإنتاج الأدب الخيالي. كجزء من مهمتها التوعوية ، كانت الدراما بمثابة وسيلة فاعلة في تقديم الحقيقة للجمهور ، وهي حقيقة قد تكون مخفية أو ملتوية من قبل وسائل الإعلام أو النشرات الإخبارية أو الخطب العامة وفقاً لبعض البرامج السياسية.

بهذا المعنى ، لعب المسرح دوراً كبيراً في تمثيل الحرب التي قادتها الولايات المتحدة ضد العراق عام ٢٠٠٣. إذ تناولت العديد من المسرحيات الأحداث والمجريات المرتبطة بهذه الحرب. ومن بين هذه المسرحيات ، مسرحية ديفيد هير "الاشياء تحدث" و مسرحية رشا فاضل "عشتار في بغداد".

بينما يستعرض الكاتب المسرحي البريطاني الأحداث التي أدت إلى شن حرب إنتلافية على العراق في مسرحيته الوثائقية ، تنقل الكاتبة العراقية صورة قاتمة للبلاد في أعقاب تلك الحرب ، تخلص بين صور التاريخ الذهبي الأسطوري للعراق مع صور حديثة للدمار والفوضى ، مع إعطاء الأمل في مستقبل أكثر إشراقاً وأكثر سلاماً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدراما البريطانية والعراقية ، المسرحية الوثائقية ، الحرب الأمريكية العراقية