



The Theatre of Genocide: Introduction

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to provide a comprehensive introduction to the theatre of genocide. Such an introduction is conducted through the following ways: 1) defining what is meant by 'genocide' and its concomitant relation with modernity and the horrific Holocaust event; 2) explaining the importance of anti-genocide theatre and its relationship with Cultural Studies for raising individual and collective consciousness and calling for stopping violence against victims; 3) shedding light on the strategies of the theatre of genocide; 4) shedding light briefly on the relationship between genocidal writings and trauma; and 5) briefly examining Euripides' *The Trojan Women* (415 BCE), Peter Shaffer's epic historical drama *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1967), Arthur Kopit's *Indians* (1969), and Christopher Hampton's *Savages* (1974) as samples of genocide theatre.

Received: 24/12/2019

Accepted: 25/1/2020

Available online: 29/12/2022

Introduction

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1. Genocide, Modernity and the Holocaust

Although ‘genocide’ has an ancient past, in the modern era of projects that pursue improving the human condition such a word becomes well-matched with modernity and scientific progress, especially the progress in manufacturing new weapons or machines for annihilating a large number of people and destroying several areas within a short time and with little effort. This is the dialectic relation between advancement and decline. Weisheit and Morn offer a condemnatory tendency toward modernity and its fallacy of advancement while refuting the idea that genocide is motivated by pluralistic societies:

It would be nice to believe that humanity has progressed to the point that genocide is a thing of the past, a product of a simpler and less developed period in the development of the human race. However, there is little evidence to support such a belief. To the contrary, the twentieth century has witnessed more deaths through genocide than any other century. Some have argued that genocide is fostered by pluralistic societies in which people of very different cultures and backgrounds are brought together. If that is true, then the increased interaction between cultures that results from modern transportation, modern communication, and the development of global business may set the stage for future acts of genocide. (153)

To unravel the paradox between modernity and its scientific progress on one hand and brutality, crimes against humanity, mass slaughter, or technological, moral and socio-political disaster on the other, one can think of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) or of Charlie Chaplin’s silent movie *Modern Times* (1936) and slapstick satire *The Great Dictator* (1940).

Modern Times is a flagrant critique of modernism and industrial capitalism. Depicted as a little tramp and a factory labourer within the context of the Great Depression, Chaplin struggles to endure hardships of living in the modern, industrial world. Instead of improving the well-being of individuals,

machines metaphorically deform and dehumanize them to animal-like, machine-like or grotesque creatures. Paul Giles describes the imagery of the clock with which the film starts and its political dimension as follows:

Chaplin's film *Modern Times* (1936) presents its opening titles over a clock face, with clock time becoming equated with factory discipline and Chaplin himself appearing to become dehumanized until his arms move like the arms of a clock. There is obviously a political dimension here, with the film portraying rising unemployment because of this new machinery and the intertitles specifically raising the spectre of Communism. (95)

The Great Dictator is an overt political and black comic satire of Hitler, his Nazi government, Benito Mussolini, fascism, and anti-Semitism. In this film, Chaplin starred in a dual role: a tramp-like Jewish barber who suffers from amnesia and a tyrannical dictator (Hynkel) of a fictional country "Tomaria" modelled after Hitler. However, towards the end of the film, he gives a moving, humanitarian over three-minute speech in which he calls for global peace, sympathy and compassion, denouncing racial animosity, martial dictatorship and industrial capitalism:

Greed has poisoned men's souls, has barricaded the world with hate, has goose-stepped us into misery and bloodshed. . . . To those who can hear me I say, do not despair. . . . The hate of men will pass, and dictators die, and the power they took from the people will return to the people. Soldiers, don't give yourselves to brutes. Don't give yourselves to these unnatural men. You are not machines! You are not cattle! You are men! You have the love of humanity in your hearts! Don't fight for slavery! Fight for liberty.

Commenting on the moral opposition the dual role of Chaplin offers in this film, Henry Gonshak points out that

Hynkel is evil, and the barber is good. And since the barber serves as a typical representative of the Jewish race, the Jews, by extension, are good, too. While some of the ghetto's Jews disagree over the extent of the threat Hynkel poses, by and large they form a warm, supportive, close-knit community. (27)

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno raise questions of why and how modern rationality gave rise to massacres, specifically mass murders under Stalin's regime and the Holocaust by Hitler. They begin their book with the following claim: "IN the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant" (3). For Horkheimer and Adorno, modernity is a self-destructive irrational element and there is a causal relation between

enlightenment and perversion. That is to say, Western modernity carries the seeds of regression and barbarism. Reading Homer's *Odyssey* as an "anticipatory allegory for the dialectic of Enlightenment" and as an expression of the human depravity, Adorno and Horkheimer view Odysseus as a "prototype of the bourgeois individual" (43) and an exemplar of the modern individual because his survival necessitates separation from nature, exploiting or dominating it and achieving self-preservation at all costs; the dream of progress entails the sacrifice of nature to culture. Odysseus becomes a captive of his own culture, a captive without choice. Enlightenment as an ideology is regressed into the nightmare of myth and barbarism. Modernity has led not only to science and advancement but also to autocracy and destructive technology.

Genocide, as a term, refers to a wholesale or in part intentional extermination of a targeted (whether religious, racial, ethnical or national) innocent group, frequently perpetrated by the nation's leaders (the government through its military and police forces) or by hired individuals. This extermination or atrocious destruction of an entire group or individuals belonging to certain groups has no specific time for its occurrence, that is, it could take place during war or peace. Israel Charny, has proposed as a generic definition of 'genocide': "the mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings, when not in the course of military action against the military forces of an avowed enemy, under conditions of the essential defencelessness and helplessness of the victims" (66). Genocide differs from "common savagery", as Robert Skloot points out, in that "no matter how large-scale, whole groups were targeted for annihilation" (Introduction, *Theatre of Genocide* 3). As Scott Straus explains, for labelling it so, 'genocide' must meet three conditions or include three components, namely, "extensive violence (large-scale, sustained, widespread, systematic violence), group selective (targeted at groups), and group-destructive (designed to destroy groups in particular territories under perpetrators' control)" (19). This means that the hallmark of genocide is that it not an indiscriminate or arbitrary violence; rather it is group-selective and intentional.

Etymologically, genocide is derived from *geno*, a Greek word for 'race or tribe' and *cide*, a Latin word for 'murdering'. It was coined and gained wide-ranging currency after WWII, in 1944, by the Polish-Jewish jurist, political figure and historian of mass violence Raphael Lemkin in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. In this book, Lemkin offers the following broad definition of 'genocide':

Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killing of all the members of a nation. ***It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups*** . . . The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions of culture, language, national feelings, religion, [and] economic

existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups. (79) [my bold italics]

Later, in an article published in 1947 in the *American Journal of International Law*, Lemkin shed light on the wide range of genocide activities by pointing out that the crime of genocide includes not only the “deprivation of life but also the prevention of life (abortions, sterilizations) and also devices considerably endangering life and health (artificial infections, working to death in special camps, deliberate separation of families for depopulation purposes and so forth)” (147). Such action, Lemkin goes on explaining, are intended to “destroy or to cripple permanently a human group” (147).

Noteworthy, Lemkin had personal experience due to the fact that many of his family members were killed in the Jewish genocide after he had fled to America. The term became codified in 1948 by the United Nations. In their Introduction to *The Origins of Genocide*, Schaller and Zimmerer argue that Lemkin’s idea of genocide could be a valuable frame for “the analysis and punishment of the persecution and annihilation of the European Jewry” (1). Although Lemkin had no sanctioned ambassadorial status, his attempts to convince politicians and governments to adopt his anti-genocide program led to legalizing a convention that prevented and punished the crime and the scourge of mass murder, as Skloot remarks (Introduction *Theatre of Genocide* 1). Lemkin drafted the United Nation’s “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” that was formally presented on December 9, 1948 and endorsed in 1951. According to this Convention,

Genocide is any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group: (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (qtd. in Straus 20)

According to Puri's *Dictionary of Criminology*, ‘genocide’ is a word that was coined “at Nuremberg Trials meaning the crime under international law of seeking systematically and deliberately race murder as was practised against the Jews by Germany” (97-98). The term ‘Holocaust’ refers to the genocide during the Nazi regime in Europe that lasted four years (between 1933 and 1945); the Nazis methodically planned obliteration of all the Jews in Nazi occupied Europe. The Holocaust set out to exterminate European Jews under Adolf Hitler led to calamitous consequences: “some six million of Europe’s eight million Jews had been systematically murdered. Another six million non-Jews—Poles, Catholics, Gypsies, homosexuals, and political enemies—were also destroyed” (Pojman 459).

At the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, twenty-one Nazi leaders were indicted of crimes committed purposefully against peace-making, war crimes and crimes against humanity, eighteen were found guilty and eleven were penalised to death; the Nazi war criminals were condemned to death for their annihilation policies. Robert H. Jackson, US Supreme Court judge, made the following opening statement and prosecution at these trials: “The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been calculated, so malignant, and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored” (qtd. in Pojman 459). What is remarkable in this case is that “the Nazi criminals broke no German laws in their treatment of the Jews. The plaintiffs appealed to a higher law, the universal moral law that forbids killing the innocent, a minimal version of natural law” (Projam 459).

In the context of the Holocaust, the perpetrators were the Nazis while the oppressed or the dehumanized were not only the Jews but political dissidents, or people of different ethnic minorities, such as Roma people (about 500.000 Romani people were killed), enemies of the race-based state (Gypsies), and other people the Nazis considered being worthless to live. For these reasons and malignant objectives, political dissidents were deported to ghettos and concentration and extremist camps were set. Any act of resistance to the Nazi policies or sympathy with the oppressed was harshly punished. Spies were among people to inform about any form or act of disapproval or resistance. More importantly, the Nazi aim was not just to dehumanize the Jews but also to humiliate them in the first place; thus physical and spiritual torture went side by side in the Nazis’ treatment of the Jews, minorities and insurgents. Before WWII, Gisela Perl practiced as a doctor in Auschwitz, tells this account of her time there:

One of the basic Nazi aims was to demoralize, humiliate, ruin us, not only physically but also spiritually. They did everything in their power to push us into the bottomless depths of degradation. Their spies were constantly among us to keep them informed about every thought, every feeling, every reaction we had, and one never knew who was one of their agents. (Perl 54)

Perl goes on narrating the catastrophic and the demeaning consequences of these brutal practices which could be summarized in encouraging the principle of self-preservation and the discouraging any collective action against the Nazi oppressors: “There was only one law in Auschwitz—the law of the jungle—the law of self-preservation. Women who in their former lives were decent self-respecting human being now stole, lied, spied, beat the others and –if necessary—killed them, in order to save their miserable lives” (54). It is obvious that under the Nazi regime, the oppressed did not care towards others; they lost their morals and senses of self-dignity, empathy with other oppressed calamities. However, this is one version of what was experienced during the Nazi regime. That is, one cannot deny

that there were acts of care, mutual assistance and solidarity among the oppressed in camps. Rachel Silberman says:

We helped each other. I must say, in the bad times people didn't care, like my mother didn't care, whether it was me or another girl. There was another mother and three daughters, and we were close together and if anything happened to anybody, we would all help each other. . . . But there was also a Hungarian woman doctor, a thin, tall lady. You could see she was an educated, fine woman. She went around and said to the girls, "Don't eat what they gave today. Don't eat it. This is poison." She was right; there was something wrong. They gave us raw salami, not cooked thoroughly, and she said, "You will all get sick from it." And those who ate did get sick. That woman was so sick herself, but she walked around and watched and tried to help whoever she could. (Gurewitsch 82)

2. The Theatre of Genocide as an Engaged Art

Art in general and theatre in particular could be a fertile ground for conflicting and struggling ideological ideas. Although art plays a fundamental role in the reproduction of a culture, it can oppose it and shatter its myths or ideologies (distorted ideas). Besides being a way of entertaining and amusing audiences, art has the power to criticize and instruct, to invert the reader's possible expectations and customary ways of thinking, and to break down general presumptions that we strive to make sense of the world by revealing the fallacy of what has been taken for granted or represented. In other words, art is a tool of illumination, rather than of deception, and it has didactic and revolutionary purposes. Bertolt Brecht views that art must have a transformative effect on the way people live and see things: "There is no play and no theatrical performance that does not in some way or another affect the dispositions and conceptions of the audience. Art is never without consequences, and indeed that says something for it" (151). Taking the concept that theatre has a political influence into consideration, the theatre of genocide, despite the fact that it differs from political activity in that it may not have an immediate response and action, can influence political moods and judgements. In this regard, Skloot explains that

In truth, plays are ineffective in bringing about *immediate* changes in societies no matter how intelligent or powerful they may be. But like the best art, they can help us to better understand the violent world and provide insights into human behavior, creating images that, in the long run, may make the world more peaceful and more just. (Introduction, *Theatre of Genocide* 6)

Attempting to call for and experience both peace and justice in a grotesque contemporary world through the medium of theatre reminds one of Tom Stoppard's argument that "art is important because it provides the moral matrix, the moral sensibility from which we make our judgements about the

world” (qtd. in Purse 325). Skloot adopts Stoppard’s words, remarking plays have the power of preparing the ground for “changes in policy and thinking and, on a level of emotional engagement, give theatrical life to those whose voices have been silenced because they were marked for exclusion from a place among humanity where they rightly belonged” (Introduction, *Theatre of Genocide* 6).

Viewed from Tony Bennett’s angle of cultural politics or putting policy into cultural productions, the theatre of genocide, as an engaged art, attempts to raise individual and collective consciousness about such as power, exploitation, dehumanization, barbarism, racism, discrimination, and resistance. As cultural politics have to do with “the power to name”, to “represent common sense”, to “create official versions”, and to “represent the legitimate social word” as Chris Barker and Emma Jane quote Jordan and Weedon’s words (601), Bennett views that art has the power to transform our presumptions of the way the world is, to liberate us as readers or audiences from what is falsely disseminated by the dominate groups, and to give a voice to the silenced and the subjugated:

Two main concerns can be distinguished here. In the first place, the emphasis falls on modifying the relationship between persons—whether as readers, members of a subculture, or the advocates of a fashion system—and those cultural forms which have borne consequentially on their formation. The key instrument of politics here is criticism and its primary object is to modify the relationship between, for example, text and reader in such a way as to allow the texts in questions to serve as the means for a politically transformative practice of the self into which the reader is inducted. (24)

As an engaged art, the theatre of genocide, as a place of witness, has ethical implications and some goals to have a real impact on public discourse through the following techniques: shedding light on ethical binaries and raising emotional seriousness and intellectual consciousness, embodying survivor testimonies, revealing bitter and traumatic experiences of those who are victimized at the hands of their abusive perpetrators, by uncovering the real reasons behind exploiting and murdering victims or innocents, by calling for pathos towards them, by rewriting and questing historical documents. In this respect, Skloot argues that

Like all engaged art, it [the theatre of genocide] seeks to comment on and influence public discourse through various strategies: by the description of the victims’ suffering and the assertion of their essential worthiness, the discussion of the perpetrators’ motivation, the presentation of images of healing and compassion, the evocation of empathy, the questioning of the proper use of historical knowledge, and even the expansion and dissemination of what the critic Susan Sontag called a “collective instruction” of culture. (Introduction, *Theatre of Genocide* 5)

An important word in the above-mentioned quotation is ‘empathy’. Generally speaking, empathy is the faculty that enables us to put ourselves cognitively and effectively into another human being’s

place; therefore we could understand and feel his desires, needs and sufferings. It is the capacity of listening to another with mind and heart. While sympathy is a shared feeling or a spontaneous emotional feeling of pity for or alliance with another person in the context of a sad or distressing event, empathy is an experiencing of similar emotion with another person, either spontaneously or deliberately (through cognitive effort). David Howe differentiates between sympathy and empathy in the following way: “To be sympathetic is to have feelings (*pathos*) that are the same as (*sym*) those of the other. To be empathic is to know, sense or enter (*em*) feelings (*pathos*) of the other’ (13). According to Davis, the term ‘empathy’ is important in psychoanalytic studies to denote the internal imitation of “emotional cues” when witnessing another’s emotional state (5).

The following is an example offered by Simon Baron-Cohen of empathy in a hanging event at Auschwitz:

At just nine years old, Thomas was rounded up with thousands of Jews and taken to Auschwitz. There he had to watch while an inmate was forced to hang his friend who tried to escape. The SS guard ordered the inmate to put a noose around his friend’s neck. The man couldn’t fulfil the order because his hands were shaking so much, with fear and distress. His friend turned to him, took the noose and, in a remarkable act, kissed his friend’s hand, and then put the noose around his own neck. Angrily, the SS guard kicked the chair away from under the man to be hanged. [...] The empathy within the friendship comes through so powerfully in this awful situation, as does the extreme of lack of empathy of the guard. . . . Presumably he chose this particular form of punishment because he *wanted* the two friends to suffer. (3)

Baron-Cohn asserts that the guard wanted his prisoners to suffer. The guard lacks empathy which is a lack of presumed feeling that could be expected to arise from aligning oneself with those undergoing the bitter experience.

Like postcolonial writings, anti-genocide works of art attempt to bring memory into focus and the past events for re-examination, to bring the oppressor and the oppressed into confrontation, and to lend a voice or provide a space for the victimized to narrate and describe their agonies and to reveal harsh realities. Skloot remarks that performances that deal with crimes of genocide endow an important “theatrical life to those whose voices have been silenced because they were marked for exclusion from a place among humanity where they rightly belonged” (Introduction, *Theatre of Genocide* 6).

3. Genocidal Writings and Trauma

There is an intimate connection between genocidal writings and trauma theory as they are survivors with traumatic events and memories. The transformation of traumatic experiences into a

narrative also allows the events of the past to become witnessed; this is particularly necessary for traumatic historical events such as war and genocide which tend to be dismissed or falsified by the historical record.

Trauma, for Freud, is any “excitations from outside that are powerful enough to break through the protective shield” (56). The protective shield is a psychic skin that enables the individual to deal with outside stimuli, to keep excitations low and to maintain the ‘pleasure principle’. Besides genocide, traumatic experiences include sexual abuse, building collapse, kidnapping, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and wars. Freud goes on explaining that trauma is an overwhelming external stressor event that causes a change in the steady state of the individual, reducing the coping mechanism or ego-defensive mechanisms:

It seems to me that the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli. Such an event as an external trauma is bound to provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organisms energy and to set in motion every possible defensive measure. At the same time the pleasure principle is for the moment put out of action. (33-34)

Cathy Caruth, another psychologist, obviously raises serious issues for the necessity of witnessing a traumatic past as it proposes that the past can only be accessed through what she calls a ‘gap in understanding’. In recent discussions of trauma that have been developed partially because of questioning linguistic representations of the traumatic events of the Holocaust, Caruth emphasises the literality in the repetition of traumatic memory, observing that: “The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (5). One of the major problems that arise from the model of traumatic memory as a literal return is that it denies any form of working-through that may lead to the trauma survivor being cured.

In the theatre of genocide, there are certain tools that could be employed to link the present with the traumatic past. Narrative, especially told by the survivor, plays an important element to shed light on what occurred in the past. Language here plays an important role. Judith Herman notes that trauma survivors “often tell their narratives in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner which undermines their credibility and thereby serves the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy” (1). Language of denial is an obvious indicator of trauma. Change of settings also plays an important role as it leads the spectators to scenes of genocide. Props, sounds, light and clothes also enable the dramatist to create a certain vision of what occurred in the genocidal event. As for time, the dramatist can leap from past to present, and vice-versa, during the play’s course. The play becomes a

dramatization of the story of a preceding event told by a narrator who is clearly a modern-day figure. Past and present are intermingled on the stage at the same time in the figure of the narrator and the participants in the insurrection.

4. Scenarios of Genocide in Theatre: Classical and Modern

“Scenarios of Genocide”, as a term, is coined by the historical sociologist Helen Fein who defines ‘genocide’ from a sociological perspective as a “sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity directly or indirectly, through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members” (*Genocide* 24). Fein goes on remarking that this definition “would include the sustained destruction of nonviolent political groups and social classes as parts of a national as parts of a national . . . group” (24). According to such a definition, genocide is not a war, nor a civil war; rather it is a mass killing of unarmed, helpless groups. Clarifying the distinction between genocide and civil war, Ton Zwaan explains that

What distinguishes genocidal situations in principle from situations of war and civil war is that during genocides one party – the persecutors and perpetrators – is armed and organized to use force, while the other category – the persecuted and victims – is not armed nor organized to use force. Armed resistance is rare, and moreover usually crushed by the superior power of the perpetrators of the genocide. In genocidal situations the means of violence and the means of (military) organization are extremely unevenly distributed, and overwhelmingly concentrated on one side, that of the perpetrators. (4)

In “Scenarios of Genocide”, Fein points out that although genocide differs in function from other forms of intergroup or collective violence such as lynching, collective punishments and massacres, she believes that there is one underlying explanation that can encompass all of these types:

Genocide is the calculated murder of a segment or all of a group defined outside of the universe of obligations of the perpetrator by a government, elite, staff or crowd representing the perpetrator in response to a crisis or opportunity perceived to be caused by or impeded by the victim. (4)

Such a definition is helpful in explaining genocide in Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Rwanda, Rwanda, Bosnia, etc. Such peoples were seen by their perpetrators as worthless. Fein goes on pointing out that dehumanization is exhibited as “degradation of the other, imputing their inferiority or worthlessness. The other may also be dehumanized or objectified by comparing or equating them to animals—rats, dogs, pigs—and nonhuman forms of life” (6).

4.1 Euripides's *The Trojan Women* (415 BCE)

The history of theatre is imbued with examples of the scenarios of genocide that could be dated to Euripides's play *The Trojan Women* or *The Women of Troy* (produced in 415 BCE during the Peloponnesian War of Athens against Sparta). The play—the third tragedy of a trilogy that deals with the Trojan War, the other two being *Alexandros* and *Palamedes*— is an anti-war tragedy about the enslavement of Trojan women after the fall of their city. It is set immediately after the Trojan War, dealing with war and its resulting devastation (the plight of women and slaves), and dramatizing the seizure of the island of Melos and the subsequent killing and subjugation of its people by the Athenians, and with the fate of Trojan women (the spoils of the war) after the city has been captured. The play isn't about the heroes and legends we know from the Trojan War (Achilles, Agamemnon, Hector, or the Trojan Horse). Rather it depicts the anguish of Hecuba and her daughters as they wait to be divided among the Greek captains. The captive Trojan women, led by the forlorn captive and the former queen of Troy Hecuba and her daughter Cassandra, lament their fate, that is, the loss of their husbands while the remaining family members, especially their children, are about either to perish or be treated as slaves. Waiting outside the walls of their captured city and wearing none of the jewellery they may have possessed, the women of Troy are waiting to be exiled to Greece by their perpetrators or new masters. “Much of the play”, as Zapkin notes, involves “the Trojan women in a prison camp discussing their various troubles and fearing for their futures as slaves to the Greek conquerors” (Zapkin 5).

In the aftermath of the Trojan War, the women of the royal house become captives of the victorious Greeks, who are preparing to sail home. Their husbands and sons are dead and their city is burning around them; these proud, furious, grief-stricken women envision their imminent fate as concubines of the Greek leaders, whom they fear and loathe. The play, as Toscano notes, is “a dramatization of the aftermath of the Trojan War on enslaved female survivors, by focusing on the human reactions of dethroned Queen Hecuba . . . and the mythic Helen of Troy” (T20). The central figure of the play, which largely takes the form of a lamentation, is Hecuba, widow of the slain Trojan king Priam and mother of Paris, Hector, Cassandra, and Polyxena (along with many others). Hecuba has lost everything as her husband is murdered; her daughters become widowed; and her home is demolished. Hecuba laments,

O my sorrow! This is now the be-all and the end-all here of all my woes. I shall leave my fatherland, my city is being torched. Come, long legs, make what haste you can, however difficult it may prove, so that I can salute my wretched city.

O Troy, city that breathed forth greatness once among barbarians, soon you will be stripped of your famous name. They are burning you and leading us off from the land as slaves. O you gods! And yet why do I call upon the gods? (300)

The play dramatizes the massacre at Melos to typify and convict the brutalities of war, avoiding the chivalrous view of a heroic war to dramatize instead on the tragedy and the sufferings of the wives and children of the city's defeated leaders and soldiers who are carried off to the ships to face bondage and abuse at the hands of their perpetrators in Greece. Skloot remarks that this play represents "the classical tragic model" because Euripides, in this play "about the destruction of a city and a whole people, gathers his suffering multitudes for a final, if futile, spasm of resistance to genocide" (*Darkness* 31). Skloot describes this play as "bleaker in outlook than most tragedies, classical and modern, because it concludes with the destruction of the last male in Troy", the boy Astyanax who is brutally cast from the city's walls (31). In terms of the perpetrator vs. the victim relationship in the genocidal event, the Athenians are conscious that Milos's military power is feeble if compared to their own. The play's modern adaptations, as Lauriola points out, "have become a suitable vehicle for raising awareness of human rights' violations and for promoting reactions" (87).

Shedding light on the importance of modern adaptations and productions of Euripides's play in the context of past and modern crimes against humanity, O'Toole begins his article "Trojan Women" by remarking that

We remember, after the Holocaust and the gulags, after Srebrenica and Rwanda, that the stain of savagery runs deep in our species. It is easy to believe that the capacity for atrocity is the most venerable part of our inheritance, the longest thread that links us to our ancestors. What we sometimes forget is that the capacity for sympathy is no less venerable. This is one reason that, whenever the opportunity arises to see a good production of Euripides's *Trojan Women*, it should be taken. (12)

The plays which follow are modern attempts of blaming colonial powers that contributed to the destruction of indigenous peoples and their cultures. The colonial powers' purpose was for the pursuit of gold or religious domination.

4.2 Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1967)

The Royal Hunt of the Sun exemplifies the idea that the conflict between man and gold leads to annihilation. It also dramatizes the tension between man and society; man is depicted as searching desperately for a sense of the divine in a world controlled by social restrictions, institutions

and established norms. Describing its unprecedented effect on the audience for the horrible scenes it represents and its dramatic technique, Billington remarks that

It is hard to understand now the shock *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* caused in 1964. Here was a stylised historic spectacle dealing with conquests, massacres, Inca sun-gods and looted gold in a theatre dominated by Beckettian minimalism and box-set naturalism. (22)

The play represents Shaffer's breaking away from the normative values of the well-made play, tackling "a historical subject on an epic scale" (Elsom 97), although he is not interested in historical specific accounts. Shaffer adopts some Brechtian and Artaudian techniques such as the role of a narrator who is an old man recollecting his past of being a member of Spanish armed force undertaking the conquest and the annihilation of the Inca Empire in Peru forty years ago, incorporating music, rituals, inarticulate cries and props into the action of the play, transforming the stage into a battleground of bloodshed and bludgeoning, dramatizing man's evil impulse as greed and lust. However, this does not mean that Shaffer completely abandons the conventions of the well-made play; in the play there is a definite crisis and a conflict between the contrasted antagonists Atahualpa Inca and Francisco Pizarro that represent two different sets of morality, power and cultural values. It is the conflict between the Spanish invaders who are recruited and led by Pizarro and the subjugated Inca empire governed by Atahualpa. The conquest of Peru represents a clash between civilisations, between two different religions (Christianity and Paganism) yet analogous in principal: killing for spreading the faith of Christianity. The "priests inferred that Pizarro should take the life of Atahualpa so that the Spanish would survive and the Christian belief would spread throughout South America" (Mohammdi 37).

The play is a flagrant censure of how one nation unexpectedly finds itself subordinate to the dominance of another. The colonized Sun-God Atahualpa is taken into prison for a deal of providing gold for Pizarro, which, once paid off, the subjugated Pizarro has to make a difficult choice between his allegiance to set the monarch free or sacrifice himself and save his soldiers. Atahualpa consents to his captors' gluttony, offering them a room filled with gold in exchange for his liberation. However, after receiving the ransom, Pizarro charges Atahualpa of stirring up rebellion. Although Atahualpa pacifies the Incans, he is executed by strangling.

Reading the play in the light of the colonizer-colonized relationship, Mohammdi points out that this play is the story of the "colonized and colonizer, the story of battle between two different religions with the same principles. Another example of degrading and dehumanizing of people who have their own kind of civilization and their own belief but to the conquerors they are "others", "aliens" (37). Shaffer's play dramatizes how colonization has a damaging effect not only on the oppressor, but also

on the oppressed. The oppressor is suddenly crushed by realizing that his privileges are illegitimate in subjugating the Other. Upon this discovery, the oppressor attempts to compensate his blame by “finding justifications that transform his oppressive image (Mohammdi 37).

In the light of political ideology, Billington parallels the Spanish conquest of the Incas for gold to America’s unjustified invasion of Iraq:

"The political resonance was always there," says Shaffer, a little deaf as he nears 80 but still boyishly high on the adrenaline kick of rehearsal. "The Spanish said they were going to save the Incas from savagery and idolatry and make their life better because they'd have Christ: today we offer democracy as a panacea. And, while the conquistadors were blatant in their admission of greed, today the need for oil has replaced the hunger for gold. I'd be willing to bet that any incursion throughout history in which the invading country has proclaimed it is bringing benefits to the conquered is based on a lie. (22)

As the Spaniards committed unbelievable acts of destruction to the Incas, America committed unbelievable atrocities toward the Iraqi people with the pretext of searching for nuclear weapons. “Aesthetically, all the great achievements of Inca gold and silverwork virtually disappeared. In much the same way, Baghdad's museum treasures have been vandalised under American occupation”, says Shaffer (qtd. in Billington 22).

4.3 Arthur Kopit’s *Indians* (1969)

History is no more reliable than memory. Stephen Bertman writes, “Like an individual, a nation can rearrange the pieces of the past in order to create a version of the truth that is more psychologically satisfying”. He continues saying, “And if certain pieces do not fit, a political regime or even a whole people can dispense with them altogether, choosing sweet oblivion over the pain of remembrance” (63). Kopit’s *Indians* underscores this tendency in America’s attempt to forget, if not obliterate from memory, a great deal of undesirable and horrific actions, past or present, taken against innocent nations and peoples. The play attempts to deconstruct the cultural mythmaking process through its examination of personal identity construction; the American oppressors create self-deluding narratives to rationalize violently irrational actions toward the Native Americans. In this play, the myth of Manifest Destiny (expressed through the legend of Buffalo Bill) is deconstructed. As Bostian remarks, the play “offers tremendous insight into the innate human quest for a stable identity in an unstable world. And it is relevant not only to the social moment of its creation, but also to the present one” (68).

It is a more condemnatory verbal attack than a long serio-comic one-act play, comprising a mosaic of scenes that cover about two decade of the American history from 1866 till 1990. It is

contemptuously funny about no less a subject than genocide of Native Americans during 19th-century westward expansion under the sponsorship and legacy of Manifest Destiny that infects the contemporary American 'collective consciousness', to borrow Jung's term, employing absurdist and experimental techniques.

It tells the story, through Buffalo Bill Cody who comes from the oppressor group, of how the white man devastated the Indians in his fervent march across the frontier. It is through "a series of dream-like flashbacks" that Kopit "re-enacts the participation of Buffalo Bill and others in the Indians' destruction" (Smith 2). In other words, Kopit defines "the nature of the American character, and how it is revealed in its conflict with people who have been seen, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as 'outside the universe of obligation' (Skloot, "Theatrical Images" 190).

Indians traces the conquering of the West, from Geronimo's surrender in 1866 to the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890. In 30 years, the Wild West was tamed, passing from history to popular culture via dime novels and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. The play takes the audience back in time to discover the lives of legendary Indians Buffalo Bill Cody and other famous Native Americans like Sitting Bull and Geronimo. It also brings a sense of justice to America's native people and tells a different version about how the west was won. The play offers the myths surrounding cowboys and Indians, underscoring the issue of lack of respect between cultures. Not only does Kopit's "attention-grabbing" play dramatize the contradictions of Buffalo Bill Cody's life and relationship with Native Americans, but it also opens up "the real savage story of how the West was won, to demythologize that old game of cowboys and Indians" (A.13), as Klein Alvin remarks.

Alvin draws parallels between Kopit's play and the Vietnam War, explaining that Kopit was inspired to write this play after reading that the deaths of innocent people murdered in the Vietnam War were regarded as the "inevitable consequences of war," and pointing out that "Clearly, parallels to the Vietnam War were rife. In fact, it was a newspaper account of a shooting in Saigon that inspired Mr. Kopit to draw a startling analogy, making connections to an historic American arrogance in perpetuity" (A.13). Revealing his intentions in writing this play, Kopit, in a discussion with John Lahr, says "I wanted to expose the madness of our involvement in Vietnam. I had believed for some time that what was happening was the symptom of a national disease. . . . I decided to explore the Western conflict, particularly the way in which a myth had evolved about the West to justify what we had done to the Indians" (qtd. in Skloot, "Theatrical Images" 189). Patterson sheds light on the importance of Kopit's play in the context of genocide, remarking that "Kopit turned to a more serious political investigation of the white settlers' treatment of Native Americans. . . . Kopit's play was one of

the first major pieces to confront the issue and to relate it to continuing genocide in South-East Asia” (203).

4.4 Christopher Hampton's *Savages* (1974)

The historical backdrop of *Savages* could be encapsulated in the military autocracy in Brazil from 1964 to 1985 and the bombing that occurred during the Quarup celebrations that resulted in the extinction of the Cintas Tribe. The play deals with the systematic slaughter of Brazilian Indians by shedding light on the Brazilian Indian "problem" under a tyrannous regime that colluded with the oppressor against the Citans tribe. Alan West, British government official in Brazil and interested in the Indian culture and rituals, is kidnapped by the Brazilian Revolutionary Movement to be exchanged for the release of imprisoned Brazilian political activists. Carlos Esquerdo, interested in reciting quotes by Frantz Fanon and Albert Camus, attempts to make his captive understand the thoughts behind the revolutionary movement. While Carlos is worried with the plight of the Brazilian labours and landless farmers, West is preoccupied with the extermination of the native Indians. As Sebastian Black notes, as Carlos, the easy revolutionary, talks of his country, one learns the necessary facts about the predicament of the Brazilian urban poor and the terrors of a police state” (155). On the other hand, West knows that the genocide is on its way to annihilate the indigenous Indians. The Indians were poisoned by sugar and infectious disease, and slaughtered by covetous land owners whether domestic or foreign. At the end of the play, Ataide Pereina tells an American investigator about the history of this genocide.

In terms of the techniques of the theatre of genocide, Ian Johns points out Hampton's aim is to raise awareness for the plight of Brazilian tribes that were being systematically exterminated by commercial interests. Set in Seventies Brazil, the play intercuts the kidnapping of the British diplomat Alan West . . . by left-wing guerrillas more concerned with the plight of the urban poor, with flashbacks involving an anthropologist . . . and a meeting with a Coca- Cola- swigging American missionary . . . who is "integrating" the natives. (22)

The first design of the play (condemning the murderers) shifted as Hampton learnt more about the Indians: “The more I searched the more I thought it was all really caused by the system—of which the Indians are just symptom” (68). This means that Hampton tends to centre his play not only on the perpetrators but also on the plight of the Brazilian Indians who are being systematically exterminated by Brazilian industry and the Brazilian government. Hampton goes on illuminating such a plight, saying “The Indian problem is a result of the economic policies of capitalism—a simpler statement but true. The more I went into it the more I realized it would be absolutely necessary to put in something

about the political situation in Brazil” (68). Thus, the two strands—atrocities against the Brazilian population by its government and system of capitalism on one hand and genocide done to them by foreign forces (monstrous American missionary) are balanced. As part of the play’s network of juxtapositions (domestic and foreign), Hampton places the scenes with Pereira. The first scene is set just after a scene in which the British government official (West) begins to make friends with Carlos. Diametrically opposed in their political views and principles, West and Carlos are still part of the same system and the same society. The communist adherents still refuse to see that industrialization and the capitalist-worker (metaphorically, captor-captive) relations are threats to the Indians’ civilization. The possibility that the abductor and the enslaved can be befriended is contrasted with Pereira’s inhumane attitude to the Indians as sub-human.

The second act is filled with scenes of death, with Carlos re-counting the murder of the guerrillas by the state’s secret police forces that are in fact the death squadron, and with Pereira describing the massacre of the Indians and the “brutal inhumanity of the Brazilian dictatorship” (Holland 145). An important note about this play is made by Holland who notes that Hampton “recognizes that responsibility for genocide is borne both by the company, part of the faceless system, and by individuals like Pereira”, asserting that Pereira is unable to see the Indians as anything but animals or sub-humans.

Conclusion

The theatre of genocide seeks to influence discourse by saying what cannot be said, giving a voice to the victim to narrate his/her traumatic story of being dehumanized by the perpetrator, and using exciting action and evocative language. Among the techniques employed by anti-genocide dramatists are history, myths, cultural encounter, evocation of empathy for victims of genocide, discussion of the perpetrators' motives, shift in lighting, use of props, music, rituals and juxtaposing the past and the present. This study has also shed light on the intimate connection between genocide theatre on one hand and cultural politics, postcolonial writings and trauma studies on the other hand by showing that such a theatre attempts to oppose what is officially disseminated, to question historical accounts, to call for social change, and to depict the agonies and bitter memories experienced by genocide victims.

المستخلص

مسرح الإبادة الجماعية: مقدمه

احمد محمد علي الحسيني

يحاول هذا البحث أن يكون بمثابة مقدمة وافية لمسرح الإبادة الجماعية. وقد تمت تلك المقدمة من خلال الطرق التالية: (1) تحديد المقصود بـ "الإبادة الجماعية" وعلاقتها الوطيدة بالحدثة وحدث "المحرقة" المروع ؛ (2) شرح أهمية مسرح مكافحة الإبادة الجماعية وعلاقته بالدراسات الثقافية لرفع الوعي الفردي والجماعي والدعوة إلى وقف العنف الموجه ضد الضحايا ؛ (3) إلقاء الضوء على استراتيجيات مسرح الإبادة الجماعية ؛ (4) إلقاء الضوء بصوره موجزه على العلاقة بين كتابات القتل الجماعي و الصدمة النفسية ؛ (5) تقديم شرح موجز لمسرحيات تعد نماذج لمسرح الإبادة الجماعية ألا وهي: " نساء طروادة " (٤١٥ ق. م) ليروبوديس، المسرحية التاريخية الملحمية "الحمله الملكي لملاحقه اله الشمس" (١٩٦٧) لبيتر شفر، "الهنود" (١٩٦٩) لأرثر كوبرت و "المتوحشين" (١٩٧٤) لكريستوفر هامبتون.

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