

<https://doi.org/10.32792/utq/jedh/v161>

الصدمة والخيانة وبلاء التوقعات الزائفة في مسرحية *المغذورون* لجورج باكر

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الملخص

تناول هذا البحث دراسة الصدمة والخيانة وتبعات التوقعات الزائفة في مسرحية "المغذورون" (Betrayed) للكاتب جورج باكر، حيث تُعد حرب العراق عام 2003 واحدة من أكثر النزاعات تدميراً في التاريخ الحديث. يسلط البحث الضوء على المعاناة العميقة التي واجهها العراقيون، وبالأخص المترجمين والصحفيين الذين عملوا مع القوات الأمريكية، وكيف تحول "المنقذ" المنتظر إلى مصدر للألم وتحقيق لأسوأ الكوابيس. من خلال تطبيق "نظرية الصدمة"، يحلل البحث كيف تعكس المسرحية حالة "الانقسام النفسي" للهوية والوعي لدى المترجمين الذين أصبحوا "أشخاصاً في المنتصف"؛ منبوزين من مجتمعهم كخونة ومحل شك دائم من قبل الجانب الأمريكي. كما يستعرض البحث "بلاء التوقعات الزائفة" الذي نتج عن حملات التضليل والمعلومات المفبركة حول أسلحة الدمار الشامل، موضحاً كيف أدى هذا الزيف إلى صدمة أخلاقية وسياسية كبرى. تخلص الدراسة إلى أن المسرحية لا تقدم مجرد إدانة سياسية، بل توثق مأساة إنسانية ناتجة عن التخلي والإهمال المنهجي، مع الإشارة إلى استمرار أزمات الصحة النفسية في المجتمع العراقي كنتيجة مباشرة لهذه الصدمات المتراكمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: جورج باكر؛ مسرحية *المغذورون*؛ نظرية الصدمة؛ المترجمون العراقيون؛ حرب العراق 2003؛ الخيانة السياسية.

Trauma, Betrayal and The Plague of False Expectations In George Packer's *Betrayed*

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Abstract

The 2003 Iraq War stands as one of the most disruptive conflicts in modern history, leaving a legacy of profound trauma and suffering for the Iraqi people. This paper explores how George Packer's play, *Betrayed*, dramatizes the harrowing experiences of Iraqi translators who risked their lives for the promise of American freedom, only to face systemic neglect and violence. Through the lens of trauma theory, the study examines the psychological "psychic separation" experienced by these individuals as they become "people in between"—distrusted by their own society and abandoned by the American forces they served. The research further investigates the "plague of false expectations," contrasting the hopeful aspirations of the Iraqi people with the reality of an invasion fueled by misinformation and fabricated claims of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). By analyzing characters like Adnan, Laith, and Intisar, the paper illustrates a multi-layered betrayal: the betrayal of Iraqis by Americans, the internal betrayals within Iraqi society, and the moral failure of a political campaign built on falsehoods. Ultimately, the study highlights the enduring mental health crisis in Iraq and the resilient yet shattered hope for a future reconciliation.

Keywords: George Packer; *Betrayed*; Trauma Theory; Iraqi Translators; 2003 Iraq War; Political Betrayal.

1. Introduction:

The 2003 Iraq War remains one of the most transformative and disruptive conflicts of the 21st century, leaving behind a legacy of profound social and psychological unrest. For the Iraqi people, the initial promise of liberation from previous oppression was quickly eclipsed by a reality far worse than anticipated. The "savior" many expected became a source of systemic suffering, leading to the realization of their worst nightmares. Among those most severely affected were Iraqi journalists and translators—individuals who risked their lives to bridge the gap between the coalition forces and the local populace. George Packer's play, *Betrayed*, emerges from this volatile landscape. Based on his original *New Yorker* article, the play documents the harrowing journey of three young Iraqi translators as their homeland collapses around them. Through their stories, Packer presents a "grave moral failure" on the part of the American government and captures the painful human experience with sharp dramatic impact. To understand the depth of this failure, one must look through the lens of *Trauma Theory*. This theoretical framework explores how literary texts process traumatic events, typically defined as the abrupt introduction of unexpected violence or death into the mind. Such encounters lead to a "psychic separation" in the survivor's identity, leaving them in a state of fear and confusion. In the context of the Iraq War, this trauma is not merely personal but cultural, fueled by an escalation of bombings, random killings, and kidnappings that have left over 20% of the population suffering from mental illness.

Furthermore, the play explores the "*Plague of False Expectations*" rooted in the political justifications for the war. The invasion was paved by allegations regarding weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and links to al-Qaeda—claims that were later revealed to be unsupported by credible intelligence. This discrepancy created a cycle of betrayal: Iraqi translators believed in the "*American dream*" of freedom more than the Americans themselves, yet they were ultimately branded as traitors by their own people and viewed with suspicion by the very embassy they served. This research aims to analyze how Packer uses these narratives to represent the broader Iraqi experience of trauma and the collapse of hope in the aftermath of 2003.

“The clarity of the writing, the urgency of the story being told ... give the play a sharp dramatic impact and a plain-spoken beauty. Painful human experience is presented here as just that. Nothing else is necessary to awaken sympathy, despair and awareness of a grave moral failure on the part of the American government.” (Packer,2008)

1.2 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative analytical approach grounded in *Trauma Theory* to examine George Packer's *Betrayed*. It combines close textual analysis with cultural and psychological criticism in order to explore representations of trauma, betrayal, and false political expectations. The research contextualizes the play within the socio-political realities of post-2003 Iraq, drawing on interdisciplinary sources from trauma studies, war literature, and mental health research.

1.3 Trauma As A Scream Of Silent Suffering

Generally speaking, trauma theory studies how literary texts process and are influenced by traumatic events. Understanding the various ways that traumatic events are depicted, processed, revealed, and suppressed across a range of literary and historical texts is the goal of trauma theory. Trauma theorists are interested in how literature can be used to document and express cultural traumas, as well as how different authors may try to tone goat and resolve their own personal traumas through their works. They are also interested in how fictional characters try to do the same. The word "trauma" describes the abrupt introduction of novel and unexpected information into a person's mind, typically as a result of an abrupt encounter with death or violence. The survivor of this traumatic event experiences an emotional and intellectual division between what they felt or believed prior to the event and what they now know or believe. This leads to a psychic separation in identity and consciousness, which frequently leaves the survivor feeling scared, confused, and disturbed. An immediate encounter with the reality or possibility of death is frequently the catalyst for a traumatic event. This encounter causes a sudden and fresh realization of one's own mortality and vulnerability, which profoundly disturbs one's mental state. Literary and historical acts of "testimony" have piqued the interest of trauma theorists. (Balaev,2018:361)

Naomi Mandel's *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America* (2006) argues that the traditional concept of trauma as unspeakable is a "discursive production" that evades moral responsibility in representing atrocity by privileging the "problems inherent in speech" rather than addressing the "ethical obligations involved in such representations (Mandel 2006: 4, 5). In her analysis of trauma and the paradoxes of memorialization in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, Mandel writes that "silence and forgetting are as much a strategic and self-conscious gesture on the part of the subjugated as they are the product of the subjugating culture's demands and requirements" (2006: 172).

Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003) establishes a view of traumatic experience beyond that of pathology by examining trauma's specificities and variations in butch-femme discourses and the public culture that arises around trauma. Her analysis examines sexual trauma and focuses on lesbian culture to argue that "affect, including the affects associated with trauma, serves as the foundation for the formation of public cultures" (Cvetkovich 2003: 10). Cvetkovich acknowledges the potential for trauma to be unrepresentable and dissociative but focuses on the ways that traumatic experience, specifically sexual trauma, creates new value in representations and cultural practices.

Understanding traumatic stress reactions and their possible impact on treatment in behavioral health services is one of the fundamental ideas in trauma. People can be affected by trauma in a variety of ways, ranging from overt symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to more subdued, subtle reactions, and even resilience. Trauma can result from one-time incidents, ongoing circumstances, or repetitive experiences, and its effects are influenced by a variety of factors, including the trauma's nature, the individual's traits, and the sociocultural setting. PTSD among military members is a highly publicized concern that greatly affects those affected. While the psychological effects of war have been known since World War I, the incorporation of emphasis on immediate trauma over long-term predisposition. Despite initial doubts, the new classification gained widespread acceptance. The rise in PTSD rates post-deployment and potential delayed-onset PTSD is becoming a bigger focus of health concern and research. The extended military actions in have been significantly different from the brief 1991 Gulf War missions that various armies participated in over the last two decades, leading to a rise in injuries and deaths from improvised explosive devices among personnel. (Cesur,2011)

Due to the use of retrospective samples, estimates of PTSD rates have shown a wide range of current and lifetime PTSD rates, sparking discussions about the actual prevalence of PTSD among military members. On the other hand, recent activities in Iraq have made it possible to assess PTSD during ongoing operations and shortly after personnel come back from deployment. Cultural factors have importance in shaping perceptions of trauma and mental illness, including PTSD, and discusses the potential overlap of trauma with co-occurring mental health and substance-related disorders. This highlights the broad, nuanced understanding of trauma essential for providing effective, compassionate care in behavioral health.

A study in the *Lancet* medical journal has warned of an existential dilemma plaguing Iraqi society: mental health illnesses, which have been on the rise since 2003, according to a study

published in the latest issue of the prestigious journal. The study, involving four researchers and published in the latest issue of the prestigious journal, reported that more than 20 per cent of Iraqis suffer from mental illnesses, and this percentage is on the rise. 'Over the past 20 years, mental health in Iraq has been a difficult issue to address as the country has faced wars, conflicts and political instability. The deterioration of medical facilities, the security situation, and the lack of basic necessities such as food and water have had a major impact on the mental health of the Iraqi people,' the study showed. Fear was widespread and the majority of Iraqis were traumatized the occupation of Iraq led to an escalation of violence through bombings, random killings and kidnappings. < <https://orientxxi.info/dossiers-et-series/iraq-mental-health-between-wars-drugs-and-unemployment,7527>>

Millions of Iraqis were displaced from their homes and neighborhoods as a direct result of the war and sectarian displacement, fleeing identity killings committed by sectarian militias. The study indicated an increase in rates of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder among Iraqis who were uprooted from their homes and lost friends and relatives. A study conducted in Baghdad reported that 91.1 per cent of women had experienced war-related psychological trauma in the past two decades. Women make up 44 per cent of visitors to psychiatric clinics. Many factors have played a role in the persistence of mental illness in Iraq. When ruling parties used the weapon of sectarianism to consolidate their power, political instability contributed to a tense and traumatic environment.

2. Invasion and False Expectations In Betrayed

Iraqis have worked for the United States for thousands of years. A. military personnel serving as interpreters. Insurgents believe that these interpreters are plotting with the enemy, so they have targeted them and their families. Throughout the war, at least 360 Iraqi interpreters have lost their lives. The people of Iraq have been most affected by Washington's 2003 decision to use military force to overthrow Saddam Hussein. As a result of their active participation in promoting communication between the locals and the military, many Iraqi interpreters employed by the coalition have been forcibly deprived of their homes, families, body parts, or even their lives. It was widely believed that interpreters should suffer this fate because they are traitors. Despite their patriotism and loyalty, female interpreters were distrusted by society and frequently perceived as prostitutes (Andrea Dukakis, 2010:9):

ADNAN I thought I lost the job then. But at that time, before things got really bad, the polygraph was not so difficult, not like now. A week later they called me for the security briefing.

LAITH When I heard this news I was so jealous, I wanted to kill you! It was my dream to go into an important office every day, to wear a jacket and tie. And at that time my job with the Assassins wasn't good. Don't get me wrong, I liked the job. It was always something new. And the guys, they were very easy to know, very cool. But they did things—like, they never gave me the good body armor when we went on a raid, just some cheap vest that doesn't protect you against an AK. Or they took me out on patrol in my own neighborhood, even after I told them it was dangerous for me. I started wearing a bandanna over my face. We were losing our trust with the Americans and the Iraqis. The Iraqis stopped trusting you, and the Americans didn't trust you from the beginning. You became a person in between.

And then, interpreters I knew started getting killed. Like, five of my friends working in other units were killed. So I decided to quit, even though there were no other jobs.
(Packer,2008:

Many Iraqis, though, have a more nuanced, deeper understanding of the country's recent history: An understanding which can be seen in their literature – and particularly in the contemporary, post-invasion literature. For the past two decades, Iraqi literature in particular has undertaken a deep excavation of its recent past, going far beyond the confines of the U.S. invasion. Iraqi literature sometimes reflects on the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, the experience of immigration to Western countries – in addition to 9/11 and the United States' 2003 invasion of Iraq following false claims of Saddam's possessing weapons of mass destruction.
(Mohammed,2015:145)

Although many in the U. A. have examined Iraq from the perspective of the 2003 invasion, but modern Iraqi literature is not centered on these events. Bush started a war against Iraq twenty years ago with Vice President Dick Cheney as his sidekick. The false allegations that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had a WMD arsenal that directly threatened the United States and was working with al Qaeda, the group responsible for the horrific September 11 attack, paved the way for this tragic conflict. Today, most people agree that their invasion was a huge strategic error that killed more than 4,000 American soldiers and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians, as well as caused regional violence and instability that gave rise to ISIS.:

ADNAN You work with the Americans and you get a threat. This threat will mean you are dead both ways— continue working with the Americans or stop working with the Americans. It's a circle, and you stay in it because there is no way out. It is more like inside your mind, you know? This threat will paralyze you, you don't think logically, in the end you can't think at all and you will do nothing, just stay at home waiting for them to come. And now that you are making me look at my life from the outside—it's unbelievable! What I did, the way I lived! The threat was always there, but I never felt it or paid attention to it. Whenever I thought deeply and seriously about my situation, I would block it and just move on. Because there's always the possibility that things will go wrong.

When it happens to your family, it is one hundred times worse. I tasted this a few months after Intisar's accident, when my younger brother Ahmed was kidnapped. (Packer, 2008)

Max Boot, an analyst who was once heavily involved in neocon foreign policy, wrote in a 2018 book, "I can finally acknowledge the obvious: It was all a big mistake.". Even though Saddam Hussein was a horrible man, Iraq fared better under his despotic rule than it did

under the chaos that ensued. I feel bad for supporting the invasion and for all the people who died. “[T]he decision to go to war was a clear misjudgment,” wrote columnist David Brooks of the New York Times three years prior. Brooks had been a vocal (and naive) beater of the war drums in 2003. David Frum, Bush's pro-war speechwriter who came up with the "Axis of Evil" argument to support attacking Iraq (as well as North Korea and Iran), called the invasion "plainly" foolish and the war a "misadventure" in an article published last week in the Atlantic. "

PRESCOTT Can we do this on background? I'm not really cleared to talk to you, but I'd like to be helpful because I think we don't always get our message out very well and the media sometimes misunderstands what we're trying to do. You asked why I volunteered to serve here. Look, just FYI: I'm from Springfield, Missouri, my dad has a small law practice, I went to Wash U, and I entered the foreign service after 9/11 for all the usual mom-and-apple-pie reasons. I believe in American exceptionalism—within limits. Not blindly. I knew we'd make a thousand mistakes in Iraq, but I also knew we were not here for oil or Halliburton. The Middle East is my generation's Europe and I wanted to be part of the effort to change the region. And by the way, that's a matter of national security as well as democratic values. I think it's a pile of bull crap to say that Arabs and Muslims don't want the same things we want. People are people, and every day in this job I see how much Iraqis deserve the chance to have a normal life. Do I wish the political process went faster? Yes. Do I worry about Sunni buy-in? Yes. But whatever you

Many individuals who now express regret over the Iraq War assert that they entered into the conflict with good intentions, underpinned by solid reasoning and driven by genuine

concern for American safety. However, they refuse to acknowledge participating in an effort to deceive the American public, stirring up support for the war through fear tactics and misinformation. Frum, who has become a close ally of mine during the Trump era, serves as a representative example. In his essay, he disputes the notion that Bush lied and people died, observing, "I don't think the leaders of the time intended to mislead. They were taken aback and disoriented by 9/11. They allowed themselves to be deceived." "I don't think the leaders of the time intended to mislead. They were taken aback and disoriented by 9/11. They allowed themselves to be deceived." This self-deception argument—we believed what we were saying—is frequently put forth alongside the claim that the Bush-Cheney administration made their decisions based on flawed intelligence suggesting Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, and as a result, these leaders did not intentionally distort the threat. (David C. Hendrickson & Robert W. Tucke, [CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform](#), 2005:44)

However, this story is false. As a result of intense pressure from the Bush White House, intelligence assessments that claimed Iraq had large quantities of WMDs and was on the verge of developing a nuclear weapon were frequently contested by intelligence community experts. Later, but prior to the invasion, UN WMD inspectors examining Iraq contested these conclusions. Nevertheless, in order to support the case for war, Bush, Cheney, and their top aides (Paul Wolfowitz, Scooter Libby, Donald Rumsfeld, and others) accepted these problematic assessments along with a variety of unproven (or disproven) reports. The important thing is that they oversold these conclusions to the public. (Jeffrey Richelson, 2004:) Meanwhile, they issued overwrought statements about the supposed threat from Iraq that either were unsupported by the faulty intelligence or utterly baseless. In short, Bush and Cheney *did* lie, and those that marched with them toward war were part of a campaign deliberately fueled with falsehoods.

Speaking to a convention of Veterans of Foreign Wars in August 2002, as the Bush administration began its campaign to garner public support for an invasion of Iraq, the vice president said, "There is no question that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction." He is undoubtedly accumulating them to use against us, our allies, and our friends. However, at that time, there was no solid intelligence proving that Saddam had resurrected a significant WMD operation or that he planned to use such weapons against the United States.

Actually, Cheney's claims of Iraq being a grave threat were not supported by the most recent intelligence assessments at the time. In his testimony to Congress the year before, Secretary of State Colin Powell stated that Iraq was still "contained," that its military was "weak," and that "the best intelligence estimates suggest that they have not been terribly successful" in creating nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. The Defense Intelligence Agency chief, Vice Admiral Thomas Wilson, said that the Iraqi military was "significantly degraded" in a little-known testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee in late March 2002." and that Saddam possessed only "residual" amounts of WMD, not a growing arsenal:

PRESCOTT's bedroom, in Springfield. PRESCOTT is lying in bed with bandages on his face, hands, and arms. On his desk there is the picture of ADNAN, LAITH, and INTI-SAR. The phone on the desk rings. He can't or won't answer, so we hear an outgoing message say, "This is Bill and I am so totally fucked up that you'll have to leave a message," then LAITH's voice on the answering machine.

LAITH (Voice-over) Bill, habibi, shlonek? (More greetings in Arabic) We miss you. We were so worried when you didn't come back. Did al Qaeda put a sleeper cell in Springfield, Missouri? (PRESCOTT laughs painfully, then groans.) Really, we are very worried. Call and tell us that everything is okay. Baghdad is going to hell without you. You will never guess—we are sitting in Palestine Hotel with that journalist who interviewed you and Intisar. We are telling everything, the good, the bad, and the ugly. We told all your secrets. Now you have to give your side of the story. Just kidding, habibi. We said you are the only American we trust. (After a pause) Bill, sorry, I have a little problem. It's a little urgent so please call me. Sorry to bother you.

While Cheney was building up support for the invasion at this VFW convention, General Anthony Zinni, who had been commander in chief of the US Central Command, was on the stage. He was surprised by Cheney's stark and harsh remarks about Iraq. Years later, he recounted his reaction in a documentary: "It was a total shock. I couldn't believe the vice president was saying this, you know? In doing work with the CIA on Iraq WMD, through all the briefings I heard at Langley, I never saw one piece of credible evidence that there was an ongoing program." Put simply, Cheney was lying.

"Saddam is a threat because he's dealing with al Qaeda," Bush said. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld claimed to have "bullet-proof" proof that Saddam was linked to Osama bin Laden just weeks prior. The assertion that Saddam had a "long-standing relationship" with al Qaeda was made by Cheney in March 2003. No "bullet-proof" evidence was ever presented, and the intelligence did not support any of this. Rumsfeld, Cheney, and Bush were fabricating it all. Another example of Bush and Cheney spreading misleading information rather than being misled by faulty intelligence was this one. When detractors blame Bush or his advisers in general, it tends to obscure the larger issues with statecraft that surfaced following 9/11. Bush's failure was not due to his incompetence as a leader, his credulity as an ideologue, or his craftiness as a sly politician.

Tragic incidents occur when responsible officials and sincere people attempt to do the right thing and end up making things worse, not because leaders are stupid, dishonest, or malign. The terrible character of the war was not communicated to the American people. To garner public support for the invasion of Iraq, Bush, Cheney, Rice, Rumsfeld, and their allies used dishonorable tactics, regardless of whether their goals were noble. Many people still find it much simpler to admit that the war was a mistake than a fabrication twenty years later.

However, it was both. Bush and his henchmen recklessly disregarded the facts in their promotion of it, using hype that was fed by lies and intended to incite fear rather than thoughtful and rational public debate. Bush and Cheney made a mistake and sold it poorly. Would this disastrous war have happened if there hadn't been so many false claims, exaggerations, and misrepresentations? We'll never be able to tell. However, it should not be overlooked that this catastrophe of death and devastation was the consequence of a meticulously planned campaign of lies and misinformation in addition to a serious policymaking error.

2.1 Betrayal As A Representative Of The Iraqi Plague

Based on Packer's *New Yorker* article of the same name, *Betrayed* took a total of eight months to create, from inception to production, at the Culture Project, where it runs through April 13. It was a developmental sprint that most plays and playwrights can only dream about. Packer had never written a play before he attended a performance of Lawrence Wright's *My Trip to Al-Qaeda* at the Culture Project in March 2007. But Packer is a novelist, memoirist and, most recently, staff writer for the *New Yorker*, and in 2007 he'd written the first piece he thought had "dramatic possibilities," a 16,000-word article about the United States' reprehensible treatment of its Iraqi interpreters.

"The scope of the *New Yorker* article is too large for a play, but the intensity of the stories is perfect," he says. "I guess these Iraqis had gotten into my system. Their voices were in my head, and I wanted to do them more justice than I could even in a 16,000-word magazine article."

Wright spoke with the Culture Project about the possibility of making his article into a play after seeing his performance. After they brought in Pippin Parker, a playwright, director, and dramaturg, a partnership was formed. Keyly, the two agreed on how to modify Packer's hundreds of pages of interviews with Americans and Iraqis from Sweden, Kurdistan, Jordan, Syria, and dozens of other places. "George really did not want to write a play that was, you know, an American or white man's navigation through some foreign, difficult situation," Parker explains, adding that's what these stories frequently become. "

During development, the most notable change to the script, as the collaborators had intended, was the removal of an offstage journalist to whom the Iraqis told their story. Packer claims that "[That] was a good thing" because it allowed for an even closer bond between the Iraqis.", "The *Betrayed* theatrical adaptation started to take shape in November, with Packer penning the drafts and Parker providing staff support, reading organization, and commentary. In December, rehearsals began, and the premiere took place in February. The deeper themes of *Betrayed*, however, are the Iraq War and, more especially, Packer's outrage at the way America treated its Iraqi allies who risked everything to stand by us after we captured the country and overthrew Saddam Hussein.(Danju,2013)

Adnan and Laith, two Iraqis—one Sunni, one Shiite—risked their lives to serve as translators for Americans and, by supporting the invaders, to help transform Iraq into the democratic, moderate state they feel America is committed to. This is the story of *Betrayed*. One of the play's strongest points is the translators' faith in America's good intentions, ironically which was also likely the primary motivator for Packer to write their stories.

“They cover the entire experience—from high hope, great sacrifice and some illusions and naivete to disillusionment, danger and even death,” Packer says. “No other Iraqis have gone through such extremes. No other Iraqis have hoped as much and lost as much ... One of my friends said the shame of the play is that they believed in this more than we did.” The translators' role as go-betweens and assistants to the Americans makes them suspicious to all Iraqis due to the nearly universal disenchantment with, if not outright hatred for, the American occupation, Packer says, and puts their lives in a precarious situation.

“These guys are the most vulnerable and the most hated of all,” he says. “They don't have an armed group on their side. They can't call on their militia to get revenge if one of them gets killed because they don't have a militia. We were supposed to have been their militia, but we haven't defended them.” However, *Betrayed* goes beyond simply detailing the difficulties faced by Iraqi interpreters. While Americans do betray Iraqis, Iraqis also betray Americans, and Americans betray Americans. It shows a nation, a city (Baghdad), and an embassy (the US Embassy) enmeshed in a bloody web of local militias and distant political decision-makers who, for reasons unrelated to the welfare of the nation, are unwilling to lower their defenses enough to even attempt to understand one another:

INTISAR It's different. We are “traitors.” Okay, I will tell you what happened. Last night I was walking from the taxi to my house after work. There is a man who is always on the street, selling cigarettes. His name is Abu Abbas. The children on the street call him Eggplant Face. He always said hello to me, until last week. Then he stopped. I didn't know why.

INTISAR gets up from her desk and moves toward the shadows. Suddenly a man steps out and blocks her path.

EGGPLANT FACE Intisar, where have you been?

INTISAR (Startled, slightly frightened) At work, of course.

EGGPLANT FACE Strange, a woman has a job when so many men can't find one. Where do you work?

INTISAR (Thinking on her feet) I'm a reservationist at Royal Jordanian Airways. Do you want to book a ticket to Amman?

EGGPLANT FACE Intisar, Allah knows when we lie.

INTISAR And he knows when we speak the truth. {She tries to walk on, but he blocks her way.}

EGGPLANT FACE They say you work with Americans.

INTISAR Who says?

EGGPLANT FACE The brothers. They say this is why you don't cover yourself.

INTISAR {Quoting the Koran} "In religion there is no force." If I wear hijab it should be for Allah, not the brothers or anyone else.

EGGPLANT FACE There are rules here. The defenders of this area will not allow a woman to look like a prostitute.

Prescott, the press secretary for the US embassy who sincerely wishes to help stabilize and develop Iraq, is the person who most embodies American annoyance. He pays attention to what the translators ask for in order to make their extremely risky lives safer, but he relies on the regional security officer (RSO) of the embassy to take action. The RSO is motivated by a basic mistrust and paranoia of all residents of the Red Zone, which is the entire region of Iraq outside the Green Zone, which is the fortress-like citadel of the United States. A. jurisdiction). According to him, no one can be truly trusted and all Iraqis are either potential terrorists or are shielding someone who is. In the end, the translators are left to fend for themselves; they are free to quit coming to work if they feel threatened. Prescott and the RSO represent what one would probably perceive as opposing extremes on the spectrum of American archetypes in narratives about the Iraq War: the unsophisticated, religious man who believed the Bush administration's portrayal of the conflict as a humanitarian effort, and the snobbish military man who turns violently against all Iraqis once the mission turns into an occupation in a nation out of control. The image of the American warfar is also not flattering:

ADNAN It was getting worse every week, but at the embassy nothing was happening. To come to work in the morning and go home at night, it was like two different worlds. From the inside, we saw that the Americans did not have control. But at that time still I believed more in my cause. I would say I am working for a cause—so if I die for it, let it be. All Iraqis are fatalist—we believe that if it is time to die, then let it die, so what? We don't know about the pleasures of life so much, so death to us wouldn't mean that much. To leave a miserable life, it's not that much to die. For you as an American, you can go everywhere and you do things you like and money is not a problem for you.

Life is beautiful for you! Not for an Iraqi who doesn't have electricity, who is under threat. So what's the big deal to die and leave all this? As for Packer, he doesn't see the situation improving for Iraqi translators or average Iraqis anytime soon. "It will never be safe for Iraqis to work with Americans," he says, "because until there is rule of law – which is years or decades away—any Iraqi with a grudge or a cause can kill any other Iraqi and basically get away with it."

Conclusion

The play offers a surprisingly optimistic viewpoint. It describes the experiences of a heterogeneous group of Americans and Iraqis who set out on a treacherous expedition into what is known as the "reality-based market." Throughout this journey, their most treasured hopes for Iraq have been effectively dashed by the harsh realities of violence, ingrained mistrust, and systemic incompetence. There is still recognition, though, that a final resolution to their predicament has not yet been reached amid all of this chaos. Both Iraqis and Americans are exhausted from a long war that has gone far beyond what was anticipated and taken a significant toll in terms of both financial resources and human lives. As demonstrated by recent reports of casualties, including six Americans and more than forty Iraqis in the last two days, the war continues despite many declared "milestones" and flimsy victories, acting as a continual source of pessimism and hopelessness about the future of Iraq. For those who are able to see it, *Betrayed* indicates that there is still hope:

PRESCOTT You should collect them in a book. It would be a bestseller in America. (He is thoughtful for a

moment.) Hey, what did you mean, “You talk to the wrong people”? That’s what you said before Intisar was killed.

ADNAN (Hesitating—does he want to get into'it?) Not you, Bill. All the Americans.

PRESCOTT Okay. What did you mean?

ADNAN You talk to these politicians in the Green Zone and they tell you what they think you want to hear, and you tell Washington what you think it wants to hear, and everybody is happy, and Iraqis die and die and die.

PRESCOTT They’re your elected leaders.

ADNAN We don’t know them. You brought them with you and they lie to you. They don’t care about the simple Iraqi people. They only care about their interests.

PRESCOTT So we should be talking to who?

ADNAN Your enemies.

Adnan's concluding remarks in the play do not serve as a denunciation of Bush or America, nor do they function as a direct indictment of the injustices he has experienced, whether from foreign forces or fellow Iraqis. Rather, his words resonate with a shared sentiment among both Iraqis and Americans regarding the profound losses incurred through the naivety, shattered aspirations, and betrayals associated with the Iraq War. Furthermore, he reflects on the potential for recovery and reconciliation that still exists in the aftermath of these events: “Until this moment,” he says. “I dream about America.” Ultimately, *Betrayed* stands as a powerful dramatic testimony to the enduring psychological wounds of war, exposing how political deception and moral abandonment continue to shape Iraqi identity, memory, and hope.

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