

Bushra Juhi

Assistant Lecturer

Department of English Language and Literature

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***Stuff Happens: David Hare's Iraq War Drama***

David Hare's play *Stuff Happens* chronicles the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq. The play takes its title from a notorious remark made by the U.S. former Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld when he was asked to comment on the looting and mayhem in Iraq after the invasion in 2003. "Stuff happens," he told reporters.

All the main characters are major world figures and leaders including Saddam Hussein making a speech on Iraqi TV, speaking in Arabic and a translator renders it in English:

*SADDAM H: We apologize to God about any act which has angered him in the past, and that was held against us and we apologize to the Kuwaitis on the same basis. (Hare, act 17, p.71)*

These characters are very familiar to everybody who must know from TV and newspapers if not from personal experience a lot about them.

In many cases, the actual words those real-life leaders said in public statements are part of the dialogue, like the speech of Colin Powell in the United Nations and other speeches of such kind. The excerpt from Bush on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2002, known as the "axis of evil" speech, is also included in the play:

*BUSH: Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility towards America and to support terror. States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. (Hare act 10, p.26)*

Hare combines these statements that are on the public record with imagined scenes of what took place behind closed doors and with theatrical design to generate a play that centers on still-living history.

Hare states in the “Author’s Note” to the first publication of the play:

*The events within it have been authenticated from multiple sources, both private and public. What happened happened. Nothing in the narrative is knowingly untrue. Scenes of direct address quote people verbatim. When the doors close on the world’s leaders and on their entourages, then I have used my imagination. (qtd in McCullugh, 2004; p.1)*

Although Hare claims the authenticity of the events in his play, he does not call it a documentary play, but a history play:

*Stuff happens is a history play, which happens to centre on very recent history... This is sure a play, not a documentary, and driven, I hope, by its themes as much as by its characters and story. (qtd in McCullugh, 2004; p.1)*

“The model” of his history play “is Shakespeare,” Hare acknowledges. (Tusa, p.11) However, Shakespeare wrote his history plays about events that took place long before his birth while Hare’s history play covers very contemporary subjects. Hare’s, then, is still “a half-wrought history or a history play-in-progress.” (Stothard, 2004; p.2)

I will try to examine the stylization used by Hare and the play's genre and characterization. The play is no doubt a political one, so I will examine whether the play is merely the playwright's political statement \_ or to be more specific his anti-Iraq-war stand \_ or simply a play about recent history.

Before talking about Hare's use of stylization, it is important to have a brief introduction to the playwright himself.

David Hare is a British dramatist, film director and film writer. The 63-year-old Hare \_ known as Sir David, in the light of his knighthood in 1998 \_ is "one of the most productive and successful political playwrights to emerge in Britain in the postwar era." (Sierz, 2004; p.1)

Hare started his career with an openly political trilogy of plays *Knuckle*, *Slag* and *Fanshen* in the 1970s and the *State of the Nation* trilogy analyzing British national institutions in the 1980s. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Hare started a new kind of political writing which "combines documentary realism with imaginative reconstruction of the arguments behind the publicly known facts." (Tusa, p.1)

Hare's interest in the politics of the Middle East, in particular, first manifested in *Via Dolorosa*, which is a play in the form of a monologue acted solo by Hare himself, deals with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through Hare's own 1997 journey through Israel and Palestine, and the 33 people whom he met. (See Stackman, 2006; p.1)

*Stuff Happens* was written in 2004 and opened in September that same year at the Royal National Theatre in London. It was later performed in the United States of America and Canada.

*Stuff Happens* is not Hare's only play about Iraq. In 2006, he wrote *The Vertical Hour*, which addresses the relationship of characters with opposing views on the 2003 invasion of Iraq. (See Simonson, 2006; p.1)

With its post-9/11 clichés "war on terror," "axis of evil," "regime change," "dossier," etc., *Stuff Happens*, no doubt, emerges as an inseparable part of the political theatre, or the Theater of War, which was developed after the attack on the World Trade Center on 9/11/2001. (Letts, 2004; p.7)

*Stuff Happens* traces the origins of the Iraq war. It highlights how the Bush administration's team produces a platform on the basis of false intelligence reports that Iraq has very dangerous weapons that it can use to attack any of the European countries within a few minutes. Using these reports as a reason to prove Iraq is dangerous, the Bush administration develops a plan to invade Iraq. The argument for this invasion is the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) issue, accusing Iraq of working on a project which is against the American and European's interests and security. Before the invasion, UN weapon inspectors were sent to inspect the whole Iraq to find out any clue about these weapons but their reports said that Iraq had not worked on it since 1991. In *Stuff Happens*, the result of this inspection is conveyed by Hans Blix, the UN chief inspector, to the Bush administration. But it is not enough to dissuade them from their "preemptive war." The American officials raised another issue that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has deep relationships with the terrorist group al-Qaeda although they have no evidence in this respect. The play raises the question of why America invaded Iraq, but *Stuff Happens* falls short of providing any specific answer. (See Jantzi, 2005; p.2)

*Stuff Happens* deals with the Iraq War from a different perspective. There are no soldiers, no battles, few Iraqis and no dead, only political leaders on stage. The play focuses on backroom deals and political maneuvers of the Bush administration that made the decision to go to war.

*Stuff Happens* consists of two acts with twelve scenes each. Even though the play has 49 characters, the main plot only involves nine protagonists who took part in the Iraq war in real life. These characters include: George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Condoleezza Rice, Paul Wolfowitz, Kofi Annan, and Hans Blix.

The play introduces Dick Cheney, the former vice president of America, by saying he served in the U.S. military during the Vietnam war but had played a serious role in it because he “has achieved a total of five student deferments in order to avoid being drafted to Vietnam.” (Hare, 2006; p.4) He had his other aims and priorities at that time.

Another character is Paul Wolfowitz who served in many defense-related posts in America and was considered an American power broker:

*WOLFOWITZ: I focus on geo-strategic issues. I consider myself conceptual. I am willing to re-examine entire precepts of U.S. foreign policy. (Hare, 2006; p.6)*

Then there comes the name of Donald Rumsfeld, the former American secretary of defense who had given the title idea of this play in his press conference:

*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! But in terms of what’s going on in that country, it is a fundamental misunderstanding to see those images*

*over and over and over again of some boy walking out with a vase and say, "Oh, my goodness, you didn't have a plan." That's nonsense. They know what they're doing, and they're doing a terrific job. And it's untidy, and freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things. They're also free to live their lives and do wonderful things, and that's what's going to happen here. (Hare, act 2, p.3)*

Colin Powell, the former American secretary of state, who played a major role in the media war ahead of the Iraq invasion \_ especially in his UN presentation \_ is also part of the war planning team in the play. Then comes the role of Tony Blair, the former Prime Minister of Britain, who gave all kinds of strategic and political support to his ally, Bush, to launch the attack on Iraq.

The play moves back and forth between different settings. It also has an actor-narrator, employing the device of using a nameless actor as storyteller who explains the historical context of events and sets the stage.

The play opens with the actor-narrator, making it clear from early on that the path to Iraq invasion was inevitable:

*AN ACTOR : The Inevitable is what will seem to happen to you purely by chance;  
The Real is what will strike you as really absurd ;  
Unless you are certain you are dreaming, it is certainly a dream of your own;  
Unless you exclaim – "There must be some mistake" – you must be mistaken. (Hare, act 1, p.3)*

This unnamed actor also explains the title of the play:

*AN ACTOR : Stuff. Happens. The response of Donald Rumsfeld, the American Secretary of Defense, when asked to comment on the widespread looting and pillage that followed the American conquest of Baghdad – Friday April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003. (Hare, act 1, p.3)*

Moreover, the narrator presents background information and often comments on a character's lines or actions. To take the first scene with Condoleezza Rice as an example, these details are provided through stage directions, "*Condoleezza Rice, splendid, always alone, steps forward*" (Hare, p.5), after that the actor-narrator comments:

*AN ACTOR: At the same time at Stanford University, a minister's daughter from Birmingham, Alabama, Condoleezza Rice, is choosing between a professional music career or a life in academia studying the Soviet bloc. (Hare, act 3, p.5)*

The actor also provides colorful details like Rice's fondness for keeping two mirrors in her office:

*AN ACTOR: In her office Rice keeps two mirrors, so she can see her back as well as her front. (Hare, act 3, p.5)*

The actor-narrator device helps in easing transition between scenes and the cross-cutting between the White House, 10 Downing Street \_ Blair's residence \_ the UN, Camp David, the Bush ranch in Texas and Iraq.

The sequential order of events is sometimes disrupted by monologues that turn away from the main direction of the play and represent a scope of different opinions and mixed viewpoints on the American push for war.

Among the pro and con voices, invented by Hare, is that of an angry journalist who cannot understand why his colleagues do not see the apparent good of removing the dictator Saddam Hussein:

*JOURNALIST: ....*

*How obscene it is, how decadent, to give your attention not to the now, not to the liberation, not to the people freed, but to the relentless archaic discussion of the manner of the liberation. Was it lawful ? Was it not ? How was it done ? What were the details of its doing ? Whose views were overridden ? Whose views condoned ? (Hare, act 5, p.12)*

The toughest speech in the form of monologue in the play belongs to "A Brit in New York," who answers the argument that America radically changed after 9/11 with the answer "Yes, it got stupider."

*BRIT IN NY: "America changed." That's what we're told. "On September 11<sup>th</sup> everything changed." "If you're not American, you can't understand."*

...

...

*On September 11<sup>th</sup>, America changed. Yes. It got much stupider. (Hare, act 18, p.76)*

America got much stupider is reaffirmed by Powell's angry speech when he tells off Bush and Rice that he wants his "country to be less arrogant" and that 9/11 attacks should not give them the license to behave like idiots:

*POWELL: Three thousand of our citizens died. They died in an unforgivable attack. But that doesn't license us to behave*

*like idiots. If we reach the point where everyone is secretly hoping that America gets a bloody nose, then we're going to find it very hard indeed to call on friends when we need them. (Hare, act 11, p.44)*

Is Hare trying to convey the message that America got much stupider, more arrogant and got the license to behave like idiots by marching to war in Iraq? The play is more challenging than that simplicity. Although, the playwright uses irony and mostly has his characters speak their intentions bluntly, he does not give us direct answers.

The play does not say whether Bush wanted the war to retaliate for 9/11 or to take revenge against Saddam for his assassination attempt on Bush's father or even for Israel. As the unnamed Palestinian academic said in monologue:

*PALESTINIAN A: ....For the Palestinian, there is no other context. We see everything in the context of Palestine. Why Iraq ? The question has been asked a thousand times. And a thousand answers have been given. Why was the only war in history ever to be based purely on intelligence – and doubtful intelligence at that – launched against a man who was ten years past his peak of belligerence ? Why Iraq ? Why now ? Here comes the familiar list of explanations. Because an Arab democracy would serve as a model. Because it was unfinished business – “He tried to kill my Dad”. Because Osama bin Laden had served notice on the dictatorship in Saudi Arabia, and now America*

*needed a new military base. Because Cheney worked for Halliburton. "It was all about oil!" For us, no. For Palestinians, it's about one thing : defending the interests of America's three-billion-dollar-a-year colony in the Middle East. (Hare, act 11, p. 46)*

The last monologue is the play's finale in which an unnamed Iraqi exile describes how he cannot comprehend how they, speaking of Bush and Blair, came without plans to save Iraqis after the dictator was gone. He reflects on the untold, undocumented Iraqi casualties of war and on the fates of nations who put faith in the wrong people:

*IRAQI EXILE:*

*A vacuum was created. Was it created deliberately? I cannot comprehend. They came to save us, but they had no plans.*

...

*And now the American dead are counted, their numbers recorded, their coffins draped in flags. How many Iraqis have died? How many civilians? No figure is given. Our dead are uncounted. (Hare, act 24, p. 99)*

...

*I mean, if there is a word, Iraq has been crucified. By Saddam's sins, by ten years of sanctions, by the occupation and now by the insurgency. Basically it's a story of a nation that has failed in only one thing. But it's a big sin. It failed to take charge of*

*itself. And that meant the worst person in the country took charge. A country's leader is the country's own fault.*

*I mean, people say to me "Look, tell America." I tell them: "You are putting your faith in the wrong person. Don't expect America or anybody will do it for you. (Hare, act 24, p. 100)*

These closing words are the play's "more didactic moments" which are meant to stir heated political arguments about "A country's leader" who is "the country's own fault," alluding as much to Bush and Blair as to Saddam Hussein. Beside holding these leaders accountable, "Hare apportions some of the blame for the war to all of us." (Rooney, 2006; p. 3)

In his review of the play, Elyse Sommer stated in "The Internet Theatre Magazine," that:

*(The Iraqi Exile), who happens to provide the play with its most emotionally resonant scene, sees his country's biggest sin as failing to take charge of itself and thus allowing the worst person [Saddam Hussein] to take charge of itself. He might well be talking about the United States citizens who twice elected George W. Bush, who though a far cry from a crazed, sadistic dictator, was hardly the wisest choice to lead this country at a critical time. (Sommer, 2006; p. 4)*

Beside being a historical play about recent history which is still occupying headlines on newspapers and TV news, many critics consider *Stuff Happens* as a tragedy. In his review on the play in the Daily Mail, the paper's theatre critic and political sketch writer, Letts Quentin, says:

*Men who are dead set on bad decisions are the stuff of theatrical tragedy. That is what makes Hare's play powerful – the way events have spooled out of our control.... This is tragedy as re-enactment, not as straight fiction. (Letts, 2004; p.8)*

*Stuff Happens* can also be viewed as tragic-comedy, argues Christopher Rawson, another theater critic:

*Hare presents the journey to war as tragi-comic -- comic because of its self-delusion and the foregone nature of its destination, tragic in what happens along the way to Tony Blair and Colin Powell. Both are used by the Bush administration as cover and eventually discarded; they are tragic because they conspire out of mixed motives in their own fall. (Rawson, 2007; p.2)*

Rawson describes, in this stage review on the play, both Blair and Powell, as tragic heroes who fall victim to a sinister administration, there is no doubt that Powell is portrayed as a tragic hero. But there is little evidence in the play that can support Blair as a tragic figure.

Hare paints Blair as a smartened, self-centered and self-righteous figure who says he wants to "reorder the world" for moral purposes but who is more interested in sticking close to the heart of power in Washington than to his principles. Blair tells his aides of America's one rule and that they should get in early and prove loyalty so that the Americans would listen:

*BLAIR: There's one rule. With the Americans there's one rule. You get in early. You prove your loyalty. And that way they listen. The one thing we've learnt: if for a moment, if even for a moment we come adrift from Washington, our influence is gone. It's gone! (Hare, act 17, p.73 )*

Only in the end, the Americans do not listen to anybody and march to war.

When Bush first approaches Blair about the subject of Iraq which is moving up on the agenda, Blair demands the invasion be legal before he will get involved:

*BLAIR: What he says is this : Even with UN support, any invasion may still be illegal unless we can demonstrate that the threat to British national security from Iraq is what he calls 'real and imminent'.*

....

*BLAIR: Real and imminent, George. If Britain is involved, we will need evidence that Iraq can and will launch a nuclear, biological or chemical attack on a Western country. We can't go to war because of what we fear. Only because of what we know. (Hare, act 10, Pp.31-2)*

At home, Blair along with his advisors go through the records on Iraqi WMD. He demanded some sort of a dossier. When Blair finally receives a draft of his proposed dossier, which seems to him seriously disappointing in its lack of conclusive evidence, a call was diverted to the British intelligence that further information is immediately required. Within next twenty-four hours, the head of MI6 \_ the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) colloquially known as MI6\_ is on Blair's doorway to deliver the golden piece of made-up facts and figures. The new dossier discloses, Blair claims, that Saddam's military planning allows for some of the WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them. (Hare, act 14, p.53) That is enough for Blair to side powerfully with the United States of America in invading Iraq.

The most powerful scene is when the biggest players - Cheney, Rumsfeld and Powell - debate what to do about Blair, Europe and the United Nations as the crisis approaches. Powell eloquently explains Blair's position and why

the administration must support him because he has “been loyal from the start.” (Hare, act 20, p.86) Cheney describes Blair as “a preacher sitting on top of the tank,” who needs “rations, needs a latrine, just like everyone else.” Powell says he likes Blair and Cheney says he hates him:

*POWELL: I like Blair.*

*CHENEY: Maybe you do. But we don't need him. And as of this moment he's bringing us nothing but trouble.*(Hare, act 20, p.86)

George Bush, sitting quietly and smiling there with Rice, lets the ideologies, feelings and characters clash. Then he explains in a couple of sentences why, on balance, Blair needs all the support America can give him. (Moore, 2004; p.2)

*BUSH: Blair's got a real problem. His government can fall. It may really fall. New government in London. That's in nobody's interest. Not his. Not ours.* (Hare, act 20, p.87)

Bush decides:

*BUSH: We need to help him.* (Hare, act 20, p.87)

Hare comments on how Blair was outwitted by the Americans and “how a supposedly stupid man,” speaking of George W. Bush, “gets everything he wants” and “a supposedly clever man,” Tony Blair, “ends up with nothing he wants.” (qtd in Jaffe, 2005; p.2)

It is obvious that Hare, the establishment figure who was knighted during Blair's era, tried to defend Blair and show that he meant good and peace:

*BLAIR: The state of Africa is a scar on the conscience of the world. But if the world as a community focussed on it, we could heal it. And if we don't, it will become deeper and angrier. This is the moment to tackle problems from the*

*slums of Gaza to the mountain ranges of Afghanistan. This is a moment to seize. The kaleidoscope has been shaken. The pieces are in flux. Soon they will settle again. Before they do, let us reorder this world around us. (Hare, act 8, p.21)*

But the playwright depicts a different person than what he intended him to be. Blair is shown as a follower of Bush's administration looking for glory himself, risking his own political career and taking his country into unpopular war. Hare himself acknowledges that point, saying

*But Tony Blair is a very problematic figure of drama because he never comes out the way you intended him to. In every production of the play I've seen, he always emerges far weaker than you hoped he would. (qtd in Ouzounian, 2008; p.4)*

The tragic hero in Hare's portrayal is Colin Powell, who watches with growing anxiety and anger as Cheney, Rumsfeld and the others in Bush's administration gaily steer the ship of state toward war. While Paul Wolfowitz is telling Bush that invading Iraq and overthrowing Saddam Hussein "is something they can do with very little effort," (Hare, act 7, p.16), Powell pleads patience, demanding that the administration at least go through the motions of seeking international consensus and support at the United Nations. The Middle East, Powell warns, is a tinderbox. And the current level of thinking from some people in the administration seems to be approving throwing in a match and seeing what happens:

*POWELL: If we go into Iraq without a coalition and without the UN, then we're going to find ourselves in trouble. The whole region is a tinderbox. And the current level of thinking from some people in this administration seems to be 'OK,*

*so let's throw in a match and see what happens... ' It's at that level. Truly. It's nihilistic. (Hare, act 11, p.42)*

In spite of his anger, Powell is horribly outmaneuvered by his White House colleagues. Bush does listen to his peace pleas, but decisively goes for violence.

The play shows that Powell has a soldier's sense of loyalty to his commander who told him to make a presentation before the UN on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2003 against the Iraqi WMD Program:

*POWELL: A presentation, sir ?*

*BUSH: Yes. That's what we need. There's a powerful case for war. We need to put that case. In one place. At one time. At the UN. We've all been looking at the intelligence, we've all been assessing it.*

*POWELL: Yes we have.*

*BUSH: We know exactly how strong it is.*

*POWELL: Yes we do.*

*(There is a silence. BUSH does not seem to be going to speak)*

*POWELL: Excuse me, sir. Just to be clear. Who would be making this presentation?*

*BUSH: Well that's what I was saying. People trust you, Colin. And you feel strongly. It would have to be you. (Hare, act 20, p.87)*

Powell's complete allegiance or rather subservience to Bush, as demonstrated here when he agrees to make that infamous presentation, is his tragic flaw. The presentation is a turning point in the development of this character, who is portrayed as moral, rational and the administration's lone voice of reason. The play's hero who was determined to avoid war now

promotes that war. The play suggests that Powell probably knows that what he is going to say in the presentation is a case of deception or at least Powell has major doubts over the intelligence he is to share with the world. At one point in the play, he talks about the element of hypocrisy by having the receipts of Saddam's WMD:

*POWELL:                There's an element of hypocrisy, George. We were trading with the guy ! Not long ago. People keep asking, how do we know he's got weapons of mass destruction ? How do we know ? Because we've still got the receipts. (Hare, act 11, p.45)*

Although Powell is trying to make the wisest and most ethical policy decisions, he could only be led down a path that could be so mistaken, so dishonest, and so destructive.

Bush is depicted, to everybody's surprise, as a watchful, cautious politician:

*As you might expect, the man found to be most at fault is the president. But when the play was first performed, it came as a surprise to many that the character of George W. Bush should be something of a revelation. This president is not the bumbling rich kid or gung-ho cowboy of left-wing satire. He is a man whose lack of words makes him an enigma, whose brevity of style is a powerful tool. In conference, we see him turn to Cheney, Rumsfeld, or, most often, "Condi", and permit them to speak. They then present their take on what they believe is going on in the mind of the commander-in-chief. He stays out of the fray. When his appointees have fought things out among themselves, he makes his decision. "He's a tricky one," observes the more eloquent and open Blair.*

*Bush's reluctance to enter into debate gives him strength. This man is definitely not Cheney's puppet. But his taciturnity is also the cause of disaster. (Martin, 2008; p.1)*

Hare himself seems to be surprised by Bush's portrayal in the play:

*I'm afraid the character of George Bush, in *Stuff Happens*, is quite a rich character, and I think people begin to recognise the real George Bush and see the real George Bush a little bit differently when they've seen the play. (Tusa, p.12)*

This character reminds us of Blake who once said that Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, was "of the Devil's party, though he didn't know it". He meant that the poet had fallen in love with Satan, his most vivid creation. Maybe the same thing can be said about Hare in relation to George Bush. (Moore, 2004; p.2)

For though Bush-haters will find happy moments when the president seems ignorant or stupid, for example, with his comments on Palestine based on one helicopter overflight with Ariel Sharon:

*BUSH: Sharon flew me in a helicopter over the Palestinian camps. Looked real bad down there. (Hare, act 4, p.9)*

He gradually emerges as the most interesting character, completely different from the one in everybody's mind or the one who was targeted by Muntadhar al-Zeidi's shoes in the press conference of Bush's last visit to Iraq in December 2008.

Bush in *Stuff Happens* is the most powerful and then the most interesting because the play is about power. Bush thinks that God has put him where he is for a reason:

*BUSH: I feel like God wants me to run for president. I can't explain it but I sense my country is going to need me. Something is going to happen and at that time my country*

*is going to need me. I know it won't be easy, on me or on my family, but God wants me to do it.*

....

*BUSH: God told me to strike at Al Qaeda and I struck them, and then He instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did.*  
(Hare, act 23, p.98)

He finds that he can, as one of the narrators says, "achieve purpose". Instead of just explaining, he can command. He can actually make something happen. (Moore, 2004; p.3)

In *Stuff Happens*, the playwright includes the arguments in favor of and against the attack on Iraq. But was Hare against the war? Maybe that "goes without saying" because he is "a Left-wing playwright" (Moore, 2004; p.1).

The play helps us to look at the reality rather than considering the fictitious stories and observing the sketches. Indeed invading Iraq was a misuse of power, a reality depicted in the play which is touted as an anti-Iraq-war play.

The target of Hare's play after all is not a general system of political thought or government or leaders' deception such as Bush's lie about WMD and Blair's dossier. The play's main theme, rather, is about how policy is made and how some honest people like Colin Powell become scapegoats of that policy.

Except for a few last-minute addenda, the story stops a few years ago, before the Abu Ghraib prison incident of the torture of Iraqi detainees, the bombing of Samarra mosque, the subsequent sectarian violence and the other calamities of the occupation. The play's action has been, as they say, overtaken by events that lead to the invasion.

It's telling that the play deals so little with the early days of the war itself, given the context of the title, and makes no mention of the looting of the National Museum, which was the referent to Rumsfeld "stuff happens" statements. "Stuff happens" refers to an American profanity. But Hare uses it in the title to refer to how the decision to go to war \_ a decision of enormous magnitude and with profound consequences \_ just "happens."

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