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Research article

"Can the Subaltern Speak?": A Critical Study of Hannie Rayson's Two Brothers

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ABSTRACT

Hannie Rayson's *Two Brothers* (2013) critically investigates Australia's post-9/11 border policies via presenting the ideological struggle between power of authority and refugee advocacy regarding an Iraqi asylum seeker. While Hazem speaks, his voice is systemically overwhelmed by a power imbalance reducing his complex subjective experience to a "wordless figure" manipulated within political discourse. This paper analyzes the structural mechanisms of exclusion that facilitate a political critique of the Australian border regime. Relying on the cosmopolitan theoretical frameworks of Michel Foucault, Gayatri Spivak, and Giorgio Agamben, the paper proposes that *Two Brothers* dissects the processes of both Biopolitics and Epistemic Violence. The study demonstrates how dominant power utilizes institutional coercion and legal threats to silence both the refugee and the advocates effectively stripping his political identity. Eventually, the systemic dehumanization reduces Hazem to "Bare Life", a figure exposed to unpunishable violence, and denies this "subaltern" the right to speak or revolt.

"هل يمكن للتابع أن يتكلم؟": دراسة نقدية في مسرحية الشقيقان لهاني رايسون

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المُستخلص

تُقدم مسرحية "شقيقان" للكاتبة هاني رايسون (2013) تحليلًا نقديًا لسياسات أستراليا الحدودية في مرحلة ما بعد أحداث 11 أيلول، من خلال عرض الصراع الأيديولوجي بين سلطة النفوذ ومناصرو اللاجئين، وتحديدًا فيما يتعلق بطالب لجوء عراقي. رغم محاولة طالب اللجوء هذا (حازم) للحديث، إلا أن صوته يُطغى عليه بشكل منهجي بفعل اختلال موازين القوى، مما يختزل تجربته الذاتية المعقدة الى "شخصية صامتة" يتم التلاعب بها ضمن الخطاب السياسي. تُحلل هذه الدراسة الآليات البنيوية التي تتجاوز النقد السياسي. واستناداً إلى الإطار النظري العالمي لكل من ميشيل فوكو وغاياتري سبيفاك وجورجيو أغامبين، تؤكد الدراسة أن مسرحية الكاتبة المسرحية رايسون هي نموذج لكلًا من "العنف المعرفي" و"السياسة الحيوية". كما تبرهن الدراسة كيف تستغل السلطة المهيمنة الإكراه المؤسسي والتهديدات القانونية لإسكات اللاجئ والمدافعين عنه، مما يُجرده فعليًا من هويته السياسية. وفي نهاية المطاف، يؤدي التجريد المنهجي من الإنسانية إلى اختزال حازم إلى مستوى "الحياة المجردة"، وهو شخصية مُعرضة للعنف المُفلِت من العقاب، ويحرم هذا "التابع" من حقه في الكلام أو الثورة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السياسة الحيوية، العنف المعرفي، الصمت البنيوي، الحياة العارية، سياسات الحدود، اللاجئ، السلطة السيادية

Introduction

While Hannie Rayson's *Two Brothers* (2013) was first performed in 2005 as a provocative dramatic response to Australia's post 9/11 border policies, this paper utilizes the script as published in the 2013 anthology *Staging Asylum*. The play stages the refugee issue as the central site of the ideological confrontation between the two siblings, James 'Eggs' Benedict, the Minister for Home Security in the Australian Conservative Government, and Tom Benedict, a lawyer and Chief Executive Officer of the Lawson Foundation, mirroring the national political divide (Balfour, 2013, p.208). This conflict is dramatized through Hazem's fate, an Iraqi refugee, whose tragic experience is drawn from real-life events, including the SIEV X disaster and the dividing conflict surrounding the Costello brothers. To portray the conflicting interests of the two political factions on stage, Rayson creates two siblings who differ sharply in political perspectives and agendas, yet are combined in strong family ties (Brisbane, 2005). Rayson admits that the inspiration for the characters came after observing this real-world conflict between advocacy and authority (Sharma, 2019, p. 79-80). While earlier scholarship has focused on the play's political allegory, this article explores the systemic violence integral in Hazem's fate analyzing the structural mechanisms which apply the structural production of Bare Life on the Iraqi refugee.

Structurally, the plot is set in motion by the sinking of a fictional refugee ship, the Kelepasan, an event that reflects the real-life SIEV X disaster, which leaves an Iraqi refugee named Hazem as the sole survivor (Balfour, 2013, p.208). Rayson was motivated to write the play to interrogate the degradation of

Australian political culture following the series of border security crises in 2001, including Tampa Crisis, the Children Overboard affair, and the terrorist attacks on the United States (Sharma, 2019, p.81). By merging these incidents, Rayson exposes how the ruling class weaponizes Islamophobic stereotypes and "exclusionary nationalism" to manipulate public perception (Slattery, 2003). The story follows the thuggery of state policy as the government tries to suppress the truth of disaster, escalating through the character of Eggs' son, a young naval officer burdened by remorse. Ultimately, Rayson wrote the play as a futurist warning, fearing that without public accountability and a return to compassion, the state would continue to prioritize manufactured security narratives over fundamental human rights.

Historically, in the aftermath of the disaster, Prime Minister John Howard (1996-2007) declared the Australian government had no information regarding the boat or the victims in the Indonesian territorial waters, dismissing the event as unfortunate accident. However, Australia had received many intelligence concerning smuggler boats moving from Indonesia toward Australian waters. Strong circumstantial evidence led many to condemn the government for the SIEV X drowning. John Howard's anti-refugee campaign further implicated his administration in the public eye, yet the disaster remained uninvestigated and mired in suspicion. By keeping the tragedy out of official public discourse, the state excluded the refugee issue from humanitarian consideration. The suspicion was compounded by survivor allegations of witnessing two vessels investigated the site, supporting by overhead aircrafts, which failed to offer assistance (Sharma, 2019, P. 83-4).

Problem Statement

The essential problem is that the structural silencing of the refugee, Hazem, is not merely one of media disregard, however an active procedure of systemic marginalization that current critiques fail to address by imposing only the political narrative. This paper addresses a critical gap in the existing scholarship on Hannie Rayson's *Two Brothers* by incorporating a theoretical framework that focuses on political discourse, authority and biopolitics. The paper underscores the systematic process of silencing the refugee by conveying the contradiction between the marginalized voice of the refugee and that of the advocate's, Tom, advantaged legal discourse. It asserts that this is not merely one of media neglect, but an active process of systemic marginalization which reduces Hazem to a "wordless figure" (McLoughlin, 2023). It critiques the political narrative both epistemic and physical, which permits the dominant power structure, represented by Eggs, to ultimately nullify the refugee's subjective reality. This article opposes this by formulating a comprehensive analysis of how political discourse acts as Foucauldian mechanism of power to strip Hazem of his political identity, thereby relegating him to Agamben's "bare life".

Significance of Study

The significance of this study is threefold. Initially, it provides a contribution to Australian theatre criticism by situating Rayson's *Two Brothers* within a cosmopolitan theoretical framework which connects postcolonial thoughts of both Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak with modern power theory of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben to reveal universal mechanisms which enable the state to control and dehumanize Hazem, the "subaltern" figure. Secondly, by examining the limits of representation of both

Nick Couldry and Jo A. Tacchi, this paper provides a critical lens on refugee advocacy. Finally, it emphasizes how well-intentioned endeavors by the advocate, Tom, can reinforce the structural hierarchies which seek to interpret through the dominant language of political advantage.

Literature Review

The body of literature relevant to this study is centered around three essential theoretical zones: the politics of representation, the critical framework of biopolitics, and the function of discourse in "othering". The foundational debate focuses on the power imbalance between the refugee's emotional and personal language and the advocate's institutional and political voice to argue that marginalized voices have to be valued. The analysis is grounded in Edward Said's concept of "us" versus "them" binary and Stuart Hall's (1997) power/knowledge game which examine how stereotypes are used to construct the excluded as "other". Central to the paper's biological lens is Giorgio Agamben's (1998) framework of the *State of Exception* and *Bare Life*. Hazem exists as homo scar, a numeral stripped of political bios and reduced to the law, biological vulnerability of zoe. This study bridges Foucault's theories on institutional normalization and sovereign control with Spivak's epistemic violence to analyze Hazem's experience. The result is a portrait of systemic erasure, where Hazem's voice is suppressed not by accident, but by a deliberate epistemology that values political ease over the truth of human suffering.

This theoretical reduction of the refugee to 'Bare Life' was mirrored in the play's real-world reception, where conservative critics utilized a similar exclusionary rhetoric to dismiss Rayson's work. For instance, the opening scene of Rayson's play starts with the political figure knifes the only survivor of Kelepasan which can be metaphorically explored to suggest the negation of the other. It ends with the surrender of the characters who call for ethical values for different desires such as hesitancy to betray a father and others to keep a son out of jail. After its first performance, the cast is compromised as well as being savaged. In the *Herald Sun*, Andrew Bolt attacks the play as a vomiting of arrogant hate. Additionally, Rayson is also attacked for supporting the conspiracy theory which shows the Australian side as responsible of SIEV X sinking. The play is criticized as clichéd and trite and its playwright as mercenary (Balfour, 2013, p.208-9).

Two Brothers is a controversial play that causes a conflict of views between those who support and those who oppose it. Helen Thomson, a theatre critic at *Age* newspaper, praises *Two Brothers* as a passionate and powerful play by for its contribution to the issue of the refugees in the drama field. She describes it as "blow after blow at cherished notions of Australia as an egalitarian land of the fair go. [Rayson's] targets are many, her aim is deadly and she leaves her audience at the end shaken, sickened even, at a national self-portrait that is utterly shameful" (as cited in Phillips, 2005). Within the same newspaper, Tom Hyland, a political commentator who lacks expertise in drama, denounces *Two Brothers* as a one-dimensional propaganda that ignores the truth, deals with the stereotypes and calls for prejudice instead of studying those moral issues (Phillips, 2005). The pro-Howard commentators were angered by the similarity between Rayson's play and the Costello brothers in his government as well as the SIEV X incident and called for cancelling the Australia of Arts.

Discussion

The play begins by establishing a Foucauldian regime of truth, where the refugee's voice is routinely neglected in favor of dominant media narratives that portrayed Hazem's voice as institutionally silent and him as a wordless figure. This is not a passive absence but a productive act of Power/ Knowledge (Foucault, 1980); the political establishment, represented by Eggs and the mass media, creates a specific knowledge of the refugee as a controllable symbol rather than a human being. This discursive fixing of identity purposes through what Hall (1997) describes as a power/knowledge game, which reinforces a violent hierarchy of "us" and "them" (Said, 1978). By labeling Hazem a "security threat" from the "Middle East" (p. 38), the government uses its institutional authority to construct a reality where Hazem is "othered" and structurally muted before he can even speak. As Foucault argues, multiple power relations cannot exist without the production and circulation of such a discourse, which here serves to justify Hazem's exclusion from Australian civilizational body.

Within this framework, the ethical dilemma arises regarding who speaks on the refugee's behalf at a moment when their own voices are suppressed. This does not mean that refugees are literally silent, Hazem's own voice is heard in the play, but rather that their subjective narratives are actively overwhelmed or suppressed by political discourse. The core issue is thus one of power, not absence. This lack of subjective spaces for self-expression demonstrates a system of active marginalization that structurally subverts both policy and academic discourse. Yet, the advocate's voice, Tom, who is allowed to speak on behalf of the refugee, is different from the refugee's. This permission is accepted by the media not because of intrinsic superiority, but because of structural hierarchy; Tom's voice possesses political and institutional unity because he speaks their legal and political language while Hazem uses personal and emotional language that is alien to their ears (McLoughlin, 2023, p.56).

Furthermore, "Refugees have often been used as a symbol by others, for instance in media discourses or political campaigns, instead of being taken as human beings" (McLoughlin, 2023, p.59). The political establishment and the mass media have taken them as symbols, political tools or emotional objects of policy because symbols are more controllable, emotionally potent, and interchangeable, unlike complex human beings. Additionally, "refugees and asylum seekers are not given much space to speak in many media discourses and are generally placed as the subject of narratives rather than as active agents" (McLoughlin, 2023, p.56). Tom finds that "it is crucial to challenge continued exclusionary dynamics" (McLoughlin, 2023, p.51). Thus, he takes the responsibility to lead a discourse on the National Press Club, since "[t]here is a need to create space for people to have ownership and control over their own stories" (McLoughlin, 2023, p.51). According to McLoughlin (2023) "it is crucial to critically examine who is present, who is excluded, and whose voices are highlighted" (p.51). Since "the reliance of the media on information provided by government" (Herman & Chomsky, 2008, p.62) allows the state to control the narrative, Eggs's use of a strategic emotional reminder, evoking past national trauma to prioritize security, effectively cancels Tom's moral critique and reasserts the government's dominance over the political discourse.

Consequently, Hazem is reduced by the political figures like Eggs and Jamie, Eggs' secretary, and the media, to a wordless figure whose story is consistently ignored in favor of voices that serve a political agenda. He is prevented from speaking for himself, both literally and symbolically. Hazem's silence is made in two distinct stages. The first occurs during the administrative discussions in Act Two, where Jamie dismisses Hazem's presence by stating, "we certainly don't want to encourage crazy people […] not from the "Middle East" (p.38). This scene provides the textual proof for Hall's power/knowledge game; Hazem is not present to defend himself, yet his identity is being labelled by Jamie as a "security threat" (p.51). Accordingly, Hazem's subjective story is already being ignored and reframed by the political debate. Because of its disruptive and emotional nature, Hazem's voice is structurally muted. Secondly, a literal silence happens through stabbing him, which physically inhibited his ability to talk entirely, permitting the political figures to fabricate the narrative around him. Although Tom attempts to speak for Hazem, his voice is different. Despite using political language, Tom lacks institutional authority which made his failure to achieve moral justice in contrast to Eggs who has both the institutional power and the political language of propaganda, blame, and legal defense.

This structural marginalization illustrates the productive power of the state, which does not ignore the refugee but actively generates a discourse that renders the subaltern's voice inaudible. Epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988) is calculated by institutional authority. Characters, like Eggs, brand Hazem's testimony as irrational, ensuring only the official expert narrative holds weight. Consequently, as Malkki (1996) suggests, Hazem is not silent due to a lack of voice, but due to being made inaudible by historical structures of power that prioritize political ease over the lived reality of human suffering. Even the advocacy of Tom, which aligns with Couldry's (2010) value of the narrative self, fails because it operates within this same Foucauldian grid; Tom's expert voice is accepted by the media only because he speaks the state's legal language, unintentionally reinforcing the system that demands a specific, institutionalized type of voice to be heard.

This violent hierarchy is reinforced by the play's engagement with Edward Said's post-colonial binaries, where the strategic use of stereotypes constructs a rigid between divide between the dominant Australian "us" and the refugee "them" (Said, 1978, p.2). This dynamic illustrates Michel Foucault's (1980) contention that power relations cannot exist in any society without the circulation, accumulation, production and functioning of a dominant discourse, in this case, the discourse of the illegal invader. It is this power imbalance that leads to spatial marginalization as Hazem is relegated to the fringe by depicting him in a remote, isolated cliff-top house to symbolize the official process of "othering". This reflects Hall's (1997) "power/knowledge" game in which dominant groups use stereotypes to classify the "other" who does not fit the norm as a "a threat to security" (p.259). Consequently, when Eggs asserts, "[t]his is my house" (p.2), he is not just protecting his property; he is asserting a civilizational divide. This is the colonial branding Edward Said (1979) warned against, where the Arab is portrayed as having "fallen again into a savage state" (p.171) to justify his structural exclusion from Australian landscape.

Depending on structural power, the foundational contest considering marginalized voices comes from Gayatri Spivak (1988), who critiques the concept of epistemic violence and the muted status of the subaltern. Spivak asks, "can the subaltern speak?" (p.66), arguing that the dominant Western colonial apparatus does not ignore the marginalized voice, it actively dismantles it. This creates a "crisis of representation" (p.69) where the subaltern's reality is overwritten. In Rayson's play, this suppression is not passive; it is a deliberate act of violence. Characters like Eggs use their institutional authority to brand Hazem's lived experiences as irrational or invalid, ensuring that only the official narrative holds weight. In doing so, Hazem's testimony, his factual loss and emotional, is rendered systematically inaudible. This truth is sacrificed to an epistemology that values legal technicalities and political ease over the lived reality of human suffering.

Beyond the epistemic violence, the play further illustrates that the refugee's silence is, as articulated by Liisa H. Malkki , a result of historical structures, the long-standing, systematic, and deeply embedded political, social, and economic systems of power. Malkki (1996) opposes the idea of giving the marginalized people voice (p.398) because it ignores the fact that these "people who are silent not due to a lack of a voice, but rather due to having been oppressed and kept quiet by historical structures" (as cited in McLoughlin, 2023, p.57). Hazem has a voice and will to speak, but he has faced physical silence, beside the symbolic muzzle. The physical silence refers to the literal, tangible actions taken, by Eggs and the Australian system of power which he represents, to prevent Hazem from speaking or being heard. This occurs through his spatial isolation in the remote house which separates Hazem from the public sphere and prevents his words from reaching the public. This is compounded by the symbolic muzzle when Hazem is dismissed as irrational or irrelevant, his voice is symbolically muzzled.

To understand the roots of Hazem's status as "bare life", one must look back to the play's opening prologue. This physical silence is not an abstract notion but is enacted in the play's prologue, where the stage directions describe Eggs "menaces him with the knife at his throat" (p.1). By beginning the play with this specific physical threat, Rayson establishes that the refugee's story is literally cut off before it can begin, proving that sovereign power is first exercised upon the body. In a Foucault context, Hazem's attempts to speak are meant to "resist dominant narratives and assert their own voices and perspectives, reclaiming their agency in the face of systemic oppression" (Naem, 2024, p.596). Quieting Hazem transcends personal violence; it is a calculated move within a dominant political discourse. The Australian government's worries that Hazem's words might "bring down" (p.46) their administration, are instance of employing the very "power/knowledge" dynamic Foucault identified. Here, power is not merely the state's right to punish; it's about a productive disciplinary force that generates its own reality. Through such mechanisms, the state generates knowledge that renders human subjects as submissive and useful within institutional and political framework.

Furthermore, Foucault posits that modern society functions by a dual power structure: a framework of "public right" and "a closely linked grid of disciplinary coercions whose purpose is in fact to assure the

cohesion of this same [political] body" (Foucault, 1980, p.106). In the play, Eggs' effort to compromise Tom by offering him a new job and a promoting in the United Nations Human Rights sector external Australia perfectly exemplifies this disciplinary power. This offer, while seemingly beneficial, functions as a sophisticated formula of coercion considered to neutralize Tom's advocacy for Hazem and maintain the political establishment's narrative. By appeasing Tom and keeping him under his control, Eggs manages to remove a dissenting voice from the political sphere, thereby guaranteeing the cohesion of the dominant discourse on refugees. Tom's direct accusation, "[y]ou are trying to buy my silence" (p.11), emphasizes his awareness of being subjected to this insidious manipulation, revealing how even apparently benign gesticulations can be turned into instruments of control within a broader power dynamic.

Foucault's disciplinary power is essentially demonstrated by its application against the state's own allies, Lachlan and Tom. Lachlan, a naval officer, holds the truth about the boat sinking and the government's false claims, yet he remains silent. His restraint regarding the boat sinking is a result of a complex web of institutional pressure. The threat of a "court-martialled" (p.43) or being branded a "Nazi" (p.30) or villain by press demonstrates how hegemony operates through social terror. The implied presence of "hundreds of witnesses in the Kalgoorlie" (p.70) evokes the Panoptic gaze (Foucault, 1977), where the mere possibility of being watched forces the individual to self-regulation and silence. To compel Tom's silence, Eggs employs a dual mechanism of dominance. Initially, he uses disciplinary power, the subtle, professional coercion, by attempting to buy Tom's silence with the prestigious United Nations job. This tactic, which Tom recognizes, is a sophisticated formula of coercion designed to neutralize Tom's advocacy and maintain the political establishment's narrative.

Significantly, to impose absolute silence, Eggs resorts to the obvious force of Sovereign Power. Foucault defines Sovereign Power as the right "which can either benefit or irrevocably destroy life" (Foucault, 1978, p.129), that functions through visible, deductive acts of punishment. Eggs illustrates this by threatening to use the authorized status to imprison Tom's son, Harry, on fabricated drug charges. By directly wielding the "lucrative judicial system" (Foucault, 1980, p.5) to serve political interests, Eggs converts the moral argument into a matter of state-sanctioned coercion. Eggs' actions demonstrate that the legal system is secondary to sovereign force; his violence represents "a state of exception" where raw power supersedes legal protections. Consequently, any moral debates about justice and truth are reduced irrelevant when faced with the state's capacity to impose harm. Tom's final, silent action of "wiping [the knife] clean" (p.76) signifies his full submission to protect his son from the overwhelming authority of the state.

Shifting focus slightly, while Spivak's work is foundational, more recent theorists have expanded on the concept of voice to provide a more nuanced framework for understanding advocacy. Nick Couldry (2010) offers a broader perspective by considering voice as both a value and a process, which gives "an account of one's life and its conditions" (p.7) and "values all human beings' ability to give an account of themselves; it values my and your status as 'narratable' selves" (p.13). The play determines the denial of

this value. Eggs and the power structure reject to recognize Hazem as a "narratable self", which justifies his original symbolic silencing by dismissing his testimony.

However, Jo A. Tacchi (2012) presents a crucial qualification, arguing that voice is "inadequate unless there is also a shift in the hierarchies of value and attention accorded different actors and communities" (p. 7-8). This means that it is not enough for this individual to have a story, but there must be listened to by a community that assesses their experience. Tom tries to compensate for this by employing a political language to describe the incident as a "full-scale emergency" (p.12) arguing that government "failed to launch a rescue operation" (p.12) to abort refugees' attempts to "foot on our soil" (p.13). Yet, power dynamics problematizes his efforts to fight power imbalances.

The ultimate expression of this systematic exclusion lies in Giorgio Agamben's *State of Exception*, a framework that exposes how Australia's border policies function by overriding the normal rule of law. The creation of a remote, legally liminal space where Hazem is confined, symbolized by the barbed wire, happens before his death. This forced isolation and confinement establishes his pre-existing status as bare life, *homo sacer*. Hazem's status as 'bare life' is dramatized through his physical confinement. This image of confinement evokes the concentration camp, which Agamben identifies as the ultimate expression of biopolitical power; it is a site where an individual's status a rights-bearing subject is stripped away, leaving only a biopolitical life that the sovereign can dispose of with impunity. This dehumanization is further highlighted by the strategically meaningless label used to describe him: "moderate" (p.59). This shows that even a benign political description cannot protect him as the political system operates regardless of the individual's legal rights.

Defining this state further, Agamben's "Bare Life" is central for a life stripped of all political and legal status (bios), making it the figure of homo sacer, who can be killed by the sovereign with impunity but cannot be ritually sacrificed. This biological existence, vulnerable and excluded from juridical order, is what modern biopolitics continuously seeks to produce and manage (Agamben, 1998, p.1-8). According to Agamben's concept, the state of existence, which critiques how Australian border policies suspend the normal rule of law. In this play, the political discourse and sovereign authority treat Hazem as a mere biological body (zoe) and strip him of his political rights (bios), which Agamben identifies as expression of biopolitical power where individuals exist only as a body to be contained and managed. This vulnerability is created regardless of whether Hazem joined a party or sought to exercise formal political rights it places him outside the legal and political sphere altogether. Eggs demonstrates this by saying "we'll be putting Mr. Al-Ayad on the first plane back to Iraq" (p.37), an imperative that treats Hazem as a disposable object subject to exclusion, thereby exercising the sovereign power to reduce his life to a state that can be legally deported without recourse.

Thus, the systemic violence concludes in the political discourse stripping Hazem of his identity, reducing him to Giorgio Agamben's notion of "bare life". Hazem is perceived as a mere biological existence (zoe), not as a citizen with political rights (bios), and placed him in a precarious "zone of indistinction in which zoe and bios constitute each other" (p.8) where his life is depicted to the sovereign's

power to murder and sacrifice. The government's framing of Hazem as a problem rather than an individual and the media's dehumanizing rhetoric are not just political tools; they are the biopolitical acts that reduce his life undeserving of protection. This state is cruelly realized in the violence inflicted upon him by Eggs, which, according to Agamben's perspective, is not an act of homicide against a fellow human but the unpunishable killing of a life that has been exposed of its legal and moral standing. Thus, Hazem's personal tragedy develops a dramatization of how a sovereign power, through political discourse, can form and dispose of bare life.

Conclusion

This paper has confirmed that Rayson's *Two Brothers* functions as more than just political critique, serving instead as a dramatic dissection of the structural mechanisms of power that control refugee narratives. Through integrating the theoretical frameworks of Michel Foucault, Gayatri Spivak, and Giorgio Agamben, the paper highlights two processes of Epistemic Violence and Biopolitics. Definitely, the relegation of the Iraqi refugee, Hazem, is shown to be the eventual brutal realization of the political discourse which systematically refuses his testimony. It further reveals Foucault's dual operation of power: where Disciplinary Power imposes dissenters like Tom and Lachlan through institutional pressure, the threat of Sovereign Power enforces silence and ensures the cohesion of the state's narrative. Ultimately, Tom's well-intentioned advocacy is inadequate, approving the study's essential finding: the structural tool works to render the refugee's subjective narrative illegible and relegate them into muted subalterns. The play serves as a testimony to the violent state of exception essential in modern border security policies.

Ultimately, in responding to Spivak's (1998) foundational enquiry, "can the subaltern speak?", the play suggests that while Hazem is not literally silent, he remains a 'subaltern' who is unable to speak within the dominant Australian political epistemology. Although his voice is physically heard on stage, it is systematically rendered inaudible by a structure that only recognizes the legal and political language of the advocate. Hazem's narrative is consistently "wip[ed] clean" (p.76) from the translated record, symbolized by Tom's final act of cleaning the knife. Sovereign power enables Eggs to successfully intimidate the advocate, Tom, to eventually submit to protect his family, and Hazem to a subaltern whose narrative is buried alongside his body.

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