

Chapter Two: *Called to Account*

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Chapter Two: *Called to Account*

Introduction

Called to Account: The Indictment of Anthony Charles Lynton Blair for the Crime of Aggression against Iraq – A Hearing opened at the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn, North London, on 19 April 2007, where it ran for seven weeks. It was edited by Richard Norton-Taylor and directed by the Tricycle Theatre's artistic director, Nicolas Kent. *Called to Account* focused on the British government's decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003 and whether there is a case for charging Tony Blair as a war criminal under UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 (1974). The play was constructed from testimony from a range of high-profile witnesses who were cross-examined by eminent lawyers about their knowledge of the circumstances and the decision-making process in the lead up to the war. The cross-examinations were subsequently edited by Norton-Taylor and eleven such interviews were included in the play. Although considered to be one of a series of 'tribunal plays' at the Tricycle Theatre, *Called to Account* was qualitatively different from both Kent's and Norton-Taylor's previous productions and distinct within the historic canon of tribunal plays. Here, the interviews were not edited from a legal trial, but arranged specifically for the purposes of a theatrical production. This difference resulted in innovations in Kent and Norton-Taylor's working methods: because the interviews were arranged for the play, the testimony was not subject to the rules of a law court, and thus the witnesses and lawyers could be filmed. Each actor was thus given a DVD of their subject's interview. In comparison to the previous tribunal plays,

therefore, in *Called to Account*, the actors had unprecedented access to the specifics of the original interview. This resulted in a quite different set of challenges from those encountered in *Talking to Terrorists*, and, I will argue, prompted a particularly focussed concern with restraint and precision among the cast.

Tribunal Theatre

The term ‘tribunal play’ refers to a documentary production in which the primary document is an official legal case. Kent is correct when he states that ‘I wasn’t doing anything spectacularly new...but it seems like I reinvented the wheel.’¹ Although often credited otherwise, as Kent recognises, he and Norton-Taylor did not create the form as much as reinvigorate and revitalise it for the contemporary stage.

The distinct history of tribunal theatre has led some researchers, including Derek Paget, to distinguish it entirely from ‘verbatim’.² The influential exponents of the form were working in Germany in the 1960s and had a direct link to the experiments in the 1930s of Erwin Piscator, who is considered the founder of

¹ *Tribunals at the Tricycle: Nicolas Kent in conversation with Terry Stoller*. January 2005, London. <www.hotreview.org/articles/tribunalsatthet.htm> accessed 5 August 2009.

² Paget states, ‘An additional confusion has been introduced by the apparent determination of theatre criticism to conflate verbatim and tribunal theatre...The distinction between the two modes is very clear and deserves to be preserved against the tendency to forget previous work.’ Derek Paget, *Get Real*, p.233. Paola Botham has researched tribunal theatre’s antecedents in court dramas in both plays and novels in her chapter ‘Witnesses in the Public Sphere: *Bloody Sunday* and the Redefinition of Political Theatre’ in Susan C. Haedicke, Deirdre Heddon, Avraham Oz and E.J. Westlake, eds., *Political Performances* (New York: Rodopi, 2009), pp.35-53.

documentary theatre.³ The leading documentary dramatists were Rolf Hochhuth, Heinar Kipphardt and Peter Weiss. The latter two writers staged tribunal versions of contemporary legal cases. Significantly, all three writers' most famed documentary productions were directed by Piscator within a formative three-year period from 1963-5. These productions launched tribunal theatre as a form in its own right.

Rolf Hochhuth was a formative figure in the rise of tribunal theatre. His documentary play, *Der Stellvertreter* (*The Representative*, known in America as *The Deputy*), premiered in West Berlin in 1963. Strongly influenced by the world-wide televised trial of Adolf Eichmann, it centred on Pope Pius XII, and accused him of failing to act in relation to the Nazi extermination of the Jews.⁴ Directed by Erwin Piscator, the production 'unleashed an international public discussion, the like of which had not been stimulated by any play in the history

³ Piscator's 1925 production, *Trotz Alledem* (*In Spite of Everything*) was arguably the first documentary play. Of the production, Piscator wrote 'we intended to have figures like Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg portrayed on the stage...many felt that our plan to include members of the government in the revue was dangerous...Film was to be combined organically with live action of the first time...The film used in *In Spite of Everything* was documentary. From the archives of the Reich which were made available to us by one of our contacts, we used authentic shots of the war...' Erwin Piscator, *The Political Theatre*, trans. Hugh Rorrison (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980), pp.92-4. For more on Piscator's documentary work, see John Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), pp.46-67; and Maria Ley-Piscator, *The Piscator Experiment: The Political Theatre* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967).

⁴ Adolf Eichmann appears in the play. For our studies here it is noteworthy that Hochhuth's play appeared two years after Eichmann's trial, which made television history when the Israeli court took the unusual decision to allow live recordings, and the trial was broadcast around the world. Laureen Nussbaum has noted the influence of the live broadcast of Adolph Eichmann's trial not only on this play, but on tribunal theatre in the 1960s in general. See Laureen Nussbaum, 'The German Documentary Theatre of the Sixties: A Stereopsis of Contemporary History' *Modern Drama*, Vol.4:2 (1981), pp. 237-55. For more on Eichmann's trial, see Anat Feinberg, 'The Appeal of the Executive: Adolf Eichmann on the Stage', *Monatshefte*, Vol. 78:2 (USA: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), pp. 203-14. For more on *The Representative*, see Eric Bentley, ed., *The Storm over The Deputy*, (New York: Grove Press, 1964) and Sidney F. Parham, 'Editing Hochhuth for the Stage: A Look at the Major Productions of "The Deputy"', *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 28:3 (Oct 1976), pp. 347-53. For Piscator's aims for the production, see Paget, *True Stories? Documentary drama on radio, screen and stage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp.74-6.

of the German theatre'.⁵ The play employed a wide variety of documentary sources as the basis of the reconstruction, which were melded with scenes of Hochhuth's own invention.

Two landmark tribunal productions followed Hochhuth's play.⁶ Such was the dominance of the tribunal form in the 1960s that Herbert Lindenberger stated 'Structurally, documentary plays tend to take the form of trials'.⁷ Heinar Kipphardt's play, *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, was first performed in 1964 in Berlin and Munich. It was particularly successful, becoming 'the talk of Europe'.⁸ The play is a condensed version of the investigation into Oppenheimer, an American nuclear physicist, and focuses on his appearance in front of the House of Un-American Activities Committee in 1953.⁹ Kipphardt's play 'took the [documentary] genre a stage further' and became a form of documentary that is now termed 'tribunal'.¹⁰ Patterson has noted that:

By thus confining himself to one body of documentary relating to a specific question, Kipphardt has solved many of

⁵ Michael Patterson, *German Theatre Today* (London: Pitman Publishing, 1976), p.75.

⁶ In addition to these two formative verbatim productions, Nussbaum also studies two tribunal productions less well-known to a British audience: Rolf Schneider's *Nurnberg Trial* (1967), based on the trial in 1945 of the top-ranking Nazis, and Hans Magnus Enzensberger's *The Havana Inquiry* (1969), taken from the public inquiry into the aborted Bay of Pigs Invasion, Cuba, in 1961, and which 'brought the series of tribunal pieces from the 1960s to a close', p.250.

⁷ Herbert Lindenberger, *Historical Drama: The Relation of Literature and Reality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p.21.

⁸ 'The Character Speaks Out', *Time Magazine*, 20 Nov 1964.

<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,830818,00.html>> accessed 9 Apr 2010. For a contemporary commentary of the play, see John Michalski, 'German Drama and Theater in 1965', *Books Abroad*, Vol. 40: 2 (USA: University of Oklahoma, 1966), pp.137-40. The play was also staged in London in 1966 at the Hampstead Theatre Club and enjoyed similar success, transferring to the West End.

⁹ Oppenheimer was the scientific director of the American atomic project at Los Alamos during the Second World War. Following fears about his Communist sympathies, he was removed from his post.

¹⁰ Patterson, *German Theatre Today*, p.79.

the difficulties Hochhuth found himself in. He has discovered the content suitable for the form.¹¹

In his introduction to the play, Kipphardt states the rules to which he adheres, which we shall find replicated in the tribunal plays of Kent and Norton-Taylor:

The author deliberately confined himself to drawing only upon historical data for all the facts presented in this play. The author exercised his freedom only in the selection, the arrangement, formulation and condensation of the material.¹²

This statement has rightly been questioned by Eric Bentley, who observed:

The claim implicit in Kipphardt's published notes is that, while small facts are shifted around a bit, no damage is done to the essential truth of history. It is, however, Kipphardt who decides what the essential truth is.¹³

Bentley's concerns have been repeated cyclically by commentators on verbatim theatre. Further questions abound from Kipphardt's insertion of invented monologues between the scenes from the trial transcripts: 'He has tried to evolve these monologues from the attitudes adopted by these persons in the course of the proceedings or on other occasions'.¹⁴ Perhaps most importantly, the play ends with an impassioned speech by Oppenheimer about science's modern association with the 'dread and horror'¹⁵ of warfare, though in Kipphardt's introduction he concedes that 'At the actual hearing, Oppenheimer was not given

¹¹ Patterson, *German Theatre Today*, p.79.

¹² Heinar Kipphardt, *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (London: Methuen, 1967), unpaginated.

¹³ Eric Bentley, review of *Oppenheimer*, *New York Times*, 16 Mar 1969. Quoted in Dawson, pp.128-9.

¹⁴ Kipphardt, *Oppenheimer*, unpaginated.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.106.

the opportunity for making a final statement'.¹⁶ This, according to Nussbaum, 'aroused understandable protest from Dr Oppenheimer', and suggests the ethical dilemma of mixing verbatim and invented testimony, and the debatable integrity of the rules Kipphardt attests he worked by.¹⁷ The production opened with an introduction typical of Piscator's epic theatre aesthetic. There was little attempt at realism, as Kipphardt's stage directions instruct, '*The stage is open. Visible spotlights.*' A montage of images of atomic explosions was projected before '*On the wall of a house, radiation shadows of a few victims of the atomic explosion on Hiroshima.*'¹⁸ However, as the piece progressed, this style was replaced, as Nussbaum notes:

Once the second half of the piece gets on its way, there are no more projected or taped documents nor 'alienating' monologues to remind the audience that they should not give way to the illusion of being present at the actual hearing.¹⁹

The way in which the epic aesthetic gave way 'to the illusion of being present at the actual hearing' is intriguing, and relevant to our investigation of *Called to Account*.

Peter Weiss's 1965 play, *Die Ermittlung (The Investigation)*, like both *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* and *The Representative*, was an internationally

¹⁶ Kipphardt, *Oppenheimer*, unpaginated.

¹⁷ Nussbaum, *Modern Drama*, p.245. *Time* magazine quotes Oppenheimer: "I had never said that I regretted participating in a responsible way in the making of the bomb." In a letter to playwright Kipphardt threatening a law suit, Oppenheimer added, "You may well have forgotten Guernica, Dachau, Coventry, Belsen, Warsaw, Dresden and Tokyo. I have not." See *Theater Abroad: The Character Speaks Out*. 20 November 1964.

<<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,830818,00.html>> accessed 9 Apr 2010.

¹⁸ Kipphardt, *Oppenheimer*, p.9.

¹⁹ Nussbaum, *Modern Drama*, p.246.

significant theatrical event.²⁰ *The Investigation* was an edited dramatisation of the Frankfurt War Crimes Trials (1963-65), which tried twenty-two Nazis involved in the death camp at Auschwitz. *The Investigation* was performed simultaneously in sixteen cities across East and West Germany shortly after the conclusion of the trials on 19 Oct 1965. Piscator directed the West Berlin production. It received a rehearsed reading at the RSC, directed by Peter Brook, which Kustow notes ‘pioneered, in this country at least, the stage as courtroom...Nick Kent at the Tricycle Theatre...continues this moral and civic stance today’.²¹ Megson similarly identified the formative influence of *The Investigation* on the Tricycle tribunal plays: ‘Weiss’s *The Investigation*...clearly establishes a template for the Tricycle’s approach.’²²

It was also a tribunal play which was seminal in launching American documentary theatre. Shortly after these landmark German productions, Donald Freed’s *Inquest* (1970) ‘initiated if not inspired...the flourishing of documentary theatre...in the United States’.²³ Like *Oppenheimer*, Freed’s source text was a trial investigating possible communist affiliations relating to the American atomic project, focussing on the 1951 trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.²⁴ *Inquest* opens with a prologue employing recognisable Piscatorian documentary

²⁰ For more on Weiss’s work see Paul Gray and Erika Munk, ‘A Living World: An Interview with Peter Weiss’, *Tulane Drama Review*, Vol. 11:1 (1966), pp. 106-14; and Franz P. Haberl, ‘Peter Weiss’s Documentary Theater’, *Books Abroad*, Vol. 43:3 (Summer, 1969), pp. 359-62.

²¹ Michael Kustow, *theatre@risk* (London: Methuen, 2000), p.134.

²² Chris Megson, ‘Half the Picture’, ‘A Certain Frisson’ at the Tricycle Theatre’ in Forsyth and Megson eds., *Get Real*, p.196.

²³ Attilio Favorini, *Voicings: Ten Plays from the Documentary Theater* (Hopewell, N.J: Echo Press, 1995), p.xxix. Derek Paget notes Daniel Berrigan’s play, *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine* (1971) as a further early example of tribunal theatre in America. Paget, *Get Real*, p.233.

²⁴ Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were charged with leaking details to the Soviet Union. Both were found guilty and executed.

devices such as montaged newsreel footage, before the scene turns to the trial, in which Freed instructs '*The audience is the jury. Dialogue is directed to them.*'²⁵

Erwin Piscator's influence on the tribunal theatre form is, thus, clear. Herbert Arnold, in his article in *Theatre Journal*, notes that 'Following in his didactic footsteps are Rolf Hochhuth...and Peter Weiss.'²⁶ Speaking at Piscator's funeral in 1966, Kipphardt proclaimed 'We all come from your theatre.'²⁷ Arnold states:

The goal of Hochhuth and Weiss is a theatre of political and moral enlightenment aimed at the intellect inside the theatre and a subsequent transformation of reality outside the theatre, using all the technical possibilities first suggested by Piscator's concept and practice of 'total theatre'.²⁸

The relationship between tribunal and Piscator's 'total theatre', which Attilio Favorini has described as 'bombarding the emotions with an arsenal of theatre technology to achieve maximum audience manipulation', is interesting in relation to *Called to Account*.²⁹ Favorini describes Piscator's direction of both *The Representative* and *The Investigation* as 'lean'.³⁰ This is a term we will encounter in relation to Kent and Norton-Taylor's work. Weiss states that 'no attempt should be made to construct the courtroom' and 'The variety of experiences [of the witnesses] can, at most, be indicated by a change of voice or bearing'.³¹

²⁵ Donald Freed, *Inquest* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970), p.26.

²⁶ Herbert A. Arnold, 'The Other Tradition: A Brief Anatomy of Modern German Drama', *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 32:1, (Mar 1980), p.46.

²⁷ Kipphardt quoted in Arnold, *Theatre Journal*, p.43.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.47.

²⁹ Favorini, *Voicings*, p.xix. Similarly, Derek Paget has noted that 'Piscator produced a series of plays in Weimar Germany in the 1920s which were issue-based and which investigated the interface between theatre and technology, drama and politics'. Paget, *True Stories*, p.44.

³⁰ Favorini, *Voicings*, p.xx.

³¹ Weiss also analyses the tribunal form in his 'Fourteen Propositions for a Documentary Theatre', in Proposition XII, he states: 'The documentary theatre can take the shape of a tribunal.'

Both instructions suggest an economy in performance and sparseness in the *mise-en-scène*; as Nussbaum observed, ‘Weiss bends every effort to avoid sensationalism’.³² Similarly, as we have seen, Piscator’s ‘total theatre’ montage of images and sound at the beginning of *Oppenheimer* gave way to the single focus of the court. It certainly appears that the tribunal aesthetic, despite its historical association with a Piscatorian tradition, is a distinctly sparse and un-sensational theatrical arena. Mason has suggested that this difference aligns tribunal theatre more closely with a Brechtian rather than Piscatorian approach.³³ Suggesting the aesthetic differences between a Brechtian aesthetic and Piscator’s ‘total theatre’, he states:

Piscator attempted to remove all aesthetic distance between the stage and the auditorium. The goal was to make documentary drama a direct political form...Brecht differed from Piscator in wanting above all to maintain an aesthetic distance between stage and audience...following Brecht in stressing aesthetic distance are the principal documentary dramatists Rolf Hochhuth, Peter Weiss and Heinar Kipphardt.³⁴

Later in his article, Mason states ‘Although it was again Erwin Piscator who produced *The Deputy*...The tribunal documentary drama was more directly influenced by the Eichmann trial and by the dramas of Bertolt Brecht.’³⁵ We

In this case it does not pretend to view in authenticity with the...trial’. Reproduced in Favorini, *Voicings*, p.142.

³² Nussbaum, *Modern Drama*, p.247.

³³ Although Brecht never wrote a tribunal play, he planned to do so in his final years. In a plan for the 1951/2 season, he states ‘To make a topical play the dramaturgical department is working on reports of trials.’ Brecht, ‘Preparations for the 1951/2 Season’ (c.1950), in a note to ‘Theaterarbeit: An Editorial Note’ in Willett, *BT*, p.246. Brecht worked for Piscator in his documentary theatre in the 1930s. See ‘Bertolt Brecht: the theory and practice of the dramaturg’ in Mary Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre*, pp.109-51.

³⁴ Gregory Mason, ‘Documentary Drama from the Revue to the Tribunal’, *Modern Drama*, Vol.20 (1977), pp. 264-8. For more on the relationship between Brecht and Piscator, see Hugh Rorrison, ‘Brecht and Piscator’ in Graham Bartram and Anthony Waine, eds., *Brecht in Perspective* (London; New York: Longman, 1982), pp.145-59; and ‘The Piscator Experiment’ in Tom Kuhn and Steves Giles, eds., *Brecht on Art and Politics* (London: Methuen, 2003), p.64-6.

³⁵ Mason, *Modern Drama*, p.268.

shall investigate whether *Called to Account* employed this ‘aesthetic distance’. There has certainly been a tendency to view tribunal as a ‘pure’ form: Favorini notes that Weiss’s ‘praxis has tempted his sympathetic critics to identify him with an ideal of “pure” documentary’.³⁶ Similarly, Mason states that tribunal is ‘documentary drama in its purest form’.³⁷ Part of Derek Paget’s concern to distinguish tribunal from verbatim is linked to his identification of distinct performance conventions:

Where tribunal theatre is concerned, *mise-en-scène* and acting style alike must be realist, and ‘authentic’ in that sense. The courtroom of an inquiry must look like a courtroom...Actors must act like real-life originals...the formal properties are very different from verbatim plays.³⁸

Paget also states, ‘documentary theatre has always encouraged performance as *emblem*, a deliberately 2-D acting that ‘marks out’ historical personalities by simplifying them.’³⁹ Whilst this may be partly true of his analysis of *Oh What a Lovely War!*, it certainly is not true of my investigations into *Talking to Terrorists*, nor, I contend, much of contemporary verbatim theatre.

The history of tribunal theatre suggests a microcosmic manifestation of what Derek Paget has called the ‘broken tradition’ of verbatim theatre, in which the ‘rhizomic nature of alternative forms’⁴⁰ leads to ‘“interrupted” flowerings of documentary theatre’ more widely.⁴¹ Between the 1960s and the Tricycle’s tribunal plays, ‘interrupted flowerings’ have included *Who Killed Hilda Murrell?*

³⁶ Favorini, *Voicings*, p. xxvii.

³⁷ Mason, *Modern Drama*, p.269.

³⁸ Paget, *Get Real*, p.234.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.229.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.224.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.226.

(Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, 1986) and Moises Kaufmann's *The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* (Off-Broadway, 1997). The lack of a consistent lineage of tribunal plays perhaps explains why there has been little scholarly attempt to map its particular ancestry. However, as Megson, Paget and Kustow note, it was Kent and Norton-Taylor's tribunal productions that thrust the form back to the forefront of documentary theatre for the first time since the 1960s.

Like Paget, I acknowledge that tribunal theatre has a particular ancestry that is to some extent distinct from verbatim theatre. However, as the source of tribunal productions are transcribed legal proceedings, they are still composed of recorded spoken testimony, and as such can still be defined as 'verbatim'. Whilst being mindful of the differences and the dangers of conflating them, to see these forms as entirely distinct appears to me to be a false dichotomy. Therefore, in this study, I understand 'tribunal' to be a category of verbatim, rather than an entirely separate entity.

The Tricycle Theatre

Nicolas Kent has been artistic director of the theatre since 1984.⁴² One of the four 'planks of policy', to which artistic output has remained committed since the theatre's foundation, is to stage productions and education programmes that 'attract and reflect the culturally diverse local community'.⁴³ In a multicultural

⁴² The theatre began life as The Wakefield Tricycle Theatre in 1972, founded by Shirley Barrie and Ken Chubb in central London. They moved their work to the Tricycle's current location in 1980. The auditorium is a large studio space with a 230-seat capacity. For a history of the Tricycle Theatre, see the V&A Museum's Theatre Archive, some of which is available online at <www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/theatre/archives/thm-317f> accessed 3 Jul 2009.

⁴³ Tricycle Theatre Website. <www.tricycle.co.uk> accessed 5 Jun 2009.

area of north London with large black and Irish populations, Kent has sought to address political issues pertinent to the theatre's immediate environment:

Margaret Thatcher didn't come out anywhere near strongly against apartheid...So we had a very strong relationship with the Market Theatre in Johannesburg...Equally if you were Irish, you had the situation that bombs were going off all over London...so inevitably we were doing plays about Ireland too.⁴⁴

However, in addition to serving Kilburn's diverse community, like Weiss and Kipphardt before him, through the tribunal plays Kent has created a national debating house and situated the Tricycle at the forefront of contemporary political theatre. As Charles Spencer declared in *The Daily Telegraph* in 2004, 'There is no theatre in Britain that has told us more about the way we live than the Tricycle in Kilburn'.⁴⁵ The theatre won the Olivier Award for 'Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre' in 2004 for *Bloody Sunday*, and it was for its political work that the Tricycle won the Evening Standard Theatre Awards' Special Award in 2006.

Kent and Norton-Taylor: the partnership and the plays

Richard Norton-Taylor is the Security Affairs Editor for *The Guardian*. He has worked for the newspaper since 1975, and in that time has published a number of books, often highly critical of the structure of government, including *Blacklist: The Inside Story of Political Vetting* (1988) and *In Defence of the Realm? The Case for Accountable Security and Intelligence Services* (1990), both of which

⁴⁴ *Tribunals at the Tricycle*, Kent interview with Terry Stoller.

⁴⁵ Charles Spencer, 'Where Justice is Caged', *Daily Telegraph*, 26 May 2004. <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3617731/Where-justice-is-caged.html>> accessed 17 Aug 2009.

reveal his deep-seated concern with governance and justice.⁴⁶ Norton-Taylor's partnership with Nicolas Kent has included, to date, six tribunal plays, dating back to 1994, all of which Norton-Taylor has edited and Kent has directed. It is noteworthy that Kent approached an investigative journalist rather than a playwright to edit the transcripts. Norton-Taylor is a political expert with a long history of investigating institutions, policy-makers and the British justice system. As well as lending what Kent has called 'serious credibility' to the plays, this decision suggests the type of skills required to maintain a full grasp of the legal and political complexities whilst sculpting a logical and coherent narrative out of the vast proceedings of an inquiry.⁴⁷

Kent and Norton-Taylor's first collaboration was entitled *Half the Picture: The Scott Arms to Iraq Inquiry* in 1994. It was the only tribunal play to include non-verbatim monologues, written by the famous political playwright John McGrath.⁴⁸ The production was immediately acknowledged to be of national importance, and became the first play to be performed in the Houses of Parliament, staged in the Grand Committee Room in front of an audience of parliamentarians.⁴⁹ It was subsequently televised on BBC2 and broadcast on the

⁴⁶ Mark Hollingsworth and Richard Norton-Taylor, *Blacklist: The Inside Story of Political Vetting* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1988); Richard Norton-Taylor, *In Defence of the Realm? The Case for Accountable Security and Intelligence Services* (London: Civil Liberties Trust, 1990).

⁴⁷ Hammond and Steward, *Verbatim: Verbatim*, p.164.

⁴⁸ McGrath was a major proponent of documentary theatre. His 7:84 Theatre Company regularly employed documentary devices in their left-wing political theatre, perhaps most famously in *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (London: Methuen, 1974). For more on McGrath, see David Bradby and Susanna Capon, eds., *Freedom's Pioneer: John McGrath's work in theatre, film and television* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2004).

⁴⁹ See the Tricycle Website: <<http://www.tricycle.co.uk/about-the-tricycle-pages/about-us-tab-menu/about>> accessed 17 Aug 2009. For more on the performance, see Chris Megson, *Get Real*, pp.195-208.

BBC World Service.⁵⁰ This was followed two years later by *Nuremberg: The 1946 War Crimes Trial* (1996), timed to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of what Norton-Taylor notes was ‘the world’s first war crimes trial’, and which followed the rich heritage established by Weiss and Schneider of Nazi trials in tribunal theatre.⁵¹ The play was performed at the Tricycle and again broadcast on the radio by BBC World Service. *Nuremberg* was presented alongside short verbatim pieces from contemporary tribunals, including Kent’s solo project, *Srebrenica* (1996), which drew attention to the similarities between the trial of the high-ranking Nazis and the war crimes in the former Yugoslavia. Their most celebrated venture to date, *The Colour of Justice: The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, was staged in 1999. The play, which condensed the Macpherson Inquiry that followed the Police’s handling of the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager, by a white gang, was performed at the Tricycle and the Theatre Royal Stratford East.⁵² The production was the first West End transfer for Kent and Norton-Taylor, performed at the Victoria Palace. A television production of the play was also broadcast on BBC2. *The Colour of Justice* is now on the curriculum of many schools, colleges and universities and is also used for teaching purposes at some Police training institutions.⁵³ In 2003, Kent and Norton-Taylor investigated the scapegoating and subsequent suicide of Dr. David Kelly over the question of weapons of mass destruction and the decision to

⁵⁰ The reviews of the production indicate the play’s impact. For example, John Peter in *The Sunday Times* stated ‘This is dynamite. Live theatre meets live politics’ (17 Jun 1994), in *Theatre Record*, Vol.14:12 (1994), p.743.

⁵¹ Interview with Richard Norton-Taylor in Hammond and Steward, *Verbatim, Verbatim*, p.108.

⁵² The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report by Sir William Macpherson is available to read online. See <<http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm42/4262/4262.html>> accessed 17 Aug 2009. Also see Janelle Reinelt’s article ‘Toward a Poetics of Theatre and Public Events’ in *TDJ*, Vol. 50:3, (Fall 2006) p.69-87. In addition to investigating *the Colour of Justice*, Reinelt also focuses on the case itself.

⁵³ Richard Norton-Taylor, ‘The Colour of Evidence’, *The Guardian*, 8 November 2007. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/nov/08/thecolourofevidence>> accessed 5 Oct 2009.

invade Iraq, in *Justifying War: Scenes from the Hutton Inquiry*. Again the production was televised, on BBC4. In 2004, Kent continued the rich tradition of verbatim at the Tricycle, directing Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo's *Guantanamo: 'Honour Bound to Defend Freedom'*, which, after its run at the theatre, transferred to the West End and then to New York. Kent and Norton-Taylor's fifth collaboration was *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry*. Following the run at the Tricycle in 2005, the production toured Ireland, visiting Belfast, Dublin and was also performed in front of sixty-five members of the victims' families in Derry.

Kent and Norton-Taylor's Political Agendas

With regard to *Justifying War*, Nicolas Kent has stated, 'I wouldn't have done the Hutton Inquiry if I didn't believe the dossier for going to war in Iraq had been made up.'⁵⁴ In his choice of study for the tribunal plays, Kent has sought to make interventions into debates of national and international importance. The tribunal plays repeatedly expose the lack of government transparency and accountability in supposedly public-serving institutions, thereby interrogating the institutional machinery of democracy itself. Kent has thus established the tribunal plays as a theatre of campaign and protest.

Perhaps the critical motivating factor behind the plays is that filming has been prohibited in the inquiries. Although 'public' inquiries, the number of seats

⁵⁴ Terry Stoller interview.

available was very limited.⁵⁵ Actor William Hoyland, who has appeared in all six of the tribunal plays, stated:

...cameras were not allowed in the previous inquiries. In fact that is one of the reasons that Nick was so keen to do plays like the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry – they are not televised. In many ways, that was the *raison d'être* for the whole tribunal shows.⁵⁶

In other words, the public has had to rely on journalistic reporting of the inquiries, which Kent found inadequate for the proper investigation of these complex cases. He commented that ‘Because of the television age we’re in and even newspapers, we’re getting sound bites. We get very short coverage of stories... They don’t get to the bottom of it.’⁵⁷ Similarly, Norton-Taylor notes that the inquiries have been ‘written about in short newspaper articles, or mentioned all too briefly in television and radio news bulletins.’⁵⁸ The tribunal plays have thus enabled a broader public consumption of neglected material.

Both Kent and Norton-Taylor are convinced that theatre is the most potent form to get this information out to the public. Kent has stated: ‘In theatre you’ve got a captive audience... The doors are closed and people stay in there and they wrestle

⁵⁵ Chris Megson notes that in the Scott and Hutton Inquiries, ‘only around ten members of the public were allowed to observe each session’: “‘This is all theatre’: Iraq Centre Stage.’ *CTR*, Vol.15:3 (2005), p.370.

⁵⁶ Interview with William Hoyland, 20 January 2009. All quotations from Hoyland, unless quoted otherwise, are from this interview. Similarly, Chris Megson states that ‘the initial rationale for staging *Half the Picture* was to compensate the public for the banning of TV cameras from the Scott, and later Hutton, Inquiries’, *CTR*, p.370.

⁵⁷ Terry Stoller interview.

⁵⁸ Hammond and Steward, *Verbatim: Verbatim*, p.122. Stephen Bottoms is a lone voice disagreeing, suggesting that the British public (unlike the US) have complete trust in the BBC and print journalism. He writes ‘most Britons still believe (somewhat gullibly?) in the underlying truth/reality of the news as mediated by the BBC and by newspapers such as *The Guardian*.’ See Stephen Bottoms, ‘Putting the Document in Documentary’, *TDR*, Vol.50:3 (Fall 2006), p.57.

with something for an hour and a half'.⁵⁹ The shared experience of the audience also emphasises the campaigning element of Kent's theatre. The social act of attending these plays has come to be seen as an act of solidarity with the issues raised.

The timing of the tribunal plays is also critical to their power and their potential to make political interventions. Many of the plays staged the inquiry before the findings of it were published. For example, *The Colour of Justice* was first performed in January 1999, a month before the findings of the Macpherson Inquiry were made public. Similarly, *Bloody Sunday*, which staged excerpts of the Saville Inquiry, opened in April 2005, following the final hearings which were held in November 2004. The Inquiry's final report was published on 15 June 2010, and was the longest judicial investigation in history, costing £195 million. Like Weiss's *The Investigation*, the tribunal plays provide what Kritzer calls an 'immediate form of political engagement',⁶⁰ by the fact that they are performed contemporaneously with the events they depict.⁶¹

Considering both the political and personal sensitivities surrounding the legal cases Kent and Norton-Taylor have chosen, and the implications of staging them contemporaneously, it is perhaps unexpected that the historic tendency to view

⁵⁹ Terry Stoller interview.

⁶⁰ Amelia Howe Kritzer states that 'tribunal plays substitute for failed public institutions'. See *Political Theatre in Post-Thatcher Britain: New Writing 1995–2005* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.223.

⁶¹ However, praise for the timing has not been universal. Aleks Sierz raises a strangely spurious argument when he states 'although it was good to see theatre respond so quickly to events, in this case the docu-drama was self-defeating. It strongly implied that the government had done wrong but the actual conclusion of the Hutton Inquiry, which was delivered after the play was staged, came to the opposite verdict, and exonerated Blair.' See 'Beyond Timidity?: The State of British New Writing' in *Journal of Performance and Art*, PAJ 81, Vol. 27: 3 (2005), pp. 55-61. Surely this is not self-defeating but rather emphasises the importance of the tribunal plays.

tribunal plays as ‘purer’ than other forms of documentary still persists. Despite the fact that Norton-Taylor has complete freedom over whose voices are heard, which in itself is a highly political act,⁶² David Edgar listed the tribunal plays top in his hierarchy of ‘fidelity to fact’.⁶³ He highlighted them as the most concerned with fact, placing them above Stafford-Clark’s and Soans’s *Talking to Terrorists*. Edgar’s rationale behind this order is clear: as suggested in the *Talking to Terrorists* case-study, Soans’s approach was much freer than Norton-Taylor’s. As the interviews for the tribunal plays were recorded and transcribed, Norton-Taylor’s work was that of a ‘creative editor’,⁶⁴ structuring a narrative from the legal testimony.⁶⁵ By contrast, as he collated very little recorded material, Soans’s ‘quasi-verbatim methodology’ in *Talking to Terrorists*, as Derek Paget labelled it, meant that his role was more akin to that of a writer, as little concrete material from the interviews existed.⁶⁶

Design

The tribunal plays, especially since *Half the Picture*, have become associated with a particular aesthetic, which represents a departure from the design of the tribunal productions in the 1960s analysed above, and further aligns the form

⁶² For example, the transcripts of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry ran to over eleven thousand pages, of which Norton-Taylor selected less than one percent for inclusion in *The Colour of Justice*. Similarly, Christopher Clark’s opening statement of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry was until recently the longest speech in British legal history, at forty-two days long, which Norton-Taylor edited down to around two hundred words.

⁶³ David Edgar, speaking at the ‘From Fact to Fiction’ conference, Birmingham University, 5 Sept 2007.

⁶⁴ In relation to tribunal plays, Herbert Lindenberger has called documentary writers ‘arrangers’. *Historical Drama*, p.20.

⁶⁵ We might consider Paola Botham’s comment that ‘Tribunals need not be juxtaposed by the craft of playwrighting; they offer themselves in the already dramatised process of cross-examination’, although this overlooks the degree of dramaturgical power Norton-Taylor had over the testimony. Botham, *Political Performances*, p.36.

⁶⁶ Paget, ‘Acting with Facts’, p.171.

with notions of ‘purity’ and ‘fidelity to fact’. Megson’s identification of ‘non-naturalist devices’ in *Half the Picture* suggests a closer relationship to Piscator and the German tradition than any of the subsequent productions. He states:

[*Half the Picture*] in 1994, incorporated a range of strategic non-naturalist devices, with interpolated monologues written by John McGrath and a final montage of voices that reiterated excerpts from the inquiry...*Justifying War*, staged nearly ten years later is more ambivalent in effect, more observational than polemical. In the latter there’s no theatrical equivalent to McGrath’s punchy monologues and so no interruption of the play’s seamless illusionism.⁶⁷

Although none of the tribunal plays since *Half the Picture* have featured fictional monologues, I would contend that the inquiry into the scapegoating of Dr. David Kelly and his subsequent suicide in *Justifying War*, which culminates in testimony from his widow, was not ‘more ambivalent in effect’, but rather was a polemic in a different, arguably more subtle, guise. In *The Investigation*, Weiss stated that ‘no attempt should made to construct the courtroom’. By contrast, Kent’s plays, according to Megson, display ‘a tendency towards hardcore illusionism in tribunal theatre’.⁶⁸ Similarly, Paola Botham notes that Kent’s productions are ‘set within a faithful reproduction of the courtroom environment’. Whether indeed they are faithful or not (which, as cameras were not allowed, is merely conjecture), this is indeed the effect of the staging.⁶⁹ In comparing contemporary verbatim theatre to Piscator’s productions, David Watt states:

⁶⁷ Megson, *CTR*, p.370

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Paola Botham, *Political Performances*, p.36.

Piscator's "world-historical" documentary theatre and the "explanatory" model which followed it in the 1960s have now been replaced... by a return to the essentially naturalist impulse which documentary theatre was initially designed to circumvent.⁷⁰

Whether *Called to Account* was 'essentially naturalist' will be discussed below. It is true, though, as Watt observed, that the Brechtian 'aesthetic distance' which characterised the first generation of tribunal dramatists has been replaced. In the critical reception of the tribunal plays, Kent's aesthetic, and indeed the actors' performances themselves, have repeatedly been interpreted as 'accurate' and 'literal'. In a review of *Half the Picture*, Patrick Marmion wrote 'it is morbidly literal, reproducing the excruciating atmosphere of the inquiry right down to the minutest sighs, yawns, hesitations'.⁷¹ Similarly, reviewing *Justifying War*, Charles Spencer labelled the play a 'signal public service' because (as the inquiry was not televised) 'we were denied the chance of observing the witnesses' body language, their hesitations, the moments when they seemed rattled'. It is comments such as these that prompted this case-study. These critics infer that the tribunal plays can provide the above features, and thus the audience can gain a more privileged proximity to the original circumstances than merely reading the transcripts would allow. However, in the examples above, these are exactly the areas to which the actors did not have access. In both *Half the Picture* and *Justifying War*, the actors received only the transcripts. Thus, the 'minutest sighs, yawns, hesitations' were the actors' and director's invention, as were decisions about the 'witnesses' body language'. These comments provoke questions which will form the focus of my investigations in this chapter. What access did the

⁷⁰ David Watt, 'Local Knowledges, Memories, and Community: from Oral History to Performance' in *Political Performances*, p.192.

⁷¹ Patrick Marmion, *What's On*, 22 Jun 1994, in *Theatre Record*, p.743.

actors have to original interviews? How did they work with the original material? What challenges did they face? Other questions arise from the provocatively political subject matter of *Called to Account*. How did this affect the actors? What were their preoccupations and how did these affect their approaches? As we shall see from the contextualisation of *Called to Account*, the stakes involved in laying out the case to indict a serving prime minister could scarcely be higher.

Called to Account

As Megson has identified, there has been a shift within Kent's tribunal plays since *Half the Picture* which has centred on the rejection of invented scenes. However, an arguably more profound relocation of the form took place in the staging of *Called to Account*. The play is qualitatively different from the previous five tribunal plays as it was not edited from a real inquiry, but rather was constructed from a series of interviews set up by Kent, Norton-Taylor and a lawyer, Philippe Sands QC for the purposes of a stage production. Through the presence of a video camera, and the potential to film the testimony, for the first time the actors were supplied with DVD recordings, which created a much greater access to their subjects' testimony for the cast.

Sands, using lawyers from his own chambers, conducted the interviews according to the UN Definition of Aggression. From the outset the interviews were designed to be edited into a piece of verbatim theatre and thus did not constitute a legal 'hearing', which is defined as:

A court proceeding on the record. Hearings are often used to determine issues arising before or after the full trial of a case, and may be less formal than the trial.⁷²

The reviews of the production illustrate the differences between *Called to Account* and previous tribunal plays. Paul Taylor, writing in *The Independent* called it a ‘dramatic difference’, whilst Kate Bassett in *The Independent* asked, ‘This is some kind of fantasy, isn’t it?’ Similarly, Lloyd Evans in *The Spectator* branded it ‘wish-fulfilment drama’.⁷³ On the whole, the critical responses were less favourable towards the production because of the fact that it was not a real inquiry. As these reviewers’ concerns suggest, without being based on a real inquiry, the production appeared to be a much more explicit staging of Sands’s, Kent’s and Norton-Taylor’s political agendas.

The cross-examinations were, however, consistent with the way in which a hearing would function if lawyers were briefed to establish whether there was evidence to indict Tony Blair. Similarly, the title and marketing of the play draw on the veracity of the previous tribunal plays. In both the programme for *Called to Account* and the printed text, it is listed alongside previous legal inquiries staged, most noticeably in a double-page spread in the programme entitled ‘Iraq to Iraq: The Tricycle Tribunal Plays’, which draws parallels between *Called to Account* and *Half the Picture*, and on the Tricycle Theatre website, which describes *Called to Account* as ‘the most recent play in the Tribunal series’.⁷⁴ By drawing on the rich heritage of the previous plays, the marketing infers that

⁷² *Handbook of Legal Terms*, <<http://courts.gov/Resources/holt/holt.htm>> accessed 1 Jul 2009.

⁷³ Paul Taylor, *The Independent*, 26 Apr 2007; Kate Bassett, *The Independent*, 29 Apr 2007; Lloyd Evans, *The Spectator* 5 May 2007. All in *Theatre Record*, Vol. 27:1 (2007), pp.490-3.

⁷⁴ *Tricycle Theatre Website*, <www.tricycle.co.uk/about-the-tricycle-pages/about-us-tab-menu/about> accessed 3 Jul 2009.

Called to Account is also an edited version of a legal inquiry, thereby giving this pseudo-hearing a similar gravitas.

The political topicality of *Called to Account*

The ‘Don’t Attack Iraq’ protest march on 15 February 2003 was London’s largest ever peacetime demonstration.⁷⁵ It was a public expression of the concern about both the motivations to go to war and the legitimacy of doing so. The Iraq War has been in the headlines ever since the invasion which started on 20 March 2003. Although Saddam Hussein was executed in December 2006, when *Called to Account* opened the situation in Iraq was bleak, the country seemingly spiralling towards civil war.

The play was performed in Tony Blair’s tenth year as Prime Minister. It was public knowledge long before it opened that he would not stand for another term. In September 2006, at the Labour Party Conference in Manchester, he announced it would be his last as leader. By April 2007, when the play opened, predictions as to the precise timing of his departure had become a media obsession. Blair formally stood down as leader on 30 June 2007, shortly after *Called to Account* closed.⁷⁶ The play was thus an incisive critique of a standing prime minister at a time of considerable public dissatisfaction with foreign policy.

⁷⁵ Figures vary: the organisers estimated two million people took part, whilst the police estimated 750,000. Worldwide it was estimated that between six and ten million people demonstrated. (Figures from the BBC website: see <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2765215.stm>> accessed 9 Nov 2009.)

⁷⁶ Kent has noted how important it was to perform the play whilst Blair was still prime minister: ‘We had to do it before Blair left Parliament. I was never going to do it after he left Parliament’. Hammond and Steward, *Verbatim: Verbatim*, p.144.

Through the cross-examinations, the play interrogates Blair's style of leadership, and explores to what extent his approach meant that the governmental system could be exploited. It alleges that the Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith, the most senior lawyer and legal advisor to the government, was subjected to pressure from the Prime Minister. It questions the relationship between the two with regard to the legitimacy of the war. The crux of the play is the strikingly different advice the Attorney General gave Blair between 7 and 17 March 2003. In this ten-day period, Goldsmith declared the war illegal and then made an about turn, legally sanctioning the war without hard evidence as to what had changed and who had authorised it. *Called to Account* asks why this was the case, and explores how the decision came about.

The creative team

The team which Kent recruited for the project is revealing with regard to the political motivation in staging the play. Importantly, he was able to gather together a group of lawyers of the calibre who might have acted in a real inquiry, given their eminence.⁷⁷ Philippe Sands is the co-founder of Matrix Chambers and Professor of Law at University College London. Matrix Chambers is internationally recognised as one of most important human rights practices.⁷⁸

With Matrix, Sands has worked on high-profile cases such as defending the interests of the British detainees at Guantanamo Bay and also acted for the

⁷⁷ Similarly, David Michaels, who played lawyer Julian Knowles noted 'They are lawyers who may well be involved in this kind of inquiry'. Interview with Michaels, 17 March 2009. All quotations from Michaels, unless stated otherwise, are from this interview.

⁷⁸ Matrix, incidentally, is also Cherie Blair's practice.

prosecution in the attempts to extradite General Pinochet to Spain.⁷⁹ Particularly relevant to this project is Sands's book on the Iraq War, *Lawless World: Making and Breaking of Global Rules* (2006), in which he argues that without the second UN resolution, the war was illegal.⁸⁰ In *Lawless World*, Sands also suggests that the Attorney General sanctioned the invasion in response to pressure from the Bush administration. The book is highly critical of both Tony Blair and the British government. It is consequently no surprise that in addition to being instrumental in the play's genesis, Sands also represented the prosecution in the cross-examinations.

Richard Norton-Taylor was a critic of the war from the outset and regularly wrote for *The Guardian* on the subject. Long before the invasion, he wrote a scathing indictment of the Anglo-American attitude towards Iraq. In the article, 'Don't trust Bush or Blair on Iraq' (published on 21 August 2002), he wrote, 'Whatever the reasons, and there are many, of seeing the back of Saddam, don't listen to Bush or Blair when they talk of morality, democracy and good governance'.⁸¹ Norton-Taylor's criticism of the war continued when the invasion began. Among the (almost daily) articles he published was a piece entitled 'Revealed: the Rush to War' (23 February 2005)⁸² which exposed the lack of planning in the lead up to war, and 'Blair – Bush deal before Iraq war revealed in secret memo' (3 February 2006) in which he reported that 'The Attorney

⁷⁹ For more information about Philippe Sands, see *Matrix: Who We Are*. <http://www.matrixlaw.co.uk/WhoWeAre_Members_PhilippeSandsQC.aspx> accessed 18 August 2009.

⁸⁰ Philippe Sands, *Lawless World: Making and Breaking of Global Rules* (London: Penguin, 2006).

⁸¹ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Don't trust Bush or Blair on Iraq', *The Guardian*, 21 Aug 2002, <www.medialens.org/articles/the_articles/articles_2002/rnt_don't_trust_bush> accessed on 27 Aug 2007.

⁸² Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Revealed: The Rush to War', *The Guardian*, 23 Feb 2005, <<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/iraq/story/0,,1700881,00>> accessed on 27 Aug 2007.

General, Lord Goldsmith, warned less than two weeks before the invasion of Iraq that military action could be ruled illegal.⁸³ With regard to his involvement in *Called to Account*, Norton-Taylor wrote: ‘the point, for me, is to get out even more of the evidence against Blair, and the people defending him too for that matter.’⁸⁴ In a later article he stated his intent even more strongly:

In *Called to Account* we have set out our own stall, asking whether – given all the evidence that has yet to be properly investigated in public, whether in the Commons or elsewhere – Tony Blair has a case to answer. That must be a legitimate role for the theatre.⁸⁵

Norton-Taylor’s question were been validated by the launch of the Chilcot into the Iraq war.⁸⁶ In an equally impassioned statement, Kent declared:

I think we live in a democracy and I firmly and passionately believe in calling our politicians to account...over the last few years the House of Commons has been totally devalued because we’ve had this presidential style of government, so we’ve not been able to call our politicians to account enough, and I feel that’s a very important part of the democratic process.⁸⁷

The need for transparency and public accountability in government was one of the motivating factors in staging *Called to Account*. As Kent remarks:

Despite the leaked Downing Street memos, Blair and the government say, “We don’t comment on any documents”...

⁸³ Richard Norton-Taylor, ‘Blair – Bush deal before Iraq war revealed in secret memo’, *The Guardian*, 3 Feb 2006, <<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/iraq/story/0,12956,1423304,00>> accessed on 27 Aug 2007.

⁸⁴ ‘Blair in the Dock’, Nicolas Kent interview with Mark Brown in *The Socialist Review*, May 2007. <www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=9954> accessed 11 Jul 2008.

⁸⁵ Richard Norton-Taylor, ‘Blair in the Dock’, *The Guardian*, 16 Apr 2007. <politics.guardian.co.uk/arts/story/0,,3058150,00> accessed 23 Jul 2007.

⁸⁶ Public hearings for The Chilcot Inquiry began on 24 Nov 2009.

⁸⁷ Official London Theatre Guide: Matthew Amer interview with Nicolas Kent, <www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk/news> accessed 11 Jul 2008.

so we decided to have a hearing ourselves, in the theatre, as an alternative.⁸⁸

It is thus clear both from the choice of project and team Kent recruited to work on it that *Called to Account* was a provocatively interventionist play which, using high-profile lawyers, attempted to challenge the legality of Blair's conduct over the Iraq invasion. As we shall see, the political topicality of the play and the claims it made had a significant effect on the actors' processes.

Interviewers and witnesses

For the first time in his tribunal plays, the onus was on Kent, with Sands's help, to recruit witnesses. Initially, the pair found individuals reticent to come forward. Kent told journalist Matthew Amer, 'initially people were slightly distrustful about the whole thing'.⁸⁹ This is unsurprising, as the risk involved in publicly speaking out against the current (if out-going) Prime Minister would discourage many from volunteering. Even individuals against the war and in favour of indicting Blair would have had to judge carefully whether an interview for the purposes of a theatrical production could damage their careers. Kent gave himself the ultimatum 'if we don't get at least four big players in the next ten days, we should call it off'.⁹⁰ However, when Michael Quinlan, an eminent parliamentarian and former Permanent Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, confirmed his participation, other people followed suit. As Kent noted:

⁸⁸ Brown interview.

⁸⁹ Amer interview.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

‘The minute people in the establishment knew he was taking part in this process suddenly everyone was willing to take part as it was like a seal of approval’.⁹¹

The final production included eleven cross-examinations (out of fifteen carried out), conducted between 5 January and 15 February 2007. Norton-Taylor crafted the play from twenty-eight hours of interview material.⁹² The editing process continued throughout rehearsals. David Michaels stated that ‘It is a work in progress in the rehearsal room’. Like Soans’s work during rehearsals, and symptomatic of working on a new play, the piece was constantly reshaped and cut.

In the production, Philippe Sands (played by Thomas Wheatley) acted for the prosecution in the interviews, assisted by Alison MacDonald (played by Morven Macbeth). Julian Knowles (played by David Michaels), acted for the defence, assisted by Blinne Ni Ghralaigh (played by Charlotte Lucas). Unlike previous productions, as there was no set order of witnesses, Norton-Taylor was able to craft the cross-examinations into a logical and dramatic shape.⁹³ In interview, Thomas Wheatley described his view of the play’s structure, which is very useful in understanding how the evidence was ordered. It opens with what Wheatley described as the ‘Iraqi point of view’, with Dr Shirwan Al-Mufti

⁹¹ Hammond and Steward, *Verbatim: Verbatim*, p.143.

⁹² Figure stated in the introductory note to the printed text of *Called to Account*, p.5.

⁹³ In all the previous tribunal plays, Norton-Taylor has not altered the order of the material, maintaining the chronology of the evidence. There is only one exception to this rule. In the foreword to *Justifying War*, Norton-Taylor states that he moved the evidence given by Janice Kelly, Dr. David Kelly’s wife, so that it was the final interview. ‘The evidence is presented chronologically, with the exception of that of Dr Jones. He gave his evidence two days after Mrs Kelly. It is presented here before her evidence.’ Richard Norton-Taylor, *Justifying War* (London: Oberon, 2003), p.7. There is little doubt that Norton-Taylor positioned Mrs Kelly’s evidence at the end of the play to give the piece an emotional punch, as it is the play’s most heartfelt and shocking interview.

(played by Raad Rawi), an Iraqi national and academic in Astrobiology at Cardiff University interviewed. Then three witnesses appear in a section of the play that Wheatley identified as ‘setting up the case against’: Scott Ritter (played by David Beames), an American, who from 1991-98 was a Chief UN Weapons Inspector in Iraq; Michael Smith (played by Ken Drury), a journalist who specialises in defence issues for *The Sunday Times* and who was the first journalist to get sight of, and report on, the Downing Street Memo; and Sir Murray Stuart-Smith (played by William Hoyland), a former Security and Intelligence Services Commissioner (1994-2000) and Lord Justice of Appeal (1988-2000).⁹⁴ Then Wheatley described ‘testing the case at home’ which begins with the first of what he identified as ‘two star witnesses’, Clare Short MP (played by Diane Fletcher), an ex-Cabinet Minister and Labour MP. Her testimony closes the first act before the interval. The ‘case at home’ continues with Michael Mates MP (played by Roland Oliver), a Conservative MP and member of the Butler Inquiry.⁹⁵ The cross-examinations then switch to ‘testing the case overseas’, in which Edward Mortimer (played by Jeremy Clyde), who was Communications Director under Kofi Annan at the UN from 1998-2006; and Juan Gabriel Valdes (played by James Woolley), Chilean Ambassador to the UN Security Council in 2003, are interviewed. The thrust of the play next moves back to England, with an interview with Bob Marshall-Andrews QC MP (played by Terrance Hardiman), a Labour MP and criminal court judge. Marshall-

⁹⁴ The Downing Street Memo is the transcript of a top ministerial meeting held on 23 July 2002, which outlined America’s intention to remove Saddam Hussein from power over a year before the invasion began. It was leaked to *The Sunday Times* on 1 May 2005. See <www.downingstreetmemo.com> accessed 16 Jul 2009.

⁹⁵ The Butler Inquiry was set up by Tony Blair to investigate the intelligence on Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction, which were never found. See <<http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/07/13/butler.qanda/index.html>> accessed 16 Jul 2009.

Andrews's interview is followed by the second 'star witness', Richard Perle (played by Shane Rimmer), an eminent American politician who worked for Reagan and then as Chairman of the Board at the time of the Iraq War for the Bush administration. The final cross-examination is with Sir Michael Quinlan (played by William Hoyland, the only actor to play two roles), former Permanent Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, which Wheatley described as a 'coda' to the play.⁹⁶

Predictably, the balance of pro and anti-war witnesses tips heavily in favour of those against the invasion. Only three individuals, Al Mufti, Mates and Perle appear for the defence. Mark Brown, in an interview with Kent and Norton-Taylor for the left-wing paper *The Socialist Review*, stated '[they] may have suspected that Kent and Norton-Taylor have particular views as to Blair's guilt where war crimes are concerned, but accepted the process to be open and fair.'⁹⁷ Roland Oliver felt this was also true of the three pro-war interviewees that took part:

Norton-Taylor comes from *The Guardian* stable, and so you would assume there would be a certain mindset or a certain view. But Michael Mates agreed to be interviewed because he likes Norton-Taylor...he said that he was as far away from Norton-Taylor politically as it is possible to be, and yet he was a straight and honest journalist.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ In an appendix to the printed text of the play is evidence from Professor Mahbubani, Lord Lester, Don Van Natta and Nadeem Kazmin who were interviewed but whose evidence was not included in the stage production.

⁹⁷ Brown interview.

⁹⁸ Interview with Roland Oliver, 13 January 2009. All quotations from Oliver, unless quoted otherwise, are from this interview.

However, we must question these claims, as this was evidently not true of everyone they approached. At the press night post-show discussion, Kent let it be known that certain members of the pro-war contingent had refused interviews: Anne Clwyd MP (a Labour MP who was a vocal supporter of the Iraq war and is currently the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Iraq Group); Lord Owen (a cross-bencher in the House of Lords); and Colin Powell (former US Secretary of State).⁹⁹ Kent has stated that ‘It was difficult to find people who would defend Blair’s position. I mean really difficult...It had become a very unfashionable position’.¹⁰⁰ The balance of interviewees was noted by many of the reviewers. Charles Spencer found it ‘worryingly partisan’¹⁰¹, whilst Ian Shuttleworth labelled it ‘immensely one-sided’.¹⁰² However, considering the scope of the production, one wonders why these reviewers were surprised. The play set out to make the case for indicting a prime minister, and thus was designed to be an incisive exposé of his alleged deceit.

Casting

As with Stafford-Clark’s casting of *Talking to Terrorists*, Kent used many actors with whom he had worked previously. Indeed, *Called to Account* was the first tribunal play for only four of a cast of fourteen, which led Jeremy Clyde to call

⁹⁹ For more details of the post-show discussion, see John Nathan’s review in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 Apr 2007 in *Theatre Record*, p.492.

¹⁰⁰ Hammond and Steward, *Verbatim: Verbatim*, p. 144.

¹⁰¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 24 Apr 2007.

<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3664670/Kangaroo-court-fails-to-take-off.html>> accessed 5 July 2008.

¹⁰² *Financial Times*, 25 Apr 2007 in *Theatre Record*, p.491. Interestingly, cast member Ken Drury told me that ‘about the balance of the play I remember us having a conversation about how one sided was this? Nick was claiming that it was equally divided, I’m not sure about that’. Interview with Ken Drury, 8 Jan 2009. All quotations from Drury, unless stated otherwise, are from this interview.

the experienced ensemble ‘Tricyclists’.¹⁰³ This also suggests that Kent was very specific about the type of performance he wanted, and that having found actors adept at certain skills, he tries to maintain an ensemble of experienced actors.

This was not hard to achieve, as William Hoyland stated:

The parts in these plays are about 99% men, so if you have a group of middle aged men that you like, then you are going to continue working with them.

In their critique of large institutions, such as the government, police, judiciary and the armed forces, the tribunal plays have tended to focus on high-ranking positions, the majority of which are still held by white, middle aged, predominantly upper-middle-class men. Like Stafford-Clark, Kent cast actors of roughly the right age and ethnicity to play the roles.

Like *Talking to Terrorists*, none of the actors were well known to the general public. Marvin Carlson has noted that famous actors are ‘entrapped by the memories of the public, so that each new appearance requires a renegotiation with those memories’.¹⁰⁴ Here, however, although some were recognisable, none carried the weight of memories of previous roles in the way that Carlson

¹⁰³ Interview with Jeremy Clyde, 27 May, 2009. All quotations from Clyde, unless stated otherwise, are from this interview. The cast’s previous experiences of the tribunal plays are as follows: William Hoyland and Thomas Wheatley have appeared in all the plays, James Woolley has appeared in all but *Half the Picture* and Jeremy Clyde has appeared in all but *Justifying War*. David Beames appeared in *Justifying War* and *Bloody Sunday*; Ken Drury appeared in *The Colour of Justice*; Terrence Hardiman appeared in *Bloody Sunday*; David Michaels and Roland Oliver appeared in *Justifying War* and Raad Rawi appeared in *Half the Picture* and *Nuremberg*. Only Shane Rimmer, Diane Fletcher, Morven Macbeth and Charlotte Lucas were new to the tribunal plays.

¹⁰⁴ Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as a Memory Machine* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p.9. Joseph Roach also notes the ‘role-icon’, which describes as ‘a part that certain exceptional performers play on and off stage, no matter what other parts they enact from night to night’. Joseph Roach, *It* (Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 2007), p.38.

suggests. Arguably, the cross-examinations in *Called to Account* benefited from an unknown ensemble cast, rather than a star who would be likely to pull focus from the issues in the play, or call undue attention to one character.

Thomas Wheatley and David Michaels, playing Sands and Knowles, were cast at the beginning of the process, and so were able to observe first-hand the interviews later edited and recreated on stage. The casting of the witnesses, by contrast, partly because of the difficulties in persuading people to give evidence and finalising the line-up, took place at various points later in the process. The actors playing the witnesses were all cast specifically to play a particular individual.¹⁰⁵ In contrast to *Talking to Terrorists*, they were employed on a much more familiar contract: they rehearsed for three weeks followed by a production week, then started the run.

The most formative aspect of the actors' experiences arose as a direct result of the fact that *Called to Account* was not an official legal inquiry and thus interviews could be recorded, both on audio and DVD by means of a camcorder. Ken Drury recalled that in some previous plays, such as *The Colour of Justice*, the cast were given audio recordings, but never before had the interviews been filmed. With the exception of two actors, the cast were given a DVD and audio version of the full-length interview in addition to the complete transcript and

¹⁰⁵ Indeed, it was due to the last-minute finalising of the line-up of witnesses that resulted in William Hoyland playing two roles. Rather than an artistic choice, he told me: 'That's how I ended up playing two parts in fact. Quinlan wasn't going to be in it, but it was decided later on that he would be - before rehearsals started but once I'd been cast.'

Norton-Taylor's edited cross-examination.¹⁰⁶ As we shall see, this new material had a profound effect upon the actors' work.

The Acting Processes

Foregrounding politics

I interviewed the cast of *Called to Account* between 8 May 2007 and 27 May 2009.¹⁰⁷ All the interviews, with the exception of Thomas Wheatley, whom I interviewed in person at the Tricycle Theatre, were conducted over the telephone.¹⁰⁸ We have seen that the primary focus of the *Talking to Terrorists* cast was attempting to understand the psychology of the individual they played. Catherine Russell's research into 'Phoebe's' circumstances was not restricted to the content of the script, but rather on trying to learn as much about her formative psychological experiences as possible. Likewise, Chris Ryman's approach was also based on his perceived need to identify psychologically with the individual he was portraying. Indeed, it appears that Stafford-Clark encouraged actor-

¹⁰⁶ Two witnesses, Valdes and Ritter were interviewed over the phone using a conference call machine, and thus James Woolley and David Beames only received an audio recording.

¹⁰⁷ This expanse of time is due to an earlier project for which I interviewed Thomas Wheatley (8 May 2007) and Diane Fletcher (25 July 2007). The remaining interviews were carried out between 8 January and 27 May 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Aside from the two interviews conducted in 2007, the order of the interviews was purely down to the availability of the actors. In addition to those previously cited, the dates were as follows: David Beames, 28 Apr 2009; Raad Rawi, 8 Mar 2009; Terrance Hardiman, 12 Mar 2009; James Woolley, 17 Mar 2009; Shane Rimmer, 7 Apr 2009. All quotations from actors, unless stated otherwise, are from these interviews. As both Alison MacDonald and Blinne Ni Ghralaigh, assisting Sands and Knowles, had few lines in the play, I did not conduct interviews with the actors who played them.

The actors' training was as follows: David Beames and Raad Rawi trained at Bristol Old Vic; Jeremy Clyde and James Woolley trained at Central School of Speech and Drama; Diane Fletcher and Terrence Hardiman trained at RADA; William Hoyland at the Drama Centre; David Michaels and Ken Drury at Manchester Metropolitan School of Theatre (then Manchester Polytechnic); Roland Oliver at Oxford University; Shane Rimmer in his native Canada; Thomas Wheatley at the Drama Studio.

interviewee meetings in the play's preparation in order to foster the actors' belief in a personal bond with their subject. By contrast, in *Called to Account*, the engagement was with a professional, public persona. As Clare Short said of her responses in the cross-examination, 'most of it is in my book'.¹⁰⁹ These were not personal trauma narratives in the way in which interviewing a victim of a bombing in their own home was for Soans and Stafford-Clark; *Called to Account* presented legal and political arguments surrounding a particular conflict. This difference was most succinctly articulated by Ken Drury when he talked about his performance as Michael Smith:

This material is not emotional for Smith – there is little emoting for any of the characters really. It is Smith's intellectual professional side. He comes from a certain point of view. So it wasn't psychological analysis.

Although the cross-examinations were not devoid of emotion, it is true that the vast majority of questions called upon the witnesses' powers of justification, reasoning and intellect more often than they elicited an emotional response.¹¹⁰

Like Drury, Raad Rawi and Terrence Hardiman identified the play as unusual in its lack of focus on the psychology of those that appeared. Rawi stated:

Plays are driven by character and emotion. Most plays. You approach a play through the emotional life of your character. In most plays that develops. You latch onto what makes people tick, what triggers an emotion. Why certain things are said. But with *Called to Account*, a lot of it is recollection. All those characters were recalling what happened.

¹⁰⁹ Telephone interview with Clare Short, 30 May 2008. All quotations from Short, unless stated otherwise, are from this interview.

¹¹⁰ In his keynote paper 'Documentary Drama – A Contradiction in Terms?' David Edgar contrasted the 'coolness' of inquisitive court language with the 'heat' of the original event being investigated. ('Acting With Facts' Conference, University of Reading, 1 September 2010).

Rawi's comments suggest that he had previously relied on a Stanislavskian approach to character, which he evidently found was redundant in the play. Terrence Hardiman also noted that the lack of emphasis on an emotional journey negated a Stanislavskian approach: 'You can't use Stanislavski or method as you are not there to emote, you are there to present an argument as honestly as you can and fairly to the script you have.' The different emotional landscape to which these actors allude was pre-empted in performance by the way in which the testimony was framed in the two plays. In the opening exchanges of *Talking to Terrorists*, Edward, the psychologist, tells the audience about the people they 'are about to meet'¹¹¹, whereas Julian Knowles informs the audience that they 'will hear' the evidence.¹¹² The different tone of these introductions anticipates the audience's engagement with the individuals depicted. To 'meet' someone suggests a reciprocal relationship in which audience members experience a personal investment in the individual. To 'hear' evidence, by contrast, suggests a more intellectual, forensic quality.

This quality of intellectual engagement was further nurtured through direct appeals to the audience to act as the jury and decide for themselves whether Blair was guilty. Sands and Knowles were invited to write opening statements, which, unlike the cross-examinations (but consistent with the scope of the 'hearing'), were works of fiction, written *as if* the hearing was official. In his speech Sands says:

¹¹¹ Soans, *Talking to Terrorists*, p.36.

¹¹² Norton-Taylor, *Called to Account*, p.10.

...the prosecutor seeks the authorisation of the Court to investigate the facts, to ascertain whether they provide a basis for indicting Anthony Charles Lynton Blair for the crime of aggression. As the Court assesses the evidence, we invite you to focus on four facts...¹¹³

The speech was rich with official legal terms that did not actually apply, but framed the testimony to appear official. ‘The Court’, for the performance’s duration, was the audience, and so Sands readied them for a display of politics, not personalities. Similarly, Knowles’s speech was written as direct address to the audience: ‘The prosecution ask you to consider a number of issues.’¹¹⁴ These comments, the first speeches in the play, immediately enlisted the audience and cast them as the jury, asking them to evaluate the evidence.¹¹⁵

Perhaps the most explicit way in which the production planned to involve the audience was by holding a vote at the end of the play, in which the audience was invited to decide the fate of Tony Blair.¹¹⁶ Reminiscent of the first generation of tribunal productions, this device of politicising the audience can be seen as a literal employment of a technique endorsed by Brecht:

...once illusion is sacrificed to free discussion, and once the spectator, instead of being enabled to have an experience, is forced as it were to cast his vote; then a change has been launched which goes far beyond formal matters and begins for the first time to affect the theatre’s social function.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Norton-Taylor, *Called to Account*, p.9.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.10.

¹¹⁵ For more on the notion of ‘casting the audience’, see James B. Nicola, *Playing the Audience* (New York: Applause Theatre Books, 2002), p.13.

¹¹⁶ Diane Fletcher recalled that: ‘to begin with they were going to have a vote, but then they chose not to do that.’

¹¹⁷ Brecht, ‘The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre’ (1930), in Willett, *BT*, p.39.

However, as we shall see, in *Called to Account*, ‘illusion’ was not ‘sacrificed’ in the way that Brecht wanted, but rather, like the German tribunal plays that preceded it, documentary techniques bookended the play. Despite the focus on their subjects’ political stance rather than their psychological and emotional lives, which led to Rawi and Hardiman departing from a Stanislavskian approach, we shall see that the actors’ preoccupations were not based on interrupting the audience’s engagement with the role in the way that Brecht encouraged.

The day before the production opened, Michael Billington published an article in *The Guardian* entitled ‘Theatre wants your vote’, in which he wrote of ‘*Called to Account* – a piece of verbatim theatre which puts the case for and against the prosecution of Tony Blair over the invasion of Iraq, and which gives the audience on the night the final vote.’¹¹⁸ However, the vote was dropped from the production, in a move which Billington, despite his earlier intrigue, stated was wise, ‘since it avoids any suspicion of a kangaroo court.’¹¹⁹ Rather, the performance ended with closing statements from the defense and prosecution. Again, these speeches were delivered directly to the audience. Sands asked, ‘You have now heard the evidence. Are there grounds for a full investigation as to Mr Blair’s involvement in the crime of aggression?’¹²⁰ He then went on to outline why he believes there is. In what reviewer John Peter described as ‘a very British

¹¹⁸ Michael Billington, ‘Theatre wants your vote’, *The Guardian*, 18 Apr 2007, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2007/apr/18/theatrewantsyourvote>> accessed 6 Jul 2009.

¹¹⁹ Michael Billington, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2007/apr/24/theatre>> accessed 6 Jul 2009.

¹²⁰ Norton-Taylor, *Called to Account*, p.89.

ending' the defense is given the last word.¹²¹ Here, Knowles also appealed directly to the audience: 'At the close of this hearing I submit that you should find Tony Blair does not need absolution. He has done nothing that justifies condemnation.'¹²² Although the vote did not materialise, the production provoked the audience into a political and legal engagement. This gave rise to particular challenges for the actors.

Precision and Restraint

The DVD and linguistic precision: The language of law and politics

One of the acting challenges which arose from the play's engagement with politics and law was capturing and comprehending the precise language employed by all involved. As the title 'A Hearing' and Knowles's invitation to the audience 'to hear' the evidence suggest, the British legal system is based on using spoken testimony in order to prove guilt beyond reasonable doubt. Frequently associated with a battle of wits and a virtuoso command of the spoken word, it is naturally an arena which lends itself to the stage. Couple the legal system with politics, as is the case in *Called to Account*, and the play sees a marriage of two professions which prize public speaking, rhetoric and verbal precision most highly. Although we no longer refer to 'hearing a play', we still 'hear evidence', such is the foregrounding of spoken testimony in law.¹²³ Woolley's comment that 'Nick knows when it is sounding how he wants it',

¹²¹ John Peter, *Sunday Times*, 29 Apr 2007 in *Theatre Record*, p.493.

¹²² Norton-Taylor, *Called to Account*, p.92.

¹²³ This has changed however. See Theseus's line in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 'I will hear that play' (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1994), 5.1.82, p.108.

suggests an emphasis on oral rather than visual precision. Norton-Taylor's cynical view of the language of these professions suggests why they are ideal for depiction on stage:

There are many effective weapons available to those determined to prevent the truth from emerging. They include dissembling, euphemism, deliberate ambiguity and plays on words. Civil servants, diplomats and government ministers are past masters at it.¹²⁴

Although evidently ideal fare for a stage production, the language was a challenge for the actors. Shane Rimmer recalled that:

The first thing is that it is very much governmental political talk. It is not the kind of talk you or I would come out with... It is a lingo that one has to get used to in order to make it sound natural. He [Perle] sounded, if nothing else, completely natural.

As all those who appeared were connected with politics or law, this challenge united all the cast, with both the actors playing lawyers and those appearing as witnesses noting the difficulties they faced. Thomas Wheatley cited a particular question asked by Sands to illustrate the need for clarity and precision to which Rimmer alludes:

The key to the work is that everybody understands what they are talking about, because if we do, there is a chance the audience will... There are a couple of very odd sentences: 'Do you believe the British government behaved honourably and honestly on the issue of intelligence and related matters in the

¹²⁴ Hammond and Steward, *Verbatim: Verbatim*, p.113. For a detailed investigation into the performances given by witnesses in tribunals, see G.D. White, "'Quite a Profound Day': The Public Performance of Memory by Military Witnesses at the Bloody Sunday Tribunal", *Theatre Research International*, Vol. 31:2 (2006), pp.174-87.

context of the series of issues in Iraq?'... so understanding it is the key, but Nick is very good at that. He makes it clear.

This language is a direct consequence of the editing process. As we have seen, Soans's script for *Talking to Terrorists* was only loosely based on the interviews, and should be understood as an amalgam of the interviewees' words and Soans's own stylistic imprint, created through his and the actors' memories. By contrast, the witnesses' words in *Called to Account* were not re-formulated by a playwright but rather recorded. We must consequently appreciate that the documents from which these two plays were constructed are qualitatively different. With regard to the precision necessitated by the witnesses' and lawyers' language, without exception the DVD was hailed as a very important aid by the actors and for most was the major determinant in their approach to the play.

The recordings proved particularly useful for line phrasings and emphasis, which in this production, far more so than in *Talking to Terrorists*, were critical in understanding the intricacies of the witnesses' stance and in being able to recreate their speech with precision. Like Thomas Wheatley's problems with the length and logic of some of Sands' questions, Shane Rimmer noted that:

[The recording] was very helpful because words can only take you so far. You can get a lot of indications in the words about the person you are playing, but to see him [Richard Perle] is a couple of steps on from that. He is a very impressive man...I played it firstly to get all that, and secondly, a lot of what he talked about I couldn't really understand, as you have to be in the scene there.

By ‘in the scene’ Rimmer refers to how helpful it was to see Perle’s comments in the context of the cross-examination. Both Raad Rawi and Ken Drury found the tape revealed unexpected vocal features. Rawi stated:

He [Shirwan Al Mufti] was very nice, very charming. Even when he was talking about really horrific details about the Kurds in Iraq in the 70s, he was extremely calm and maintained this air of serenity about him...I could tell he had a great humility about him. You’d never get that from the text alone.

Similarly, Drury noted:

The DVD is fascinating vocally, because this stuff is actually quite hard to learn. People speak in really strange ways – they never quite say things the way you would expect them to say them. They certainly never say things the way a writer would write them.¹²⁵

Both actors observed unexpected tones in their witnesses’ testimony which they would have been unlikely to have adopted had it not been for the DVD. When describing how they used the DVD recording, and the effect it had on their work, the actors constantly returned to two areas: firstly, as I have begun to explore above, they were concerned with the precision these particular working processes required. Secondly, and closely associated with this precision, was restraint. To investigate these terms further, and analyse how they manifested themselves in the actors’ work, the following sections will explore different approaches.

Raad Rawi: responsibility, restraint, and ‘colouring’ the part

¹²⁵ Again, this emphasises the differences between Norton-Taylor’s and Soans’s script.

For the cast of *Called to Account*, the presence of the DVD produced a particular kind of responsibility towards their subjects which was qualitatively different from that encountered by the actors in *Talking to Terrorists*. This was most cogently articulated by Raad Rawi:

...prior to rehearsals I studied the tape...As an actor it is essential that we remain pure to what is being said and not do any kind of elaborate reading, not try to colour it in any way....You are conditioned as an actor to make things colourful...People normally talk in a flat monotone which as an actor is the opposite of what you usually do...[Here] there is no need to demonstrate to the audience, whereas in a normal play you often make things seem larger than life. So you don't have that pressure, but you have the pressure of being true to the intent of what was behind that person saying what he does.

Rawi's comments provide a direct contrast to the experiences of some of the *Talking to Terrorists* cast. The changes demanded by Stafford-Clark to Hutchinson's and, notably, Russell's portrayal can be understood, to use Rawi's terminology, as requiring them to 'colour' and 'elaborate' on what they had observed; such was the aim of creating a 'scenic' or 'theatrical truth' for Stanislavski. In a play in which the audience was told they would 'meet' the individuals, Stafford-Clark evidently wanted interesting personalities to appear. By contrast, in *Called to Account*, it was the witnesses' legal and political contributions, not their personalities, that were critical. Thus, physical and emotional restraint, rather than elaboration, was emphasised.

It is evident that in the same way that Rawi felt that the political narrative and associated emotional restraint precluded him applying a Stanislavskian approach

to character, the presence of the DVD required further departures from the way in which he had previously worked. Throughout his interview, Rawi's emphasis was on the logic of, and intent behind, Al Mufti's testimony. Thus, his preoccupation with Al Mufti's cognitive processes was apropos of his political stance rather than the emotional and psychological root of his comments. Rawi recalled that this emphasis underscored his preparation:

As much as we try and look like them and behave like them, that is only in order to be closer to who they are, in order to be closer to the purity of their message, closer to what is the kernel of what they are saying.

Visual and behavioural precision was thus subsumed, and only deemed helpful insofar as it supported his work on what Al Mufti *said*, which strongly indicates the high stakes for the actor and the political significance of the subject matter. Rawi's own ethics of representation in avoiding 'colouring' and 'elaborating' on the words was a preoccupation echoed throughout my interviews. For example, Clyde noted: 'You just have to be true to the video version. You try not to colour it too much, other than what this man has given you.' Similarly, Hardiman stated that 'you have to work on it in such a way that you don't comment on the character'. In a slightly blunter fashion, David Michaels stated that 'your responsibility is to give the right account of what he said...your job is not to decide whether he is a twat or defend him.' Therefore, although the DVD recording provided a tangible, concrete source that *Talking to Terrorists* lacked (and so spared the cast the ethical dilemmas inherent in Stafford-Clark's and Soans's *modus operandi*), the need for restraint and precision resulted in a quite different set of associated demands.

Rimmer and Beames: precision and legality

Shane Rimmer and David Beames shared similar ethical concerns about playing their parts. Both noted that due to the political significance of the testimony included in the play (as Wheatley noted ‘there was a certain amount of scoop in it: fresh material’), this responsibility was not limited to the actors’ own ethical compass. Rather, the need for verbal precision had legal as well as artistic roots. Rimmer stated:

You have to be very careful not to misrepresent them in any way. That feels quite confining in the first part...you can get into a hell of a lot of hot water if you do, and possibly face libel if they chose to do it. So you do have to work within certain confines.

The actors’ accountability evidently had legal consequences. Any slip of the tongue, memory failure or verbal inaccuracy could result in court action. These were very real concerns, as in the run of any play, human error inevitably occurs.

David Beames recalled that:

Nick is very strict about the precision of the language. For example, he’d pick me up if I said ‘isn’t’ instead of ‘is not’, because for legal reasons if you are reproducing something it has to be exact, so he is very hot on that.

The legal issues raised by Beames and Rimmer thus explain why ensuring precision regarding the testimony was such a preoccupation for the cast and director in this play. However, not all the actors felt these high levels of accountability. James Woolley experienced the verbatim script as a safeguard:

You do feel responsible to him, but it is not huge because you are only quoting from the words he said, and they are not taken out of context...you are not being libellous or slanderous or anything else like that.

Woolley evidently did not feel the weight of responsibility experienced by the actors above due to the fact that the witnesses' responses were staged in the context of the questions they were asked. In *Called to Account*, as the interviewers (in this instance the lawyers) were inscribed in the play, all of the responses were in context. By contrast, in *Talking to Terrorists*, the interviewer did not appear and thus the audience did not have access to the questions to which the interviewees responded. To use Bill Nichol's 'Modes of Representation' relating to the presence of the interviewer in screen documentary, if *Talking to Terrorists* can be classified as 'expository', in that they do not appear, here the interviewer is 'interactive' in that they are present, seen and part of the action.¹²⁶ This increased 'narrativisability', to use Stella Bruzzi's phrase, evidently tempered the responsibility felt by Woolley.¹²⁷

Playing from the witness's point of view: Research Strategies

One strategy by which the actors attempted to limit 'colouring' their portrayals and maintain a precision with regard to the political agenda of their character was by ensuring that they saw the play from the point of view of the individual they played. To this end, they employed various research methods. It may appear

¹²⁶ Nichols, *Representing Reality*, p.xiv. These terms are designed to relate to film documentary, but are equally applicable to the stage.

¹²⁷ Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction (Second Edition)* (Routledge: London, 2006), p.23.

that playing a character from their point of view is a given. However, Kent's dissemination of material dictated a particular view of the play which was critical to the cast's processes. The actors playing witnesses only received their own interviews in advance of rehearsals. Although they were furnished with CD, DVD and both edited and full transcripts of their interview, they were not sent the full script of the play. When the play went into rehearsal, these actors were only called to rehearse their own cross-examinations.¹²⁸ To explore the way in which this functioned, it is informative to contrast the experiences of the actors playing the lawyers with those playing witnesses.

Diane Fletcher noted that 'it's quite a lonely experience really because... although we're a team...you go in on your own, apart from the actors playing the lawyers'. Similarly, Ken Drury noted that 'You can feel quite detached during it, a bit lonely.' Of all the actors, it was Jeremy Clyde who most fully explored the way in which the limited dissemination of material and the resulting isolation functioned:

You can only see really where your piece comes in late on...you are not aware of the shape of it. We can't get an overview, unless you are on stage all the time as one of the lawyers. Maybe it is important we don't. It means you play it from the character's point of view...as a witness it must be from their point of view.

Rather than attempt to identify the significance of his cross-examination in the wider context of the play, Clyde could only recreate the testimony he observed on the DVD as precisely as possible. He reported that without understanding the

¹²⁸ This continued even in performance: the interval marked a dressing room 'changing of the guard', as the actors for the second half arrived and the actors left that had already performed. As Oliver noted: 'In the performance the dressing room was so small that we had a shift system, so Raad Rawi...was on first and we shared a spot, so we would just cross over.'

significance of their witnesses' testimony, previous casts had often worried about whether their interview was interesting:

There has always been a moment in every single tribunal play where the cast have all looked at each other and said 'oh I'm not sure – is it going to work? How dull is this?' But every time it has worked, and it has worked because Nick and Richard can see the whole thing. Whereas we only see our little bits – they have the overview.

None of the witnesses are through-characters (in that none re-appeared), but rather each witness was seen once in the synoptic accumulation of evidence. It is intriguing to speculate as to whether restricting the actors' knowledge in this way may have been a strategy Kent employed to avoid the actors 'colouring' their portrayals, and further restrain their performances. As the actors were unaware of the significance of some of their witnesses' comments, the potential for them to see chimes and motifs which are recurrent, and so give extra weight to these moments was reduced. Arguably, these actors are thus alienated from the grand-narrative by Kent, who has adapted a Brechtian device for his own purposes.

The way in which the actors playing witnesses were denied the overview of the play may also explain the absence of a Stanislavskian vocabulary in the actors' articulation of their processes. 'Perspective' was critical for Stanislavski, who dedicated a chapter to the concept in *An Actor's Work*:

Only when an actor has thought about, analysed and lived the entire role and a broad, distant, clear, colourful, alluring perspective opens out before him can his acting, so to speak, take the long view and not the short view as previously. Then

he can play not individual tasks, speak not individual phrases
but whole thoughts and passages.¹²⁹

Through this perspective, the actor can pick out ‘the richest colours...because of its [a particular moment’s] significance in relation to the whole play’.¹³⁰ As Rawi has stated, the restraint he exercised denied him the possibility to ‘colour’ the role. Kent’s dissemination of the script thus precluded the actors from being able to ‘play whole actions, and speak whole thoughts’.

In his interview in *Verbatim: Verbatim*, Kent argued that ‘the actors can be quite possessive of their character’.¹³¹ He attributes this partly to the timing of the plays: ‘you’re conscious that your character might be in the news tomorrow. That gives it an edge, and it means you must never betray your character’.¹³² As Kent states, in *Called to Account*, any of the witnesses could find themselves in the headlines at any time, and so shift the focus of the play.¹³³ Kent thus found that the actors were adamant that their witness was given a fair hearing:

I had big tussles with Diane Fletcher, who played Clare Short, because we had to cut the play down, and she felt that if I cut some of the evidence Clare gave, it diminished Clare’s intelligence... Now that’s wonderful, because people are so engaged in their characters that they feel it’s necessary to defend their characters’ positions.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Stanislavski, *AAW*, p.458.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Hammond and Steward, *Verbatim, Verbatim*, p.157.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ For example, on 10 May 2007, during the play’s run, a major story broke when David Keogh and Leo O’Connor were convicted of breaking the Official Secrets Act for leaking the Downing Street Memo, which Michael Smith then published. The publicity the story generated arguably shifted attention onto Ken Drury’s cross-examination as Smith. See <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2007/may/10/uk.topstories32>> accessed 14 Sept 2009.

¹³⁴ Hammond and Steward, *Verbatim, Verbatim*, p.157.

However, from analysing Clyde's comments, we can posit an alternative explanation for the actors' sense of ownership. It is evident that the lack of access to the overarching shape of the play was a critical contributing factor. Consequently, without an appreciation of how Norton-Taylor's re-edits functioned, the actors were justified in seeking to protect their witnesses' testimony. Kent's limited dissemination of material pre-rehearsal and his separate calls for actors during the play's preparation, despite being isolating, thus maintained the actors' focus on precision with regard to the details they had observed in the interview.

The experiences of Thomas Wheatley and David Michaels, playing the lawyers, were quite different. They were in rehearsal 'all day, every day' and, due to their early casting, were able to attend some of the interviews from which the play was constructed. As suggested by Wheatley's description of the shape of the play (p.137), the fact that they were onstage almost all the time meant that they had a clear understanding of the play's narrative arch.¹³⁵ Wheatley stated 'in my head I do have a theatrical shape...it's one of the ways you make it bearable for the audience – you tell a story.' Similarly, Michaels noted:

One shape was that some were mine – they were witnesses for the defence, and others were prosecution witnesses. Obviously my purpose with our own witnesses was to bring out the comments you wanted your witness to say. Leading your witness as they were leading their witness...[You] are trying to lead a witness or trap them essentially.

¹³⁵ Knowles was absent from the Mortimer and Valdes interviews, whilst Sands only missed the Marshall-Andrews cross-examination.

The lawyers, in the words of James Woolley (who himself played lawyers in *Justifying War* and *The Colour of Justice*), were ‘in all the time, calling the shots and...running the show’. Thus, through their ‘perspective’, they had an appreciation of the play’s shape as a whole and so were able to ‘tell a story’, or in Stanislavskian terminology, create a ‘throughaction’.¹³⁶ Michaels and Wheatley thus ‘led’ the narrative, and provided a spine through the play.

There were three main research strategies identified by the actors in relation to establishing their witness’s point of view. The first approach was utilising the research materials available to the cast. Although many actors talked at length about their witness’s background, and were passionate about the themes of the play and proud of the knowledge that they had acquired, Shane Rimmer’s comments about Richard Perle are particularly noteworthy.

Shane Rimmer: individual research

Richard Perle is an eminent Republican politician. He was an Assistant Secretary for Defence during the second Reagan administration (from 1987-89) and Chairman of the Defence Policy Board Advisory Committee under the first Bush administration (2001-03). He also published a book entitled *An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror* in 2003.¹³⁷ Rimmer, a Canadian actor based in the United States, recalled that when he started working on the play, ‘I didn’t know too much about him. I knew he was a hard-liner...He is called ‘The Prince of

¹³⁶ Stanislavski, *AAW*, p.312.

¹³⁷ Written with David Frum, (London: Random House, 2003).

Darkness’.’ However, his own private research, outside of rehearsal time, provided a fuller understanding of Perle’s political stance:

He had a mind like a steel trap. He is a brilliant man. Totally misguided, but brilliant...Perle doesn’t suffer fools. I think the CIA had its fair share of them...I think they were ‘yes men’. Pretty good organisers I suppose. And they were nasty. No matter how much the government was involved with Guantanamo Bay, they were the ones that were running it, and extraordinary rendition questioning. Although he was a neo-conservative, I don’t think he was an extremist. Although he served with Dick Cheney, he didn’t like Rumsfeld, who he thought was a bit of a brute – I think he called him a Nazi once, but not on tape.¹³⁸

Rimmer’s experiences are noteworthy in the light of the actors’ focus on avoiding ‘colouring’ and ‘commenting’ on their portrayals. Although he calls Perle ‘totally misguided’ and in the same interview stated that ‘I didn’t have much sympathy for his political policies’, Rimmer’s description is notably sympathetic considering he clearly has very different political allegiances himself. Rimmer deflects the criticism that might be levelled at Perle to the CIA. Whether justifying Perle’s testimony in this way helped Rimmer as it enabled him to feel positive about the man he played was not a question on which Rimmer would be drawn, and thus remains a matter of conjecture. In his research, Rimmer appears to have submerged his own political inclinations and judgement in order to give (as Rimmer reports Perle described on seeing his performance) ‘a fair representation’.

¹³⁸ Individual research was facilitated by the Assistant Director, Philip Honour. William Hoyland recalled: ‘The assistant Philip Honour told me, “if you Google this you will get that”, or “I’ve found an article about your character in *The Sunday Times* seven years ago”, so you get help in that sense. And there are some biographies if they are in the public domain.’

It is evident from his description of Perle's political agenda that this knowledge gave Rimmer confidence that he understood his responses, which was important considering his earlier observations regarding the need to reproduce Perle's relaxed performance under cross-examination. Rimmer was not the only actor to note the self-assurance which resulted from research. Jeremy Clyde stated that 'you do a lot of reading and research that can't be brought to the stage, but it gives you confidence.' Similarly, Roland Oliver commented: 'when you have done all the work, you don't think about playing Mates, it is me talking about what I know'. This vocabulary is notably less emotional than that of Merlin and some of the actors in *Talking to Terrorists* who suggested they had an emotional connection with the individual they played. Rimmer, Clyde and Mates do not suggest any connection of this kind, but rather that researching their roles gave them confidence.

Jeremy Clyde: cast discussion and the politicised actor

Clyde noted that it was when 'talking backstage' that the wider issues were discussed. Later in my interview, Clyde elaborated on how central these discussions were to his experiences of both *Called to Account* and *Bloody*

Sunday:

You get twelve people in a very small space, and because we were all reading the papers and everybody is up to date with the issues and has done the research, some of the most interesting debates and discussions I've ever had took place there [backstage]. Enlightening conversations. Often talked about from a position of great knowledge, from the position of your character. So if you were playing a Northern Ireland priest [as in *Bloody Sunday*] you would have really researched that area. So

someone would ask you, ‘what was the position of the church at this point?’ It was fascinating. We were quite well informed. It wasn’t ‘luvvie’ at all, but rather very pertinent and interesting discussions backstage. Really arguing out the politics was another great element of the process.

The cast was energised and politicised by the play, and much of the debate was based on the research they had conducted into their witnesses’ political point of view. This investment in the play’s themes is in part attributable to the topicality of both plays, performed contemporaneously with the legal cases they depicted, and the political significance of their themes. This level of politicisation is reminiscent of Brecht’s actors, for whom a central part of the rehearsal process was discussion and debate:

Without knowledge one can show nothing; how could one know what would be worth knowing? Unless the actor is satisfied to be a parrot or a monkey he must master our period’s knowledge of human social life.¹³⁹

Although Brecht wrote this before the advent of verbatim theatre, his comments on being ‘a parrot or a monkey’ are relevant here. Without learning more about ‘human social life’, Brecht claims that the actor is restricted to being a mouthpiece for the director. In fact, without these discussions and research, the actor can only ‘parrot’, that is replicate, the original speaker. Like Clyde, Brecht saw accumulating this knowledge as a fundamentally collaborative act:

The actor learns as the other actors are learning and develops his character as they are developing theirs. For the smallest social unit is not the single person but two people.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Brecht, ‘A Short Organum’, in Willett, *BT*, p.196.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.197.

However, again we see a divergence from Brecht's aims in this technique. For Brecht, learning about the social and historical specificities was associated with his 'historicisation' techniques which represented a move away from viewing behaviour as natural and eternal, and rather that behaviour is culturally specific and thus capable of change.¹⁴¹ By contrast, in *Called to Account*, it was associated with the actors' confidence that came from understanding their subjects' political allegiance and attitudes. Given the play's political argument was designed to indict the Prime Minister, this confidence was crucial.

Meetings between Actor and Subject

The third approach to establishing the point of view of the character was by meeting them. In comparison to *Talking to Terrorists*, in which meetings were strongly encouraged, and all but two actors met at least one of the individuals they played in their preparation of the play, in *Called to Account* only three of the twelve actors discussed the project with their subject before the play opened. Again, the actors playing the lawyers had a slightly different experience. Due to their early casting, Thomas Wheatley and David Michaels observed some of the cross-examinations first-hand. Michaels stated:

I went to see the interview with Michael Quinlan, so I was there...without telling Julian [Knowles] that I was going to play him...I said I'll operate the camera whilst I'm here, so I made sure I had a lot of footage of Julian on it. Otherwise it was always on the interviewee, so I pointed it at him to make sure I had everything I needed.

¹⁴¹ See Brecht, 'Short Description of a New Technique of Acting', in Willett, *BT*, pp.136-40; and Mumford, *Bertolt Brecht*, pp.72-6.

Michaels's main aim was thus to ensure that he had the same DVD material with which to work as the actors playing the witnesses, and so he used the cross-examination to observe and record rather than use it as an opportunity to meet Knowles and discuss the play with him. Like the actors playing witnesses, later in interview Michaels stated that 'You lean on that tool the whole time really', suggesting just how important the DVD was to him. Thomas Wheatley said that he too 'operated the camera' and so was 'having a good old squinny at Philippe Sands'. However, as will be explored later in this chapter, Wheatley's first-hand observation led to a quite different experience.

The three actors who discussed the play with their witnesses in specifically arranged meetings during rehearsals were Roland Oliver, Jeremy Clyde and Ken Drury. Their comments were remarkable in the unanimous lack of importance they placed on these meetings. In response to my question 'when you met him, were there certain things you were looking for?' Roland Oliver replied, 'Well I already had the tape. I spent a lot of time with the tape trying to get him right.' Aside from enjoying meeting him, Oliver did not recall that the meeting with Mates had a significant impact on his work, but rather talked about the DVD in relation to his portrayal. When Jeremy Clyde met Edward Mortimer, as the men went to school with each other, they found themselves at cross-purposes: 'He wanted to talk about our school days...I wanted him to talk about Kofi Annan. I had a very different agenda – what it was like backstage at the UN'.¹⁴²

Summarising his meeting with Michael Smith, and expressing a sentiment

¹⁴² That Clyde knew Mortimer (albeit distantly) was purely coincidental. No one else knew the person they played.

typical of the experiences in *Called to Account*, Ken Drury noted ‘the elements of his character that I did use were straight from the DVD’. He went on:

I’m not exactly sure what you take away from those meetings.
Would my performance have been different had I not met him?
I really couldn’t answer that.

Indeed, referring to his experiences of previous tribunal plays, William Hoyland stated:

It is a mistake to meet people before. You get a bit influenced by how they actually are, which doesn’t help... You see you can’t always trust the real people, because they are not always as self-aware as you think they would be.

Hoyland questions how sincere the person is being, and by doing so suggests that interviews and authenticity do not necessarily go hand in hand. Hoyland’s scepticism stands in stark contrast to the *Talking to Terrorists* cast’s experiences of their meetings with their subjects. This is no doubt due to the different purposes of the meetings in the processes. In *Talking to Terrorists*, material was generated from the meetings, whereas in Kent’s production it existed already. In *Called to Account* the actors’ task was rather different: to recreate the testimony that had been recorded. As Raad Rawi stated, ‘it was a very specific task: how he gave that testimonial.’ Thus, understanding the political significance of the comments was more important than gaining a personal understanding of their subjects. In this light, Hoyland’s concern about being ‘influenced by how they actually are’ can be seen as referring to the temptation to deviate from the delivery of the testimony on the DVD as a result of the actor’s new attitude towards the individual created through meeting them. It is also useful to compare

these responses to the sentiment articulated by Chipu Chung in *Talking to Terrorists*. With regard to not being able to meet the ex-member of the Ugandan National Resistance Army, she said: 'I was quite, not devastated by it, but quite disappointed.' In *Called to Account*, none of the actors expressed regret at not meeting their subjects in the play's preparation. As a result of the recordings, the meetings were evidently much less central to these actors' experiences than in Stafford-Clark's play.

Establishing the witness's point of view, which was necessitated by the way in which Kent limited the actors' access to the grand narrative of the play, was thus a form of restraint which further foregrounded precision in the actors' processes. He made the actors work by montage, which, although a Brechtian device, was not employed by Brecht in this way. As Kent and Norton-Taylor had invented the project, and so could film the cross-examinations, despite being a by-product of this approach, the DVD came to be the most formative tool the actors had at their disposal.

Restraint in performance

The restraint exercised and imposed in rehearsal by the DVD was also foregrounded in performance. The production was rich with recognisable documentary theatre devices which both encouraged the audience's intellectual involvement and imposed further restraints on the actors' performances. In a style of design recognisable from previous tribunal plays, but in contrast to Piscator's aesthetic, Kent's set (designed by Polly Sullivan) was a dramatic

evocation of the sort of room in which the original interviews might have taken place. The stage was carpeted, with a line of windows obscured by thin office blinds along the back wall which were backlit to suggest daylight outside. Three tables, arranged in a horseshoe formation, were set centre stage, and at them were five chairs. Other set included small filing cabinets and tables. The set was dressed with the usual office paraphernalia, such as water jugs, files and folders.

The oral testimony of the witnesses was also supported by evidence on plasma television screens on both sides of the stage and around the auditorium. The screens constantly displayed the documents to which the actors referred. Their use was consistent with Brecht's comment that:

The orthodox playwright's objection to the titles is that the dramatist ought to say everything that has to be said in the action, that the text must express everything within its own confines...Footnotes, and the habit of turning back to check a point, need to be introduced to play-writing too.¹⁴³

The digitalisation of the documents contributed to the verisimilitude of the theatrical event, and further created a believable look and feel as they were reminiscent of the way in which information is provided for the jury in court.¹⁴⁴

At both the beginning and end of the play, devices were deployed which encouraged the audience to invest in the illusion of a real inquiry. When the audience entered, the stage was set, with the lights up. As the play started, there was no customary lighting change; indeed, apart from the actors' entrance, there

¹⁴³ Brecht, 'The Literarization of the Theatre' (1931), in Willett, *BT*, p.44.

¹⁴⁴ Similarly, other signifiers of authenticity included the video camera used to record the interviews, which was positioned stage left, and the conference call machine used to interview Ritter and Valdes, which was brought on by the respective actors.

was no signal that the play was about to start. The actors chatted casually (this was improvised and not verbatim) and prepared themselves for interview, taking out documents and stationery from their briefcases and reading over their notes.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, at the end of the performance, there were none of the usual theatrical signifiers such as a blackout, curtain or bow. Chris Megson's comments about *Justifying War* suggest a very similar performative mode:

...the piece started as a couple of minor officials entered the room preparing for the arrival of Hutton and his team...At the end, there were no bows, no acknowledgment of the spectators, no invitation to applaud.¹⁴⁶

Bows in theatre traditionally invite praise from the audience, giving both an opportunity to display their appreciation of the actors' skill and the cathartic release of seeing the actors out of role. By refusing the audience this opportunity, Kent maintained focus on the play's content. Of *Justifying War*, Chris Megson has stated that 'Theatricality itself was distinctly downplayed in the production'.¹⁴⁷ However, we must exercise caution with this term 'theatricality'.

Patrick Lonergan, writing about *Bloody Sunday*, has rightly noted that:

...the aesthetic at work here is that there are no aesthetics – the production's creators do all they can to maintain the illusion that we're not in a theatre. Which is of course highly theatrical.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Roland Oliver told me that 'Mates started the second half – and so I walked in with Thomas playing Sands and he always used to say something to me...about the architecture or something that Mates commented on, and he would ask me about that, or something similar.'

¹⁴⁶ Megson, *CTR*, p.370.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Patrick Lonergan, "Speaking Out". *Irish Theatre Magazine* 4 (23), p.30. Similarly, writing about 'Realistic performance' in documentary, Derek Paget has noted that the 'set of formal conventions, constructed as a 'natural' or 'real' technique, is then collapsed into a 'truth' which is offered as an endorsement of a 'natural', commonsensical, view of the world. The denial of technique, the veiling of conventions, is what is most unreal and unnatural of all'. Paget, *True Stories?*, p.21.

Rather than ‘down-played’ theatricality, we might note that the production employed a different kind of theatricality, designed to focus the audience on the accumulation of witness testimony, and to encourage the audience to view the play as a jury would a trial. To this end, the blocking of the production further restrained the actors’ performances. The prosecution sat stage right, with Philippe Sands sitting downstage, and upstage of him, Alison MacDonald. Stage left, sitting directly opposite them, were Julian Knowles and Blinne Ni Ghralaigh, all at right angles to the audience. This meant that both Sands and Knowles looked upstage to ask questions, and that the witnesses sat upstage centre directly facing the audience. As the audience was denied full view of the lawyers, their focus was directed at the witnesses. This blocking also created two head-to-head relationships: the defence faced the prosecution and the witness faced the audience.

Satirising what he evidently identifies as a continuation of traditional documentary theatre’s penchant for aesthetic simplicity, in an article in *The Guardian*, playwright David Edgar quipped that the staging conventions in verbatim theatre can be reduced to asking ‘will it be stools or chairs?’¹⁴⁹ Although in his polemic he overlooks productions such as *Black Watch* and *Fallujah*, neither of which saw a predominance of occasional furniture, in *Called to Account* the answer was quite definitely ‘chairs’. With the exception of the rare moments when Sands stood to help a witness find the correct page, all eleven cross-examinations were conducted with the five participants seated. This

¹⁴⁹ David Edgar, ‘Doc and Dram’, *The Guardian*, 27 Sept 2008.
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2008/sep/27/theatre.davidedgar>> accessed 6 May 2010.

was a feature which evidently affected the actors playing the witnesses rather than the lawyers. Roland Oliver noted that:

It is restricting but also challenging to have so little movement...it does concentrate attention on the text, but also...being on the spot as a witness is as daunting for the actor as it probably was for the witness. In rehearsal most of us confessed to feeling as if we were auditioning in front of a panel of severe professional judges.¹⁵⁰

Ken Drury expressed a similar sentiment when he said, ‘Certainly as an actor you feel very exposed. There is no hiding place...But on the other hand...It is a very powerful place to be onstage.’ William Hoyland noted:

...you are sitting down all the time – your physicality is hugely restricted. One of the ways you normally get into a character is by thinking how they might walk and the way they might hold themselves, but here you sit and that is all. So it is a little bit more concentrated in a funny way than a normal acting part...it is a different type of acting in that respect... Sometimes you come off and you want to run round the block and shake yourself. You do feel very much imprisoned in the chair behind the desk.

Hoyland’s comment that the lack of movement resulted in the performance being ‘a little bit more concentrated’ is noteworthy. Jeremy Clyde certainly experienced this: ‘It is unusual to just do a part that requires you to sit behind a table on a chair...That staging forces it down to an absolute minimum.’ David Beames agreed, commenting:

It stops you doing too much. It reins it in... You have to sit down, relax and try and talk in a conversational manner really. In this case they weren’t even sat like they were in the Hutton and Saville Inquiries where there was lots going on – journalists bustling around at the back, in this case it was just in private

¹⁵⁰ Roland Oliver, follow-up email correspondence, 21 Aug 2009.

rooms in chambers. So there is nothing else going on, so you are very restricted in that way.

Due to the fact that it replicated the pressure the witnesses were under during the interview, this was a feature that evidently specifically affected the actor under cross-examination: neither actor playing a lawyer noted comparable experiences.

In addition, despite the relatively small theatre space, in which the cast could very easily be heard with minimal projection, each actor wore a tie microphone in the cross-examinations and their responses were amplified around the auditorium. Despite being a barely noticeable element of the staging from the audience's point of view, it evidently had a sizable impact on the actors' performances. David Michaels noted: 'Because you are miked, you can't go into sudden theatricality', whilst William Hoyland found it 'hard to perform in a theatre when you are being miked. It is very unusual.' Michaels's and Hoyland's observations suggest that the microphones precluded voice projection, and encouraged a conversational vocal performance that was reminiscent of everyday speech. Jeremy Clyde noted the benefit of the restraint the microphones necessitated:

You don't have to project because you are miked...I don't like show-off acting. It has become terribly easy to tear a passion to tatters, but I am not for that.

The microphones served to enforce a particular discipline and restraint on the actors' vocal expression. These actors' comments corroborate Kent's description of the primary function of the microphones:

I've always worked with microphones...the microphones mean the actors don't even have to put on a louder voice in order to be heard. The hyper-naturalism of everything being very low-key means it is nearer to the truth, I suppose.¹⁵¹

Kent's comment that it is 'nearer to the truth' is only true in as much as by equipping the actors with microphones, he relieved the cast of the need to vocally adapt the interview to fit the bigger space. As they were able to speak at a conversational pitch, they could more closely replicate what they saw. Thus, the way in which Lloyd Hutchinson had to adapt his 'unbelievably soft spoken' interviewee in *Talking to Terrorists* was not necessary here.

We can thus appreciate that the elements of precision and restraint were foregrounded in *Called to Account* by the cast's increased access to the specifics of the original interview made possible by the DVD recording. These elements prompted quite different challenges from those experienced in Stafford-Clark's production. In the actors' working methods in rehearsal, and in the combination of the static staging and the amplification of their voices in performance, the cast found innovative and diverse strategies to work on their roles whilst remaining focussed on the political significance of their subjects' testimony.

Gesture, physicality and appearance

Guided by the actors' preoccupations, so far in this case-study attention has been almost exclusively limited to the verbal features they identified in the recordings. Given the dense legal language, and the play's focus on the political significance

¹⁵¹ Hammond and Steward, *Verbatim: Verbatim*, p.156.

of the testimony, this focus is little surprise. However, the DVD recording also allowed the actors to observe their witness's physical appearance, bearing and gestural range.

Oliver and Hardiman: Physical Selection and Adaptation

Terrence Hardiman's and Roland Oliver's experiences regarding gesture are noteworthy in relation to avoiding 'commenting' on the character. However, their experiences depart from the notions of precision we encountered in the actors' attitudes towards verbal features. As noted above, the DVD and CD that the actors received were of the full interview, which ranged from an hour to two hours in length. The final edited versions ran at between five and ten minutes. This meant that in the same way that Norton-Taylor chose only certain testimony to include, these actors had to select gestures from the range they had observed. Both found that this process of selection was challenging. Oliver summarised the problem:

I can recall spending a great deal of time trying to get my character's gestures, mannerisms and posture right. I also remember that such gestures and mannerisms had to be edited in much the same way as the text had been edited...because repeating all the gestures could appear too elaborate if they were squeezed into too brief a passage.¹⁵²

Oliver thus selected certain gestures to include in his interview. Hardiman expressed similar concerns:

¹⁵² Follow-up email correspondence with Oliver, 21 Aug 2009.

The interview was just over an hour and the final précised version was about five minutes. So that in itself is a problem. The problem of editing. When you edit you select, and in that selection you have to watch out that you are not making a value judgement on the person.

Thus, rather than minutely copy every movement, Hardiman explained:

I felt that I had to get the equivalent of that cumulative feeling into this very short version, and not over-lard it or lay on another attitude that was not there. I might as an actor think ‘oh that would be good and dramatic to do’ but it wouldn’t fit. You had to avoid it.

Evidently, Hardiman was concerned to avoid expressing anything that was not already present, but which may have appealed to him as a performer. Despite this restraint, the problem with regard to ‘commenting’ on his witnesses persisted due to his freedom to select certain moments. Both actors reported that attempting to recreate a specific gesture was unhelpful, as Oliver explained:

One move that Mates did a lot was with his right hand. He would put it on his cheek and run it across his forehead and then down over his face, almost as though wiping his face. It looked entirely natural when he did it, and then I started to do it and it looked as though I had chosen a gesture as a way of making point about him.

It is clear that some gestures did not look natural when included in the edited cross-examination, despite the fact they were copied from the recording. Oliver provided a further example of this issue when he said:

Some of my friends felt rather miffed on Michael Mates’s behalf – they thought I was sending him up a bit, which I can assure you wasn’t the case. I mean if you look at the tape, he behaved, at certain points, like an overgrown school boy. He got excited

about the camera rolling and pulled a face at it! None of which we did...I'm playing some of it down. You don't want to look like you are doing a review sketch, even if they did in the interview.

Oliver clearly did not deem Mates's playful performance in the cross-examination helpful in the production, and so he had to adapt what he had observed, and yet was still accused of 'sending him up'. In the static staging of *Called to Account*, every move by the actor was viewed as if in close-up. Consequently, in order not to 'colour' their portrayal or 'comment' on the character, the actors deemed a straight replication of gestures and behaviour unhelpful. Hardiman noted that 'It can be self-defeating – you try and use some of those idiosyncrasies and the audience say "why did he do that?"' Therefore, unlike the precision they sought in their vocal performances, for these two actors, capturing their witness's physicality was based more on an economy of gesture specifically designed to avoid 'commenting' on them, than on a detailed replication moment by moment.

This example provides us with a quite different understanding of the term 'adaptation' which we encountered in Lloyd Hutchinson's approach in *Talking to Terrorists*. Hutchinson needed to make his subject theatrically viable and so adapted the man's quietness to work on stage. Here, however, Oliver had to scale his performance back to be viable within the tone of the production. 'Theatrical viability' thus not only refers to the practical demands of performance (such as being heard), but also to the particular performative mode of the production. Both, in their selective use of what they had observed, created Stanislavski's 'scenic' or 'theatrical truth' in their performances. We thus tend to understand theatrical truth as making something more entertaining and colourful for the

stage. However, Oliver's comments suggest that we can also acknowledge that it can constitute a reduction or restraint in order that it fit the particular 'truth' of the production.

Physical Appearance

Called to Account was firmly rooted in the be-suited streets of Whitehall and the Inns of Court. With the rare exceptions of Scott Ritter (blue checked shirt) and Clare Short (red pashmina), costume varied only in the particular shade of suit or colour of tie. Creating the physical appearance of the individual was thus associated with features such as hair colour and style and whether they wore glasses. The cast's comments in relation to these elements were divided. Several actors did not mention appearance at all: Woolley, Hardiman and Rimmer did not recall anything they deemed noteworthy, whilst Drury simply stated 'as far as the appearance is concerned there was nothing to be done about that'. By contrast, for other actors it was clear that creating a strong resemblance was an important component in their portrayal.

I have already noted that Kent cast actors of roughly the right age and ethnicity to play the roles. Raad Rawi felt that the similarity was greater than this when he said, 'It was certainly necessary for the production for the people to look as like their real person as possible.' Similarly, Clyde stated that 'Nick is very good at casting close to the person'. However, we must balance these comments with Hardiman's aforementioned statement that 'I don't look like him', and,

moreover, that he made no effort to do so.¹⁵³ It should be remembered that, with the exception of Clare Short, these were not well-known individuals, recognisable to the audience. As David Beames noted in his portrayal of Scott Ritter:

I danked my hair down a bit so it went darker and combed it like his. We got a pair of glasses that looked identical, and got what I wore from pictures. But I don't look like him at all really. But in his case we sort of thought that not many people would be familiar with how he looked anyway.

Most actors recalled similar experiences to Beames, in that the steps they took to appear similar to their subject were designed to help them rather than the audience. In *Playing for Real*, Roger Allam noted that even when playing an individual as iconic as Hitler, with a strong audience expectation, there were aspects of his appearance which were designed primarily to satisfy the actor:

...on stage you have to be convincing to the audience...but I noticed that his eyebrows were set lower than mine so I waxed out the top of my brows, keeping the middle and drawing them in lower, and the effect was really quite unsettling. Getting the eyes right made a big difference to me though I don't know that anyone in the audience would have noticed.¹⁵⁴

Similarly, Hoyland noted: 'If I looked in the mirror before I went on and saw this be-suited and be-spectacled man with different hair looking back at me, it all helps.' Likewise, Rawi stated: 'I had a hair cut and grew a moustache', and

¹⁵³ David Watt disagrees: 'Much of the new verbatim theatre remains in thrall to the naturalist habit. This is clearly the case in the "tribunal plays" at the Tricycle Theatre in London, which played edited versions of transcripts in a set representing a court room and with actors cast for their resemblance to the real figures they portrayed'. Watt, however, overlooks the well-used documentary devices outlined on pp.167-70, and also that the actors are part of a regularly-used ensemble, which indicates that resemblance was not informing Kent's casting process. David Watt, *Political Performances*, p.193.

¹⁵⁴ Cantrell and Luckhurst, *Playing for Real*, p.28.

Michaels said: 'I had my hair cut and I dyed it' whilst Clyde was found 'the right glasses and the right sweater. We copied what he was wearing.' These actors' comments are consistent with James Woolley's experience that 'You have a look, you have the voice'. They do not describe attempting to recreate minutely their appearance, but rather they crafted 'a look' of the person, or what Rimmer called 'a reminder'. However, Roland Oliver went further than most to resemble Michael Mates:

I wore the same colour tie, the same tie pin, same colour shirt, similar suit – although mine is Marks and Spencer's and his is probably Saville Row – and I made up my eyebrows to make them look bushier. But his eyebrows extend a bit across his face and I tried to draw mine to do the same and it didn't work. It may be good for the audience but it doesn't convince me. Whereas if I flicked them up a bit and made them darker, I thought, yes, I look more like him.

Like Allam's description of changing his eyebrows, Oliver also wanted to convince himself, not the audience, that he could create a similarity. In a similar approach to the way in which he worked on Mates's gestures, Oliver evidently adapted what he saw so as to aid his portrayal rather than minutely copy Mates's appearance. He also described the benefit of making-up before a performance:

The modern fashion seems to be for long warm-ups with half an hour of Pilates, and actors of my generation don't tend to do that, but you do need to get yourself into the right frame of mind. I'm sure that the half an hour that people used to spend making-up in the old days did that.

Although clearly satirising modern warm-up techniques, Oliver's pre-performance ritual, in addition to altering his appearance, had the effect of concentrating and preparing him for the performance.

Synecdochic reminders of actuality: Thomas Wheatley

Thomas Wheatley placed by far the most emphasis on physical appearance in his portrayal of Philippe Sands. As he met Sands whilst observing the original cross-examinations, he was able to borrow some of Sands's own belongings: 'I'm using the pens he uses...I'm wearing one of his own ties, which he has lent me.' The details that Wheatley mentions are revealing. They fall under Joseph Roach's category 'accessories' in his book, *It*. Roach's research investigates 'a certain quality, easy to perceive but hard to define, possessed by abnormally interesting people. Call it "it."'¹⁵⁵ He observes that the English synonyms for *It* are 'charm, charisma and presence'.¹⁵⁶ For actors in verbatim theatre, particularly those playing famous individuals (as we shall see in Diane Fletcher's portrayal of Clare Short), capturing their 'presence' is a critical facet of performance. In relation to Wheatley's experience, Roach's comments on the use of accessories owned by the real person are particularly illuminating. He suggests that an accessory is an object 'that by extension discloses the emerging structures of synthetic experience itself'.¹⁵⁷ It is through this extension that objects owned by the individual can act as a synecdoche for the individual more widely. As Roach notes, 'accessories make meanings under the ever-useful trope of synecdoche – the part stands in for the whole.'¹⁵⁸ For example, Roach analyses the way in which King Charles II's funeral effigy, dressed with the King's own clothes, wig and sceptre, provided the public with a tangible 'living'

¹⁵⁵ Joseph Roach, *It* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p.1.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.7.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.51.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.53.

link to the dead monarch. Wheatley's choice of items certainly appears to have had a talismanic effect on him. They were not of importance to the audience, who didn't need to know, for example, the colour of Sands's tie, and clearly wouldn't know that it actually belonged to him. Instead, these details were of use to Wheatley. They became synecdochic signifiers of authenticity for the actor rather than the audience, providing a tangible link between actor and role. We might compare Roach's description of the way in which Samuel Pepys carried a sword with Wheatley's use of Sands's pen and tie:

He doesn't feel well dressed without his sword. He doesn't think to defend himself with it in an emergency, however, because that is not what it's for. It has other work to do. It works as a prop to support his performance as he fights his way across the threshold of gentlemanly status and claims social spaces beyond as his own. It makes him visible to himself and to others as what he wants to become.¹⁵⁹

Like Pepys, Wheatley's tie was not designed as a fashion statement or his pen to write. Rather they 'supported his performance', providing a link with the man he portrayed. Although Pepys's sword also functioned as a sign to others, it is Roach's comments on the way in which these items 'make visible to himself... what he wants to become' that are most relevant to Wheatley's approach. Roach observes, 'To accessorise a costume is thus to furnish it with the supplementary but nonetheless telling items which serve to identify or locate the wearer.'¹⁶⁰ In Wheatley's case these items identified and located the character for the wearer. Their use to Wheatley evidently was not the visual similarity they facilitated, in the same way in which Pepys's sword was not for

¹⁵⁹ Roach, *It*, p.53.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.52.

fighting, as much as the importance to Wheatley of the objects themselves, allowing him to conjure a presence through Sands's actual possessions. This conjuring has a close association with David Freedberg's writings on *envoûtement* or voodoo in which the individual would dress up the image to be a likeness of their target.¹⁶¹ Roach notes that it was believed that this 'increases the efficacy of its magic'.¹⁶² Although I'm not suggesting Wheatley employed the dark arts, the presence of Sands's own belongings clearly had a deeper resonance for him. These, he perceived, brought him closer to the man than merely looking like him would allow.

Diane Fletcher's portrayal of Clare Short

Fletcher's experiences are analysed entirely separately because her approach was qualitatively different from the other actors whom I interviewed. The experience of portraying Clare Short challenged not only Fletcher's approach to playing a role, but also made her consider the nature of acting and what it constitutes. Although *Talking to Terrorists* featured public figures such as Mo Mowlem and Terry Waite, it was Fletcher who most fully explored the impact of her subject's fame on her portrayal. She felt that Short's celebrity and broad popularity with the electorate brought with it a profound pressure to capture her with great precision:

¹⁶¹ See David Freedberg, *The Power of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

¹⁶² Roach, *It*, p.96.

[It] terrified me. Some of the characters although you may have heard of them are not known. But everyone obviously knows Clare Short. So I thought if I don't pull this off...¹⁶³

Throughout my interview Fletcher repeatedly echoed the sentiment above, describing the experience as one that variously 'frightened' and 'terrified' her, and that she has 'never been that nervous'.

Clare Short is a controversial figure. She was Secretary of State for International Development from 1997 until 2003, when she resigned from the Labour Party over the decision to invade Iraq. In an open resignation letter, she stated that she believed Tony Blair was 'engaged in a series of half-truths and deceits to get us to war in Iraq', a view which is now commonly shared.¹⁶⁴ However, her resignation was, to many eyes, partly undermined by her earlier decision not to resign. Her eventual resignation seemed, therefore, anti-climatic and belated.¹⁶⁵ Short's testimony under cross-examination was arguably the most incisive critique of Blair's leadership heard in the play.

Given the audience's expectations, Fletcher felt that Short's fame meant that 'you couldn't allow yourself interpretation'. She said: 'you couldn't invent. You mustn't invent'. Although, as we have seen, all the actors were concerned with precise renditions of their subject, the crucial difference in *Called to Account* is that it was only Fletcher's portrayal that the audience could judge in terms of

¹⁶³ Other cast members agreed about the associated demands that came with Short's fame. Wheatley asserted: 'It is a crucial thing. If someone is very well known, and here Clare Short is the only person, there is a feeling that you have to get as close as you can to her'. Similarly, Hardiman noted, 'That was one that had to be played as much like her as possible because she was such a well-known character.'

¹⁶⁴ Short's resignation letter was published on the BBC website. See <news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6070156.stm> accessed on 06 September 2007.

¹⁶⁵ She has also published a book on her view of the war: Clare Short, *An Honourable Deception? New Labour, Iraq and the Misuse of Power* (London: Free Press, 2004).

how successful she had been. Herbert Lindenberger's comments with regard to historical drama are relevant to the challenges Fletcher faced:

Whenever an audience is aware that it is watching real people and events on stage, it remains conscious that what it experiences is essentially the re-enactment rather than the enactment of an action... We retain a double view of the action, participating in its reality at the same time that we recognise its actors as "only" actors; the true reality is one which the representation can at best point to but can never fully embody.¹⁶⁶

This, Lindenberger contrasts with a fictional play:

In a fictive action the only reality is the one enacted before us; the actor, instead of being "only" an actor, is much more likely to "become" the personage whom he claims to represent.¹⁶⁷

I would argue that Lindenberger's argument relates specifically to playing a famous individual, rather than any 'real people'; as we have seen other actors did not have the pressure of audience expectation on their portrayals, though his comments with regard to the audience's levels of consciousness certainly evoke the kind of experiences Diane Fletcher recalled, in which the doubleness was intensified.

Like the actors above, Fletcher sought the detail she required from the recording she had been given. Fletcher's comment that 'you have a lot of work at home - I did a great deal of homework', was something of an understatement:

¹⁶⁶ Lindenberger, *Historical Drama*, p.24.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

I used to play it [the DVD] over and over again...it was the timing I suppose that I was listening to. I would listen to it and then turn the sound off and then try to match the movement to the voice... That was the battle.

Rather than using the recording, as many had done, to understand the way in which the individual framed their argument and phrased their answers, Fletcher used it to replicate exactly what she had seen, painstakingly synchronising Short's gestures with her voice and vice-versa. This was an incredibly precise physical and verbal replication in a way we have not previously encountered in the approaches above. Fletcher identified that this process reversed the way in which she usually worked:

I had always thought of myself as an actor who works out the thought before the physical thing, but this was fascinating as I had to do it the other way round, I had to work out what she was thinking from the way she was moving.

Fletcher thus attempted to establish explanations for Short's utterances from what she saw. It appears that Fletcher's usual way of working is very much influenced by Stanislavski's early work, in that she focuses on how the psychology and emotion of the character affects her physicality. However, as cited earlier in relation to Bella Merlin's research, Stanislavski also taught how the external can influence internal processes:

An actor on the stage need [*sic*] only a sense of the smallest modicum of organic physical truth in his action or general state and instantly his emotions will respond to his inner faith in the genuineness of what his body is doing.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Stanislavski, *CAR*, p.150.

As Benedetti states, ‘physical states can produce mental states’.¹⁶⁹ However, there were points where this process of psychological justification broke down for Fletcher:

Sometimes she said things...where I hadn’t a clue why she said it, or why she smiled at a certain time, so occasionally I would have to say, well this is what she did, without knowing why.

It is clear that the text presented problems for which Fletcher felt unable to invent a backstory. She went on to give a specific example from the play:

There was one particular bit where she mentioned Gordon Brown...and she slightly smirked, and I wonder why...perhaps because I don’t think they were great pals at all, and she was laying the ground for ‘he’s just as bad as Blair’, I don’t know...and the audience can work it out in the same way I did.

When no explanation presented itself, Fletcher elected simply to re-create what she had seen without understanding why it was said. She argued that the audience was then in the same position as she was, trying to establish the motivation behind the comments. It is interesting that Fletcher did not decide on a reason in her own mind, and use it to give motivation to the line. This refusal of a Stanislavskian form of justification meant that she reproduced the original, copying externally what she observed. The DVD recording allowed this approach in a way that was not possible for the *Talking to Terrorists* cast. By doing so, Fletcher limited colouring or commenting on the utterances. This element of her portrayal was echoed by Jeremy Clyde in his portrayal of Edward Mortimer: ‘Yes, there was ambiguity, but then the man is a diplomat so he is

¹⁶⁹ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski and the Actor*, p.69.

used to ambiguity. You don't fill in the gaps. Absolutely not.' In contrast to the *Talking to Terrorists* cast, it appears that these actors more readily accepted the unknown and unknowable when playing a real person, and where some of the actors in Stafford-Clark's production sought a Stanislavskian form of psychological coherency, here the actors were happy to recreate the ambiguity they observed using the DVD recording.

As Clare Short has a particularly distinctive voice, a large part of Fletcher's work with the DVD was perfecting her vocal idiosyncrasies. Fletcher found capturing her accent challenging:

Her accent shifts all over the place. Sometimes it is very Birmingham, sometimes it has a slight estuary speech, with glottal stops and things. So it confused me sometimes when I was watching it.

Her preoccupation with the vocal elements of her performance was thus shared with the cast, but Fletcher's perception of the audience's expectation meant that her approach put a much greater emphasis on a precise replication. This was particularly apparent when I asked whether she consciously adapted anything that she had seen in the recording:

We did talk about this. Because that was a bit tricky. I did make some changes. She kept her eyes down, although for the theatricality of it I have to lift my head a bit, whereas she only looked at the person asking the question, or away and down.

Although the actor's gaze is critically important in theatre, the degree of adaptation from what Fletcher had observed was evidently minimal. Aside from

these subtle changes to Short's eye-line, Fletcher's process was entirely predicated on copying exactly what she had seen.

A parallel concern alongside Fletcher's preoccupation with Short's vocal features was gaining a physical resemblance to her. A close physical similarity was arguably necessary given the media's familiarity with Short. The production team went to greater lengths than with the other actors to achieve this, which included hiring a wig from the National Theatre:

I wanted to be as close as possible. I couldn't have done it without the wig. That to me was crucial. Because she has got that very dark Celtic hair. And that's what you think about with her.

The costume was less critical in gaining a physical resemblance to Short. Fletcher described it as being 'just black with that red pashmina'. However, her similarity to Short was uncanny. Ken Drury agreed, commenting: 'she really did look like Clare Short'.

Despite her relentless emphasis on verbal and gestural precision, Fletcher came to reassess her initial reaction to the production:

At first I thought this isn't acting, this is a different skill you are asking me to do. But then I realised it is of course, this is what we do, we watch people, and then we try to recreate.

Whilst it clearly was acting, and observation is indeed a critically important skill, the way in which actors utilise their observations is rarely done with such an acute emphasis on external detail and precision. A comparable experience which

further illuminates Fletcher's process was Siân Phillips's performance as Marlene Dietrich in Pam Gems's play, *Marlene*. Like Fletcher, Phillips's process was entirely predicated on the external features:

[We had] footage of her press conferences, her arrival in airports, all those things. We sat for weeks looking at this material until we got the walk right. We sat and did all that surface stuff, and in the end it became an intrinsic part of the character. It is a way into character, from the surface. We copied every finger movement, every gesture on every note she sang.¹⁷⁰

Evidently searching for a workable vocabulary to describe this experience, Phillips compared it to Samuel Beckett's direction when she appeared in his play, *Eh Joe*: 'preparing a text with him is a purely mechanical and tortured affair. You have no contribution of your own at all.'¹⁷¹ However, she found that in both Gems's and Beckett's plays this external, laborious work ultimately released her creatively:

The mechanical work suddenly became real, became personal, it was very strange. But the point is that the same happened with Marlene, the external, the minute details one worked on didn't feel at all useful and then suddenly it all came together and one feels like someone else.¹⁷²

By contrast, Fletcher found the discipline associated with keeping rigidly to the original interview required a 'feat of concentration' which she found 'exhausting – I think everybody did.' She also felt restricted by the lack of creative input: 'you couldn't allow yourself interpretation... It was like being a butterfly, you were just stuck there, and I always hoped the questions would spark off the

¹⁷⁰ Cantrell and Luckhurst, *Playing for Real*, p.140.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

answer'. This lack of creativity rendered her unable to develop the role in order to keep it fresh for each performance, sustaining herself creatively throughout the run: 'For me it is the creativity that I lacked in it...because it had to be the same every night, nothing alters.' The process clearly did not release Fletcher creatively in the way that Phillips experienced. Indeed, it was this feeling that made her relieved that the run was quite short:

I wouldn't have liked to have gone on doing it longer than I did, because my...acting instinct was taking over a bit...I'd start to play up to it [the audience response] slightly.

It is interesting that Fletcher obviously felt that her 'instinct' as an actor was a hindrance in this style of performance. This appears to be associated with the degree of restraint she had to apply in performance, particularly with regard to the audience.

However, Fletcher's frustrations did not temper the success of her portrayal, which was universally praised in reviews of the play. Comments include: 'Diane Fletcher who deftly catches the tone of...Clare Short gives an illuminating impression'¹⁷³, 'eerily accurate'¹⁷⁴, 'blazingly accurate'¹⁷⁵, 'spookily accurate'¹⁷⁶ and 'her hoarse voice and mannerisms are Short to a T'.¹⁷⁷ Even Clare Short herself was impressed:

I could see what a good actress she was, I could see her holding her body or moving her arm in a way that I didn't

¹⁷³ Nicholas de Jongh, *Evening Standard*, 24 Apr 2007, in *Theatre Record*, p.490-1.

¹⁷⁴ Ian Shuttleworth, *Financial Times*, 25 Apr 2007, in *Theatre Record*, p.491-2

¹⁷⁵ Susannah Clapp, *Observer*, 29 Apr 2007, in *Theatre Record*, p.492.

¹⁷⁶ Georgina Brown, *Mail on Sunday*, 29 Apr 2007, in *Theatre Record*, p.493.

¹⁷⁷ Tim Walker, *Sunday Telegraph*, 29 Apr 2007, in *Theatre Record*, p.492-3.

know I did but when I saw her I realised I did...She must have watched the video. I was very impressed...I remember sitting there and knowing that was me, and yet I didn't know that I do those things. It was uncanny...she felt like a little bit of me.¹⁷⁸

However, playing such a publicly known individual did not liberate Fletcher, but rather Short's fame made profound and lasting demands on her performance, and constantly frustrated her desire for creativity.

Difficulty of Definitions

Impersonation, Imitation, and Mimicry

The cast's focus on restraint and precision provokes much more fundamental questions regarding the terms 'impersonation', 'imitation', and 'mimicry' than in the previous chapter. We have already come across 'impersonation' in the section on Lloyd Hutchinson's approach in *Talking to Terrorists*. Hutchinson identified that he impersonated in the hotseat, but then his work in rehearsals, due in part to the theatrical viability of the individuals he played and the changes that Stafford-Clark imposed, departed from this. However, Hutchinson could only impersonate insofar as he could copy selected features that he remembered from his short meeting, which for some actors was conducted over a year before the play opened. By contrast, the cast of *Called to Account* could, as evidenced by Diane Fletcher's process, minutely replicate their witnesses' responses in the cross-examinations by virtue of the DVD recording.

¹⁷⁸ The actors were not told that the person they played was in the audience until after the performance.

This issue was given a great emphasis by the cast. In his opening comment in interview, Hoyland stated that ‘There are various, well not exactly rules, but conventions’ in the tribunal plays. He went on ‘The most important thing is that you don’t imitate.’ Similarly, Hardiman spoke of the ‘specific challenges’ that these plays posed, of which ‘the main problem was I didn’t want to do an imitation of him’. Shane Rimmer too stated that ‘Impersonation is not, I think, necessary here...that was one thing I didn’t make a stride towards at all.’ In their rejection of these terms, many of the actors referenced performers that are skilled in this area, and from whom the actors differentiated their work. Roland Oliver cited Rory Bremner and Jon Culshaw, whilst David Michaels mentioned Mike Yarwood.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, Ken Drury stated that:

Most actors are not like Rory Bremner, so you are not going to be able to give an absolute copy of what he did, but the DVD gives you a clearer picture of what the person’s behaviour and attitude is like...It wasn’t something I studied and tried to get every nuance, because that is not what we were trying to do really.

It is noteworthy that these actors associated the terms impersonation, imitation and mimicry with comic performers. Although Drury contends that it was his lack of particular skills that precluded him imitating, arguably more significant is that Bremner, Yarwood and Culshaw all use their skills of replication to parody their subjects. Bremner is particularly associated with his impressions on programmes such as *Bremner, Bird and Fortune*, in which he satirises contemporary politicians to great comic effect. The slightest suggestion that by

¹⁷⁹ Michaels stated ‘you are not trying to be Mike Yarwood. You are not trying to do an impersonation’ whilst Oliver noted: ‘I’m not a Rory Bremner, or Jon Culshaw, so I didn’t try and mimic him perfectly.’

impersonating the individual, the actor satirised them, clearly dissuaded the cast from using the term.

It is perhaps also true that there is a snobbery regarding impersonation, and that it is viewed as a less noble art than acting. None of the actors in *Called to Account* turned to celebrated portrayals of real people, such as Helen Mirren as Elizabeth II in *The Queen* or Forest Whittaker as Idi Amin in *Last King of Scotland* (both of whom received Oscars for their performances), to offer an example of impersonation. Rather, it appears these terms are considered low-brow in comparison with these performances, which might further explain the actors' reticence to use the terms. Impressionist Jan Ravens has certainly noted snobbery. Speaking at the University of Reading's 'Acting with Facts' conference, she stated:

I think of myself as an actress and impersonator, but there is something considered second-rate about being an impressionist. Impressionists are not asked to be actors – the two can't meet.¹⁸⁰

In addition to the satiric connotations above, in rejecting these terms, the cast also returned to their aim of foregrounding the political significance of their subjects' testimony. Thomas Wheatley stated, 'it is very, very important the impersonation does not detract from what is being said.' Wheatley suggests that impersonation might be linked to indulgence. Rather, the actors had to exercise restraint in order to serve the political narrative. Similarly, Terrence Hardiman

¹⁸⁰ Ravens spoke on the keynote panel of actors in the discussion 'Acting or Impersonating? Playing the Famous on Stage and Screen' (University of Reading, 2 September 2010).

asserted that he avoided impersonation in order to privilege Bob Marshall-

Andrew's political agenda:

I don't look like him, I don't sound like him, but I've got to get the essence of what he was saying. That was the big problem to deal with – we all had the same problem...you need to get the audience to listen to the argument. Your other work can't get in the way of that.

This was echoed by Hoyland, who differentiated 'fairness' when portraying the individual from 'accuracy':

You can't in any way traduce the character you are playing. There is a real responsibility to represent them fairly. I say fairly rather than accurately because again, you don't want to try and give an imitation because that doesn't work, but you want to represent them fairly and give them a fair hearing.

However, although the actors did not describe their approach in this way, they were still working, as Rimmer suggested, 'within certain confines'. This raises the problem of definitions. James Woolley summarised the issue when he said:

I am not an impersonator as such, I would have a different approach to someone who does mimicking, that is a different take...but I can't get into the science of where mimicking ends and acting starts.

As Woolley's comment suggests, the terms impersonation, imitation, and mimicry do not refer to an agreed set of characteristics or techniques that can be readily distinguished from 'acting'. Woolley's comment was illustrated in the vocabulary David Beames used:

One doesn't try and do an impersonation of them, but you try and be as much like them as you can...I tried to sound as like him as I could...It didn't happen every night, but I did try to copy him to the letter as much as I could.

These definitions are evidently blurred: Beames did not describe his approach using the terms above, but did attempt to 'copy him to the letter', which indicates that it may be more the connotations of the terms that the actors found to be negative rather than the processes involved with them.

This problem raises a critical point. It is clear that Beames and the other actors above struggled to find an appropriate terminology to describe their work. When a portrayal is based on precise observation and recreation, as it was here, it appears that these actors believed that the available vocabularies have been lionised by other forms of performance. Due to their satiric and potentially low-brow connotations, the actors do not happily associate their work with these terms.

Growth and development: 'Printing' a portrayal

The DVD recording also raised a new challenge in performance. Closely aligned with their focus on precision, the issue of growth in performance arose repeatedly in my interviews. Although any live event has a freshness and spontaneity, many of the actors argued, like Fletcher, that the run did not evolve in the way they had experienced in fictional plays. David Beames commented that:

It does change slightly because you are relaxing into it a bit, but because it has to be as true a representation as you can, it can't grow. It is one thing that Nick comes down on you for: 'The gestures are getting too free and easy' – he tells you to go back to the tape again and do it how it was at the beginning. So in that way it can't grow really.

The recording evidently functioned as a touchstone to which some of the actors returned to ensure precision. William Hoyland also identified Kent's presence during the run as a factor in the play's growth, although he did accept that the performances developed:

You think you've got it right and then two weeks in you realise that you have got better in some funny intangible way. But of course Nick is a great help and gives you notes throughout the run. He might come about two weeks in and say you're getting sloppy in this bit.

Similarly, Jeremy Clyde also noted that Kent was keen to maintain precision with regard to the recording: 'It has been known for Nick to come round after and give someone, myself included, a rocket for spinning it out too much, for enjoying yourself too much.' The director's presence at performances is rare to find to this extent. As Hoyland states, 'He is a great director to work with during the course of the run. It being his theatre, he does see it a bit more often than a visiting director might do.' Whilst his presence may be explained by the fact the play was in his own theatre, it also suggests that he monitors the performances to ensure that the actors do not begin to indulge their performances and colour the interviews.

James Woolley called upon vocabularies he associated with his screen work to describe the way in which the limitations on growth affected his performance:

It is more like a ‘take’ in a film. You have to print exactly the same one each time. In other plays, things develop and change, but in verbatim theatre it is more like printing something – it has to be the same each time.

Woolley, unlike Fletcher, did not see this as restricting. He said that ‘it is rather satisfying. It becomes a challenge – can I print this the same each night?’ These comments on growth and development in performance were not found in the experiences of the *Talking to Terrorists* cast. They are a direct result of the particular working methods and the presence of the recording.

‘No acting required’

In *Verbatim: Verbatim*, Nicolas Kent discussed the performance style in his tribunal plays and made a series of observations regarding actors’ approaches:

For actors it is not like being in an ordinary play. They know they’re taking part in something that is to some extent ‘history’ so they come with such commitment to the truth and the project that the minute anyone sees anyone else acting, everyone knows – so no one acts; it is like an unwritten pledge that in no way will anyone do anything for effect. So the atmosphere is very restrained.¹⁸¹

Kent’s comments are initially perplexing, as he turns ‘acting’ into a negative concept that has to be avoided. Elsewhere in the interview he states, ‘With a tribunal play, if you do anything for dramatic effect it’s wrong, you know it’s wrong.’¹⁸² It was evident from the actors’ recollections that Kent’s negative

¹⁸¹ Hammond and Steward, *Verbatim: Verbatim*, pp. 155-6.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p.155.

vocabulary in relation to acting was prevalent throughout. Clyde remembered that ‘the note to everybody, and Nick always gives it to the newcomers, is ‘no acting required’.’ Similarly, David Michaels recalled: ‘If you added too much, Nick would say ‘you don’t have to do that. It is not a play.’’ Like the term ‘theatricality’ we must be careful to note that this refers to particular dramatic effects, perhaps those which were liable to shift the focus from the accumulation of evidence onto individual portrayals. It appears that when Kent sought precise and detailed performances, the short-hand or colloquial language he used to articulate his aims can easily appear to overlook his appreciation of the actors’ craft. Once again, this may well be a further manifestation of the suspicion over terms such as ‘impersonation’, ‘imitation’ and ‘mimicry’, and that Kent, like the actors, found that few helpful vocabularies were available.¹⁸³ It is obvious that despite the cast’s emphasis on precision and restraint, their processes were no less ‘acting’ than those for an invented part, and yet clearly everyone involved found it difficult to find a vocabulary adequate to describe this.

A similar difficulty regarding vocabularies is evident with regard to the ways in which the actors balanced their role as creative agents in the performance with the need to maintain the audience’s focus on the legal thrust and gradual build up of evidence. David Michaels stated that:

¹⁸³ The negative connotations of terms connected with acting more widely have also been explored by Jonas Barish and Cormac Power: ‘Not only has theatre itself been the object of prejudice, but so too have terms associated with theatre. As Barish notes, terms such as “acting, play acting, playing up to, putting on an act, putting on a performance, making a scene” etc, tend “with infrequent exceptions” to be “hostile or belittling”.’ Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1981), pp.1-2, quoted in Cormac Power, *Presence in Play: A Critique of Presence in the Theatre* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), p.88.

One reason that some actors can lose faith with it – I don't mean in our production – is when they try to theatricalise it a bit, without realising that the strength of it is in the words. An audience will sit and listen. The words explode like little bombs without having to do anything theatrical...they are waiting to hear the tiny little nuggets that are buried deep in people's speeches.

Michaels refers to the relationship established at the beginning of the play when Knowles informs the audience that they will 'hear' the evidence. As explored earlier in this chapter, the lawyers provoked the audience to use the evidence to answer certain questions so as to come to their conclusions. Whilst Michaels may be right that the audience 'will sit and listen' (indeed these devices directly primed them to do so), I would question how helpful the notion that 'the strength of it is in the words' is for our understanding of these actors' processes. Most would agree that the strength of any dramatic literature is in the words, and yet the actor still has the primary creative role in giving them life. Rather, Michaels's statement that the actor doesn't have 'to do anything theatrical' again relates to acting 'for dramatic effect', rather than decrying any creative steps the actor might take. Similarly, Clyde commented that 'from an actor's perspective, you can afford to be boring as it has been edited so carefully that whatever you have left to say is going to be quite interesting.' From analysing the processes involved, we can thus understand Clyde's comment as relating to the precision they pursued in their portrayals, rather than setting out to give a lack-lustre performance. Both actors and the director are searching for vocabularies to explain the way in which the narrative was foregrounded over individual performances. However, the actors' comments about the power of the words rather than their own processes, and Kent's negative vocabulary about acting, mean that they are complicit in obscuring the actors' creativity and skill.

Perhaps more helpful are Clyde's comments in which, like James Woolley, he uses a vocabulary associated with his screen work to illuminate his experiences in *Called to Account*: 'As far as the acting tips were concerned, it was less is more...you can still do film acting, which is a wonderful thing. I love it.' Clyde acknowledges the benefits of restraint and precision in the production and the effect it had on his performance. These experiences further explain Kent's comments such as 'no acting required'. Rather than dismissing the actors' craft, the emphasis is on scale.¹⁸⁴ James Woolley made a comparable observation when he stated 'There is a lot of emphasis on the subtleties of your answers I think.' Neither Clyde nor Woolley underestimated their creative enterprises, but rather both suggested that the scale of their portrayal was associated with a close-up on camera.

Conclusion

It is evident from the testimony of the actors in *Called to Account* that the production led to qualitatively different experiences from those encountered by the cast of *Talking to Terrorists*. The actors' articulation of their work expands and enriches the range of experience analysed in the previous case-study.

Although I have avoided homogenising the actors' processes, and a wide variety of approaches have been analysed, the vocabularies the actors used to describe their preparation and performance in *Called to Account* are more unified,

¹⁸⁴ In a paper on docudrama, John Corner noted a similar 'performative intensity' when playing a real person. This phrase is useful as it captures the concentration that the elements of restraint and precision require. John Corner, 'The Body Politic and Political Bodies' conference paper at the 'Acting with Facts' conference (University of Reading, 2 September 2010).

concrete, and less emotional than those in Stafford-Clark's production. This appears to be a result of the actors' constant emphasis on the political implications of their witnesses' testimony and the tangible resource the recording provided, which meant that their approaches were based on verbal precision, not on attempting to understand their subject on a personal level. Witnesses were seen in their professional role, not their private surroundings, and thus the testimony was composed of political contributions, rather than of personal trauma narratives. As a consequence, the actors' processes were predicated not on intangible, ethereal emotions, but rather on political allegiances, logic and verbal bravado.

The most significant difference between the two productions was the pronounced rejection of Stanislavski among the cast of *Called to Account*, and the emergence of Brecht as the more relevant theorist. In the previous chapter, the actors' use of a Stanislavski-infused vocabulary often proved a hindrance to their articulation; here, despite the similarities in training between the two casts, it was rejected almost completely. In my interviews for *Called to Account*, the two actors who mentioned Stanislavski by name did so in order to distance their work from his teaching, and the testimony of the other actors was not inspired by Stanislavski's work as we found in *Talking to Terrorists*. This appears to be a direct result of two elements: the political implications of the production, and the use of the DVD recordings.

Political Implications

Although both *Called to Account* and *Talking to Terrorists* are political, the explicitly interventionist nature of *Called to Account* meant that the actors were almost exclusively concerned with the political agendas of their subjects. To this end, the cast frequently used a vocabulary with strong Brechtian resonances. This is perhaps unsurprising given the historical context of the tribunal form. The actors' aim was to perform the testimony they had observed so as to foreground the political implications of their subjects' words. In fact, Kent adapted Brecht's methods for his own purposes: he denied the actors access to the grand narrative of the play which had the effect of alienating them and ensured they focused only on their own role. Although this montage approach is a recognisable Brechtian trope, the way in which it was achieved was Kent's own post-Brechtian reformulation. However, though Brecht is helpful at certain points, the actors did not, in fact, adopt a wholly Brechtian approach to their roles. For example, although the way in which the cast became stimulated by the politics of the play has strong overtones of the way in which Brecht politicised his actors, in *Called to Account* this was designed to increase knowledge and confidence rather than assert the actors' own role as agents of political change. Similarly, we have seen that the actors playing the lawyers may have directly appealed to the audience and, like Brecht's theatre, provoked the spectators to stay politically and critically attentive to the political arguments. However, in *Called to Account*, the foregrounding of the DVD in the cast's processes encouraged them to perform their roles as accurately and believably as possible, and thus the actors did not actively aim to interrupt the audiences' identification with the characters.

The DVD recording

It is clear from the actors' testimonies that the DVD recording was the most formative element of their preparations, and moved their work further away from a Stanislavskian rendering of the role. Considering just how important the DVD recordings were to their processes, it is noteworthy that prior to this study they have been entirely overlooked. The presence of the DVD gave the actors unprecedented access to the original specifics of their subject's testimony and resulted in an emphasis on restraint and precision. From analysing the actors' experiences, we can be quite specific with regard to the meaning of these terms. The practical considerations of precisely reproducing spoken testimony was evidently a central concern for the actors, and one not experienced by the cast of *Talking to Terrorists*. In *Called to Account*, the actors found the political intricacies of the text difficult to comprehend and learn, and were constantly aware of the legal requirements to stay close to what they had heard.

The DVD recording provoked further challenges for the actors with regard to physicality and gesture. Here, the critical concern was to avoid 'colouring' their portrayals. To this end, the emphasis on restraint took precedence over precision, as the actors adapted the physical actions of the character to further foreground their testimony. In *Talking to Terrorists*, the actors were concerned with making their characters interesting, and so, like Stanislavski's writings on 'theatrical truth', they adapted what they observed to be more dynamic on stage. Here, by contrast, the actors actively removed exuberant moments they observed on the DVD to privilege the political agenda of their subject. The analysis of the actors' work with the DVD illuminates what Kent means by 'no acting required'. Prior

to this study, the only comments about performance in the tribunal plays were from Kent and Norton-Taylor. We can now see that Kent's comment refers not to an absence of rehearsal and performance skills, but to a minimalist realism which may be more associated with film acting.

In contrast to *Talking to Terrorists*, the actors did not deem meetings with the individuals to be important. As they were working from the DVD recordings, and recreating how particular testimony was spoken, some actors were openly sceptical about meeting their subjects. The cast of *Talking to Terrorists* used their meetings with the interviewees to learn more about them; as the cast of *Called to Account* were equipped with the recorded testimony, meetings presented the danger of moving their performance away from the original specifics of the recording.

As in the *Talking to Terrorists* case-study, the processes the actors developed from the DVD recording presented problems with vocabularies. Shane Rimmer identified the 'confines' of working with the DVD, and these seem to have contributed to the departure from using Stanislavski's teaching. In comparison to *Talking to Terrorists*, the foregrounding of the DVD in the actors' processes meant that there was less capacity for invention and interpretation. These approaches appear to have been completely different from the actors' past experience and their training, and provoked them to look to other areas to find appropriate vocabularies. For example, James Woolley's comparison with his screen work was useful in illuminating the level of detail demanded in the

production. This suggests that performance practices associated with film might be a fruitful avenue for further research.

An additional problem with regard to the actors' articulation of their processes is the set of prejudices which appear to have informed their vocabularies. Despite the DVD allowing a much closer replication of the original testimony than was available to the *Talking to Terrorist* actors, it is noteworthy that the cast were reticent to use terms such as 'mimicry', 'impersonation' and 'imitation'. It is critical that these terms are reclaimed if a more helpful vocabulary is to be found. The actors clearly were using these skills, and so we need to divorce them from the negative connotations they carry to be able to fully explore exactly what they mean.

A further development we have seen in this chapter is the impact of a subject's fame upon an actor's working methods. Diane Fletcher's initial reaction that the production demanded a 'different skill' and that it was 'not acting' suggests the extent to which her experiences of playing Clare Short departed from the way in which she had worked in the past. Her perception of the audience's expectation of her portrayal clearly resulted in a forensically detailed reproduction of what she had observed in the recording. Her decision to imitate moment by moment rather than establish motivations for Short's comments represents a rejection of Stanislavski's teaching, and evidently posed new challenges for Fletcher. However, like many fellow cast members (and arguably British-trained actors generally), other vocabularies were not to hand for Fletcher to articulate these processes. As suggested in the previous chapter, although Brecht has emerged as

being (at least in part) helpful here, unlike Stanislavski, his work is not familiar to British actors. It appears that Fletcher's initial reaction that it was 'not acting' more accurately could be described as 'not Stanislavskian acting', which rendered the exigencies of Fletcher's process outside her past experiences or training. Fletcher points to a level of detailed physical work (also experienced by Siân Phillips in her portrayal of Marlene Dietrich and her work with Samuel Beckett) which is usually associated with dance and movement. It may be that research into vocabularies surrounding these disciplines may also prove productive.