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# Shock and Awe: the Theatre and Dramatic Literature of September 11th

Mollie Boliek

*Western Washington University*

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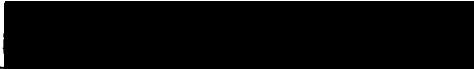
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SHOCK AND AWE:  
THE THEATRE AND DRAMATIC LITERATURE OF SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>

By  
Mollie Boliek

Accepted in Partial Completion  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

  
Moheb A. Ghali, Dean of the Graduate School  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

  
Chair, Mark Kuntz, M.F.A.

  
James Lortz, M.F.A.

  
Maureen O'Reilly, M.A., M.F.A.

MASTER'S THESIS

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SHOCK AND AWE: THE THEATRE AND DRAMATIC LITERATURE OF  
SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of  
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

By  
Mollie Boliek  
October 2010

## Abstract

How did the American theatre community respond to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and how did the response shape new dramatic works?

This thesis will examine the American theatre before and directly after the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The response to theatrical works being written and performed will be examined by reviews. Also, the political activism from theatre artists will be discussed.

The thesis will also look at the dramatic literature that was written in response to these events. With more dramatic works being written, there are categories which emerged. The categories are plays written before 9/11 with parallel themes of post 9/11 plays, remembrance, responses to the politics and policies directly after 9/11 and the Bush administration. The following plays will be used to demonstrate the three categories:

*Omnium Gatherum* by Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros

*Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* by Victoria Brittain & Gillian Slovo

*The Guys* by Anne Nelson

*Stuff Happens* by David Hare

*with Their Eyes: September 11th--The View from a High School at Ground Zero* by Annie Thoms

*Wake Up and Smell the Coffee* by Eric Bogosian

*The Women of Lockerbie* by Deborah Brevoort

*9 Parts of Desire* by Heather Raffo

Using excerpts from these scripts, the thesis will define the categories and how each plays best fit into the categories.

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*"To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public." - Theodore Roosevelt, 1918*

### Introduction

The events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, changed the world forever. The United States had not experienced an attack on U.S. soil since Pearl Harbor in 1941. New York City endured the majority of the destruction with the collapsing of the Twin Towers and Building 7 of the World Trade Center complex. The events of September 11<sup>th</sup> sent shockwaves across the world. Business in New York City came to a grinding halt, including all theatre business both on and off Broadway.

As the U.S. began to pick up the pieces of a shattered country and re-open businesses, the government was beginning to take action against this act of terrorism. Before people had time to absorb what had happened to their country and the reasons why, the government was assembling troops to launch an attack on al-Qaeda and to search for Osama bin Laden. President George W. Bush and his administration called this the "War on Terror".

Within months of the invasion on Afghanistan, many people began to speak out against the war that had begun.

As the war in Afghanistan and the search for Osama bin Laden shifted focus to a war in Iraq and putting an end to Saddam Hussein's reign, protests against the war began to become more prominent. Organizations such as Not in Our Name and Theatres Against War were created by intellectuals and artists, to speak out against the war and the government's quick shift of focus from Afghanistan to Iraq. These organizations began to hold international days of protest and evenings of performance.

Other projects grew out of these days of protests, such as Culture Project's Impact Festival and THAW's Freedom Follies. One protest was *The Lysistrata Project* created by Kathryn Blume and Sharron Bower. They "used the resources of the Internet to get more than 300,000 people from fifty nine countries to participate in the readings" (Kotzamani 103). Another protest was *What I Heard About Iraq (A Cry for 5 Voices)*, based on Eliot Weinberger's article with the same title from the *London Review of Books*. The work is a multi-media piece using verbatim speeches from government and military officials, soldiers, and civilians from the United States and Iraq.

With the protests and performance pieces beginning to take place, dramatic literature about September 11<sup>th</sup> also



began to emerge. As more works were written, categories began to take shape. In examining different dramatic works, a group of plays written before 9/11 demonstrated parallel themes to post-9/11 works. The categories are plays written before 9/11 with parallel themes of post 9/11 plays, remembrance, responses to the politics and policies directly after 9/11 and the Bush administration.

With the world changed forever, how did the American theatre community respond to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>? Also, how did the response shape new dramatic works? Which plays fall into these new categories?

The thesis will examine the American theatre directly after the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The response of shows being performed and written will be examined by reviews. Also, the political activism from theatre artists will be discussed. The following plays will be used to demonstrate the three categories of literature:

*Omnium Gatherum* by Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros  
*Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* by Victoria Brittain & Gillian Slovo  
*The Guys* by Anne Nelson  
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*Wake Up and Smell the Coffee* by Eric Bogosian  
*The Women of Lockerbie* by Deborah Brevoort  
*9 Parts of Desire* by Heather Raffo

Using excerpts of script, the thesis will define the categories and how the plays best fit in the categories.

"The city is going to survive, we are going to get through it, It's going to be very, very difficult time. I don't think we yet know the pain that we're going to feel when we find out who we lost, but the thing we have to focus on now is getting this city through this, and surviving and being stronger for it."

--Rudolph Giuliani

### America Under Attack

At 8:45 a.m. (EDT), American Airlines Flight 11 from Boston flew into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. People began to evacuate the building at 8:50. There was an evacuation called for the South Tower at 8:56. At 9:03 a.m., United Airlines 175 from Boston flew into the South Tower. Evacuation of the two buildings was a long and drawn out process. There were stairwells filled with smoke and debris. There were elevator shafts filled with fire. Even though a second plane had hit the World Trade Center, officials still believed the towers would not collapse. The South Tower fell to the ground at 10:05 a.m. The North Tower of the World Trade Center collapsed at 10:28 a.m. In less than two hours, the shape of the skyline of New York City had changed forever, along with the idea of safety from terrorism on American soil.

While the World Trade Center was being evacuated, American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon in Washington D.C. at 9:43 a.m. The plane penetrated the

three outer rings, but caused damage to all five rings. The plane crash killed the 59 passengers and crew and the 5 hijackers. Eighteen minutes after the initial impact, the Pentagon walls collapsed killing another 125 people.

At 10:10 a.m., United Airlines Flight 93 crashed in Somerset County, Pennsylvania. The flight did not reach its planned target. The people on this flight chose to fight back against the hijackers. This was concluded from the black box and phone calls to family members. The 9/11 Commission believed the hijackers crashed the plane, so that the crew and passengers could not obtain control of the aircraft.

Once the towers collapsed, rescue workers moved quickly searching for anyone alive amidst the twisted steel of the Twin Towers. This was a slow process because the surrounding debris was extremely unsafe. Only twenty people were pulled out of the wreckage alive. (see Appendix A). Genelle Guzman McMillan was the last survivor to be rescued 27 hours after the Twin Towers fell. Film director Oliver Stone, who has directed films that comment on political moments through out U.S. history, focused his film the *World Trade Center* on two workers rescued from the

debris. During the destruction, 2,948 people of 91 nationalities were killed.

The War on Terror, which includes the Afghanistan War and the second Iraq war, directly stems from these events. The war in Afghanistan initially started to try and find Osama bin Laden and members of al-Qaeda, who publicly took credit for 9/11. The war in Afghanistan began in October 2001. U.S. troops were trying to remove the Taliban government, who had links to al-Qaeda. The original target, Osama bin Laden, has still not been caught.

The imposing threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq caused us to split our forces between the two countries. In 2002-03, President George W. Bush called for disarmament of WMD's. There were no WMD's found by the U.N. inspectors. In March 2003, the U.S. announced that diplomacy failed. On March 20, 2003, the U.S. invaded Iraq. President Bush declared an end to major combat on May 1, 2003. In December 2003, Saddam Hussein was captured. He was tried for his "crimes against humanity" and convicted. Hussein was executed December 30, 2006. The war on terrorism continues to this day. The evacuation of U.S. troops from Iraq has begun. The war in Afghanistan is still being fought.

"No theater could sanely flourish until there was an umbilical connection between what was happening on the stage and what was happening in the world."

-- Kenneth Tynan

### Theatre Before & After 9/11

The economy was booming before September 11<sup>th</sup>, however, after September 11<sup>th</sup>, businesses closed trying to make sense of the chaos. The New York Stock Exchange was shut down for four trading days. Americans not only suffered emotional and safety issue, but were also forced to deal with an economy that came to a halt. This also affected the New York theatre scene. "The Alliance of Resident Theatres...estimated a \$5 million loss for 2001 as a direct result of the attacks and a \$16.3 million loss for 2002" (Fife 4). People were scared to leave their houses. In Fife's article, Douglas Aibel the Artistic Director of Vineyard Theatre stated, "the night it was announced Tom Brokaw's assistant had anthrax, we had 40 cancellations" (4).

The issue of economic turmoil was not the only problem New York theatres had to encounter. After the attacks many people did not know when it was okay to laugh again. *The David Letterman Show* was one of the first television shows

to return to regular broadcast. The show returned six days later on September 17<sup>th</sup>. Letterman delivered a heartfelt monologue from behind his desk. Theatres, on the other hand, were faced with the question: when do we start to question what happened and our feelings towards 9/11? "One might have expected that when the theatres did reopen, many would mount productions dealing directly or indirectly with recent events, but the dynamics of the American theatre did not encourage such expressions" (Carlson 4-5). During this time, audiences wanted to be entertained; many did not want theatre asking them to delve into how 9/11 could happen. The emotions and imagery were still fresh in the public's eye; the workers were still cleaning up the wreckage of the Twin Towers. Many assumed the public wanted to see light hearted pieces, such as musicals, but patrons were not purchasing tickets for any New York productions. To give Broadway the aid they had asked for and needed, "The Giuliani administration is buying 50,000 theatre tickets to help Broadway shows," (Cardwell 50). This created the "Spend Your Regards to Broadway" program. These tickets were handed out to WTC rescue workers and victims families. They were also given away to people, who could show they had spent \$500 or more in New York City shopping.

As people started to attend theatre again, there was a slow introduction of plays with vague post 9/11 themes. One of the first plays was *The Guys* by Anne Nelson. This play is about Nelson, a journalist, who befriends Nick Flanagan, a fire captain. Flanagan is in the process of writing eulogies for his fellow firemen who died in 9/11. This was the start of post 9/11 dramatic literature. *Where Do We Live* by Christopher Shinn, *Guantanamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom* by Victoria Brittain & Gillian Slovo, *Ponies* by Mike Batistick, *Recent Tragic Events* by Craig Wright and *Omnium Gatherum* by Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros are just a few of the new political plays that were written.

With the media inundating the American public with images of the War on Terror, more people felt brave enough to take a stand. New theatre pieces began to emerge about the War on Terror. This is when the organization Not in Our Name was created by artists and intellectuals from around the United States. Their mission statement is as follows:

As the Not In Our Name Pledge of Resistance states, "we believe that as people living in the United States it is our responsibility to resist the injustices done by our government, in our names." Our mission is to build, strengthen and expand resistance to stop the U.S. government's entire course of war and repression



being waged in the name of "fighting terrorism." (Not in Our Name)

As people grew more disgusted with the war, they started to hold events to speak out against it. Not in Our Name created an event called, "Evening of Conscience". Numerous actors, singers, and playwrights performed. More of these anti-war movement protests began to crop up. On December 9<sup>th</sup>, another protest occurred with more than 200 theatre artists from New York at P.S. 122, an old public school that had been turned into a performance space. At this protest, Harold Pinter's University of Turin speech was read by actress Kathleen Chalfant. Marvin Carlson, a theatre professor at City University of New York, summarizes Pinter's speech as follows:

He condemned the hypocrisy of a government that threatened war on a nation involved with weapons of mass destruction and defiance of international law when America itself possessed far more such weapons than anyone in the world and has rejected international agreements on biological and chemical weapons. (9).

At this same event, a new organization was introduced, Theatres Against War (THAW).

THAW became the driving force behind the upcoming protests. By February 2003, over a hundred theatres had joined THAW. As THAW began organizing the events for a protest on March 2, 2003, the international day of protest

was held on February 16. This was a time, when the pendulum of history could be swayed to the other side. Many people had begun to oppose the war on terror, especially since the main focus had shifted from the hunt of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan to Saddam Hussein in Iraq. "Several hundred thousand citizens in New York joined the international day of protest...among them were several thousand representatives from THAW" (Carlson 10).

New York had not seen a larger protest than the one that took place on March 2, 2003. There were many theatre companies involved such as The Living Theatre, International WOW, and the Women's Project. There were performances throughout the five boroughs opposing the now pressing war on Iraq. People were starting to take action instead of sitting idly by.

In conjunction with this day of protest, on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, *The Lysistrata Project* took place. This project, as stated before, was created by Blume and Bower. The project "invited everyone to assume responsibility in preventing war by undertaking 'a theatrical act of dissent'" (Kotzamani 103). Using the internet they spread the idea of the project. The readings did not need to be full theatrical productions. The readings were more about

getting the message out. Blume and Bower provided variations of the script, even one that was 5 minutes long to be read in an office situation. This approach "proved effective in encouraging ordinary people, worldwide to make political statements in an immediate and direct way" (Kotzamani 104). With more than 300,000 people involved, *The Lysistrata Project* was a success. Blume and Bower gave everyone a voice using one of the oldest plays of classical theatre, *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes, speaking out against war.

*What I Heard About Iraq (A Cry for 5 Voices)* was adapted for the stage by Simon Levy. The script is based on Eliot Weinberger's article from the *London Book Review* "What I Heard About Iraq". This play uses politicians, military officials and soldiers, and civilians' words verbatim to create this script. Levy continues to update the script, especially when there has been a huge shift in politics of the war. Along with the text, there is a multi-media presentation on a screen above the actors' heads. There is video footage of Colin Powell speaking to the United Nations, facts that are shown when an actor states them, and photos of the war in Iraq.

There are two female and three male actors, who create the roles of President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Barbara Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Tony Blair, and numerous military officials for both the American and Iraqi governments. The actors perform many different roles. The focus is on the words, rather than on who is the better actor.

During the last few minutes of each performance, the new totals of American soldiers' deaths, wounded, and "evacuated for other reasons" are stated. These are updated daily and the information can be found at [www.icasualties.org](http://www.icasualties.org). At the end of each performance, there is a talk back session offered for the audience to attend. The audience is encouraged to stay to discuss their opinions of what they have just viewed and help them decompress. By compiling quotes from the past nine years and combining them with the multi-media footage, this show gives a new opinion on the 'War on Terror'.

As theatres recovered from the economic hardships of 9/11, artists began to question what was happening with the War on Terror. Theatres began to see new performance pieces being created in response to what was taking place.

New dramatic literature was also being created in response to the War on Terror.

"History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again."

- Maya Angelou

### Pre-9/11 Plays with Parallel Themes to 9/11 Works

When examining the literature stemming from the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, there are a select group of plays that were written a few years before 9/11, which have corresponding themes to the literature that was being written directly after 9/11. These plays deal with themes such as acts of terrorism, prejudice and dealing with grief.

*Wake Up and Smell the Coffee* examines the terrorist act of the Oklahoma City bombing, and the fact that it was committed by an American and not someone of Arabic decent. *The Women of Lockerbie* focuses on how the community of Lockerbie, Scotland is trying to heal from the crash of the Pan Am 103 flight. Each of these plays deal with specific themes that are parallel with the events and feelings from 9/11.

Eric Bogosian's, *Wake Up and Smell the Coffee*, is a one man show created from character monologues. The monologues cover themes about climbing the corporate

ladder, religion, and pop culture. His characters include: an evangelical preacher, a movie producer trying to capitalize on a plane crash, an annoying businessman wanting every perk he can get, a "good" ol'boy, and a sycophantic actor. The monologues are sarcastic and brutally honest.

However, there is one monologue, in particular, that deals with a 9/11 theme. The monologue is titled "Arabs". The monologue is about the Oklahoma City bombing. The bombing was a terrorist attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995. The bombing was the deadliest terrorist act on American soil with 168 casualties before the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

Bogosian writes in his author's note, "the imagery in these monologues reads very differently now... I feel things now I didn't feel when I wrote those words. I know things I didn't know then" (Bogosian 6). Bogosian captures the fright we experienced the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup> with "Arabs", a monologue which is no longer used in performance.

OH MY GOD, NO! THEY JUST BLEW THAT BUILDING UP IN OKLAHOMA CITY! THAT'S THE WORST THING I EVER SEEN IN MY LIFE! HUNDREDES OF PEOPLE KILLED! LITTLE CHILDREN! WHO COULD A DONE SOMETHING LIKE THAT? MUST A BEEN ONE OF THOSE ARAB TERRORISTS! (Bogosian 22).

This monologue parallels the feelings of what people were experiencing on the morning of 9/11. As Americans watched the news coverage, many, who were interviewed, expressed shock about what had happened

The monologue turns into a news report stating, "A dark day dawns on this American city this morning. A city in mourning...this morning. What forces seek to disrupt our cherished American beliefs of love, peace, and justice?" (Bogosian 23). Many were asking similar questions the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, as they sat watching the media coverage.

*The Women of Lockerbie*, by Deborah Brevoort, was written in 1998 during a playwriting residency. The play is about a couple searching for the remains of their son, who was killed in the crash of Pan Am 103, in Lockerbie, Scotland. Madeline is searching the hills of Lockerbie for any piece of clothing or remnant of her son, Adam. Her husband, Bill, who has been forced to push his grief aside, chases her through the hills. The couple is befriended by Olive Allison, the spokesperson for the women of Lockerbie. The women, who also lost loved ones, are pushing the American government to release the articles found at the



plane crash to them. They want to wash the articles of clothing and return them to the victims' families. However, George Jones, a representative of the American government, will not release the clothes due to regulations stating they cannot release contaminated clothes. He informs the women that the clothes will be burned in the morning. As the evening progresses, we see how the plane crash has destroyed Madeline and Bill's relationship, but brought the people of Lockerbie together.

With morning fast approaching, the women plead once more with Jones to release the clothes. He denies them for the last time stating the burning of the clothes will take place as soon as the trucks of fuel arrive. Olive and the others decide the only way to save the clothes is to break into the warehouse and take the clothes. The women arrive at the warehouse to be stopped by George. Unexpectedly, Madeline shows up at the warehouse's locked gates and begins to wail. The other women begin to wail with her. Finally, Jones gives into the women and opens the gates. The women retrieve the clothes from the "Shelves of Sorrow". However, Madeline still cannot find Adam's belongings. She is overcome by emotion herself and runs to the hills. The women bring the clothes to the stream to

wash them. George comes to the hills to bring Madeline and Bill their son's suitcase, which was unharmed in the crash. With the suitcase in their possession, they begin to start to heal themselves and their relationship. When Olive opens the bag to wash the first article of clothing, she cannot do it. Madeline takes the clothes out of the bag and hands a piece to each woman. The last image of the play is the women cleaning the clothes in the stream.

When the play first begins, the audience sees a striking resemblance to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the aftermath. The burning of the victims clothes is the first connection to 9/11.

Woman 2. Olive...He's going to burn the clothes.

Olive. *Burn the clothes!?*

Woman 1. Yes

Woman 2. Everything on the Shelves of Sorrow will be incinerated at dawn.

Olive. I was afraid something like this was going to happen.

Woman 2. Now that the investigation is over and the evidence has been collected against the terrorists, they're going to burn the clothing of the victims. (Brevoort 16).

The clothing parallels with the steel from the twin towers. Many people were upset, when the remains of the buildings were sent to salvage yards in New Jersey. They thought the American government was turning a blind eye to what had happened in New York, and instead, focusing on a war.

Another correlation between *The Women of Lockerbie* and September 11<sup>th</sup> is the discussion of the cleanup the women have with George. George believes what he is doing is best for these women. He states, "I have a responsibility here. A responsibility here to reduce the trauma that has already come to this community and to look out for its welfare. For your welfare" (Brevoort 75-76). He continues with, "They're covered in *blood*. A lot of blood. Blood from 270 people. And that's not all. There are guts on those clothes. *Guts*." (Brevoort 76).

Jones' words are similar to those of former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, when he was discussing the hope for finding any more survivors, "I believe that it is certainly time to say that the chances of finding anyone would now involve a miracle. And miracles have happened. But we should not -- it would be unfair to offer any kind of broad hope to people." (Cooper B9). Giuliani is not as vulgar about moving on from the trauma, but does say it is time to realize that there will more than likely be no more bodies found. However, the women respond with:

Woman 2. The things we have *touch*ed are worse, too. Mr. Jones... I picked up *body parts*.

Woman 1. I did too. I found a woman's hand and a child's leg in my garden. I picked them up with my own two hands and carried them down to the morgue. (Brevoort 77).

The women's are like the rescue workers, who picked up the body parts of the victims, and the operating engineers, who cleared out Ground Zero. "The smell has crept into the workers' clothes, and the place has invaded their dreams" (Le Duff 1B.1). These two groups tried to help Americans heal by finding lost loved ones and cleaning up the wreckage at Ground Zero.

*The Women of Lockerbie* is a strong example of a pre-9/11 play that has themes of 9/11 works. The play demonstrates how a community can band together after a catastrophic event like the plane crash of Pan Am 103. The play also shows how if there is no resolution that it is hard for the families to heal and move on. These two points correspond with the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Before the 11<sup>th</sup>, the country seemed disconnected; however, within minutes of the planes crashing into the North and South towers, the American spirit was extremely prevalent. Many families found it hard to accept that a loved one had been killed because there were no remains to bury.

The fact that two plays written so close to events of 9/11, and the themes fit so perfectly to what Americans were thinking is shocking. Bogosian capturing the anger American's felt during the time period. Brevoort examines

a city's grief over a tragedy. Each play is a true 9/11  
piece.

"Time is passing. Yet, for the United States of America, there will be no forgetting September the 11th. We will remember every rescuer who died in honor. We will remember every family that lives in grief. We will remember the fire and ash, the last phone calls, the funerals of the children."

- President George W. Bush, November 11, 2001

### Plays of Remembrance

The attacks on America left 2,974 people dead, not including the 19 hijackers, with an additional 24 people still missing. These victims were taken suddenly with only a few able to place phone calls to loved ones to say a quick goodbye. *The Guys, with Their Eyes: September 11th--The View from a High School at Ground Zero*, and *9 Parts of Desire* examine the contemporary world from three very different viewpoints. *The Guys* is about a fire captain, who asks a writer to help him write the eulogies for his fallen colleagues. *With Their Eyes: September 11th--The View from a High School at Ground Zero* is told through the eyes of high school students, who experienced the tragedy of 9/11 in their school's backyard. *9 Parts of Desire* gives an account of remembrance from an Iraqi woman's point of view. Each of these plays gives interesting perspectives on the many different sides of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

*The Guys* by Anne Nelson is based on her experience of working with a fire captain, Nick Flanagan, who needed help

composing eulogies for his fallen men. Nelson met with Flanagan just a few days before the first funeral for which he was to give the eulogy. In one day, Nelson, her brother-in-law Burk, and Flanagan wrote the eulogies he needed. Nelson kept in contact with Flanagan and continued to write eulogies for him.

During a benefit dinner for her husband's organization, Nelson met Jim Simpson, artistic director for the Flea Theatre. The Flea Theatre had been struggling since 9/11 and was looking for a new work to produce. Simpson encouraged Nelson to turn her notes from the eulogies into a play in response to the need for reflection. Once she sent her rough draft to Simpson, he asked if he could produce it. Nelson was taken more aback, when Jim asked if she would have an objection to his wife, Sigourney Weaver, playing the role of the editor. "*The Guys* premiered as a workshop production at the Flea Theater in New York with Sigourney Weaver and Bill Murray. It opened on Tuesday, December 4, 2001, twelve weeks to the day after the World Trade Center attack" (Nelson xxv).

As the play opens, we meet Joan talking about, "New York. My beautiful, gleaming, wounded city," (Nelson 3). She then asks, "'Where were you September eleventh?'

Question of the year." (Nelson 4). This is a question that has replaced the token history question of the past, "Where were you when John F. Kennedy was killed?"

In writing the eulogies, Nick is truly worried that he cannot give his men the memorial they truly deserve.

I been sitting down in front of a piece of paper all day, and I haven't been able to write one sentence...I mean, I'm no writer under normal circumstances. But now...What can I tell the families? What am I going to say? (Nelson 9)

There were many fire and police captains that chose to give eulogies for men and women they lost in the collapse of the Twin Towers. The funerals were not only for the "everyday" fireman and policeman that were laid to rest.

At funerals in Farmingdale, N.Y., Queens and Manhattan, the three -- Chief of Department Peter J. Ganci Jr., First Deputy Commissioner William M. Feehan and the Rev. Mychal F. Judge -- were mourned, honored and laid to rest. (McFadden 1).

These men were laid to rest on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September. Many families did not want to have services until they found a body. Firefighter Lt. Mike Pena of Rescue 1 stated, "With this job, you lose firefighters...I worked Father's Day when we lost three firefighters, but this, this is --No, no, nobody's lost yet. Nobody's lost yet." (Jones A20). Nick also discusses this with Joan.



Some of the families, they're still waiting, they say they're going to find them alive in some air pocket or something. But the other families, they say no, they're gone. They want to go ahead and have the service. But they don't have bodies. (Nelson 9-10)

Watching the Twin Towers fall with their men inside, it was very hard for the families to give up hope, when there was no physical proof that their loved ones were not alive.

As Nick describes his fallen colleagues, he has a hard time coming up with the right words. "This hero stuff, like they were some guys in a movie. But Bill - he wasn't like that. He was just an ordinary guy. A schmo." (Nelson 12.) Throughout the media coverage, we saw the media put these men and women on a pedestal. The firefighters continually tried to explain they were just doing their job and trying to help. As the play continues, the audience views these ordinary men through Nick's eyes: Bill, the fatherly type, Jimmy, the "probie", Patrick, the old timer, and Dave and Barney, the two pranksters.

At the end of the play, Joan asks the question that many Americans want the answer to, "When do we go back to normal?" (Nelson 56). The response she receives, "Yes, we'll go back to normal. But normal will be different.

This is the new normal" (Nelson 56). With terror plots being exposed frequently across the world and the on-going fight to keep America safe, people are living in this new normal.

*with their eyes: September 11th--The View from a High School at Ground Zero* was created by the students of Stuyvesant High School, located four blocks north of the World Trade Center. Many students watched as the two planes flew into the Twin Towers. The FBI and the Secret Service set up a command center and triage area in the building. As the day progressed, the students and staff were evacuated from the building. They walked in small groups peeling off once they reached their own house or house of a friend.

Annie Thoms, faculty adviser for the Stuyvesant Theater Program, found it hard to be cut off from her students the days following the attack. Stuyvesant High School remained closed to students. Thoms's neighbor informed her there were websites Stuyvesant students were using to communicate with each other and post their thoughts about what had happened. After reading their postings, Thoms had an idea. She was familiar with Anna

Deavere Smith's work. Smith, who created *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight: Los Angeles*, interviews different people and takes their words, voice, and gestures to create a performance. Thoms decided to use this technique to create the winter show at Stuyvesant. She used a student director, Ilena George, and two student producers, Lindsay Long-Waldor and Michael Vogel, and a cast of 10 students (see Appendix C) to develop the show. Thoms ensured that the students were a mix of grades and ethnicity.

The students set out to create a list of students to interview. Thoms, again, ensured there was a broad representation of students and faculty interviewed. The group also decided not to just focus on September 11<sup>th</sup>, but the days, weeks and months after. The interviewers did not ask the same questions,

Because we wanted to elicit stories about a variety of subjects, the actors did not ask all their interviewees the same questions, though there were common ones: Where were you on September 11<sup>th</sup>, and what did you see? Have we gotten back to normal? What's "normal" to you? What do you think we need to talk about? (Thoms 5-6)

After the interviews, the students with the help of Thoms and George edited their "transcripts into poem-monologues" (Thoms 6).

Once the monologues were constructed, the group began their rehearsals. It was the first time that everyone heard the finished script. Each actor had begun to study the vocal pattern of the person, whose story they would tell. The monologues were beginning to take shape. Thoms, influenced by Smith's work, pushed for portrayal versus caricature. Staging was simple.

All ten actors remained onstage at all times, changing costume in front of the audience. In the staging, as in the monologues themselves, we tried to avoid being cheesy or maudlin, to avoid tear-jerking moments or empty displays of patriotism and unity. (Thoms 9)

*with their eyes* was performed on February 8 and 9, 2002.

In the printed script's foreword, Anna Deavere Smith praised the students of Stuyvesant High School.

Some went to volunteer for the Red Cross, others took care of their friends, and some tried to give blood. But these students did something more, and something that most of the nation has yet to do, even now, eight months later. They immediately started to create history, and they immediately started to create art. (Smith xi -xii).

These students were trying to capture the world that was swirling around them in disarray. History is constantly in the making. "This particular history is written not just with the eyes, but with the ears and the bodies of these young students" (Smith xiii).

The play starts with the *Overture*, which gives the audience a brief glimpse of what the students and the faculty saw the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>. Jennifer Suri, the assistant principal for Stuyvesant, remembers:

There were students who came into my office to use the phone  
to touch base with their parents  
to see if they were okay...  
and there were actually many of them crowded into my room and the electricity went out momentarily and the lights started flickering and everyone screamed and dropped to the floor, frightened.  
And I just tried to comfort them. (Thoms 26)

This monologue captures the fear many were feeling.

In one hour and forty-three minutes, American citizens knew they were under attack, but to not know what would happen or who was behind it, was too much for some to bear.

Ilya Feldsherov remembers:

I saw my friend, one of my best friends, Julia, she's one of best friends from freshman year and she was - she was just shaking.  
And I just held her.  
And we were all like not saying anything,  
We were all just standing there,  
thinking like *oh my god!* (Thoms 36)

The students rescued each other, when the world was falling down around them.

Many can empathize with the people, who lived with the terror in their backyard. However, many did not think about the many Muslims on that day. Unfortunately, many

thought Muslim was equal to terrorist and had a hard time choosing to believe otherwise.

Mohammed Haque was worried about his family.

Fearing for your safety  
or more for the safety  
of my mother  
who covers her hair  
or of my sister or my father  
worrying for their safety  
from ignorant people  
who would do something to them  
because they're Muslim..  
but I was personally worried  
about the safety of -  
of my family members  
because of the backlash against Muslim Americans  
and the fact that someone  
who doesn't know what they're doing  
or someone who is  
extremely angry  
decides to take their anger out  
on a member of my family. (Thoms 211).

Haque's concerns were valid. "The federal government reported a seventeen-fold increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes, from twenty-eight in 2000 to 481 in 2001" (Schevitz A1).

The script ebbs and flows with the tragedy of that day, to the kindness and out pouring support of others, to the realization that we may never be normal again. There are stories from students, teachers, and staff of the school. In their own unique way, they captured several emotions people were feeling.

*9 Parts of Desire* was created by Heather Raffo.

Instead of hearing about the attacks on the World Trade Center or the politics of the Bush administration, we are given the chance to enter into an unknown world to most of Americans. We are brought into a world of Saddam and war. Like *with their eyes*, Raffo takes the words of Iraqi women and turns them into a poetic story. However, Raffo did not conduct formal interviews with these interesting women, but:

a process of spending time together living, eating, communicating compassionately, and loving on such a level that when I parted from their homes it was clear to all that we were now family. (Raffo x)

These women from young to old, rich to poor, or living in Iraq or not tell their emotional stories.

All 9 women are portrayed by one actor. The woman uses an *abaya*, a black robe like garment, wrapped differently to distinguish each character. Each woman tells their story simply at first, but as the story continues the "characters" begin to interrupt each other, "driving the play toward a psychic civil war with the solo performer embodying the larger argument of what liberation means for each woman and for Iraq" (Raffo 69).

*9 Parts* begins with Islamic call to prayer, also known as *Adhan*, and is heard throughout the play. The prayer is

heard five times throughout the day: at dawn, midday, in the afternoon, sunset, and when the sky is dark and daytime is over.

Loyal, an artist tells a horrifying story of the evil that lurked in Saddam Hussein's family.

I did a painting once of a woman  
eaten by Saddam's son  
that's how I describe it.  
A beautiful young student, from University of Baghdad-  
Uday he asked her out, and she couldn't refuse,  
he took her and beat her brutally, like is his way-  
and she went back to campus and  
her roommate saw the bruises and things and asked her  
"What happened?"  
And she so stupid, innocent girl told her the truth.  
Why she talks such things?  
Iraqis they know not to open their mouth not even for  
the dentist.  
Of course Uday, he took her back  
with his friends, they  
stripped her  
covered her in honey  
and watched his Dobermans eat her. (Raffo 8)

There are numerous reports of Iraqis telling of family members mysteriously disappearing never to return again, held in prison for no reason, or using poison gas to attack Halabja.

In Susan B. Glasser's article for *The Washington Post*, she writes of numerous tales of abuse towards prisoners:

Anwar Abdul Razak said both his ears were cut off.  
Saad Abdul Wahab said his jailers placed electrodes on his navel to administer shocks. Nabil Abdul Ali said his shoulders were dislocated and an electric wire was



wrapped around his genitals and attached to a hand-cranked machine. Zuhair Kubba said he was hung upside down and beaten with an iron rod (A1).

Loyal's story of a woman being eaten by Uday's dogs is hard to believe, however, the story is an account of what some have gone through. These stories of the abuse should be heard, as to commemorate those people who suffered during Saddam's regime.

The Doctor shows us a different side of the war. She turns the mirror on Americans showing the effects our depleted uranium (DU) tipped bullets are having on their children.

And the cancers la, I've never seen them before in Iraq, girls of seven, eight years old with breast cancer...But it's toddlers even with breast cancer, more than one cancer in the same patient, whole families all suffering from cancer - (Raffo 21)

DU is "a byproduct of the uranium enrichment process of nuclear weapons production from which uranium's most radioactive isotope, U235, is recovered for re-use in new fuel rods," Dr. Hassan states in the article "An Arab-American Priest, Depleted Uranium, and Iraq" (Hirschfield 29). The Doctor's monologue raises the question, "Why are we using DU, if it has these effects on human beings?"

Raffo's *Iraqi Girl* shows us what it is like to grow up with your culture mixing with another culture that is the complete opposite of yours.

On TVs, on *Oprah*, I saw people  
They have so many hard lives, at first we feel bad for  
them  
but always by some miracles their things get better!  
(Raffo 25).

With the help of media, the Western ideal has been imposed on the world. Little girls want to be the 'famous, skinny actress', even though being skinny is not a part of their culture. Little boys grow up wanting to be the next 'all-star athlete'. The juxtaposition to these ideals is watching your family be afraid of American soldiers because they do not speak English or being afraid that you will be kidnapped, when you leave your house. Iraqi children are forced to deal with competing ideals from their country and from the West, when deciding who they are.

*9 Parts of Desire* lets us see the many sides of an Iraqi woman. The play shows us a side that many Americans do not get to see in our mainstream media. Different parts of the characters lives from child to young adult to middle aged woman to an elderly woman, we can see the how Hussein or Western society has shaped them.

*The Guys, with their eyes: September 11th--The View from a High School at Ground Zero, and 9 Parts of Desire* exemplify plays of remembrance. From the fire captain remembering his crew to the students whose school was a command center, the audience is given a glimpse into those whose lives were uprooted during September 11<sup>th</sup> and the days after. They are also given the rare glimpse into the lives of Iraqi women. The audience sees women who are secretly choosing themselves and their families over Hussein's regime or the War on Terror that is being fought on their doorstep. These plays capture three different faces of why September 11<sup>th</sup> should be remembered.

"All of us have heard this term 'preventive war' since the earliest days of Hitler. In this day and time...I don't believe there is such a thing; and frankly I wouldn't even listen to anyone seriously that came in and talked about such a thing."

-- Dwight Eisenhower

### Political Plays

With the sudden shift from searching for Osama bin Laden to stopping Hussein's reign in Iraq, people started to question what was happening in the world. Plays with a political message began to emerge. Playwrights used actual quotations from politicians and military people to create plays. Three examples of this are: *What I Heard About Iraq, Stuff Happens*, and *Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'*. *What I Heard About Iraq*, as stated before, uses words from politicians, military officials and soldiers, and civilians verbatim to create a multi-media production. This play does present a biased view supporting the left side of politics. *Stuff Happens*, written by David Hare, is titled after Donald Rumsfeld's remark about the looting of Baghdad after Hussein's fall. Hare scrutinizes the political lead up to the invasion of Iraq. *Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* examines if the "war on terror" is accomplishing what it set out to do or if we are

compromising our values. *Guantanamo* uses spoken evidence from the detainees and their families interwoven with political debates and opinions.

One other play that will be examined in this category is *Omnium Gatherum* by Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros. This play showcases both the conservative and liberal political views. *Omnium Gatherum* is not based on actual quotations, but explores the ideas following the events of 9/11. Each of these plays looks at different pieces of the political puzzle that are still occurring today.

*Stuff Happens* by David Hare follows the events leading up to the war in Iraq. With a script that flows from time and place freely and 44 character roles, Hare keeps the reader or audience member engaged with heavy political themes. The play starts with the quote that gave the play its basis.

Journalist: What's your response, sir? Mr. Secretary, how do you respond to the news of looting and pillage in Baghdad?

Rumsfeld: I've seen the pictures. I've seen those pictures. I could take pictures in any city in America. Think what's happened in our cities when we've had riots, and problems, and looting. Stuff happens!  
(Hare 3).

Hare took Rumsfeld's quote and turned it into a look behind the scenes at the Bush administration. Hare used verbatim quotes, press conferences, and meetings, along with fictionalized meetings to create the political piece.

In a closed meeting after 9/11, we see Bush discussing Afghanistan with other members of his cabinet. Bush states, "I tell you how I see Afghanistan. I see it as a 'demonstration model'" (Hare 19). Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz elaborate on the 'demonstration model' idea.

Rumsfeld: My conclusion was we should take any action necessary to dissuade nations from challenging American interests. Top of that list was Iraq.

Wolfowitz: We're talking a corrupt dictatorship, run by a man who oppresses his own people and thumbs his nose at American power. We're talking about going in and establishing democracy...For a minimum expenditure of effort, we can get maximum result. Take out Saddam and we blow fresh air into the Middle East. (Hare 20-21).

This meeting is the beginning of a war that is still being fought today. A democratic government has been established since 2005. There are still bombings from the insurgents and American troops are still there. Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz believed it would take little effort to complete this job, unfortunately, changing a government takes time.

Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, supported the U.S., when we were attacked, "This is not a battle between the United States of America and terrorism, but between the free and democratic world and terrorism" (Hare 18). As the play progresses, he starts to question Bush and his administration's tactics:

Blair: We're both - you and I both - look, it's clear - capturing bin Laden has tremendous significance...

Bush: That could be.

Blair. Tremendous impact. And in the world as it is, the British arm capturing him would not ring the same bells as if you had caught him. I accept that.

I don't want to labour this

Bush: You're not labouring it, Tony. You're making a point. We don't ever not hear you.

Blair: As of December 11<sup>th</sup>, bin Laden has gone off the map. Intelligence has lost him. In the time between when we were ordered to withdraw and you going in, bin Laden escaped.

Bush: Yes. Thank you for raising that, Tony. What other matters are you thinking to raise? (Hare 30).

Hare raises some interesting points, which have been part of some conspiracy theories. Did the British know where Osama bin Laden was? Did Bush give the order for the British military to let bin Laden go? Did Bush go after Saddam Hussein to "finish" his father's war? The questions may never be answered.

Colin Powell was President Bush's Secretary of State during his first term. Powell is a military officer who

begun his career in 1958. Powell served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the first Gulf War. He supported the first war because Hussein was occupying Kuwait at the time. However, following the months after 9/11 he believed that in order to invade Iraq the U.S. needed to have the U.N.'s backing:

It's about being effective. And the present policy of being as high-handed as possible with as many countries as possible is profoundly counter-productive. It won't work... People keep asking, how do we know he's got weapons of mass destruction? How do we know...It would be great to say we could invade Iraq unilaterally. Except we can't...We need a coalition. And if that takes time, amen. And the only place to do it is at the U.N. (Hare 53-54)

Fortunately, the administration chose to go to the U.N. However, they wanted to put a spin on the situation. Cheney called it, "Crisis at the UN" (Hare 55). The U.N. responded to the call to action. The U.N. sent Hans Blix to investigate Iraq's possible production of WMD's.

As the play goes on, we are let into the situation that Powell's hands are tied. He is being attacked by the administration, the French, and the media.

What is this? What the hell is this? I've got a bunch of right-wing nutcases in the White House, I've got the treacherous French in the Security Council. I'm standing in the fucking road! And the shit is all flowing one way! We had an agreement! I thought we had an agreement! (Hare 97).



Through the last couple of pages, it is clear Powell is on his own in both the Security Council and the Bush administration. The Council calls for Blix to finish the inspection, and the administration is calling for war. On February 5<sup>th</sup>, Powell gives a presentation to the U.N. stating there is an 'imminent threat'. The Council and people began to call for the inspections to be complete. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. invaded Iraq. Although Powell did not agree with the basis of the invasion of Iraq, he supported it publicly.

*Stuff Happens* analyzes the events that occurred leading up to the second Gulf War. Like *What I Heard About Iraq*, *Stuff Happens* uses verbatim quotes to help form the script. Plays using this technique are becoming more prominent due to the wars continuing, and people forgetting what was said two, three, or four years ago. These plays help bring the politics from the past few years together, so audience members can see what has been stated by the administration, the military, and civilians.

*Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* by Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo examines the British detainees, who are held at the U.S. naval base without due process. These men, who were caught at the wrong place at

the wrong time, are believed to be enemy combatants. The story is interwoven with interviews of the detainees and their families, letters from the detainees, political opinion and question and answer sessions from press conferences. However, "numerous attempts were made to get the viewpoint of members of the government (both in the Lords and the Commons for this play, but no one was prepared to be interviewed" (Brittain & Slovo 3).

The play reads more like an episode of a television news reel starting from the detainees' whereabouts shortly after 9/11 to their lives at Guantanamo Bay. Each detainee set out with good intentions to make the world a better place. Wahab and Bisher Al-Rawi, brothers, wanted to produce oil. They chose to try this in the country of Ghana, as Wahab states:

[My idea was] we buy the peanuts from the farmers. We process it. We produce cooking oil, which we sell back to the farmer and the by-product is animal feed which you can use to raise chicken or beef or whatever. So, everything is produced on the ground and everything is sold on the ground. And it is very, very profitable. (Brittain & Solo 10).

Mr. Begg talks about his son, Moazzam, who wished to start a school in Afghanistan.

He somehow, had it in his mind that the Afghan people are the people in the world who most deprived. He talked to me about it. He said: 'I want to go and

start some educational institutions there'. (Brittain & Solo 12).

Each person had good intentions for the country they went to; however, with the war on terror escalating any act of kindness could be a cover-up for suspicious behavior.

All three men had been interrogated before by people in the area. When Moazzam was first interrogated, he was at home in England. Some neighbors believed there were suspicious acts taking place in Moazzam's shop. The suspicious acts were actually the Islamic Call to Prayer. He chose to close his windows for privacy and to keep his neighbors from feeling uncomfortable. Mr. Begg recalls,

[The police] said that [Moazzam] must be having some connections with Taliban or somebody. He said: 'I don't, I don't know what you are talking about'. They raided his house. They couldn't get anything, nothing at all, but they were after his computer...Moazaam said: 'There is no code in computer - whatever is there is there and you can check it. You are [the] experts have it checked.'...[So] they took him to court, I mean to the police station, questioned him and immediately released, and afterwards they apologised. (Brittain & Slovo 11).

Moazzam was living his life; however, all Muslims considered to be involved in a "suspicious" act were watched by the government the days following 9/11.

Wahab and Bisher Al-Rawi were detained in Ghana due to Bisher being Muslim and his having a friendship with Abu Qatada. Qatada is a radical cleric that was wanted by the

British government in December 2001. Bisher "also in 1998 he did a pilot's license to fly small light helicopters, little two/four seater things, it's hardly 737s," Mark Jennings, a case worker for Ed Davey states in the play. Bisher was held for a continuous 40 days, and then due to Ghana's laws of no more than 40 continuous days of being held, transported to a jail at Bagram Air Force base in Afghanistan.

Moazzam had told his father he was escorted by two Americans and two Pakistanis. Mr. Begg tried to find his son, "I used my resources, whatever we have in Pakistan in army" (Brittain & Slovo 25). He could not locate his son or even find out if he was dead. "They said that Moazzam is not here; he must be either as you say kidnapped by local Patans or [he] is with Americans" (Brittain & Slovo 25). For a parent an immense fear is not being able to find their child and could be too much for one to bear.

*Omnium Gatherum* by Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros compared to the other plays in this category is fictional. The play examines the many different viewpoints that were prevalent after 9/11. Suzie, a Martha Stewart type, is hosting the "perfect" dinner party. The food and dinner table is immaculate. Each guest has a

different viewpoint on politics and life: Roger, the Tom Clancy type novelist; Terrence, the well educated Brit; Julia, the African-American minister; Lydia, the left wing vegan; Jeff, a New York City firefighter, and Khalid, a Muslim and Professor of Middle East Studies. With any dinner conversation, no topic is off limits. With each course of food and more wine, the political debates and discussions about life become more an attack on each other. Once everyone has relaxed and is enjoying each other for which they are, Suzie introduces the final guest, Mohammed. Mohammed was one of the terrorists, who flew a plane into the World Trade Center. This sends everyone into an uproar because they do not trust him. As Mohammed tries to defend what he did, the argument becomes heated, and he lunges at Roger with a fork. A fight ensues and Mohammed is tied to a chair. Eventually, everything is discussed and Mohammed is untied. At the end of the play, it is revealed that Jeff and Mohammed are dead. The audience is left to assume that the other dinner guests are also dead.

Rebeck and Gersten-Vassilaros capture both sides of the political debate with *Omnium Gatherum*. From the beginning, everything is under attack:

Suzie: Yes, please, unleash the elixir! I was feeling so badly after the attacks I bid on two cases of this stuff.

Khalid: Another example of the unquestioning American drive for acquisition.

Roger: Don't knock capitalism. That's the only way this country will recover. Get the money flowing. Create wealth.

(Rebeck & Gersten-Vassilaros 12)

Roger's sentiment is very true for Americans after 9/11.

We needed to put money into our economy, especially in New York City's, but people wanted to hold on to their money.

Officials in the tourism industry are unnerved, too. They know the disaster site is the sole reason many of these people visit New York, but they dare not market the city that way. Advertisers are squeamish about making pitches to the growing numbers of tourists at ground zero, urging them to spend money once they are here. (Saulny B1)

New York's tourism needed an economy boost to ensure businesses they would be around for another year.

Stereotypes were a hot topic after 9/11. People made assumptions about Muslims being terrorists and terrorists being Muslims. This caused many debates because we did not want to alienate a group of people. Roger stereotypes Muslims through most of the play, "You think those Mullahs over there developing nuclear bombs and biological who-knows-what are looking for meaning? (Rebeck & Gersten-Vassilaros 24).

*Omnium Gatherum* gives a new perspective that has not been seen in the previous scripts, the character of a Muslim terrorist. Mohammed is the surprise guest of the evening. He confronts everyone with the idea of the U.S. being the first terrorists.

U.S.A., the first terrorist in the history of mankind. You drop an atomic bomb which killed hundreds of thousands of women and children, kill them by burning them to death. You dropped the atomic bomb! Nobody else. In every single war you go to, you kill civilians and innocent people, not soldiers. And you go to wars more than any other country in history. Including the massacre of your own Native Peoples. I'm a terrorist? I only support terrorism so long as it's against the United States government, and against Israel, because you are more than terrorists, you are butchers and liars and hypocrites. (Rebeck & Gersten-Vassilaros 61).

Mohammed holds the mirror for the U.S., a world power, to see exactly how they obtained this country and treated other countries throughout history. The U.S. may hide behind the guise of war for some of the atrocities they have caused; however, this does not make what they did right.

At the end of the play, Jeff tells us what he saw on the morning of September 11<sup>th</sup>:

...We knew it was bad. You could see, we're in the engine shooting down Flatbush, watching the smoke pouring out of the tower, someone says Jesus God, there's another one. Watching the second plane hit. Running into the buildings. People, falling, raining

from the sky. I never saw that before. None of us did. (Rebeck & Gersten-Vassilaros 70).

Many had not seen something so horrific, except maybe the few living survivors of World War II. The images of the planes crashing into the towers, of the people jumping, and of the buildings collapsing have been seared into our minds forever.

*Omnium Gatherum* captures both the love of debate and food perfectly. The debate is well rounded, and the food eaten throughout the play is wonderful. This play shows us that despite our many differences, we should embrace those differences to make us a richer community.

When the world was ready to analyze what happened with the events of 9/11 and the wars following, theatre began to see an influx of political plays. *Stuff Happens* and *Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* use quotes from military and government officials and detainees to recreate the world after 9/11. With *Omnium Gatherum*, although complete fiction, the playwrights demonstrate the perceptions of many after the events of 9/11. Political plays can walk a fine line between thought-provoking and preachy. *Stuff Happens*, *Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'*, and *Omnium Gatherum* are able to address questions the audience need to have answered.



"I suggest that if you know history, then you might not be so easily fooled by the government when it tells you you must go to war for this or that reason -- that history is a protective armor against being misled."

- Howard Zinn

### Conclusion

When a tragedy strikes, a community must learn to cope. September 11<sup>th</sup> was an event that pushed America to the edge. Theatre is one way we have coped with the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

Theatre also gave us plays that have parallel themes to the events of 9/11, but were written before that day. Bogosian's *Wake Up and Smell the Coffee* grasps the anger Americans were feeling after the attacks in New York and Washington D.C. *The Women of Lockerbie* shows how a community will pull together, instead of break apart during a catastrophic event. The world saw this on 9/11. Men and women helping each other survive.

Theatre gave people a venue to heal their wounds after 9/11. Through plays of remembrance, we are given the chance to remember the spirit of New York's Bravest. Anne Nelson's *The Guys* shows the grace Nick Flanagan demonstrated, even when his emotions had been pushed to the limit. The students of Stuyvesant High School created *with*

their eyes. A piece capturing the viewpoint of an age group, who often times, are glanced over, when discussing heavy subject matter. *9 Parts of Desire* gives the audience a glimpse into the lives of Iraqi women and how their lives have been affected by Hussein's reign and fall.

Theatre also gives us the venue to speak out against our government. Political plays have been around since the Greeks. There is now a surge of plays using speeches and debates verbatim to show the audience what has happened in the last few years. *Stuff Happens, Guantanamo, and What I Heard About Iraq* has gained more popularity as the wars continued.

As the politics surrounding the war continue to change, there are sub-categories emerging within the categories of 9/11 plays. *Welcome Home Dean Charbonneau* by Adam Rapp focuses on a son coming back from war, and the family realizes he is not the same person. *Yankee Tavern* by Steven Dietz examines the conspiracy theories that have surrounded 9/11. New works in theatre continue to comment on the events and politics of 9/11.

The U.S. will never forget the events of 9/11. The events have changed the course of history. With these plays, the heroes of the day will continue to be

remembered. With these plays, people will continue to question the politics surrounding 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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## Appendix A

There are twenty people, including New York City firefighters, Port Authority Policemen, and civilians, who survived the collapse of the Twin Towers.

Lieutenant James McGlynn (Engine 39)

Firefighter Mickey Kross (Engine Company 16)

Battalion Chief Rich Picciotto (11th Battalion)

Firefighter Billy Butler (Ladder 6)

Firefighter Tommy Falco (Ladder 6)

Captain Jay Jonas (Ladder 6)

Firefighter Rob Bacon (Engine 39)

Firefighter Jeff Coniglio (Engine 39)

Firefighter Jim Efthimiades (Engine 39)

Officer Dave Lim (Port Authority Police)

Firefighter Michael Meldrum (Ladder 6)

Firefighter Sal D'Agostino (Ladder 6)

Firefighter Matt Komorowski (Ladder 6)

John McLoughlin (Port Authority Police)

Will Jimeno (Port Authority Police)

Josephine Harris (civilian)

Tom Canavan (civilian)

Pasquale Buzzelli (civilian)

Genelle Guzman McMillan (civilian)

\*\*Dennis Smith's Report From Ground Zero: The Story of Rescue Efforts at the World Trade Center

Appendix B

Cast list:

*with their eyes: September 11th--The View from a High  
School at Ground Zero*

Taresh Batra as Katie Berringer and Mohammad Haque

Anna Belc as Katherine Fletcher and Mira Rapp-Hooper

Marcel Briones as Juan Carlos Lopez, Hector Perez, and  
Haydee Sanabria

Catherine Choy as Ilya Feldsherov, Owen Cornwall, and  
Jennifer Suri

Tim Drinan as Max Wilens, Anonymous man in coffee shop, and  
Tony Qian

Shanleigh Jalea as Aleiya Gafar, Matt Plazzo, and Jukay Hsu

Liz O'Callahan as Hudson Williams-Eynon and Kerneth  
Levigion

Chantelle Smith as Anonymous female dining hall worker and  
Anonymous male custodian

Carlos Williams as Renee Levine and Alejandro Torres  
Hernandez

Christopher M. Yee as Kevin Zhang and Eddie Kalletta

\*\*information found in *with their eyes: September 11th--The  
View from a High School at Ground Zero* pg 224\*\*