

## Ugly Rumours: A Mockumentary beyond the Simulated Reality

Kağan Kaya

*Faculty of Letters English Language and Literature, Cumhuriyet University, Turkey*

*\*Corresponding Author: Kağan Kaya, Faculty of Letters English Language and Literature, Cumhuriyet University, Turkey*

### ABSTRACT

*Ugly Rumours was the name of a rock band which was co-founded by Tony Blair when he was a student at St John's College, Oxford. In the hands of two British dramatists, Howard Brenton and Tariq Ali, it transformed into a name of the satirical play against New Labour at the end of the last century. The play encapsulates the popular political struggle of former British leaders, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. However, this work aims at analysing some sociological messages of the play in which Brenton and Ali tell on media and reality in the frame of British politics and democracy. Through the analyses of this unfocussed local mock-epic, it precisely points out ideas reflecting the real which is manipulated for the sake of power in a democratic atmosphere. Thereof it takes some views on Simulation Theory of French philosopher, Jean Baudrillard as the basement of analyses. According to Baudrillard, our perception of things has become corrupted by a perception of reality that never existed. He believes that everything changes with the device of simulation. Hyper-reality puts an end to the real as referential by exalting it as model. (Baudrillard, 1983:21, 85) That is why, establishing a close relationship with the play, this work digs deeper into the play through the 'Simulation Theory' and analysing characters who are behind the unreal, tries to display the role of Brenton and Ali's drama behind the fact.*

**Keywords:** *Brenton and Ali, British drama, hyper-reality, Jean Baudrillard, Simulation Theory*

### INTRODUCTION

After a seventeen-year-old Tory governments' reign, on May 1, 1997 Labour Party won the greatest number in parliamentary. As the youngest Prime Minister of the twentieth century, Tony Blair had seen that "[Labour Party] needed a new image, an image that would appeal to the successful" (Mullen, 2007, p.146) called as 'third way', he took over the government for two following parliamentary terms until 2007. Blair's new political launching particularly must be seen as one of the factors that contemporary politics once again occupied the British stage at the end of the twentieth century.

Blair years must not only be regarded as politically dramatic, but also those years are under the harsh criticism of British drama.

"There is only one thing leftwing dramatists hate more than a Tory government. That, of course, is a Labour government." (Billington 1998) For British dramatists, Howard Brenton

and Tariq Ali, it is a rare opportunity as they have always sharp criticism on political and sociological issues in Britain. They "have wasted no time in penning a flailing and unfocused satire [Ugly Rumours] on the Blair administration for failing to deliver the red-blooded socialism it never actually promised: after only 18 months" (Billington 1998). The name of the play against New Labour originates from the name of a rock band which was co-founded by Tony Blair when he was a student at St John's College, Oxford. In the hands of two British dramatists, it transformed into a harsh critical play against Tony Blair government.

Although Ali and Brenton's ejaculations seem somewhat untimely, the play "represents the first real theatrical blast of the old London Left against Blairism" (Mcmillan, 1998, p.15). That is "It wants us to know precisely where New Labour lost its principles." (Raven 1998) It precisely mocks Tony Blair because of his relationship with focus groups, not listening

enough to what the public wishes, control freakery, presiding over a divided party, particularly being unable to handle his Chancellor, Gordon Brown, acting as a Thatcherite in economy, reducing the influence of Parliament, blindly pursuing US foreign policy, failing to promote the cause of the EU, the failure in Euro policy etc. (Giddens, 2007, p.107).

However, the criticism of the playwrights really horrifies theatre men. Trevor Nunn at the National Theatre and Jude Kelly at West Yorkshire Playhouse rejected to put *Ugly Rumours* on stage. Yet, Ali reports that according to Nicholas Kent from *The Tricycle* “it’s going to be terrific fun. Unfortunately, political satire in the theatre is now a rare and unwelcome beast [...] it is time someone had a go at the Government” (Stringer 1998) due to its “meandering muddle” (Nightingale 1998) plot in which:

John Smith appears as a stricken ghost, Peter Mandelson is transformed into the sinister Polly Mendacity, and literary pastiche coexists with endless knowing references to the trivia of British politics. But mainly it involves Tony-Boy’s undeclared war with his Chancellor, Gordon Macduff: a conflict that ends with the replacement of the English Parliament by an annual ‘democracy afternoon’ of focus groups in the Millennium Dome and the return of the disgruntled Scot to his native land.

As the cast of the play is composed of real characters, and much of the humour in the play is constituted by means of character exaggerations and the fundamental hypothesis of the play depends on the responsible figures behind the simulation, this work focuses on its characters rather than its twisty plot. It analyzes Tony-Boy, Gordon Macduff, Media-Baron and two politicians’ spin doctors as defined in Webster’s - people (such as political aides) responsible for ensuring that others interpret an event from a particular point of view - in terms of their roles in the real/unreal conflict.

This work benefits from some views of Jean Baudrillard, a French philosopher, to dig into the conflict to exhibit the playwrights’ dramatic goal. It is known that affected by famous French Situationist, Guy Debord, Ali and Brenton with actor-writer Andy de la Tour founded a group with the name of *Stigma* to challenge the insolence, the foolishness and clichés of contemporary politics. Yet, this work foresees that Ali and Brenton must also be under the influence of Baudrillard. He thinks that simulacrum as a term “describes the

transformation of the symbolic into the semiotic image – a journey from reflecting reality, to masking reality, to having no relation to reality whatsoever” (Pope 2007). In this sense, this work profoundly analyzes the play by the help of Baudrillard’s own works and some significant academic works about ‘Simulation Theory’. Analysing the main characters of the play, as they distort reality, it tries to display the role of Ali and Brenton’s drama behind the fact by the help of some theatre reviews and works about their drama. This work mainly puts forth that Ali and Brenton like Baudrillard are behind the reasons that corrupt man’s true world they picture in *Ugly Rumours*.

### BAUDRILLARD’S WORLD OF SIMULATION

Jean Baudrillard is one of the most influential post-Marxist philosophers and sociologists of the twentieth century. His basic principle is based on simulation which was introduced in the late 1970s. His major concern is how capitalism surrounds the real world and social life. His works involve an attempt to explain and conceive the idea of reality in the post-modern world. Like Marx, the philosopher believes that “production not only produces goods; it produces people to consume them, and corresponding needs” (Baudrillard, 1981, p.69). In the light of Baudrillard’s views this world is described as a world of “obesity and obscenity [which] dominates all fields of life” (Adanir 2007). Baudrillard declares that “we are currently living in an era of simulation in which it is impossible to tell the difference between the real and a fake, reality and simulation” (Baudrillard, 1983, pp. 1-13). Today, the real utterly lacks to define the daily actions and attitudes of the individual anymore.

In this artificial world man cannot establish any authentic connections. This causes man to become distant from the principle of reality. Even more, he gradually isolates himself from it. Man has eventually become estranged against this industrial and mechanical world, and the new world around the man has become hyper-real. To get rid of such a complicated world atmosphere, the man has to know “everything changes with the device of simulation” (Baudrillard, 1983, p.21). It is a world of simulation or a simulation of life, henceforth. In this sense, Baudrillard believes that simulation is “the act of creating something fake” (1983, pp.23-49). This world cannot be considered as real, as long as reality becomes a part of the past.

Baudrillard regards that “the hyper-real has displaced the real because one thing has made it possible: technology” (Sheehan, 2004, p.31). According to him when the principle of reality which transforms an artificial life the man is made to believe that he lives in that real world. As the knowledge and information sectors are key domains of contemporary world, the media are becoming more dazzling and are playing an ever-escalating role in everyday life. However, today, it is debated that technology constructs a world which has no references related to the real. Baudrillard warns that “reality is simulated through the breaking of symbolic exchange relations and the positing of the discrete and disenchanted universe of the sign” (Smith, 2010, p.108). He believes that the perceptions of man have been distorted and encapsulated by the technology-oriented process of made-up reality.

In this sense, Baudrillard defines simulacrum “as a copy of a copy which has been so repeatedly acknowledged, referred to and disseminated, that it has come to be accepted as more real than the original” (Hehir, 2011, p.1078). This is the process of creating a new world in which the man like robots does what is expected from him in an absurd routine. He has just become a biologically cloned entity. The man who lives in such an atmosphere has eventually been transformed into a human simulacrum like the world which is formed by simulacra.

In this artificial world technological items and media do not serve the process in which human-being exists but it serves the system which wishes man to consume everything around him. Baudrillard (1995) asserts that “at a certain speed, the speed of information, things lose their sense”. The perceptions of the man are profoundly determined by the media events and he is subject to their effects. This constructs a kind of chaos in the mind of man. The man has no right to believe what he wishes, henceforth. Baudrillard claims that “Reality has vanished and yet we are suffering as if it still existed” (Baudrillard 2005). Baudrillard describes this world of simulacrum as a world which pictures the alteration of the symbolic into semiotic image; a kind of split from reality in order to mask the real. He thinks that “We have lost everything: the spectacle, alienation, distancing, transcendence, abstraction... a later stage in the process of simulation has been reached, namely the simulation of a real more real than the real, the simulation of a hyper-real” (Baudrillard 2005) In the world that Baudrillard draws in his

philosophy, the man is drug from one side to another without real.

However, like a dramatist, Baudrillard may not provide an exact solution for man. He noticeably points out the tragedy of man. He assumes that “of all the great figures of seduction in mythology and art - who seduce by a look, a song, an absence, by rouge, beauty or monstrosity, by masks or madness, by their fame, but also their failure and death - Narcissus stands out with singular force.” (Baudrillard, 1990, p.72) The individual has become a modern unsuccessful copy of Narcissus anymore as he is enchanted by the medium which carries the irrelevant messages for him.

### ALI AND BRENTON’S DRAMA BREAKS DOWN SIMULATION

Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton have a mutual interest in exhibiting what fakes British society comes face to face with throughout their careers. Apart from *Ugly*, they penned *Iranian Nights* and *Snogging Ken*. For instance, in their recent play, *Snogging Ken*, a satire on the contest to be London’s mayor, they cannonade Tony Blair because of his dishonest political duel with the first prospective London Mayor, Ken Livingstone. Ali and Brenton always historicize the national and international political distortion and illusion.

Brenton was the most radical playwright of the Brechtian generation in the late sixties. He “combines irony, satire, and broad humour in scathing critiques of those in power, and like Brecht, he is always situated politically vis-à-vis current affairs” (Reinelt, 1994, p.18). He clearly proclaims that “I am a straight, traditional writer, trying to write truthfully about the society” (Hay et al., 1979, p.135) His criticism on capitalist society originates in the situationist political theory of the 1960s. Although “It is impossible to identify a particular moment when Situationism begins to influence Brenton’s thinking” (Boon, 1991, p.55), it still continues.

Tariq Ali was also one of the socialist activists of the 1960s. He is a many-sided intellectual. He studied Indian history and politics. Ali is a novelist, historian and playwright. Even more, he is one of the outstanding figures of the protest movement.

They come together to disrupt the fake face of New Labour at the very beginning of this century. Combining their powerful wounding words in *Ugly Rumours*, a documentary play which blends the true and fictional words of its characters, they reveal their dramatic awareness of the present political affairs. Ali says *Ugly* is

“about the emptiness at the heart of the New Labour project. [Blair]’s an emperor without any clothes who can only put on old clothes but tries to pretend they are new.” (Raven 1998) In this sense, they consider that there is a need for “new form of resistance” (Aaronovitch 2008). Without explaining the frame of this new form, Ali reveals their criticism against New Labour declaring that:

I have a visceral hatred of New Labour and everything they stand for. These are people without any political principles at all, intent on staying in power at all cost. They will back war, privatize things [...] they are just wrecking this country. These people believe in nothing but power, they are in politics to line their pockets then retire. (Chrisafis 2003)

There has been a regular cooperation between Tariq Ali and Brenton on some harsh satires. *Ugly* is one of these neglected plays. As Ali and Brenton use their fictional characters to mock real political and media figures, it must be called as a mockumentary, a piece of ‘theatre cartoonery’ disrupting the simulation, as well. With its direct parodies, *Ugly* must be considered as the first dramatic riot against the disillusionment which was established by Tony Blair’s New Labour.

### UGLY: REALITY UNDER THE CONTROL OF SPIN DOCTORS AND MEDIA BARONS

With the appearance of Tony-Boy’s man-like spin doctor Polly Mendacity in a dark black costume on their stage, it is initially thought that what have happened recently in Britain re-emerges. However, it is really a compact satire as Ali (1998) describes:

It would provide a voice to the growing anger within many communities, artistic and others, against new Labour. It would also be a homage to the late, great Bertolt Brecht, whose centenary is being observed with great fanfare in the new Germany, where the Christian Democrat Helmut Kohl has placed the dead Marxist playwright on a plinth adjacent to Goethe. Our inspiration was the spirit, the attack and the popular, dizzying cartoonery of Brecht’s Arturo Ui.

However, the playwrights turn their harsh criticism not only to political issues in the world but also to the spin doctors and British media. In a sense, as the follies of political figures are tried to be hidden by media and politicians’ spin doctors, there must be some samples of simulation beyond the real.

When Polly appears, she bears a kind of seriousness in minds. The black costumes of

politicians and their staff are usually considered as the sign of seriousness. But, her appearance must be judged as a kind of simulation. She is herself the simulacrum of Peter Mandelson, Tony Blair’s real spin doctor. The name, Polly Mendacity, brings three significant things into minds. First, her name evokes ‘polishing’ and it sparks that she must polish one of the simulacral protagonists of the play, Tony-Boy. Second, her name reminds the well-known cartoon character, Pollyanna who is generally defined as always happy and she believes that only good things will happen in life. That is, Polly is straightforwardly considered as the fortune-teller of Tony-Boy. And third, her family name Mendacity means ‘lies’. Using allegoric names on stage may be an old-fashioned theatrical trick whereas the playwrights’ idea works well on the stage as the play is based on images.

Polly’s first words also match with her appearance. Like Brecht, Ali and Brenton use narrators on the stage. Polly, as the first narrator, begins to talk to the audience: “There is no reason not to do what I say” (Ali and Brenton, 1998, p. 5). Polly’s way of exchanging words may be considered as a method of convincing audience to act for her sake, that is, her statements fit both her image and job. While describing herself, Polly states that she is “not a control freak” (ibid, p. 5), and asks for repeating her statement. She acts as if she were democratic. However, by means of making the audience repeat her words, Polly hopes to control the audience’s point of view. She makes the audience think that they have an active role in a democratic atmosphere. Whereas the audience have red and green cards in their hands to put up according to their thoughts, Polly never takes their decisions into consideration.

This cannot be considered as an unintentional idea. Ali and Brenton demand the audience to remember that they are in a democratic platform in “an interactive evening” (ibid, p. 5) in England as England is always considered to be the cradle of democracy. Billington stresses that there is “an imaginative vision of a future in which basic human freedom would be curtailed by the state” (2009, p. 222) in Brenton’s plays. His plays “expose the contradictions inherent in capitalism and engage in an analysis of possible responses to the system” (O’Connor, 2005, p. 409). Although the word ‘interactive’ means that the people communicate with each other, democracy is restricted by spin doctors in *Ugly*.

As Polly keeps introducing herself, it becomes much more obvious to figure out what political

roles a spin doctor has. Besides, this bears a clue for what would happen throughout the career of Polly. It is then a lot palpable things to realize her responsibilities. Polly not only controls the audience but also controls a lot more off stage citizens:

Today I am the Secretary of State at the DTI. The Department for Treachery and Influence. And tomorrow... who knows? You don't. I do. But just get one thing straight. I run all the shows in town, including this one and the jury's still out. (ibid, p. 6)

Polly's words disgorge a perfect example of the concept of spectacle. She expresses that everything in the political world is directed by some external forces as if a piece of theatrical work or show were being performed. Then, it makes clear that the leaders are just players for shows.

Politicians' personal lives also depend on their political staffs. Before Polly gets in their bedroom early in the morning, Tony-Boy tells his wife, Cherry that "Polly hasn't paged us yet. Go back to sleep" (ibid, p. 7) Polly is responsible for Tony-Boy's speeches, appearance and behaviour. Everything Tony-boy does is controlled by his spin doctor.

Similarly, Tony-Boy's political partner, Gordon Macduff who represents Gordon Brown has a spin doctor named Charlie. The play is based on the idea that every politician has his own spin doctor. The existence of one spin doctor gains meaning with the existence of the other. As a second narrator of the play, he tells the audience that he is the rival spin doctor: "Contrary to what Polly Mendacity has told you, I'm the one who runs this show." (ibid, p. 10) Moreover, he reminds that Gordon is his "boy" (ibid, p. 10). Thereof he feels that he has right to control him via his commands: "(To GORDON) Gordon, recession!" (ibid, p. 10) He is also a puppet in the hands of Charlie.

As soon as Charlie stops talking at Gordons', Polly launches to speak at Tony-Boy's. This kind of sequence represents the political competition between the leaders of British Labour Party as well as their spin doctors. In addition, it reveals that the play is a power show between the spin doctors like their leaders. She sings, "I believe in Nothing but power." (ibid, p. 11) while in Number 10, her song describes how important political power is in such a game.

In this game a politician is expected to act what his spin doctor would like him to play in front of the public. This reminds the words of Baudrillard "images contaminate reality [...] model it [...] anticipate it [...] to the point that reality no longer has time to be produced as such" (1987, p.16). Political leaders are to obey rules of their spin doctors in order to have the right political public image regardless of what important political issue is discussed in front of millions. Not content but image is everything for politicians. Polly's early morning warnings exemplify such an atmosphere:

POLLY. Wrong shirt. Tony-Boy. Swizzles on television.

TONY-BOY. Not on Sky.

POLLY. Everything looks good on Sky. No content. (ibid, p. 11)

However, it is not always true that spin doctors wish peace for their political heroes in front of the public. That's why Polly tells Tony-Boy that "That's my job. Treachery and influence. I make sure everyone's so busy loathing each other that they all have to say they like you." (ibid, p. 14). Being in a stable political atmosphere spin doctors cannot control the events around them easily. Therefore they must direct people to have enemies to war.

Spin doctors also need some other certain rules of the world of spectacle. They shape even the mimic and the body language of the politicians. As Baudrillard (2005) asserts that "The image is not related to the truth. It is related to appearances." It is a fact that as social reality seems to become more unreal, today, according to likes and dislikes of the public, media and spin doctors sell popular spectacles to the world easily. While Tony-Boy brushes his teeth before experiencing a TV event, Polly reminds him how he must behave after a political issue as lens shifts the object:

[P]olish and polish and polish again. Shine. Shine perfectly in the sun... Media loves dental floss. The smile is now perfect but what if there's a war Tony-Boy? We need the war-look. War in the Gulf, War in Serbia, War in Scotland. War. War [...] Media-Barron. War in Europe. Mauritius tests H-bomb. You have got to be prepared. (ibid, p. 15)

Meanwhile, like Tony-Boy, Gordon has a tough political programme when he comes across Thatcher's ghost. He tells Thatcher that the new world order expects them to adapt to media tricks and complains her about this new media-

centred order: "Poor world's been turned upside down since you died, Ghost. We all have creatures like this now" (ibid, p. 18) In fact, Gordon's criticism is against the interactive digital democracy promised by media barons although they are indispensable for any politicians' success across the world.

On the other hand, before his meeting Tony-Boy's day begins with one of the regular communication lessons given by an expert named Malvolio Clapper. As another allegoric figure, Clapper is responsible for preparing Tony-Boy in every political war. During training, Tony-Boy is told that the art of politics depends on acts especially in hard situations. Clapper knows that when Tony-Boy was at school he used to play well on the stage. According to him acting on stage is similar to acting before cameras: "It's just like pretending to be upset when someone dies. Like Mark Antony in Julius Caesar"; (ibid, p. 23) he exemplifies how to pretend before cameras. Clapper's warning evokes one of the infamous descriptions of Tony Blair before cameras on the morning of Princess Diana's death in August 1997: "the People's Princess" in an upset mood. Clapper as an image-maker knows that the image of a politician must be in accord with his manner.

The play always indicates that public image of a politician is much more important than his real personality. People are not aware of the real faces of politicians but their hypocritical images created by spin doctors and media. Baudrillard says that "virtual world is an extreme expression" (Touraine, 2007, p.3) as it is the media which decide what personality a political figure has and what he does in the public. A politician must have a family with children when media desires it. Gordon and Charlie discuss such an issue at their side:

GORDON. Charlie, do I have to get married?

CHARLIE. Yes.

GORDON. Can't I go to the monastery? Why should I be a breeder of sinners?

CHARLIE. Let's get two things straight Gordon. One, the media needs a wedding. Two, she'll breed, not you. (ibid, 24)

Political figures always need the assistance of media. It is known that like spin doctors, media barons have considerable roles in shaping politicians. Media barons ensure the political popularity. It is a must for a politician to have close relationships with media corporations. For

example, "The BBC often seemed worthy of its nickname, 'the Blair Broadcasting Corporation.'" (Mullen, 2007, p. 147) Tony-Boy's meeting Media-Baron plainly illustrates the dependence of politicians on media barons. Ali and Brenton make their most harsh criticism of their significant political figure via their stage direction at this meeting. Tony-Boy behaves as if he met the king: "Welcome, Media-Baron. I am proud and privileged to stand before you... (He's in reality kneeling.) [...] as a new kind of Prime Minister of our country" (ibid, p. 27). The playwrights have the idea that politicians are always ready to kneel in front of the media barons for the sake of their political lives.

As media bosses are seen as the prophets of the public today, in order to be successful, a politician also needs the support of media barons' newspaper columns, so that he establishes his own media instruments to use them when necessary. When Tony-Boy talks to the baron about British policy on Euro, it becomes clear that newspapers are the most common ways to create an intended agenda for politicians. The dialogue shows how newspaper columns may affect a politician either positively or negatively across the world:

TONY-BOY. Actually if we don't go euro they'll all gang up against us and Britain will go bankrupt. And we'll have to tell people that, and in order to succeed we really do need your newspapers. No disrespect, but your very nasty paper, for which I often write ...

MEDIA-BARON. Do you?

TONY-BOY. Oh yes, yes, but could you make sure they don't attack me more than once month? (ibid, 28-29)

As media-barons distort reality whenever they wish, it is obvious that a media-boss is more powerful and dangerous than a politician nowadays. As the image, for Baudrillard, is 'fundamentally immoral'; it is 'an evil demon', then, its creators must be considered as evils, too. Media-Baron's words gradually become dangerous for Tony-Boy. Unless he acts what the baron wishes, he will lose everything he owns. Media-Baron even dares to threaten him:

You go Euro on me, and I'll have the boys do a special one for you right out of the blazing eye of the Sun. You won't know what's hit you. Every day, every second, every paper, [TV] station, on and on. You won't stand. Serial killers can't stand neither will you. You will be surprised by the surprises I have in store for

you. You will lose more than your family's respect, your mind, your balls, your referendum. You'll lose your very sense of being... My satellite footprint hangs above your head. (ibid, pp. 31-32)

Media-Baron claims that he is "running seven Governments" (ibid, p. 60) of Europe. This clearly shows once again that media establishments have become the simulation of governments in modern world order. In such a world order once someone becomes a politician, he begins to act according to media rules. Tony-Boy's wife Cherry indicates that "power corrupts everyone regardless of narrow party interest" (ibid, p. 68). Politicians usually become the victims of power. That's why they just create an illusion for citizens:

CARDINAL. The grail of modern politics is to create the illusion of change while making sure that nothing changes.

TONY-BOY. We need to give the people what they think they really want. (ibid, p. 76)

At the end of the play Tony-Boy repeatedly points out that they "must give the people what they want." (ibid, p. 83) As politics must predominantly sell hope, people need a kind of new democratic way which would be provided by focus groups and/or "a new partnership for power" (ibid, p. 83); a powerful union, possibly a Tony-Boy and Gordon Macduff deal, a new media-politics union or a referendum in *Ugly Rumours*. That is the play is a kind of utopia through which Ali and Brenton tries to illustrate how democracy may be redefined in Britain. In fact, in such a hyper-real world there is not an exact union. It would be another new game of politics or it may be considered just as a new source of simulation. It is significant that as the Cardinal points out "You are what your spin doctor does" (ibid, p. 85). Then, there is not a real politician anymore. That is, Ali and Brenton merely indicate that all people frequently need to hear new ideas whether they are true or fake created by skilful spin-doctors and media-barons for politicians in the end.

### CONCLUSION

Brenton thinks that "What [theatre] can do is to illustrate specific moments in time and the burden of decision" (Billington 1990). As audiences always wish reality on the stage, drama is mostly regarded as the mean of pure facts. Brenton therefore, believes that a play "must connect with the world outside. According to Ali and Brenton "writing a political play is

rather like a drumming on the pipes in a small room in the hope that the rest of the housing estate can hear you, or at least pick up something that you are saying". (1989, p. 14) Similarly, *Ugly* is a play which is against "New Labour's so-called 'third way', a trashy system of pseudo-thought, half-Thatcher, half-Clinton, aims at shifting the relationship of culture to power." (Ali 1998) However, this work comes up with the idea that *Ugly Rumours* must not be thought as a simple clunky satire only upon New Labour. It is a highly significant mockumentary play turning around twisty political power games. The play also disrupts the official illusion that media creates in Britain, and it tries to make British be aware of what really happens at that time.

The main hypothesis of this work depends upon Baudrillard's 'Simulation Theory' as reality is chiefly distorted by the politicians, their spin doctors and media itself in *Ugly*. Ali and Brenton who are two intentionally ignored British playwrights always manage to wash those responsible politicians and their supporters' linen in the public. Thus, this work tries to make a firm link between Baudrillard's theory of Simulation and *Ugly* to realize Ali and Brenton's dramatic aim. Baudrillard says that "the virtual world is an extreme expression." (Touraine, 2007, p. 3) According to him, our perception of things has become corrupted by a perception of reality that never existed. Although media should remain unbiased and objective, fair and accurate, comprehensive and rational, this is not the case in contemporary world. By the help of Baudrillard's views, this work claiming that Ali and Brenton's drama in particular tries to unmask spin doctors, media and political figures who all over the world are hiding the facts for their own sake by creating a hyper-real world, it analyses the playwrights' mockumentary in terms of their sociological consciousness and the way that they use for waking public's awareness.

### NOTE

This work was orally presented in the 9th International IDEA Conference 15-17 April, 2015 at Malatya Inonu University, but it was not published before.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Aaronovitch, D., 2008. "Supermac, my hero," Times, March 24.
- [2] Adanir, O., 2007. "Jean Baudrillard and Our Different Worlds: Thinking beyond the Metaphysical and Pataphysical Divide," International Journal of Baudrillard Studies, 4(1),

- January. [Online]. Available: [http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol4\\_1/adan.htm](http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol4_1/adan.htm)
- [3] Ali, T., 1998. "Seen off the stage by new Labour's stooges," *The Sunday Times*, April 5.
- [4] Ali, T. and Brenton, H., 1989. "On Iranian Nights," *Independent Magazine*, no. 36, May 13.
- [5] Ali, T. and Brenton, H., 1998. *Ugly Rumours*. London: Nick Hern.
- [6] Baudrillard, J., 1981 [1972]. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. C. Levin, St. Louis: Telos.
- [7] Baudrillard, J., 1983 [1981]. *Simulacra and Simulations*, trans. P. Foss and P. Patton et al., New York: Semiotex(e), 1-13 and 23-49.
- [8] Baudrillard, J., 1987. *The Evil Demon of Images*, trans. P. Patton and P. Foss and et al., Sydney: Poer Publications.
- [9] Baudrillard, J., 1990. *Seduction*, trans. B. Singer, Montreal: New World Perspectives.
- [10] Baudrillard, J., 1995. "The Gulf War Did Not Take Place," trans. P. Patton, Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University.
- [11] Baudrillard, J., 2005. "Violence of the Virtual and Integral Reality," *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies*, trans. M. Lambert-Drache, 2(2), July, [Online]. Available:<http://ubishops.c a/baudrillardstudies/contents.htm>
- [12] Billington, M., 1990. "Can Theatre compete with the Real Life Drama of Recent Soviet History?" *The Guardian*, September 28.
- [13] Billington, M., 1998. "Shooting blunt arrows at the Labour balloon," *Guardian Weekly*, November 15.
- [14] Billington, M., 2009. *State of the Nation: British Theatre since 1945*, London: Faber and Faber.
- [15] Boon, R., 1991. *Brenton: The playwright*. London: Methuen Drama.
- [16] Chrisafis, A., 2003. "Stage Fright for New Labour," *The Guardian*, June 14.
- [17] Giddens, A., 2007. "New Labour: Tony Blair and After," *British Politics*, pp. 106-110.
- [18] Hay, M., Roberts, P. and Brenton, H., 1979. "Howard Brenton: An Introduction and Interview," *Performing Arts Journal*, 3(3), Winter, pp. 132-141.
- [19] Hehir, A., 2011. "Hyper-reality and Statebuilding: Baudrillard and the unwillingness of international administrations to cede control," *Third World Quarterly*, 32:6, 1073-1087. DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2011.584722
- [20] Mcmillan, J., 1998. "Ugly Rumours Tricycle Theatre," *London The Scotsman*, November 11.
- [21] Mullen, R., 2007. "The End of Blair," *Contemporary Review*, 289(1685), Summer, pp. 137-155.
- [22] Nightingale, B., 1998. "Tony's ring of confidants," *The Times (London)*, November 4.
- [23] O'Connor, J., 2005. *From Sore Throats to Greenland: Howard Brenton's Utopian Plays*, *Contemporary Justice Review*, 8(4), December, pp. 409-430.
- [24] Pope, R., 2007. *Baudrillard's Simulacrum: Of War, Terror, and Obituaries*, *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies*, 4(3), October, [Online]. Available:[http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol4\\_3/v4-3-article27b-pope.html](http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol4_3/v4-3-article27b-pope.html)
- [25] Raven, C., 1998. "Double take: Political satire? Don't make me laugh," *The Guardian*, November 5.
- [26] Reinelt, J., 1994. *After Brecht: British Epic Theatre*, Michigan: The University of Michigan.
- [27] Sheehan, P., 2004. *Postmodernism and Philosophy*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Connor, S., Cambridge: Cambridge University, pp. 20-43.
- [28] Smith, R. G. ed., 2010. *The Baudrillard's Dictionary*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University. Pdf.
- [29] "Spin Doctor." *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*. 2015. Web. 05 Jan 2015.
- [30] Stringer, R., 1998. "Play aims to 'pull down the pants of power,'" *The Evening Standard*.
- [31] Touraine, A., 2007. *Introduction: in A New Paradigm for understanding today's world*. Cambridge: Polity.

### AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

With a PhD from Atatürk University, Turkey in 2009 Kağan Kaya joined the department of English Language and Literature at Cumhuriyet University as an assistant professor doctor in 2010. He regularly teaches British Drama. His academic essays are on the works of Howard Brenton, Tom Stoppard, Alan Ayckbourn, David Hare and Robin Soans. His current research interest is British political drama.

**Citation:** Kağan Kaya. "Ugly Rumours: A Mockumentary beyond the Simulated Reality" *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, vol 4, no. 11, 2017, pp. 22-29.

**Copyright:** © 2017 Kağan Kaya. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.