

TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ

ANKARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI

(İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI)

ANABİLİM DALI

**METATHEATRE AS POLITICAL SATIRE IN RENAISSANCE AND
TWENTIETH-CENTURY ENGLISH DRAMA**

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T.C.

ANKARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğüne,

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Tarih: 23/03/2023

Esra ÜNLÜ ÇİMEN

İmza

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“The world is a stage, but the play is badly cast”.

Oscar Wilde

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INTRODUCTION

Although the history of metatheatre is almost as old as theatre itself, it was not until 1963 that it was formulated as a literary and theatrical concept. Furthermore, the few studies on metatheatre in existence do not seem to show an agreement over even its basic aspects. In English dramatic literature, analyses of metatheatre generally focus on the Renaissance period. In the period in question, metatheatre has often been regarded as a theatrical innovation which transformed the relationship between the audience and the play, by breaking the fourth wall between them. This study will focus on the convergence between metatheatre and political satire in English dramatic texts from the Renaissance period up to the twentieth century. In twentieth-century British drama, in addition to being a tool for political satire, metatheatre collaborates with postmodernism to question metanarratives such as history, nationalism, Eurocentrism and colonialism. In other words, in these plays, it has a more philosophical essence. Thus, a comparative study of metatheatre in the Renaissance era and twentieth century is significant to fully grasp its different functions and the new meanings it gained. In the dissertation, focusing on plays *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582-92), *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607), *The Roman Actor* (1613) from the early modern period (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) and *The Churchill Play* (1974), *A Map of the World* (1982), *Our Country's Good* (1988) from the twentieth century, the status, function and the transformations of both satire and metatheatre will be examined in this respect. A play from the eighteenth century, Henry Fielding's *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* has also been included to access the transformation of metatheatre as a tool of political satire from early modern to the twentieth period on a fuller scale.

The dissertation consists of four chapters focusing on the function and transformation of metatheatre as a tool of political satire. In Chapter I of this study, which offers a theoretical framework dealing with the connection between satire and drama, I

will focus on some critical perspectives which are mostly controversial. 1.1 will deal with the complexity of satire, various perspectives over its origin and definition, its relative power to cause social change and its decline in the contemporary age. 1.2 will focus on the connection between satire and theatre. In this respect, the common features of metatheatre and satire, Lionel Abel's theory of metatheatre, the five metatheatrical strategies offered by Richard Hornby will be put forth. 1.3 will provide a survey of satirical and metatheatrical English plays composed between the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries.

In Chapter II, focusing on the use of metatheatre in the English Renaissance period, three Renaissance plays, namely, Thomas Kyd's Elizabethan revenge tragedy *The Spanish Tragedy*, Francis Beaumont's Jacobean comedy *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and Philip Massinger's Caroline tragedy *The Roman Actor*, will be examined to show how metatheatre serves as a vehicle for satirizing political corruption in the era. 2.1 will deal with the corruption in the legal system of Elizabethan England as portrayed in *The Spanish Tragedy*. The role of *Soliman and Perseda*, the play-within-the-play staged by Hieronimo, will be explored as an example to show metatheatre's role as a tool for satirizing political deterioration. 2.2 will examine the class distinctions of the time as reflected in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* while 2.3 will analyse *The Roman Actor* as a satire on censorship and despotic monarchies.

Chapter III, 3.1, will deal with Henry Fielding's *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* satirizing the corrupted government of Robert Walpole, a play that led to the enactment of the Licensing Act. The play including a play-within-the-play will be examined to foreground how it has been used for satirical ends in the eighteenth century.

Chapter IV will focus on plays produced in the twentieth century. This chapter aims to show that, as opposed to the earlier centuries, political satire is not directed at

individual rulers, leaders, or political figures, but rather ideologies. In these plays, what is satirized is not certain leaders or political figures, but rather, the target of such plays are the ideologies shaping the social and political structure of the world, like history, nationalism, Eurocentrism, colonialism, and neoliberalism, which requires analyses from a postmodern perspective. For this reason, in these plays, the relation between satire and postmodernism can overtly be observed. In 4.1 Howard Brenton's *The Churchill Play* will be studied as a satire on English national history with references to the critical concept's such as Brecht's alienation effect. In 4.2 David Hare's *A Map of the World* will be analysed as a questioning of Western and Eastern ideologies of power and hegemony based on a dialectical expression of characters from different cultures. In 4.3 Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* will be examined as a satire on neoliberal ideologies by focusing on the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia.

CHAPTER I

SATIRE, METATHEATRE AND THEATRE

1.1.Satire: Some Critical Perspectives

“Satire” is a term difficult to define and theorize due to its complexity and ambiguity. This has led critics and theorists to employ various, mostly negative - and sometimes paradoxical -adjectives to underline its complexity. George A. Test states that satire is “[u]nruly, wayward, frolicsome, critical, parasitic, at times perverse, malicious, cynical, scornful, unstable [...] at once pervasive yet recalcitrant¹, basic yet impenetrable” (1991:6), drawing attention to its versatile nature while Daniel M. Hooley suggests that satire is “almost always challenging” (2007:vii). Although we assume that we know what satire is, producing a comprehensive definition of satire is very difficult resembling the attempt of “put[ting] a shadow in a sack (Test, 1991:13).

However, certain definitions of the term may help as a starting point to understand its elusiveness. For instance, Chris Baldick describes satire as “[a] mode of writing that exposes the failings of individuals, institutions, or societies to ridicule and scorn” (2008b:299). While some literary works are completely satirical, some may be partly satirical. Satire may occur in literary works of different forms such as plays, poems or prose writings with a humorous or bitter tone. He designates two forms of satire: formal satire where the satirist addresses the readers directly, and indirect satire in plays and novels where the reader is dependent on the characters’ actions for meaning (299). Baldick’s analysis puts forth that written satire, either direct or indirect, may have various targets such as specific individuals or a group of people, institutions, or the whole society

¹ Disobedient, tenacious.

in general². The scope of satire may range from completely satirical literary works of all types to ones that are satirical, either humorous or harsh in technique.

Albert Bermel explains that, along with parody, satire is a common form of mockery, both of which employ “irony”, “sarcasm” and “hyperbole” (2010:533) which can appear in comedies, tragicomedies and farces (533). He also provides some examples of writers of dramatic satire like Aristophanes (*Frogs*, *Lysistrata*), Molière (*The Miser*, 1668; *Tartuffe*, 1668-9), Gogol (*The Government Inspector*, 1836), Brecht (*Mahagonny*, 1930; *Arturo Ui*, 1941) and Genet (*The Balcony*, 1956) (533-4). Bermel’s explanation underlines satire’s affinity with parody³, its literariness and its pervasiveness in the drama of distant periods and geographies.

M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham define satire “as the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation” (2015:352). Satire is different from comedy⁴ in the sense that comedy aims at arousing laughter, satire uses it “as a weapon” for criticism. They also cite Horatian satire⁵ and Juvenalian satire⁶ as types of

² John Dryden’s *Mac Flecknoe* (1678), for instance, targets the poet Thomas Shadwell. Alexander Pope’s *Dunciad* (1728), mocks authors and critics. “Satyr against Mankind” (1675) by Earl of Rochester and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) are targeted at the whole humanity.

³ Although both satire and parody are types of mockery, they are different in tone. Vladimir Nabokov indicates that “Satire is a lesson, parody is a game” (1990:75), emphasizing that satire has an instructive function and a serious tone while parody is more playful. In his essay “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse” Bakhtin underlines the relation between parody and satire. He explains that satyr plays can be regarded as parodies of myths since through a “tragic treatment” they show a different aspect of the myths (1981:53-4), drawing attention to the long-standing relation between satire and parody.

⁴ Ünal Aytür makes a distinction between the humour of comedy and satirical humour. Accordingly, the humour of comedy portrays man’s absurdities for the sole aim of evoking laughter, not necessarily condemning these absurdities. However, satirical humour aims to attack and condemn these absurdities. Furthermore, Aytür refers to Joseph Hall, supposedly the first satirist in English literature, who expressed that “the humour of comedy is ‘toothless’, but that of satire ‘bites’” (2005:39).

⁵ In his satires, Horace establishes a conversation with his readers in a quotidian language. His eighteen satires portray characters, with their shortcomings such as avarice and dogmatism. Horace’s persona speaks in a friendly manner denouncing vice.

⁶ Juvenal’s style is, in contrast to Horace’s, harsh and bitter. His poetic persona is furious with the moral corruption in the society and reflects his anger in a lofty language.

direct satire, and Menippean satire⁷ as a type of indirect satire (352-3). Abrams and Harpham's definition focus on the way satire reaches its end, evoking negative feelings such as hatred and anger towards its target, its difference from comedy in terms of the use of laughter, its various targets, and types.

As for satire, it must be first underscored that, oral or literary, it has always existed in our customs, behaviours, rulers, hostilities, evil, ridiculousness and the way we express ourselves (Hooley, 2007:1-2). Regarding its origin, two views, one ancient, the other contemporary, are generally adopted by the critics. According to the grammarian Diomedes (4th century CE), satire is related to the satyr plays in ancient Greek literature⁸ (Gilmore, 2018:38). Certain scholars, (Highet, 1962:231; Chapman, 1992:887; Rosen 2007:17; Ugolini, 2016:1), however, disagree with this view pointing out that the term satire originates from the Latin "satura" meaning a full dish made up of fruits to be served to the Gods (Chapman, 1992:887).

Even though it is generally thought that the first satires were composed by the Roman poets such as Lucilius, (c.180-c.102 BC), Horace (65-8 BC), Persius (34-62 AD), Quintilian (c. 35-c.100 AD) and Juvenal (c.60/70-2nd century AD), as Hooley expresses, it had already existed before the emergence of the Roman satire (2007:1). John Dryden highlights that the beginning of satire, in fact, goes back to Adam and Eve's verbal attacks accusing each other for their expulsion from heaven (1974:28), displaying the role of satire as a primary form of human expression (Hooley, 2007:1). This perspective has also been supported by Robert C. Elliott, who, from an anthropological perspective, claimed that in the ancient times, satire was associated with magic, and the satirists were thought

⁷ A kind of satire developed by Menippus, the Cynic philosopher, Menippean satire is written in prose, mostly with digressions of poetry.

⁸ The Satyrs are followers of Dionysus in Ancient Greek mythology in "half-horse, half-human" form. They appear as the members of the chorus in Ancient Greek plays and perform a vivacious dance. In these plays, the subject-matter is generally taken from mythology. An example of the satyr play is Euripides's *Cyclops* (Csapo, 2010:534).

to be magicians in distinct cultures like Greece and Ireland (1960:47). For example, in the 7th century Greece, Archilochus was a famous satirist whose power in verse created a sense of fear and was believed to possess the diabolical power that could kill a man (4). In pre-Christian Ireland, the members of the society, from peasantry to the Kings, were afraid of being the target of the poets' magical satire. Therefore, the Kings sometimes banished the poets from the country⁹ (21-24).

Thersites, from the Greek army in Homer's *Iliad* is thought to be the first satirist in Greek literature verbally attacking (invective) on Agamemnon (Ugolini, 2016:3). In *Poetics*, Aristotle discloses that comedy derives from such invectives (2004:61), "the [...] satirical utterances of the leader of the [p]hallic [s]ongs"¹⁰ (Elliott, 1960:100) in Ancient Greek drama. Aristotle's disclosure responds to the polemical issue regarding whether literary satire is originated in verse or dramatic form.

In respect to the motivation of satirists and the function of satire, the general tendency to compose satire rises at specific periods of turmoil or political conflict such as eighteenth-century England. In the century, the heyday of satire, the increase of satirical works in England was especially motivated by the de facto Prime Minister Robert Walpole's unprecedented, and unlawfully acquired, political power. Walpole's long period of authority between 1721 and 1742 is featured by bribery, nepotism and abuse of the resources of the monarchy to manipulate the elections (Şenlen Güvenç, 2014b:92). In such periods, as Juvenal says, "[I]t is hard *not* [emphasis original] to write satire" (1928:5). This is also an answer to Griffin's question: "Why do we continue to read and

⁹ In the Renaissance, the association of the satirists with magicians lost its appeal. However, people were still afraid of the power of satire. For example, in Italy, Pietro Aretino, a famous satirical poet, was known as the "scourge of princes" (Ugolini, 2016:3).

¹⁰ The costumes of the satyrs were made up of masks with horse ears, upright noses, shaggy hair and beard as well as equine tails and phallus (Csapo, 2010:534). That is why the songs they sang were called phallic songs.

enjoy satire?” (1994:161). Satire is still composed and appreciated because it arises out of the specific problems of the time.

Satirists regard themselves as “public servants” and firmly believe “in the corrigibility of mankind” (Real, 1992:8). As the voice of society, they aim to make people see beyond the surface of things “by unmasking imposture, exposing fraudulence, shattering deceptive illusion¹¹, and shaking [them] from [their] complacency and indifference” (Quintero, 2007:4) to show them the truth and stimulate an active reaction, in order to bring about a change, in politics, or religion.

In society, mockery plays an essential role in promoting “proper behaviour” and shaping citizens’ attitudes. Through laughter, satire functions “to deride, expose, ridicule and denounce vices, follies, and abuses or evils of any kind in society” and is “a powerful instrument of criticism and self examination” (Ebewo, 1997:31). Since satire aims to exterminate the ills of society, the function of the satirist is that of a doctor¹² attempting to heal society’s agonies (Ugolini, 2016:2).

As for its effectiveness to bring about a change in society, some regard it as the “[a]rt of [p]oisoning” without any potency to prevent crime or bring about change (Pierre Bayle, qtd. in Elliott, 1960:268) while others such as George Bernard Shaw hold a firm

¹¹ Such functions of satire as “unmasking”, “exposing” and “shattering” are related to its association with postmodern theory. Certain critics have focused on the aspects of satire that can be regarded as postmodern. For example, Griffin states that “satire is often an ‘open’ rather than a ‘closed’ form, that it is concerned rather to inquire, explore, or unsettle than to declare, sum up, or conclude” (1994:95) like literary works which are labelled as postmodern. In a similar way, Hooley draws attention to satire’s self-reflexivity, a common feature of many postmodern works: “[S]atire [...] is almost pathologically self-conscious. No genre is more programmatically burdened, none more busily and inconclusively talkative about itself, its limits and place in theme and scheme of things” (2007:3). “Satire is not the only Graeco-Roman genre where this sort of thing goes on, but it may have spotted first of all those qualities of literature we lately call postmodern” (Hooley, 2007:9), implying that satire might be regarded as the origin of postmodern literature because of its self-reflexivity.

¹² For a detailed analysis of the satirist as doctor in Early modern England, see Randolph, Mary Claire. “The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Theory: Its possible Relationships and Implications”. *Studies in Philology*. Vol. 38. No. 2 (1941) :125-157. Jstor. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4172521>

belief in the satirists' ability to bring about social change: "After all, the salvation of the world depends on the men who will not take evil good-humouredly, and whose laughter destroys the fool instead of encouraging him" (1913:186). It is an obvious call for satirists to raise their voices against depravity and intimidate the unscrupulous in order to bring order and justice in society. This change, however, might be gradual.

Rather than overthrowing governments or monarchies, satire has the capacity to force people to question accepted views and convictions, which will lead to gradual social change (Ebewo, 1997:33). Quintero remarks that the satirist is like "a watchdog". His task is not to put out the fire, but alert the inhabitants that there is a fire (2007:4). That is, the major task of a satirist is to warn the society against forthcoming dangers rather than preventing the danger.

The power of satire is clearly proven in the history of censorship; the Canterbury Archbishop and the London Bishop commanded that satirical works burnt in London in 1599; writers supporting the English government demanded that political satire should be controlled in the late 1720s; 1737 the Stage Licensing Act was promoted to control satirical performances in London (Griffin, 1994:153-4). That is, governments from the time of the Roman civilization onwards, have tried to keep satirists and satire under control to restrain, or erase, their influence on the society, which indicates that that they have been aware of its political power.

In spite of their noble objectives, satire and satirists have often been considered in a negative light. Addison likens satire's paradoxical nature to "a woman with a smile on her face and a dagger concealed under her garment" (qtd in. Elliott, 1960:268). Satirists have also been described negatively as aggressive dogs, serpents, prey animals, monsters

(Test, 1991:15), or as jesters mocking serious subjects (Ebewo, 1997:31) as well as being associated with the trickster archetype¹³ (Test, 1991:44).

Griffin explains the prevalence of satire by referring to Freud's "tendentious jokes"¹⁴, as "an expression of repressed hostility" (1994:162) while Joseph Bentley (1967) argues that satire is closely associated with violence and sadism. Accordingly, when our enemy is being satirized, we take pleasure in it because our repressed hostile emotions to that person finally find an outlet making us relieved.

Freud states that humans have to suppress their aggressive nature. However, they can show their enmity through jokes. Invective has replaced enmity (1960:102); they enjoy defeating their enemies making them ridiculous and worthless through jokes (103). Satire, as an expression of repressed hatred, can also be associated with the concept of *schadenfreude*¹⁵. Friedrich Nietzsche, a primary theorist of the emotion, illuminates that: "To see others suffer does one good" [...]. "To make others suffer even more so. This is a hard saying, but a mighty, human, all-too-human principle" (qtd. in Smith, 2018:9). There is a close relation between *schadenfreude* and satire. When people mock the failure of those who are richer, more charming and capable than themselves, they feel most satisfied. Likewise, they enjoy satire when its victim is someone of a greater status and authority than they are (Smith, 2018:15).

A final conflicting issue about satire is its decline. Ebewo, for instance, discloses that satire has lost its functions in our time due to the decline in poets' creativity (1997:36) and the loss of shame and guilt culture (39) due to which people care less about what

¹³ As an archetypal figure, the trickster injures people with his sinister jokes. He sometimes puts his life in danger as people may attempt to take revenge on him (Jung, 2004:160). The association of the satirist with the trickster archetype demonstrates that like the trickster, the satirist troubles people with his satires. Similar to him, he risks his own life since his victims may punish him.

¹⁴ Jokes which aim to hurt.

¹⁵ There is not an English translation of the word, it can be interpreted as getting pleasure out of other people's bad luck.

other people think about them. Joel Schechter asserts that due to online performances, the future of stage satire is in danger (2021:2). Furthermore, social media seems to have replaced satire (2021:155). In a society in which people of all strata, from children to the top politicians, readily disgrace themselves on the social media with the frivolous videos and posts, satire might not be very functional.

As opposed to these negative views about the future of satire, and especially satirical drama, some writers have emphasized its permanence. Although satire might be considered temporal, that it dies with one circumstance leading to its subject matter, it is not so for the topics it handles - “politics, socio-cultural life, religion, women, greed, corruption, etc.,” are all society’s issues (Ebewo, 1997:35) still waiting to be handled. Hooley states that humankind will go on satirizing until it exists (2007:2). With new problems in our contemporary world, such as refugees, collapsed economies, restrictions on freedom of expression, unprecedented rise in femicide and child abuse, pandemics and natural disasters, I argue that writers will not quit composing satirical works.

1.2. Dramatic Satire and Metatheatre

Comedy emerged out of the satirical utterances of the chorus in ancient Greek drama, which might be regarded as the initial relation between satire and drama. The close relationship, or “marriage” between satire and drama can be observed in the early examples of Ancient comedy and Roman satire (Ferris-Hill, 2015:3). Even though Lucilius did not write his satires in the dramatic form, or his satires were not composed for the stage, some of his poems include similar characteristics as Old comedy such as pieces of lively comedy and easiness (Highet, 1962:27). The use of unusual words, parody of seriousness in poetry, fragments of intentional depravity, and a free structure are also common features of Aristophanic comedy and Roman satire (Highet, 1962:29). Similarly,

Horace imitated the aspects of Old Comedy in a way more suitable to his age (Rosen, 2007:7). “Roman satire is Greek Old Comedy made Roman” (Ferris-Hill, 2015:5).

There are further associations between satire and drama. Firstly, like drama, satire is a performance. It is “as a kind of rhetorical performance or rhetorical contest: as display, and as play” (Griffin, 1994:71). For instance, Menippus was an orator; Lucian and Juvenal were performers of rhetoric; Juvenal’s satire has been regarded “as witty oratorical declaration” (1994:71-2). Satire’s affinity with performance and rhetoric can especially be observed in the satirical literary works of the Renaissance when rhetoric was a prominent aspect of culture (1994:72).

Both satire and drama are based on persuasion, for satire aims to convince the audience that something or somebody is frivolous (Griffin, 1994:1). As a rhetorical performer, the satirist aims to be applauded like an actor (1994:71). Thus, satire is an art of persuasion, and therefore, it is a branch of rhetoric (Sutherland, 1958:5). The performative nature of satire and drama is also associated with the employment of persona. In both, the satirist does not speak in his own voice, but in the voice of a fictitious speaker, or “persona”, the mask he wears to hide his own identity.

They both make use of apologia and parabasis (prologue) as a technique. The “apologia” is the introductory part of a satirical poem in which the poet introduces the subject matter and emphasizes its significant points (Keane, 2006:6). Similarly, in the parabasis of Ancient Greek comedies, the chorus aims to manipulate the opinions of the audience.

A further parallelism between verse satire and dramatic satire is that both poets and playwrights have been exposed to punishments. Archilochus’s poems were banned in Sparta; (Elliott, 1960:261); Aristophanes was loathed in his time (112) and brought to

the court for insulting the King in his plays. It was commanded that the plays of Hall, Marston and Nashe burnt in England in 1599 (Elliott, 1960:261).

Metatheatre is a term closely associated with satirical drama. Although metatheatre has been employed by various playwrights such as Shakespeare, Pirandello, Genet, Brecht and Beckett, it still does not have a clear generic definition. As Dustagheer and Newman denote, even though studies of metatheatre have generally focused upon the plays of Shakespeare (2018:5), recent scholars have discovered that the works “of ancient playwrights such as Sophocles, Euripides, Plautus and Aristophanes” also include metatheatre. In English literature, it is possible to come across metatheatre in a late 15th century play, Henry Medwall’s *Fulgens and Lucrece* (Dustagheer and Newman, 2018:8). But whether or not it is possible to use the terms interchangeably or how metatheatre relates to the postdramatic¹⁶ needs to be addressed (Dustagheer and Newman, 2018:7). In the case of satire, looking to some descriptions of metatheatre might be helpful to discover some of its basic attributes.

Baldick defines it as a drama “about drama, or any moment of self-consciousness by which a play draws attention to its own fictional status as a theatrical pretence” (2008a:203). The parts of a play in which the author directly addresses the audience like prologues, epilogues, inductions and asides referring to the play, confirm the theatricality of a play. The play-within-the-play gives the opportunity to find out its metadramatic nature, as in *Hamlet*, or *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (2008:203). Obviously, he regards metatheatre and metadrama as the same.

David Pellegrini expresses that metatheatre is “[s]elf-reflexive drama or performance that reveals its artistic status to the audience” (2010:388). This self-

¹⁶ Jenn Stephenson implies that metatheatre can be regarded as a precursor of postdramatic theatre as “it puts the real and the fictional into conversation with each other” (2015). (<https://realtheatre.blog/2015/06/11/kissing-cousins-metatheatre-and-postdramatic-irruptions-of-the-real/>)

reflexivity might be accommodated into the text by its author, which is called metadrama, or it might be added into the production by the director or the designer. In both cases, such plays are aesthetically self-conscious commenting on representations of reality and illusion. He also cites some examples of metatheatrical plays such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c. 1600), *The Tempest* (1611), Calderón's *Life Is a Dream* (c. 1629), Strindberg's *A Dream Play* (1907), Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), *Each in his Own Way* (1924) and *Tonight We Improvise* (1930) (388). Pellegrini's definition reveals that metatheatrical plays consciously reflect their fictionality. Unlike Baldick, he makes a distinction between metatheatre and metadrama. Accordingly, metadrama concerns the text of a play while metatheatre is about its performance. In each case, the play aims to make commentary on its fictional status. His definition also indicates that use of metatheatre is very common among dramatists of diverse cultures and periods.

Patrice Pavis clarifies that metatheatre is the "[t]heatre which is centred around theatre and therefore 'speaks' about itself, 'represents' itself" (1998:210). According to him, the common aspect of metatheatrical plays is that they all display the theatricality of life blurring the boundary between play and life as in the plays of Calderon, Shakespeare, Pirandello, Beckett, and Genet, and, therefore, becoming an anti-theatre (1998:210).

There are certain reasons for these discrepancies about the definitions of metatheatre since it has become an inclusive term for reflexive dramaturgy (Leonard, 2013:1; 2018:50) referring to any self-reflexive dramatic work without any distinction, and this has led to the elusiveness of the term. In addition, the terms "metatheatre", "metadrama", "reflexivity", "self-referentiality" and "the play-within-a-play" are generally used haphazardly since the 1970s (Dustagheer and Newman, 2018:7). Furthermore, there is a lack of research on the subject and not much has been said about its history, forms and functions, particularly that of Renaissance metatheatre (Dustagheer and Newman, 2018:3).

It was Lionel Abel (1910-2001), the American playwright and theatre critic, who coined the term:

[Only certain plays] tell us at once that happenings and characters in them are of the playwright's invention, and that insofar as they were discovered - where there is invention there also has to be discovery - they were found by the playwright's imagining rather than by his observing the world. Such plays have truth in them, not because they convince us of real occurrences or existing persons, but because they show the reality of the dramatic imagination, instanced by the playwright's and also by that of his characters. Of such plays, it may indeed be said: "The play's the thing". Plays of this type, it seems to me, belong to a special genre and deserve a distinctive name. (1963:59)

As Abel implies, dramatic works traditionally hide the fact that they are the products of an author's imagination; they aim to make us believe that what the playwright presents to us is real. However, some plays consciously expose their artificiality by openly displaying that the play is nothing but a reflection of the playwright's imagination, and therefore, what it enacts is merely a subjective story, not the truth itself. Abel categorizes this group of plays as another genre called metatheatre¹⁷.

Abel's formulation of metatheatre can best be understood from his comparison of tragedy to metatheatre:

Tragedy gives by far the stronger sense of the reality of the world. Metatheatre gives by far the stronger sense that the world is a projection of human consciousness. Tragedy glorifies the structure of the world, which it supposedly reflects in its own form. Metatheatre glorifies the unwillingness of the imagination to regard any image of the world as ultimate. Tragedy makes human existence more vivid by showing its vulnerability to fate. Metatheatre makes human existence more dreamlike by showing that fate can be overcome. Tragedy tries to mediate between the world and man. Tragedy wants to be on both sides. Metatheatre assumes there is no world except that created by human striving, human imagination. Tragedy cannot operate without the assumption of an ultimate order. For metatheatre, order is something continually improvised by men. [...] Tragedy, from the point of view of metatheatre, is our dream

¹⁷ The issue whether metatheatre is a genre or not is also problematic. As it has been clarified, Abel characterizes it as a genre. Richard Hornby does not feature metatheatre as a genre. Instead, he cites five metatheatrical strategies (1986): "the ceremony within the play", "role playing within the role", "literary and real-life reference within the play", "self-reference", and "the play-within-the-play".

of the real. Metatheatre, from the point of view of tragedy, is as real as are our dreams. (1963:113)

As Abel puts forth, tragedy creates the illusion of reality while metatheatre emphasizes a world that is simply a repercussion of our subjective perceptions. Tragedy exalts the status quo and reinforces it with its form; metatheatre rejects to confirm any structure as conclusively accurate. Tragedy focuses on man's relation to this tangible world praising him for his capacity to come through his doom. However, metatheatre focuses on man's consciousness rather than his place in this physical world. Tragedy owes its presence to the supposition of an eventual (social and political) order. Yet, metatheatre regards the conjecture of order as nothing but a fabrication emphasizing that tragedy gives us a picture of the world as real, a point he further develops in *Tragedy and Metatheatre: Essays on Dramatic Form* (2003). This picture is, in fact, a social and political construction, but metatheatre, by challenging the supposedly real dramatic presentations, aims to show us the real operation of the world.

Similar to satire, metatheatre, which is seemingly too theoretical to have any real utilization, is very much concerned with our own lives. Like satire, it aims to show us the truth which is hidden beneath a fictional representation. Just like political satire aims to expose the hypocrisy of dishonest politicians and their unfair policies, metatheatre aims to unearth that what traditional plays present is actually a picture of a set of certain social and political ideologies offered as an ideal order for the society. Metatheatre ultimately aims to show the fictionality of this "ideal" order by exposing the ideology and operating to protect the rights of only those who hold power in the society. In other words, metatheatre exposes "[a] set of systems" at work (Leonard, 2013:52; 2018:52), emphasizing that it functions to break the collaboration between theatrical representation and the set of ideologies it presents to its audience as an ideal way of life by uncovering their fictionality.

In terms of the strategies employed in metatheatre, Richard Hornby has determined five metatheatrical strategies in *Drama, Metadrama and Perception* (1986): “the ceremony within the play”, “role playing within the role”, “literary and real-life reference within the play”, “self-reference” and “the play-within-the-play”. The first of these strategies, “the ceremony within the play”, is an inclusion of various ceremonies such as “feasts, balls, pageants, tournaments, games, rituals, trials, inquests, processions, executions, funerals, coronations, initiations” (1986:49) in plays exemplified by the two banquets in *Macbeth*, the scene of abdication in *King Lear*, the drinking party, funeral and fencing match in *Hamlet*. Furthermore, Othello’s murder of Desdemona with its serious tone recalling religious rituals is considered to have ceremonial quality (1986:49). Ceremony and theatre are very similar: both help people comprehend the world better. In a ceremony, the characters play a temporary role such as that of the archetypal roles of bride and groom (1986:52). But, when the ceremony ends, they take on their “real” roles, demonstrating the fluidity between the two roles. Thus, ceremony in a play shows the audience that the play they are watching, like the ceremony, is made-up.

The second metatheatrical strategy is “role playing within the role”¹⁸ (1986:67), referring to the fact that while a character plays a role, an actor performs as this character. Rather than portraying who the character is, the strategy actually figures who this character really wants to be: “[I]ronically, the role is closer to the character’s true self than his everyday, ‘real’ personality” (1986:67). For instance, Hamlet’s feigned madness is a false face which divulges deeper truths about his real self, acting to convince people that he is really mad, but, he makes plans to find out the murderer of his father. In a similar way, Portia, Rosalind and Viola in Shakespeare’s plays disguise themselves as men and show their courage, sensibility and cogency, the aspects of their characters which are

¹⁸ Hornby expounds that there are three types of role playing: “voluntary, involuntary and allegorical” (1986:73-4).

thought to be masculine (1986:67). Thus, role playing within the role demonstrates that what the character seemingly does might not be a reflection of his real personality, suggesting that the play the audience is watching might not be representing reality, either.

The third metatheatrical strategy is “literary and real-life reference within the play” (1986:88). When such references are realized by the audience, the functioning of a play is shattered, and the inner play becomes like an inset play¹⁹. Hornby cites four types of metadramatic references: “citation, allegory, parody and adaptation” (1986:90). Citation, a quotation or direct reference to a work of literature, may function as a tool of literary criticism as in Aristophanes’s *The Frogs*, which includes direct quotations from Sophocles’s and Euripides’s plays (1986:91). Parody mocks an archetypal character, condition, conversation or act as in *The Rehearsal* from the Neoclassical Period (1986:93). For an adaptation to be metadramatic, the audience must be aware of the presence of the adapted play within the adapting one. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, for instance, is an adaptation of “ur-Hamlet”, likely to have been written by Thomas Kyd. But, the play is so “self-contained” that the audience does not even think that it is a rewriting. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* by Tom Stoppard, on the other hand, is a re-writing of *Hamlet* and depends so much on the original text that (1986:94) the play openly displays its metatheatricality.

The fourth metatheatrical strategy, “self-reference”, is heavily metadramatic and through self-reference, the play declares that it is a play, momentarily demonstrating its own fictionality (1986:103). An example of self-reference can be seen in the “Prologue” of Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist* (1610) in which the playwright addresses the audience as the “spectators”:

Fortune, that favours fools, these two short hours

¹⁹ Hornby designates two types of the play-within-the-play: the inset type and the framed type (1986:33).

We wish away, both for your sakes and for ours,
 Judging spectators, and desire in place
 To th'author justice, to ourselves but grace.
 Our scene is in London, 'cause we would make known
 No country's mirth is better than our own.
 No clime breeds better matter for your whore,
 Bawd, squire, imposter, many persons more,
 Whose manners, now called humours, feed the stage,
 And which have still been subject for the rage
 Of spleen of comic writers. Though this pen
 Did never aim to grieve, but better, men,
 Howe'er the age he lives in doth endure
 The vices that she breeds above their cure.
 But when the wholesome remedies are sweet,
 And in their working gain and profit meet,
 He hopes to find no spirit so much diseased
 But will with such fair correctives be pleased;
 For here he doth not fear who can apply.
 If there be any that will sit so nigh
 Unto the stream to look what it doth run,
 They shall find things they'd think or wish were done,
 They are so natural follies, but so shown
 As even the doers may see and yet not own (2002a:869-70)

At the very beginning of the prologue, he explains to the “audience” that the play will last “two short hours”²⁰. In addition, the use of theatrical terms like “scene” and “stage” emphasizes the fictionality of the play, he refers to the “comedy of humours”, associated with Jonson, and further stresses that the play is merely a literary construct. The “pen” reminds the audience that the play is a text written by Jonson and therefore, a product of his mentality and imagination. “[N]ever aim to grieve, but better, men” refers to his aim, which is to instruct.

The last strategy is “the play-within-the-play”, which is of greatest importance to this study since all of the examples of metatheatre discussed are overtly characterized as the play-within-the-play. As Dieter Mehl highlights, the play-within-the-play is not limited to any dramatic type. It may arise in “comedies, histories, and tragedies”. Likewise, the inserted plays might be dumb shows, tragedies or anything for the purpose

²⁰ Bigsby expresses that the audiences, like the actors, are performers. They are there as they accept to act as an audience is supposed to do for the duration of the play, and therefore, theirs is also a performance (1980:188).

of entertainment, parodying or moral teaching (1965:43). The play-within-the-play is a mirror to the main play which shapes the spectators' comprehension of the play (Rosenmeyer, 2002:99). It adds a third dimension to the dual identity of the actor, since the player appears on the stage both as himself and the character he performs, and the play-within-the-play attaches a third layer of time, space, characterisation and action to the theatrical experience (Fischer and Greiner, 2007:xi). As Bigsby puts out, it is the most important metatheatrical device as it clearly exposes the play as a fiction by demonstrating that the play watched by the audience is a fiction like the inner play:

[t]he very word 'play' implies the game element of drama, the pretence; it implies almost a parodic element. This becomes especially obvious, of course, when you consider the device of the play within a play (of the kind found in Shakespeare, Pirandello or Stoppard [...]) This is at least in part a mockery of form, a sly indication of the status of the total work. Reality becomes a series of infinitely receding boxes within boxes. (1980:188)

In addition, the play-within-the-play is also the metatheatrical strategy which displays the relation between metatheatre and satire most clearly. Hornby indicates that the play-within-the-play works to expose life as an illusion and becomes a metaphor for life:

The fact that the inner play is an obvious illusion (since we see other characters watching it), reminds us that the play we [emphasis original] are watching is also an illusion, despite its vividness and excitement; by extension, the world in which we live, which also seems to be so vivid, is in the end a sham. We watch a play, within which there is another play - ultimately, all is a play. In other words, the play within the play is projected onto life itself, and becomes a means for gauging it. (1986:45)

As Hornby makes apparent, the play-within-the-play breaks the illusion created by the outer play and plainly shows its fictionality to the audience who is watching the play at that moment that is nothing but a product of the playwright's imagination, a summation of his ideologies. Thus, metatheatre ultimately reveals that life is a fiction, ordered according to the dominant ideology in the society, and aims to cause an awareness in the people regarding the problems in life.

This is where the relation between satire and metatheatre can be seen most clearly. Like satire, metatheatre aims to lead to change in the society by making people realize its failing sides. Similar to satire, metatheatre is not simply literary; but also political. This is much in line with the function of metatheatre “to make apparent, to expose, to unveil” (Swiontek²¹, qtd. in Purcell, 2018:25), emphasizing its political essence one that intrudes into the authoritarian discourse from within (Giovanzana, 2015:15), underlining that metatheatre challenges and questions the dominant discourse.

To sum up, metatheatre is a dramatic concept which lacks clear boundaries and definitions, and the subject matter is fresh and alive. As a literary concept, it is closely affiliated with postmodern theory since its function is to question the text in search of alternative discourses within it, which it intentionally hid and suppressed within. This aspect of metatheatre, questioning the text from within and digging for alternative narratives, is where its relation to satire comes from. That is, like satire, metatheatre is much more than a mere literary term. It is innately political, and, therefore functions as a tool of satire, as the examples from various periods of English drama reveal.

1.3. Metatheatre in English Dramatic Satire

Satire and metatheatre are very common in English drama but, before analysing the use of metatheatre as a tool of satire in English drama, their employment in Greek and Roman drama must be illuminated since the English playwrights generally followed the classics in their use of satire and metatheatre.

²¹ As Purcell explains, Swiontek is a Polish theatre theorist (2018:24) who is not popular in English-speaking countries as his works have not been completely translated into English yet (33). However, in “Meta-enunciative Properties of Dramatic Dialogue: A New View of Metatheatre and the Work of Slawomir Swiontek” (2006) by Jenn Stephenson, a general summary of his views about metatheatre can be found.

The first examples of dramatic satire go back to the 3rd century BC when Old Comedy, generally associated with Aristophanes, developed. The plays were generally written on contemporary issues to ridicule specific people or ideas (Gilmore, 2018:33-4) as displayed in *The Acharnians* or *The Personal Peace* (425 BC), which criticizes the Peloponnesian War (431-405 BC) between Athens and Sparta. The play satirizes the devastating consequences of the war on the country's economy (Aristophanes, 1979b).

Through the play, Aristophanes satirizes the politicians' insistence on the war which has no benefits for the citizens along with their indifference to the damage the war has caused in the lives of the citizens. In addition to being satirical, *The Acharnians* is also metatheatrical as there are references to theatre, punishment of the playwrights for criticizing politicians and Euripides, the dramatist. For instance, in Act I, Dikaiopolis gets permission from the Chorus to make an anti-war speech, but states that he must be careful for he was brought to court by Cleon²² for satirising him in his play the year before²³. Therefore, he goes to Euripides to borrow the clothes worn by one of his tragic characters, the talented orator Telephus. Euripides, who is seen working on a new play, is hesitant but in order to get rid of him, he accepts to lend him the clothes he asked for (1979b:66-9).

Such references to theatre, oppression of the oppositional playwrights, and contemporary dramatists show that the play the audience is watching is a fiction like the play Euripides is currently writing, thus shattering the play's illusory world and drawing the audience into the performance. Such metatheatrical references help further to

²² In 429, Cleon was the leader of Athenian democracy and followed an aggressive strategy during the Peloponnesian War. When Mytilene rebelled against Athens, he commanded that all its citizens were killed and women and children were enslaved. In 425, he refused to make peace with Sparta and captured Spartans, but he was defeated in the end (The Editors of Encyclopaedia, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*) (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Cleon-Athenian-politician>)

²³ Aristophanes refers to his play *Babylonians* (426 BCE). He was brought to the court for his attack on Cleon in this play.

emphasize the tyranny of the political leaders. By referring to his own prosecution as a playwright, Aristophanes not only demonstrates the problems of the Greek writers, but satirizes the despotism of the politicians who limit free speech. Similarly, Dikaiopolis's visit to Euripides both reminds the audience that *The Acharnians* is fictional like Euripides's plays and criticizes the indifference of such tragedians as Euripides to the problems of the society.

In another play, *The Clouds* (423 BC), Aristophanes satirizes the Sophistic philosophy which was popular at the time. At the beginning of the play, a man named Strepsiades appears worrying about the debts his son Pheidippides has caused and he goes to Socrates's Thinkery to find a solution where he cannot learn anything to solve his problem, which is a satire on the Sophists who questioned everything without producing anything (Gilmore, 2018:35-6).

The play is also metatheatrical which can be evidently observed in the Chorus's speech to the audience in Act I, the most satirical and the most metatheatrical part of the play. The Leader, representing Aristophanes, satirizes many issues such as the literary trends of the time and the oppression of the Kings. Firstly, he expresses to the audience that the play is the best the citizens have ever watched (Aristophanes, 1979c:134). Referring to the play as "[m]y comedy" (Aristophanes, 1979c:135), he openly declares that the audience is watching a play composed by him. Moreover, the chorus leader states that his comedy does not ridicule bald men or aims to make children laugh, suggesting that it is different from the low comedies of the time as it deals with serious subject matter, demonstrating the role of metatheatre as an agent of literary criticism. The leader praises himself since he never repeats the same subjects and finds new topics for each of his plays. He also commends himself for his courage to satirize Cleon when he was at the height of his power, showing the use of metatheatre for political satire. Moreover, he refers to some contemporary playwrights such as Eupolis who were plagiarizing his plays

and chides the audience for electing Cleon (135-7). Thus, it can be concluded that, in the play, metatheatre serves as a tool of literary and political criticism which are closely related to each other. As Jameson states, “genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message, or in other terms, that form is immanently and intrinsically ideological in its own right” (2002:127).

Aristophanes’s *Lysistrata* (411 BC) dwelling on peace is another play by Aristophanes in which metatheatre reinforces the play as a satire. The play includes a ceremony and several disguises as metatheatrical elements. In Act I, Lysistrata and other women arrange a swearing-in around a huge jar of wine in which all of them promise each other not to have sex with their husbands to force them to end the Peloponnesian War (Aristophanes, 1979a:188). They also want to take over the administration of the Athenian government. When the Magistrate despises them implying that women cannot rule the government, the women dress him up as a woman with their veil, a sewing-basket and some wool (202); soon, they dress him up as a corpse with “a filleted head-dress and a wreath” (Aristophanes, 1979a: 205) which makes the man furious. Peace talks begin shortly and the war ends. While the ceremony serves as a reminder of the temporality of the roles the characters are performing, the disguising of the Magistrate as a woman reveals gender as a construct, thereby satirizing the sexual double standards of the Greek society. His disguise as a corpse satirizes and defies his legal authority which he uses for the maintenance of a patriarchal order in which women are excluded from politics²⁴.

By Aristophanes *The Assembly of Women* (392 BC) also takes up the topic of gender–power relations. At the beginning of the play, Praxagora, the leader of women, and other women appear in their husbands’ clothes and with false beard (Aristophanes, 1978:222), and meet at night to talk about the assembly that is going to gather in the city

²⁴ Because of its subversive content, the play was banned in America until 1930 (Çelik, 2005:11-2).

soon. In the end, women get to the council and take over the control of the government. While the rehearsals reveal the play's fictional status, women's disguise as men, as in *Lysistrata*, exhibits gender as a social construct, satirizing the patriarchal Greek society for excluding women from politics, showcasing the employment of metatheatre as an agent of political satire.

In Roman theatre, Plautus's *Rudens* (211 BC?), *Pseudolus* (191 BC) and Terence's *Eunuch* (161 BC) include some metatheatrical elements. In *Rudens*, Labrax deceives Palaestra saying that he will sell her to a young Athenian, Plesidippus, who is deeply in love with her. However, he plans to take her to Sicily to sell her for a higher price. But, because of a storm, Palaestra and Ampelisca, her slave, happen to find themselves on an African shore around Daemones's cottage, who is in fact, her father. Palaestra is saved from being a prostitute and is reunited with her parents, and marries Plesidippus (Christenson, 2019: 142). Labrax's deception of Palaestra might be regarded as a kind of role playing but, as a metatheatrical element, it does not have any satirical purposes. Therefore, it might simply be regarded as a precursory example of the themes of deception, double identity and role playing, the metatheatrical devices in Renaissance English drama.

In *Pseudolus*, Calidorus is a young man in love with Phoenicium who is about to be sold to a soldier. Pseudolus agrees to help him:

I have a sneaking suspicion that you all suspect
I've only promised to do these daring deeds
In order to entertain you during this play,
And there's little chance I'll do what I promised.
I'll keep my word. To the best of my knowledge,
I don't know exactly how I'll do it, but I do know
That I will. Now, it's the duty of every actor to be original
Enough to bring something original on stage:
If he can't, let him step aside for someone who can.
I'd like to slip inside for a while,
To privately muster my army of tricks.
I'll be right back after just a short delay. (qtd. in Christenson, 2019:138-9)

Obviously, Pseudolus addresses the audience as “you”, breaking the fourth wall and establishing a dialogue with them. He clarifies that the play aims to “entertain” them. By referring to himself as an “actor” going to perform, he makes the audience realize that they are going to watch a play. He asks for some time to find an “original” plan which must entertain them and help his friend, as well as fusing the boundary between audience’s real world and the world of the play.

Pseudolus tells Charinus that he will save the girl but he needs a clever man to help him, and a soldier’s costume. Simia appears as the clever slave. Pseudolus’s demand for a clever slave establishes his role as a director making the cast of his play. Therefore, the play rapidly turns into a play-within-the-play which comes out “to be a play about virtually nothing, and instead a play about the *creation* [emphasis original] of a Plautine comedy” (Christenson, 2019:141). Therefore, metatheatre in the play shows the audience the penitralia of being a playwright in the process of creating his work.

In the prologue of *Eunuch*, Terence expresses that “[t]he play we shall present today is *The Eunuch* of Menander” (1985a:165) and draws attention to its fictionality. He adds that he borrows the two stock characters, the sponger and the soldier, from another play by Menander, *Flatterer*. Terence defends himself against the accusations that he stole these two characters from Menander saying “Nothing in fact is ever said which is never said before” (1985a:166). Therefore, the prologue already reveals the metatheatrical nature of the play. Terence underlines that he is going to present a fictional work to his audience. His comment on the contentious issue of originality of literary works is also a reference to the fictionality of his work.

In the play, Phaedria, an Athenian man, is deeply in love with and is rejected by a courtesan, Thais, who is interested in the soldier Thraso who promises Thais to bring Pamphila, a slave girl who is, in fact, Thais’s sister. Phaedria’s brother Chaerea falls for

Thais and disguises himself up as a eunuch to stay at her home, rapes her and leaves the house. In the end, Chaerea marries Pamphila and Thais returns Phaedria's love (Terence, 1985b). Evidently, the disguise of Chaerea as a eunuch is the major metatheatrical component of the play which might be rendered, as in *Rudens*, as a preliminary example of the common themes of disguise, deception and double identity in Renaissance English drama.

It is possible to find satire and metatheatre in the earliest examples of English drama. (Campbell, 1914:11). In the medieval period, the drama of the period was not developed, there are not good examples of satirical drama but instead, satirical pieces arising spontaneously from people who suffered from the deterioration in religion, politics and society and hoped to cause a reform (Campbell, 1914:14). Thus, medieval satire is not a conscious attack on the social ills to bring about a change, rather, it is a manifestation of people's hopes for improvements in social and political life.

In medieval plays, satire was directed at the church and the state because people were aware of the corruption in both. They were wary of hypocritical pilgrimages and the greedy clergymen, yet, in spite of this discontent, there is not overt satire in these plays. Considering that they were written by the clergy reluctant to decry their institution, lack of overt satire in them is comprehensible. Another reason for lack of satire in these plays is that they were exposed to the censorship of a dean or a cardinal. However, the major reason was probably the nature of the plays which were inherently "didactic". Their major purpose was to educate the people to be good Christians rather than criticizing the institutions or authorities due to social problems. This was especially the case with miracle plays (Campbell, 1914:14).

Compared to the miracle plays, the morality plays were more satirical, and in addition to being didactic, (Campbell, 1914:14), they also focused on such issues as ethics

and religious, social or political matters (36). For example, in *The Pride of Life*, the oldest morality play, satire is more like a “lament” by a clergyman seeing only evil in the world where the poor are oppressed by the wealthy, and inducement, debauchery and greed keeps them busy (37). *Everyman*, the most popular of all morality plays, is a satire on humanity for neglecting God and occupying themselves with earthly pleasures. *The Castle of Perseverance* (1425) denounces the legislators, the pope, the monasteries, the fashion, avarice, vacillation of fortune, fornication, laziness, usurpation, false assize and simony (1914:38). The abstraction Avaricia is a satire on man’s desire to possess more money while Superbia is a satire on physical beauty (1914:38). The play *Wisdom* is also largely didactic which is mostly visible in the plot Temptation and Life-in-Sin in which Lucifer gives advice to the characters Mind, Will and Understanding, disguised as monks, “to leave their life of contemplation” (Campbell, 1914:41). These early plays lack “in unity and characterization” compared to the satire of Ben Jonson in *The Alchemist* or *Volpone* which targets the Puritans as well as general human follies in a highly exaggerated style (Campbell, 1914:122-3). Rather, therefore, this early satirical drama should be regarded as a precursor of the dramatic satires of the Renaissance. We cannot come across proper examples of satirical literature until then.

Early English drama also includes metatheatrical elements. For example, *The Second Shepherds’ Play* includes role playing. One of the shepherds, Mak, steals the shepherds’ sheep and his wife dresses it up as a baby (Towneley, 2000:42). Hornby states that the play is “interesting” as an animal personifies a human as opposed to the more familiar scene of a human turning into an animal. It is also “interesting” because it includes allegorical role playing. The newly-born sheep insinuates Jesus, the play also involves the birth of Jesus, and the allegory becomes clear in a comic affinity (1986:77). But, the play is not satirical as the three shepherds do not condemn Mak for theft, they

simply punish him by tossing him in a blanket (*Towneley*, 42). Therefore, disguise as a metatheatrical component does not serve a satirical purpose.

In the prologue of *Everyman*, the Messenger addresses humanity:

I pray you all gyve your audyence,
And here this mater with reverence.
By fygure a morall playe:
The Somonyng of Everyman called it is,
That of our lyves and endyng shewes
How transytory we be all daye. (*Everyman*, 2000:282)

The Messenger calls the audience to pay attention to the play, thereby also declaring that they are going to see a fictional performance. He also provides the message of the play suggesting that human life is transitory and therefore humans should not abandon God.

In *Mankind*, Mercy addresses the audience directly and tells them not to obey New Guise, Nowadays and Nought since they are evil. Soon, Mankind addresses the audience to introduce himself. Mischief makes an agreement with New Guise, Nowadays and Nought to bring Titivillus, a superior devil, but they explain that the audience must pay if they want to see him, which they accept. In the end, Mercy addresses the audience again prompting them to repent (*Mankind*, 2000:259-79).

Although metatheatrical elements are observed in Medieval period, metatheatre became popular with the Renaissance drama. Also when we talk about metatheatre today, we generally refer to it as it was used in this period. In addition, its use as a vehicle of satire can evidently be observed in this period when satirical drama flourished. As Sen states, metatheatre was not resorted to by the playwrights and the actors tactlessly or incidentally, it was the necessities of the age which forced them to use it, specifically the new techniques of staging in addition to the cultural framework altering the role of the audience (2012:13). In fact, Renaissance metatheatre owes its rise to its audience who played an unconventionally active role in the participation of the performances.

Playwrights and the actors employed metatheatre to answer the new expectations of the contemporary audience (2012:iii).

English drama witnessed an unprecedented boom in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The first public theatre, Red Lion, was built in London in 1567 which was followed by the Theatre, the Curtain, and the Rose. With the emergence of permanent theatres, the status of the audience was exposed to a radical change. The playhouses depended upon the authority of either a local governor, a nobleman, a church official, or the court; and the audience was a passive participant of the performance in the early Tudor period. Therefore, it was only the noblemen that could have “artistic control” on theatre thanks to their authority to licence plays. Yet, following the emergence of permanent theatres, plays were financed by the common audience who had a say to determine whether a play was successful or not, which granted them a position much more significant than before (Yearling, 2016:12).

This was a very positive development for English theatre. First of all, the new position of the audience gave the writers the opportunity to be more experimental since they no longer had to produce plays that their patrons would like. The newly emerging sophisticated audience directed the playwrights to compose plays which were subverting and parodying old dramatic conventions. As a result, the audience began to be active attendants of the process of the performances declaring their critical opinions of the plays (Yearling, 2016:13). The reflection of this change in the status of the audience can be observed in Beaumont’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607) in which, the Citizen and the Wife, the two audiences, do not like the performance of *The London Merchant* and jump to the stage to stop the play. Instead, they stage a romance acting like directors dictating the actors how to perform and stopping the play whenever they do not like it.

All the writers had to establish a relation with their audience, but this was more important for the satirical writer since the effectiveness of his work depended to a large extent on the approval of the audience of him as a voice of morality. The dramatic satirist needed the respect and the recognition of his audience of the validity of what he regarded as right or wrong (Yearling, 2016:42). As a result of such changes in the status of the audience, through the end of the sixteenth century, plays became “more self-reflexive and self-critical”. The plays were partly or totally about plays displaying the nature of stage productions and the reality of being an audience. Playwrights began to deal with such questions as what it means to be a playwright or an audience. For example, In *Hamlet* (c.1600), Hamlet remarks that the aim of theatre is “to hold, as ’twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image” (Yearling, 2016:19).

As Janet Clare states, at the end of the sixteenth century, theatre became so popular that probably some 8.000 people were watching a performance in London in the mid-1590s. Therefore, the state began to control the playhouses and the companies checking the contents of the plays. It became obligatory for the playhouses to get a licence (2012:276). Such measures to control the theatre are in line with what Francis Bacon said: “The minds of men are more open to impressions and affections when many are gathered together than when they are alone” (qtd. in Clare, 2012:276), indicating the potential of the theatre to affect the minds of a large number of people. In London, the Justices of Peace were responsible for the control of the plays. Sometimes, the Privy Council could limit the performances due to complaints from public, as it happened with *The Isle of Dogs*, probably “an anti-court comedy” (Yearling, 2016:47), in which the satire was so harsh that Thomas Nashe had to stay in prison for a while (Urgan, 2013:127).

Satirical plays could often cause problems for the playwrights such as imprisonment or censorship. For example, Jonson and Chapman were imprisoned for writing *Eastward Ho* (Clare, 2012:291), like some of the actors performing in *Isle of*

Gulls. Shakespeare, too, was aware of such preventions as censorship. However, he did not have any investigations as he did not write for boy companies renowned for the subversive content of their plays. In addition, he was not interested in satire (Clare, 2012:291-2). Finally, in 1599, the Bishop's Ban of 1599 halted the production of satirical plays by John Donne, Joseph Hall and John Marston (McRae, 2004:1). Satirical plays were still performed, but playwrights had to be very careful in order to escape punishments. For this reason, they employed a number of tactics such as the use of allegory or situating their plays in distant countries, generally in the ones England had controversies with (mostly in Spain or Italy), or periods, or the use of the play-within-the-play to make the impression that the atrocities they are depicting are happening in a fictitious play, showcasing the symbiotic relation between satire and metatheatre.

For example, Middleton's infamous *A Game at Chess* is an allegorical satire. Using the allegorical structure of a chess game, the play displays the English-Spanish controversy during the Spanish Match negotiations²⁵. The white players represent English protestantism while the black players represent Spanish Catholicism. In the same vein, Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582-92) which displays the inequities in English law, is set in Spain; John Marston's *The Malcontent* (1603), picturing the corruption at court is set in Italy; Massinger's *The Roman Actor* (1629), which satirizes the oppressive politicians, the repression of freedom of thought and censorship of plays, takes place in Ancient Rome.

Ben Jonson was a major satirist of the time who mostly satirized human folly and vice. For instance, *Volpone* (1606), set in Italy, satirizes hypocrisy and covetousness. Volpone (fox) abuses the avarice of Voltore (vulture), Corbaccio (crow), and Carvino (raven). He feigns death and makes them believe that one of them will be his heir, and

²⁵ The Spanish Match refers to the proposed marriage of Mary I and Philip of Spain, the future king.

gets expensive gifts from them (Jonson, 2002b), which can be regarded as a metatheatrical element. Therefore, the metatheatrical element of role playing shows Volpone's mendacity as well as his greed as a representation of the general moral corruption of the contemporary man.

Bartholomew Fair (1612) is another satirical play by Jonson which includes bitter satire on the contemporary London society. The fair, the setting of the play, enables Jonson to portray a vivid picture of the London society representing people of different classes. (Karana, 2013:97). Kinney Smithfield states that, in the past, the fair "probably had its origin as a gathering for worship in sacred place" (qtd. in Karana, 2013:98) which demonstrates the moral deterioration of the time (98).

The prologue of the play is metatheatrical as Jonson directly addresses the audience to provide information about his play:

These for your sport, without particular wrong
Or just complaint of any private man
(Who of himself or shall think well or can),
The Maker doth present, and hopes tonight
To give you, for a failing, true delight. (Jonson, 2005:708)

Clearly, Jonson tries to persuade the audience that the play does not target any specific individual to satirize; it merely aims to entertain them. Therefore, he aims to protect himself from the accusations of writing satire. In this case, he makes use of metatheatre to defend himself against the discussions his play might ignite.

Another substantial satirist of the time was John Marston whose bitter satire on the corruption at the court can be seen in *The Malcontent*. The play takes place at the court of Duke Pietro in Genova. A mysterious guest, Malevole, who is in fact Altofronto, the former Duke dethroned by Mendoza, Pietro's adopted heir, arrives in the court. Malevole says to Pietro that his wife Aurelia cuckolds him. Mendoza who also has a relation with Aurelia says to Pietro that Aurelia has a relationship with Fernese. He

arranges a plan in which Pietro will catch them in her room. Mendoza also plans to kill Pietro and marry Aurelia. Later, he aims to marry Maria, the former duke's wife to have full control of the country. In the end, however, Malevole turns his plans against him and Pietro sees the truth (Marston, 2002). Hence, the metatheatrical element of disguise ironically helps reveal the truth.

As Marsden expounds, in the Restoration, playwrights were satirizing marriage institution and the attempts of social mobility. Those plays mocked many things from the Frenchified manners of the aristocrats to middle class materialism. For example, in *The Man of Mode* (1676), the character Sir Fopling Flutter is the object of satire because of his pride, flamboyant clothes and praise of all French things. He even changes his footman's English name, which he thinks is "barbarous", for a French name. Along with social criticism, political satire was also popular in the Restoration drama. Whig and Tory playwrights employed the stage as a vehicle through which they could express their political opinions. For instance, in plays like *The Roundheads* (1681) and *The Lucky Chance* (1686), Aphra Behn attacks Whig politicians. Whig playwrights like Thomas Shadwell showed the pro-royalist aristocrats as drunkards trampling on the rights of English citizens (2007:163).

Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* (1671/2) makes a mockery of the serious drama popular in Restoration, especially the heroic drama of Dryden and Sir Robert Howard in rhyme with exaggerated characters, foreign places and unlikely plots. The play, which was written when heroic dramas very highly popular, mocks these plays and, it might even have been one of the factors in their disappearance (Marsden, 2007:165). The play is set in a rehearsal. In its frame, two men talk about a playwright, Bayes, his play based on Dryden's *Conquest of Granada*, and the rehearsal (Buckingham, 1914). In the end, the gentlemen leave, "and the rehearsal (and *The Rehearsal*) ends in a shambles" (Marsden, 2007:165). As it is explained in the epilogue, "The Play is at an end, but where's the

Plot/That circumstance our Poet Bayes forgot” (Buckingham, 1914:73). Thus, Bayes’s play is portrayed as a play which means nothing in the end. The metatheatrical device of the play-within-the-play serves as a tool of literary criticism in the play.

Henry Fielding, a famous novelist, but also a major playwright of the eighteenth century, used the play-within-the-play to mock contemporary drama and social and political issues. One of his successful plays is *The Author’s Farce* in which the play staged is a performance, not a rehearsal. The frame play includes the story of Luckless, a playwright who is in love with the daughter of his landlord, but unable to pay the rent. In the frame, there is also the character Marplay who tries to mar Luckless’s play (Fielding, 1966). As Marsden expresses, Marplay, is a caricature of Colley Cibber, a manager at Drury Lane who was known for his tendency to adapt playwrights like Shakespeare and Moliere (2007:169-70), showcasing the usage of metatheatre as a vehicle of literary criticism.

In his later plays, Fielding’s dramatic satire became more political and mostly targeted Walpole. Thus, Fielding employs metatheatre as an agent of both political and literary criticism, between which, he suggests, there is a close relation. Until 1737, the enactment of the Licensing Act which halted his career as a playwright, he composed twenty-seven plays most of which were satirical. The Act required all plays to be licenced by the Lord Chamberlain, making it difficult for the playwrights to write satirical drama.

Therefore, playwrights who had satiric tendencies moved away from politics, and plays focused more “on the foibles of the Beau Monde”²⁶ (Marsden, 2007:172). After 1737, satirical plays were more humorous rather than harsh, with the exception of the plays of Samuel Foote who was called “[t]he English Aristophanes”. Foote wrote about twenty-five plays and many of them were satirical. As an actor, Foote was popular for his

²⁶ Beau Monde: the wealthy and fashionable group in a certain society.

performances mimicking public figures, and in his plays, he aimed to do the same. In his plays, Foote targets specific figures rather than human follies; these features are seen in *The Minor* (1760), his most successful play which employs the rehearsal device like many other satirical plays (Marsden, 2007:172). However, the rehearsed play does not burlesque another play, instead, it satirizes Methodism, particularly George Whitehead (Foote, 1984) who, as Marsden explains, was one of the most popular Methodists of the time (172). Foote's satire on religion can be observed through Mrs Cole, a bawd claiming to be "saved" (Marsden, 2007:172), exemplifying the use of metatheatre to showcase religious corruption.

R. B. Sheridan, probably the most popular playwright of the later eighteenth century, also wrote comedies satirizing social issues. In *The School for Scandal* (1777/80) he mocks gossipers and excessive sentimentality of the comedies of the time (Sheridan, 1988). *The Critic* (1779/81) is "his most extended satiric drama" (Marsden, 2007:173). As its title suggests, the play models Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* with its last two acts dealing with the rehearsal of tragedy (Marsden, 2007:173). The play does not parody a particular play or a literary form. It generally mocks bad writing through Mr Puff (Sheridan, 1889), "writing overblown descriptions or 'puffs'" (Marsden, 2007:173), satirizing the literary trends of the time. As all of these examples expose, with the use of the metatheatrical devices such as the rehearsal or the play-within-the-play, literary, social and political criticism were mostly intertwined in the plays in the Restoration and the eighteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, satire was efficiently used by two significant playwrights of the time: Shaw (1856-1950) and Wilde (1854-1900). According to Shaw, the major problem of the contemporary age was "a slavish devotion to tradition and outmoded institutions" (Herr, 2007:463). In line with this, in *Arms and the Man* (1898), he, through the avaricious Captain Bluntschli, satirizes romanticism towards war (Shaw,

1952). *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1894) displays prostitution as a common social ill. Mrs Warren's daughter Vivie rejects the money provided from her mother's brothel. She loathes capitalism more than she loathes prostitution (Herr, 2007:463). Therefore, the play is a satire on the capitalist system through the portrayal of Mrs. Warren who still runs brothels although she is already wealthy. In *Pygmalion* (1913), Professor Higgins bets that he can create a lady out of the flower girl Eliza by correcting her speech and make everyone at an ambassador's party believe that she is really a duchess, which he succeeds (Shaw, 2009). Therefore, the metatheatrical element of role-playing is a tool to satirize the class distinctions, as it displays that such distinctions are arbitrary.

Oscar Wilde owes his success as a dramatist mostly to *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), a good example of light satire, in which he satirizes the superficiality of the Victorian aristocracy. In the play, John Worthing who lives in the country invents an imaginary brother, Earnest, living in London so that he can go there on the pretext of visiting him. His close friend Algernon Moncrieff also lives in London. John is in love with Algernon's cousin Gwendolen Fairfax and wins her love thanks to his fake name, Earnest. Algernon visits John's country house introducing himself as Earnest and falls in love with the ward of John, Cecily Cardew who is also impressed by the name Earnest (Wilde, 1976). The imaginary characters of Earnest employed by John and Algernon, to which Gwendolen and Cecily are attracted, display the superficiality of the contemporary society. The girls love not the men but their name without thinking if they are really earnest. Thus, the metatheatrical element of double identity displays the shallowness of the people of the time. As it is seen, in the nineteenth century, the playwrights generally focused on the hypocrisy of the contemporary society, exhibiting the use of metatheatrical devices for social satire.

Satire was also popular among modern and contemporary playwrights. At this point, the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936)'s views regarding theatre must

be reminded as modern writers were deeply influenced by his opinions. As Susan Bassnett expresses, Pirandello's plays were performed in Italy in the 1920s, but they became popular in the 1940s and 1950s as a result of the interest of the existentialist playwrights and playwrights of the absurd, causing an increase in the number of the translations of his works (1989:30).

In Pirandello's philosophy, personality is multiple; humans do not have a certain self they get at birth and, in such a case of lack of a "spiritual entity", they can do nothing "but to engage in a process of erecting patterns of being, or roles in life, for themselves" (Farrell, 2004:xIi). "A human being cannot just *be* [emphasis original]: he or she must act out a part" (Farrell, xIi). In that sense, being theatrical is superior to humans as their world "is beyond the realm of change or decay" (Farrell, xIi). In such a case, theatre is the "truest metaphor for life" (Farrell, xIi). The world is really a stage in such a comprehensive sense that not even Shakespeare could imagine. In such a world, humans are mere actors playing their parts with masks on their faces (xIi).

The reflections of such opinions of Pirandello are seen in his well-known play, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in which a group of actors are rehearsing a play by Pirandello, *The Rules of the Game*, which is "interrupted by one of the most celebrated entrances in modern drama" (Farrell, 2004:xv). Six family members, who were previously characters in another play, stop the rehearsal to ask the Producer to stage their story. The Producer agrees and the actors try to rehearse their drama. The Characters are totally aware that they are the creations of an author:

The Father: [...] one can be thrust into life in many ways, in many forms: as a tree or a stone, as water or a butterfly - or as a woman. It might even be as a character in a play.

The Producer: [...] And you, and these other people here, were thrust into life, as you put it, as characters in a play?

The Father: Exactly! And alive as you can see. (Pirandello, 2004:13)

The Father declares their self-consciousness about their own theatricality. Moreover, he draws attention to the unstable nature of reality in his speech to The Producer at the beginning of Act III:

The Father: I only want to make you see that if we [...] have no other reality outside our own illusion, perhaps you ought to distrust your own sense of reality: because whatever is a reality today, whatever you touch and believe in and that seems real for you today, is going to be - like the reality of yesterday - an illusion tomorrow. (64)

He emphasizes that there is no fixed reality as reality is based on constantly changing perceptions. Therefore, what we define as reality is nothing but an illusion. As Bassnett remarks, with his deep interest in relativity, the constant failure of human communication, the unreliability of words, changing roles, lack of a stable self, the inherent evil in human beings (1989:31), Pirandello affected the twentieth-century authors writing in diverse languages such as “English, French, German, [and] Czech”. “Pirandello’s mockery of the sovereignty of reason” is a major idea which shaped modern thought (Bassnett, 31), which could be observed in the theatre of Samuel Beckett, for instance.

Beckett made use of metatheatrical devices in his plays such as *Catastrophe* and *Krapp’s Last Tape*. *Catastrophe* is a one-act play including four characters, Director, Assistant, Protagonist and Luke, the technician, displaying the rehearsal of a play’s last scene unknown to the audience. The audience does not know the details of the inner play as they are not displayed but merely mentioned (Beckett, 1990a). By not staging the inner play, Beckett creates “an atmosphere of ambivalence” (Eşberk, 2013:39-40). With this atmosphere of “ambivalence”, he aims to obscure the affinity between real and fiction (Eşberk, 39-40). Therefore, the metatheatrical device of the play-within-the-play, with the inner play which is not performed, subverts the hierarchy of the real over the fictional by dissolving the demarcation between the two.

Beckett also uses “myth and ritual” to emphasize the fragmented nature of reality (Eşberk, 2013:47). These rituals are “vehicles in the characters’ striving to live” in an

absurd life (Eşberk, 47). Due to the absurdity of life, the characters' daily events have lost their significance as exhibited in *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) in which repetitive birthday celebrations appear as ceremonies. Krapp (69) celebrates his birthday listening to tape recordings of his previous birthday (Beckett, 1990b). His repetitive mimics and gestures are also a "reflection of ritualized events born out of Krapp's habits" which he does without any meaning. Along with these, Krapp performs other ritualistic behaviours such as gazing blankly, squinting at the boxes and thinking which serve no purpose for him. But, such repetitiveness shatters hierarchy and center since no one of these actions dominate the others (Eşberk, 48-9).

In *Cloud Nine* (1979), Caryl Churchill satirizes Victorian mindset of sex and power. To point out to the arbitrariness of race and gender in a patriarchal society, in act I, many male roles are cast with female actors and vice versa; and many roles are cast by actors of different race. For instance, a white actor plays the role of an African servant (Churchill, 1983). So, referring to metatheatrical devices such as cross gender, Churchill satirizes the Victorian society for their hypocrisy in the matters of gender and race, like Aristophanes who satirized the Greek society for its double standards regarding gender in *Lysistrata* and *The Assembly of Women*.

In the late 1970s, many authors reflected postmodern tendencies in their works, and Tom Stoppard was amongst the precursors of "postmodern skepticism" raising questions about official history and accepted knowledge (Zapkin, 2016:306). *Travesties* (1974), for example, blur[s] the lines among historical events, memory, and narrative patterns" (Zapkin, 307). The play displays Henry Carr's memories. Carr worked for the consulate of English in Zurich in 1917. During this time, James Joyce, Tristan Zara and Lenin were also in the city. Carr, as an elderly man, narrates his memories with these three men, focusing more on how Joyce asked him to play the part of Algernon in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Stoppard, 1975).

However, the historical records show that Carr performed as Algernon in the production of the English Players' directed by Joyce, and that there were problems between the two on issues of money which ended in court. Yet, there is no record verifying that Carr ever met Tzara or Lenin. It is known that these people happened to be in Zurich during the World War I, but nothing is known about the details of their relation with each other (Stoppard, 1975). Thus, references to literary figures such as Joyce, Tzara and Wilde's play are used to draw attention to the gaps in historical accounts foregrounding their unreliability.

Another metatheatrical play by Stoppard is *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* which is based on *Hamlet* in which there are direct quotations from that play (Stoppard, 1967), reminding the audience that both Stoppard's and Shakespeare's plays are fictional. With these quotations, which are not related to a contemporary play, Stoppard challenges the authority of *Hamlet* as a master narrative (Yedekçi, 2010:35). The authority of *Hamlet* is further questioned when Rosencrantz summarizes *Hamlet* from his point of view: "To sum up: your father, whom you love, dies, you are his heir, you come back to find that hardly was the corpse cold before his young brother popped onto his throne and into his sheets, thereby offending both legal and natural practice" (qtd. in Yedekçi, 2010:38). With his deconstruction of *Hamlet*, Stoppard demonstrates that he sees Hamlet and the characters in a different way than Shakespeare did. He also suggests that each audience may have his own perception of the play meaning that any form of art cannot be regarded as a self-evident entity. In contrast, they can be interrogated and produce various meanings (Yedekçi, 2010:38).

The Real Thing (1982) is based on many complicated relationships, but what seems real at first comes out to be deceptive soon. In scene I, Max accuses his wife, Charlotte, of adultery and she leaves home. In scene II, Charlotte appears to be married to the playwright Henry. It is also revealed that she is, in fact, an actress who was

performing in a play written by Henry in scene I. Annie and Henry quarrel over Annie's support for an imprisoned soldier who was arrested for burning the grave of a warrior, which is soon revealed to be a performance. In fact, they have an affair. In the second act, it is also revealed that Annie's sympathy with the soldier is not because of her belief that the act was true, but because he did it to impress her (Stoppard, 1986). With the performances added into the play, reality and performance become so much intertwined that the boundary between them is vague. As it is obvious, in the twentieth century, the playwrights referred to metatheatre to disrupt the traditional views of reality emphasizing its relativity. Therefore, in these plays, metatheatre functions as a tool for questioning the concept of reality as a whole.

In twentieth century plays, the play-within-the-play is used as an alternative story to the metanarratives such as history. Therefore, it functions as a tool to deconstruct such narratives. For example, in Howard Brenton's *The Churchill Play* (1974), it serves to deconstruct the myth of Churchill as a national hero. In the play, a number of people are kept at a camp for reasons they do not know. They prepare a play for the politicians who are going to visit the camp, and, meanwhile, it is revealed that not every citizen regards Winston Churchill as a great hero. Therefore, Brenton aims to show the partiality of national historiography. David Hare's *A Map of the World* (1982) is set at a UNESCO conference which is held to discuss Third World Poverty in India. A novelist, Victor Mehta, turns his experiences at the conference into a novel, which is later turned into a movie. Therefore, the play turns out to be a movie-within-the-novel-within-the-play, a more complicated version of the play-within-the-play, in which characters from various political stances get the chance to voice their ideas. The playwright does not satirize a certain political viewpoint. Rather, he emphasizes that each country must take responsibility for a better life, displaying the employment of metatheatrical devices to satirize global issues, rather than focusing on domestic problems.

Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* (1988) is based on a novel, *The Playmaker*, written by the Australian writer Thomas Keneally. It is based on the historical account of a voyage in 1787 in which a number of convicts were taken from England to New South Wales to construct a colony. After they arrive in Australia, the criminals perform a play, a comedy, *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) by George Farquhar. Through this play-within-the-play, the playwright questions neoliberalism through metatheatrical strategies.

As a conclusion, it could be stated that there has been a very close relation between satire and metatheatre throughout the history of English drama. Considering the examples from the earliest plays to the contemporary, it can be stated that English drama has been innately satirical and metatheatrical from the beginning, and the playwrights have employed metatheatrical elements in order to satirize the authorities for their inability to deal with people's problems. Furthermore, they provided the oppressed groups new stories through which they could cry the injustices they were exposed to.

CHAPTER II

JUSTICE, CLASS, ART: A SATIRICAL LOOK AT RENAISSANCE ENGLAND THROUGH METATHEATRICAL LENSES

2.1. Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* as a Satire on the Judicial System

Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582-92), an original and eminently popular play in Renaissance English drama, focuses on complex social issues such as the demand for justice. The play's immense popularity suggests that it must have appealed to its audience personally who appreciated the story of Hieronimo, whose search for justice is prevented by unfair statesmen. This implies that they had similar difficulties in achieving justice for themselves. Since the theme of search for justice and law is closely associated with the play's being a revenge tragedy, revenge tragedy's connection with these themes should be clarified first.

Renaissance revenge tragedy is a kind of drama with unique conventions such as having "foreign settings, frustrated revengers, vindictive ghosts, the revenger's descent into madness, spectacular violence, comic elements and metatheatrical devices, such as the play within the play" (Pollard, 2010:64). It is also distinctive considering its unprecedented popularity²⁷ since revenge tragedies were often re-printed and reworked, denoting early modern audience's remarkable interest in these plays.

Regarding the popularity of revenge plays in early modern England, Woodbridge declares that the rise of these plays which were generally dubious of Christianity as well as the assassinations of kings by revengers and the murders of dukes by common men in such a devout and hierarchical monarchy (2010:5) was a response to the economic and

²⁷ Katharine Eisaman Maus states that revenge tragedies are still surviving in a different form. According to her, western movies and detective thrillers, in which the revenger is trying to discover the murderer of his partner or a family member, and can be as evil as his adversary, are modern versions of revenge tragedies (1995:ix).

legal problems of the time (222). Many citizens thought that they were unjustly treated (2010:6). “Unfairness was like the weather: everyone talked about it” (2010:6). Like Woodbridge, Pollard attributes the increased demand for these plays to the social and political conditions of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. In the periods, the distribution of power, which was rather unsteady, depended on class. The court had an increasing monopoly on power reducing the wealth of the aristocracy and those who were depended on them for employment. Therefore, people were worried about the continuation of their accustomed way of life. The inefficacy of the law was another problem for them. English law was not formal, written or systematic and there was not a certainty about the enforcement of laws (2010:59-60). Katharine Eisaman Maus also expresses that the demand for revenge tragedies was directly linked with the social problems of the sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries (1995:xi). It was thought that social order depended on a customary system of duties and prerogatives which “bound patrons to dependants, sovereigns to subjects, aristocrats to retainers” (Eisaman Maus, 1995:xi). In such a system in which domination and obedience played a major role, what determined one’s place in the society was his rank.

In revenge tragedies, the avengers are not from the aristocracy and, as Woodbridge says, “class-based frustration” appears as a common motive (2010:236). For instance, Hieronimo and Vindice²⁸ are socially inferior than their antagonists. Hieronimo is a Knight Marshal²⁹ who works for the court³⁰. Although these revengers are seeking equality, as Harry Keyishian declares, they are mostly the victims of “malice, injustice, treachery, grief, unstable values, and deprivations of power or status” (qtd. in Woodbridge, 6). Basically, these plays tell the stories of an ordinary man who has lost his

²⁸ Vindice is the main revenger in Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1607). He wants to take the revenge of his fiancée, Gloriana who was killed by the Duke as she rejected him.

²⁹ A Knight Marshal is both a military servant and a judge of the court.

³⁰ In the 1592 edition, the words “Lord”, “King” and “Court” are capitalized to denote Hieronimo’s respect for his superiors (Woodbridge, 2010:239).

trust in the institutions, which are supposed to protect the rights of the citizens, and defies the status quo (Dunne, 2016:4). The injustices displayed in revenge tragedies generally predate the actions staged. Because revenge follows a crime against an innocent person, the deficiency of the status quo is a precondition in these plays (Eisaman Maus, 1995:ix). In this respect, English revenge tragedy is an indicator of the poor relation of the early modern man with the legal system (Dunne, 2016:166).

In revenge tragedies, the avenger lives through a horrible situation for which he has no responsibility. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, for instance, Horatio is not a villain himself and Hieronimo has nothing to do with his death. In these plays, the protagonist happens to find himself in a deadlock to which he cannot find any way out and the play is contrived in such a way that the dilemma of the protagonist reflects the audience's own anxieties (Eisaman Maus, 1995:x-xi). In this way, the English audience, who were suffering from similar problems with the stage revengers such as villainy, inequity, insecurity, lack of power or position at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, could easily identify themselves with these characters.

Moreover, the popularity of these plays pertains to the pleasure they provide the audience with. Monarchs had supreme, oppressive power in England in the sixteenth century. People were regarded as members of a certain class with obligations and did not have much worth as individuals. In these cases, "Renaissance revenge tragedy taps the repressed frustrations of such situations, presenting the delicious spectacle of subjects hood-winking and finally annihilating their superiors" (Eisaman Maus, 1995:xii). While the avengers on the stage relieve through poisoning or killing, the audience finds relief in watching the unjust being avenged (Woodbridge, 2010:222) experiencing Schadenfreude (Hill, 2004:329).

The Spanish Tragedy opens with the ghost of Don Andrea, a nobleman from Spain, telling the story of his murder (I.i). Andrea was killed by Balthazar, the Portuguese prince, in a battle and when his soul descends into the underworld where the three judges cannot decide where to place him³¹. Therefore, he is sent to Pluto and Proserpine, the King and the Queen of the underworld for a decision. Finally, Proserpine decides that Andrea, accompanied by Revenge, should go back to the world to see his death (I.i). Balthazar is taken captive by Horatio and brought to the court (I.ii). In the meantime, Hieronimo, the Knight Marshal, and Isabella discover the hanged body of their son, Horatio (II.v). Bel-Imperia writes Hieronimo a letter to inform him that his son was killed by Lorenzo, the King's nephew, and Balthazar (III.ii). When he is sure that Horatio was really killed by Lorenzo and Balthazar, Hieronimo tries to talk to the King to ensure a legal punishment for the murderers, but he is hindered by Lorenzo, who is afraid of being exposed, on the pretext that the King does not have any time (III.xii). In the end, Hieronimo stages a play, a tragedy entitled *Soliman and Perseda*³² to entertain the Spanish Viceroy. In this play, Lorenzo, Balthazar and Bel-Imperia have roles along with Hieronimo (IV.i). In the inner play, the characters stab each other, Hieronimo reveals that the swords and daggers are real and all of them are dead now³³. He also kills Lorenzo's father and himself (IV. iv). Throughout the play, Andrea's ghost and Revenge stay on the stage and comment on the action.

The play's concern for the problem of justice is clear at the very beginning when Andrea goes to Minos, Aecus and Rhadamanth³⁴ (I.i) who cannot decide where to place

³¹ Aecus says that Andrea should go to the lovers' place as he lived and died as a lover. Yet, Rhadamanth says that Andrea was a warrior and should be sent to the warriors' place (I.i).

³² *Soliman and Perseda*, which has the same plot structure as Hieronimo's inner play in *The Spanish Tragedy*, is a play thought to have been written by Kyd himself.

³³ In some other plays, too, the revenger establishes justice through theatre. For instance, Hamlet becomes sure of Claudius's guilt when *The Murder of Gonzago* is staged; in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Vindice kills Lussuiroso and his men during the performance of a masque.

³⁴ Minos, Aecus and Rhadamanth, sons of Zeus, were, in fact, mortal. After they died, they became responsible for establishing justice in the world of the living as the ministers of Hades.

him, displaying the incapability of the top judges to make a right decision. The three judges who cannot make a proper decision is a foreshadowing of the latter problems in the legal system (Dunne, 2016:1). When Andrea arrives at the palace of Pluto and Proserpine, Pluto, the King of the underworld, and “the highest legal authority and guarantor of justice” (Dunne, 2016:37) is indifferent to the issue of Andrea’s right placement. Instead, he prefers to flirt with Proserpine which implies that the rulers in the world might also be inefficient to make fair decisions in legal issues or indifferent to the problems of their subjects, treating them unfairly and unequally, as it is insinuated in Andrea’s introduction to the audience:

I was a courtier in the Spanish court.
My name was Don Andrea; my descent,
Though not ignoble, yet inferior far
To gracious fortunes of my tender youth. (I.i) (Kyd, 2002:9)

What he firstly declares about himself is his social inferiority in the court. Andrea implies that he is resentful, as he has been unfairly treated at court because of his humble origins. Referring to his rank so early, he signals that the issue of class and unfair treatment of the lower class courtiers is an important issue at the court, as well as a basic concern in the play along with revenge and justice.

In fact, the play includes many references to the characters’ class. For instance, the General talks to the King about the fight with the Portuguese and discloses how bravely Horatio fought against the enemy taking prince Balthazar captive (I.ii). The King announces that Horatio will get “this battle’s prize” for his courage and success. Soon, however, prince Balthazar, captive, comes in between Horatio and Lorenzo. The King greets the prisoner and his nephew elatedly: “Welcome, Don Balthazar! Welcome, nephew!” But, although it is Horatio who actually defeated the prince, he does not show the same excitement to his arrival: “And thou, Horatio, thou are welcome too”. Then, he commands that Lorenzo will get Balthazar’s weapon and horse; Horatio will get the

ransom. Though Lorenzo does not have a remarkable contribution to the defeat of the prince, he is rewarded by the King. In addition, he orders that Lorenzo entertain Balthazar since Horatio's house is too small to entertain such a distinguished guest, showcasing "[his] nepotism - favouring his nephew over Horatio" (Woodbridge, 2010:237). In I.iv a banquet is organized for the Portuguese ambassador in which a dumb show is staged by Hieronimo. In the dumb show, three knights who stand for England, seize and depose three Iberian kings, celebrating both the military achievement and peace. The King invites the ambassador, prince and Lorenzo to sit with him while he orders Horatio to serve as the cupbearer. These examples display that the King's treatment to his subjects is based on their social status, not on their achievements. In the play, "birth, lineage, rank, and station" are remarkably significant to live in a consistent society (Kinney, 2005:147).

Lorenzo, who is planning to marry his sister to Balthazar to ensure peace between the two countries as decreed by the King gets shocked when he realizes that his sister loves the son of a lower state official, who is "inconceivable as a husband for Bel-Imperia" (Woodbridge, 2010:237). When Pedringano tells him that Bel-Imperia loves Horatio, he replies in a daze: "What, Don Horatio, our knight marshal's son?" (II.i). "Not 'that valiant soldier who fought side-by-side with me,' but 'our knight marshal's son'", the adjective "our" nearly defining Hieronimo as a footman (Woodbridge, 2010:237). When Bel-Imperia loved Andrea who was from a lower social class, she already revealed her indifference to class distinction (Woodbridge, 2010:237). Now, she loves Horatio to help her take the revenge of her former lover. However, due to his lower class, the relationship is unacceptable for Lorenzo. Like Lorenzo, the King calls Horatio "our knight marshal's son" (II.iii), showing his contempt for the lower classes.

In II.iv Lorenzo and Balthazar, aided by Pedringano who betrays Bel-Imperia, catch Bel-Imperia and Horatio secretly meeting in a bower in the garden of Hieronimo's house. Serberine and Pedringano stab Horatio and his dead body is hanged in the bower.

Bel-Imperia calls to Hieronimo: “Murder, murder! Help, Hieronimo, help!”. Hieronimo hears her cries and goes to the garden only to find his son’s dead body hanging in the arbor (II.v). From now on, his only concern is to find out the murderer(s) to take the revenge of his son since relief will come only in this way: “To know the author were some ease of grief, /For in revenge my heart would find relief”. Up to this scene, Hieronimo is a minor character at court as Horatio’s father and the Master of the Revels responsible for staging plays for the guests. However, after the death of Horatio, Hieronimo becomes the protagonist, and the play’s principal concern shifts from Andrea’s murder to Hieronimo’s revenge³⁵ of his son to establish justice for him (Erne, 2001:35).

The concept of justice was closely associated with religion (Chandler, 2014:1-2). In religious teachings, revenge was strictly denounced (Hill, 2004:329). In “Of wrath” in *A Treatise of Moral Philosophy* (1547), William Baldwin wrote: “Wrath and revengement taketh from man the mercy of God, and destroyeth and quencheth the grace that God hath given him” (qtd. in Hill, 2004:329), suggesting that those who take revenge will lose God’s compassion to them. Baldwin also wrote: “Forgetfulness is a valiant kind of revengement” (qtd. in Hill, 2004:329), proposing that oblivion is a better punishment than revenge. According to the writers of the period, however, if one could not overcome injustice through law, he could take revenge himself, and “private vengeance” was acceptable. (Mulryne, 1989:xvi). “Even [...] Francis Bacon admits that: ‘the most tolerable sort of revenge is for those wrongs which there is no law to punish’” (qtd. in Mulryne, xvi). For Bacon, in such a case, revenge is “a kind of wild justice” (Bowers, 1966:3) which Hieronimo has to resort to in the play to punish his son’s murderers.

³⁵ The words “revenge” and “vengeance” are often used interchangeably to refer to retribution, a response to an injustice (Broude, 1975:40). However, they are slightly different in meaning. “Revenge” is closer to “punishment” as it is used today (Broude, 1975:39). While as a modern concept, “revenge” is regarded legal, vengeance is not (Jacoby, 1983:1).

When Hieronimo decides to find out the killer of his son, he gets a letter from Bel-Imperia citing the murderers as Lorenzo and Balthazar (III.ii). However, he does not immediately believe in what she has written and tries to be sure of their crime. His commitment to law is also visible in III.vi where Pedringano confesses that he has killed Serberine, his servant. In this scene, Hieronimo tells Pedringano that although he cannot achieve justice for his son for the time being, he will do it for Serberine and orders Pedringano's execution. After his execution, Hieronimo learns from Pedringano's letter that Horatio was actually killed by Lorenzo and Balthazar (III.vii). Sure of their crime, he says: "I will go plain me to my lord the King, /And cry aloud for justice through the court" (III.vii), supposing that the King will help him.

When he arrives at the court, the King is having a meeting with the Portuguese ambassador about the terms of peace. Hieronimo comes in and cries: "Justice, oh, justice to Hieronimo!" (III.xii). But, Lorenzo does not allow him to see the King saying that he is too busy to talk to him. Hieronimo cries again: "Justice, oh, justice! Oh, my son, my, son" and Lorenzo implies that he has gone insane due to his grief. As he is a prince, Lorenzo can easily persuade the King that Hieronimo is insane. He also wants to convince the King that Hieronimo is greedy and wants to get Balthazar's ransom. The King does not pay attention to Hieronimo's pleas as he is indifferent to the lower class people and goes on talking to the ambassador. As Hieronimo cannot find any support from the King, he leaves. What we see in this scene is "a biased legal system that privileges the ruling elite" (Dunne, 2016:42).

It is obvious that, like many other revengers (Dunne, 2016:3), Hieronimo, too, wants to achieve justice through legal ways (Laird, 1965:139; Dunne, 2016:40). But, the King is the sole authority in legal matters, and Hieronimo cannot secure justice as he is prevented from accessing the King; as Belsey comments, his knowledge and experience as Knight Marshal is useless, he can do nothing with it (1985:75-6). He realizes that

compared to his enemies' nobility, his position as the Knight Marshal is of no use to him (Woodbridge, 2010:232); as he says his enemies "will bear [him] down with their nobility" (III.xiii). Hieronimo has to resort to revenge because legal redress is not possible (Ratliff, 1957:114).

As a result of not being able to achieve justice through legal ways, Hieronimo transforms from a grieving father to a revenger³⁶. At first, he is an ordinary citizen pursuing his rights (Womack, 2006:129) but when his position as the Knight Marshal of the Spanish court proves pointless, "he becomes a Knight Marshal to the world"³⁷ (Womack, 2006:129-30), taking up all the responsibility to achieve justice. He announces at the beginning of III.xiii: "*Vindicta mihi!* [Vengeance is mine!]³⁸" with Seneca's plays in his hands denoting that he will take his son's revenge on his own. He also says: "*Per scelus semper tutum est sceleribus iter*" ["The safe way for crime is always through crime"³⁹], suggesting that to beat his enemies, he will behave in some treacherous ways like them. He decides to behave in a friendly matter towards his opponents to gain their trust so that he can entrap them and punish his son's murderers. Obviously, as Bevington concludes, he gradually turns into a crafty and brutal man (1996:12).

Hieronimo's distrust of law is apparently observed in III.xiii where he is visited by three citizens and Don Bazulto, who demand that he plead their cases to the King. The first citizen's case is about debt, the second man's is a private case which he does not explain, the third citizen's is about ejection and the old man is after justice for his son's

³⁶ Some critics assert that in portraying a Hieronimo who gradually turns into a bloody revenger, Kyd's aim was to persuade the audience that Hieronimo's desire for vengeance was a result of "the failure of human justice, divine justice, or both" (Henke, 1981:353).

³⁷ According to C.L. Barber, due to his social position, the middle class audience could easily identify themselves with Hieronimo (1988:135); they loved him as he represented them as an ordinary man (Womack, 2006:130). In 1602, additions were made to the play, and it was the role of Hieronimo that was enlarged (Clare, 2014:xvii-xviii), denoting the popularity of Hieronimo as a stage figure among the audience which demonstrates that they embraced him as a man ignored by the authorities, like themselves, in his quest for justice.

³⁸ Bevington, et al, 2002:51.

³⁹ Bevington, et al, 2002:51.

murder like Hieronimo. Hieronimo tells them that: “on this earth justice will not be found” and he tears the petitions, which as Barker and Hinds state, displays his desperation regarding law (2003b:35), echoed in his speech to the old man whom he was assuming to be Horatio:

Go back, my son; complain to Aeacus,
For here's no justice. Gentle boy, begone,
For justice is exiled from the earth. (Kyd, 2002:54)

Hieronimo emphasizes that there is no justice in this world. His reference to Aeacus is ironic because, along with Minos and Rhadamanth, Aeacus could not decide where to place Andrea's ghost in the underworld, and Andrea was sent to Pluto and Proserpine who sent him to the world, which exhibits that “neither earthly nor supernatural powers appear to be willing to revenge his murdered son” (Daalder, 1986:259).

In IV.i Balthazar asks Hieronimo to prepare a show for his father, the Viceroy, to be staged in his wedding ceremony which Hieronimo accepts readily. Thus, the play is formed as a metatheatre, the significance of which, as Erne (2001:96) and Semenza (2010:153) comment, has not been fully realized. Indeed, Renaissance revenge tragedies are mostly metatheatrical since they include many visual and verbal references to earlier plays. As Woodbridge explains, these tragedies are remarkably “stagy” including metatheatrical elements and plays-within-plays (2010:50). “Revenge is inherently theatrical and often involves role-playing” [...] and disguise (Wetmore, 2008:13). One reason for the ostensible metatheatricality of these plays “is that revenge itself is mimetic” (Woodbridge, 2010:51). As for *The Spanish Tragedy*, it is an exceptionally metatheatrical Elizabethan play.

Hieronimo tells Lorenzo and Balthazar that he wrote his play in Toledo (Spain) (IV.i). He adds that he was a poet when he was young. Now, he serves as the Master of the Revels. Womack remarks that the office of the Knight Marshal and the Master of the

Revels are joint in the Spanish court; Hieronimo is responsible for both providing justice and entertainment (2006:130); law and theatre are interconnected (Dunne, 2016:44), which is significant to underline the fictionality of law. Like the plays which reflect the views, convictions or biases of the playwrights and which are designed to instruct the audience while entertaining, law is a set-up, designed to protect the status quo. As Sartre said, “The law is [emphasis original] theatre” (qtd. in Mukherji, 2006:1). Thus, Hieronimo’s two positions as the Knight Marshal and Master of the Revels dissolve the demarcation between drama and law, fiction and reality.

The tragedy Hieronimo is going to stage is *Soliman and Perseda* in which a knight of Rhodes is engaged to the Italian Perseda. At their wedding, Suleiman, the Turkish sultan, falls in love with her but cannot win her love. One of his bashaws kills Perseda’s husband, the knight. In the end, Perseda stabs herself. As Belsey explicates, Hieronimo is both the playwright and the director of this play (1985:78); he “is no longer speaking from within the fiction” (Erne, 2001:64); he is performing his own reality written by himself. Putting on the stage his own play, Hieronimo is no longer an actor in a play directed by those who hold the power (Woodbridge, 2010:51). From now on, the audience is going to see the action from his perspective.

Hieronimo persuades Balthazar, Lorenzo and Bel-Imperia to perform in his play. It is decided that Hieronimo plays the murderer, Balthazar plays Suleiman, Lorenzo plays the Knight of Rhodes, and Bel-Imperia plays Perseda, performing roles paralleling their actions in the main plot. In IV.iv the play is performed. The court members assume that they are watching a play, but it is, in fact, the murder of their children. Hieronimo’s character stabs Lorenzo’s character, Bel-Imperia’s character stabs Balthazar, and then herself. As Shapiro comments, Hieronimo’s play not only causes the death of the heirs of the royal family but breaks down the peace between the Spanish and the Portuguese (1991:100). Whereas Hieronimo’s dumb show in I.iv exhibits the power of the English

King, his inner play exterminates the whole royal family (Erne, 2001:98). Thus, the dumb show is not as innocent as it seems to be. In fact, it “is only seemingly the innocent and benign counterpart of the catastrophic [inner] play at the end” (Erne, 2001:98). Although it seems to show the King’s authority, he does not have any control over the performance. Through theatre, Hieronimo not only takes his personal revenge on the murderers of his son, but also leaves the two families without an heir which satisfies the helpless audience.

The theatrical revenge of Hieronimo brings out the climax of the play and with real murders on the stage, two functions of Hieronimo, the Knight Marshal and the Master of the Revels, unite (Womack, 2006:130). Unknown to the Duke and Viceroy, Hieronimo takes his revenge, killing their children. Thus, “[t]he play within the play becomes a device of cunning to entrap his antagonist” (Bevington et al., 2002:5). He draws back the curtain and brings Horatio’s dead body to the stage. As Eisaman Maus comments, he uses his authority in theatre to force the surviving court members to see the situation from his point of view (1995:xvii), which he cannot do as a man of law. Indicating Horatio’s dead body, he yells:

See here my show, look on this spectacle!
Here lay my hope, and here my hope hath end.
Here lay my heart, and here my heart was slain.
Here lay my treasure, here my treasure lost.
Here lay my bliss and here my bliss bereft; (IV.iv) (Kyd, 2002:68)

In contrast with the King who have underlined the difference between himself and his subjects, Hieronimo draws attention to the similarities between them (Eisaman Maus, xvii). As he shows, the grief of losing a son is the same for all fathers⁴⁰. In this case, too, he makes use of theatre, “the most powerful tool the Renaissance had to assert the

⁴⁰ In III.xii the King comments on Horatio’s death merely declaring “we are sorry for’t”. But, now, he loses his nephew. The Duke and the Viceroy lose their sons, Lorenzo and Balthazar, experiencing the same grief as Hieronimo.

resemblances among human beings” (Eisaman Maus, 1995:xvii), which also explains the role of metatheatre as a tool of political satire in the play:

Hieronimo’s ‘Tragedy of Soliman’ [...] voices what has been silenced, releases what has been thwarted. A form traditionally designed to depict the world as seen from the perspective of the rulers is turned upside-down to express the perspective of the ruled. The effect is to deny the comprehensiveness of the sovereign’s vision, and to insist upon the significance of the subject’s occluded point of view (Eisaman Maus, 1995:100).

Thus, the play-within-the-play gives Hieronimo, and the lower classes he represents, a chance to be heard. For the first time, his personal problems, caused by the King’s inefficacy, are brought to the fore and displayed clearly. The King and his men have no chance but see them. Therefore, the inner play works as a tool to satirize the King who has never paid attention to the cries of his subject, exhibiting his indifference to the problems of his subjects in addition to his incapacity as a man of law.

Kyd designs his play in such a way that Hieronimo’s quest for order can only be possible with theatre. Therefore, the play stresses “that human beings are, like actors in a play, working through scripts they have not themselves written” (Eisaman Maus, 1995:xxii). Like Lorenzo and Balthazar, who are at the mercy of “Hieronimo’s malevolent authorial imagination” (Eisaman Maus, 1995:xxii), Hieronimo is, in fact, living through what the gods prescribed for him. The characters suppose that they are free as individuals, which is an illusion, as empty as the box Lorenzo sends to Pedringano which allegedly includes Pedringano’s pardon⁴¹. Kyd makes use of metaphors of theatre to draw attention to the characters’ limited knowledge of their ability to direct their lives (Eisaman Maus, 1995:xxii). He not only wants to take the revenge of his son’s death, but to show the royal audience what revenge is (Eisaman Maus, 1995:xvii). In this way, he

⁴¹ In III.iv through a messenger, Lorenzo sends Pedringano a box, which Pedringano supposes to include his pardon. But, the box is empty and is of no use to Pedringano to get rid of being executed.

confronts them with the reality that they are living in a society which is based on clear class divisions in which everyone has to live according to certain codes prescribed by the ruling classes, and, while the upper classes can easily access justice, the lower classes cannot. However, he also shows them that, it is possible to dissolve these man-made divisions.

Through the *theatrum mundi* metaphor, the play emphasizes that the experience of the audience is similar to the characters in Hieronimo's tragedy (Erne, 2001:97). Like the characters who were given prescribed roles by Hieronimo, human beings are, in fact, players. With this inner play, Kyd reveals that "all the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players" in a "divine theatre" in which they can do nothing but perform the roles God prescribed for them (Erne, 2001:97); "we are all subject to God's dramaturgy" (Erne, 2001:102). "Rather than suggesting that the play is life-like, Revenge, overlooking and stage-managing the action, suggests that life is play-like." (Erne, 2001:97), underlining that humans are all playing the roles allocated to themselves by God without any right to choose. Although this is a religious stance putting people merely at the mercy of God's decree as to their roles in this world, within the context of the play, it can be adapted to a socio-political perspective to suggest that people's roles in this world, as in the case of Hieronimo, are predetermined according to the class in which they are born.

At the end of the prologue, Revenge announces that he, along with Andrea's ghost, "will serve for Chorus in this tragedy" (I.i). Here, the word "tragedy", along with referring to the play itself, also refers to human beings' preconcerted dooms, underlining determinism (Erne, 2001:102), which suggests that the characters are not "autonomous beings", they are only "puppets" playing a prescribed plot, the conclusion of which is already known by Revenge before the action begins (Erne, 2001:97). In this respect, the play foregrounds the tension between the determinist frame in which the characters are

playing the roles written to them, and the play within the play in which Hieronimo writes his own fate (Erne, 2001:103).

Clearly, Kyd criticizes the concepts of revenge and justice at the court; the play's major concern is justice, and what we are actually watching "is the passing of older medieval codes of individual honour" (Sanders, 2014:65). Tudor and Stuart dynasties aimed to adapt the legal institutions of the Medieval age to the needs of the Renaissance (Broude, 1975:39), insisting that the state must be the only authority in judicial matters (Sanders, 2014:65). Thus, the King was the sole authority in legal issues. However, thanks to Hieronimo who uses the play-within-the-play most effectively (Daalder, 1986:255), *The Spanish Tragedy* showcases the possible threats that such a legal system might pose. After all, it turns out to be a political satire displaying the inefficacy of this legal system portraying an inefficient King disregarding the demands of his citizens in legal matters causing a catastrophe in the end. Portraying the old system of law as inadequate, partial and obsolete, the play foregrounds the urgent need for an unbiased, neutral and secular system of law. While emphasizing the requirement for a new legal system, it also reveals "how drama can be a powerful agent of social change" (Shapiro, 1991:100), displaying "the demonic power of theatre to create an environment in which [...] moral questioning of the universe gives way to sensational entertainment" (Bevington, 1996:13), while harshly satirizing its target, entertaining its audience at the same time.

To conclude, *The Spanish Tragedy* was a major play in its time dealing with a substantial issue like justice which interested common citizens. It owes its popularity among general audience to its protagonist, Hieronimo, who was loved and appreciated by them for he represented them as a victim of the flawed judicial system and a society with a strict class hierarchy. In his quest for justice, Hieronimo reveals the impotence of the King as a man of law as well as his protection of villainous Lorenzo simply for he is his nephew. Stopped by Lorenzo to access the King, the top representative of justice, he has

to take revenge himself, a legal action in his time. Since his role as the Knight Marshal is of no use to him in his search for justice, he resorts to theatre to access it. Through his inner play, *Soliman and Perseda*, he forces the King and the court members to see his grief. Thus, theatre becomes a vehicle for him to be visible by the upper classes. His inner play makes them see the events from his point of view. When he kills Lorenzo and Balthazar in his play, he finally takes his revenge and justice is established. Theatre can do what law is supposed to do revealing that the legal system is to be remodelled according to the needs of the contemporary society. Thus, displaying the nepotism of the King and the partiality of the legal authorities, theatre functions as a tool to satirize both the inefficient and outdated legal system and the inflexible class structure of the country in the play.

2.2. Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* as a Satire on the Class System

At the sixteenth century, there were private, indoor theatres in England where boys' companies performed. At these theatres, the admission fee could be six times more than it was at such public theatres as the Globe or the Swan. These theatres, which addressed not the public audience but an educated and elite audience, staged political satires, and, as a result, often got in trouble with both the London authorities and the Crown. Because of their heavily satiric productions, the boys' companies were closed down in 1590s (Bevington et al., 2002:1067). When they were reopened in 1599, they did not turn to any other kind of plays and insisted on staging political satires "thumbing their noses at figures of authority and at London's citizens" (Bevington et al., 2002:1067).

One of these boys' companies was the Children of the Queen's Revels performing at the second⁴² Blackfriars Theatre. It was the most effective children company of the period in which either boys or young men were performing all the male and female roles. The company mostly staged "ambitious, [...] innovative, [...] avant-garde" (Munro:2005:1), "strikingly experimental, even iconoclastic" (Munro:2005:3) plays. Using metatheatrical elements, they aimed to baffle the audience and exceed the limits of agreeable political or social satire. As a result of such ventures, the company was often in trouble with political, social and economic authorities. When James I ascended the throne (1603), the company could get a "royal patent, and staged the plays of popular playwrights like Ben Jonson and George Chapman. However, they also ordered some plays from such playwrights as John Marston, one of the co-partners of the company, and made a repertoire which not only entertained but also annoyed the audience. This anger turned into a political conflict and caused the company to lose its patent at the beginning of 1606 (Munro, 2005:1-2).

Francis Beaumont's⁴³ *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607) was one of the satirical plays the Children of the Revels put on the stage. It is a "disconcertingly" (Hunt, 1990:210) postmodern play. This "mock-heroic drama [...] is unquestionably a work of the highest merit in its own class. Probably no play of its time is so genuinely humorous" (Macaulay, 1883:150). It is a unique example of dramatic burlesque (Gayley, 1914:80; Jump, 1972:52), and the best example of "anti-form"⁴⁴ in Renaissance drama (Miller,

⁴² There were two Blackfriars Theatres. They were both indoors, at the Blackfriars Monastery site, but the second Blackfriars Theatre was larger.

⁴³ It is not clear whether the play was written merely by Beaumont or by Beaumont and John Fletcher. It is also uncertain which of them is the major playwright if it was written by both of them (Murch, 1908:xxi). To read more on this discussion on the play's problematic authorship, see Murch, Herbert S. "Authorship". *The Knight of the Burning Pestle by Beaumont and Fletcher*. Yale Studies in English. Ed. Albert S. Cook. Published PhD Dissertation. Yale University. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1908. xxi-xxxi.

⁴⁴ An "anti-form" can be defined as a work of art which draws attention to its own process of coming into being (Miller, 1978:82). In *The Knight*, the play is written before the audience and they witness the preparations.

1978:82). The play was first performed probably in June 1607 and published by Walter Burre six years later, in 1613. According to Lesser, Burre's decision to publish the play was, in fact, risky since it was very "unpopular" among the audience (1999:22). Its first performance was "a scandal" (Hunt, 1990:212); it was "an utter failure", "a flop" (Zacharias, 2008:104; Price, 2018:48); a comedy at which none of the audience laughed (Zacharias, 2008:104). Since the play's first production, the critics, who have been fascinated by its failure (Price, 2018:47), have tried to find out why it became a fiasco at first⁴⁵ (Lesser, 1999:22).

Some critics argued that its failure was associated with its technical innovations. According to Lee Bliss, for instance, the play was too demanding to be fully comprehended in its time (1987:36-7). Similarly, Price thought that its "radical originality" was the reason for its failure (2018:58). In his address to Robert Keysar, the Children of the Queen's Revels' manager, Walter Burre, however, attributes the failure of the play to its audience's ignorance to grasp its irony:

Sir, this unfortunate child, who in eight days⁴⁶ [...] was begot and born, soon after was by his parents (perhaps he was so unlike his brethren) exposed to the wild world, who, for want of judgment, or not understanding the privy mark of irony about it (which showed it was no offspring of any vulgar brain), utterly rejected it. (Beaumont, 2002:1074)

Apparently, Burre suggests that a sophisticated playwright wrote the play, and thus, it is not easy to understand. Therefore, its audience was not able to get its irony. In line with him, Leinwand comments that the play "was not easily grasped" (1986:65). However, for William Hunt, the play's failure was a result of the indignation of the audience, the London citizens, who believed that the play was not merely mocking the romance genre,

⁴⁵ Although the play was forgotten after 1682 (Murch, 1908:xx), it "revived" in the 20th century (Price, 2018). Indeed, the modern critics were bewildered due to the play's failure (Bergeron, 2009:459), and, in the twentieth century, the play became Beaumont and Fletcher's most acclaimed play. It can be commented that with the interest in modern and postmodern aspects of drama such as metatheatricality, the play was appreciated.

⁴⁶ According to Moorman, the fact that the play was written in such a short time denotes that it was written by both Beaumont and Fletcher (1898:vi).

it was, at the same time, attacking “the whole notion of ‘civic honor’” (1990:213). In a similar vein, Murch discusses that, in fact, the audience could get the message of the play very well; they could see that the play was an attack on themselves (1908:xvi), and that was why they did not like it. They did not like being the target of the play’s satire.

Though there has been a general agreement that the play initially did not appeal to the audience for being a satire, Price remarks that there has been an ongoing disagreement as to what it actually satirizes (2018:50). Chivalric romances, reading conventions of the middle class, the exaggerated style of the bourgeois drama (Murch, 1908:ixv), theatrical experiences of the playgoers at the time (Thomson, 2006:61), popular culture (Bevington et al., 2022:1070), knighthood, uneducated working class, rude merchant class and affluent aristocracy, (Zacharias, 2008), parental oppression of the children and the youngsters (Anderson, 1998:77), the whole public (Aspinall, 1997:170) are all targets of its satire. In short, the play is a satire on the whole London society of the time with all its classes, values, institutions and tastes. Thus, to grasp what the play actually satirizes, the social, historical and the political framework of the play, the role of the middle class in the Renaissance, May Day Festivals and The Midlands Revolt of 1607, must be taken into consideration.

The Elizabethan society essentially consisted of three classes, the highest, the middle, and the lowest. The nobility, gentry and the well-educated were the members of the highest class. Labourers and the peasantry belonged to the lowest class. The middle class, “between these extremes”, was composed of merchants, tradesmen and craftsmen whose major concerns were commerce and profit (Wright, 1958:2). The motto of this class was “put money in thy purse” (Wright, 1958:3). Indeed, they were “the backbone of” England’s economy (Wright, 1958:1). Their contribution to the urban development of London was most remarkable. These men were proud of their class, economic achievements and London, “their greatest city” (Wright, 1958:19). They believed in their

own value and they were ambitious for better economic and moral improvement (Wright, 1958:2). In the early seventeenth century, in which the play was written, this was still the case.

Due to the economic and social rise of the middle class, at the end of the sixteenth and the start of the seventeenth century, literary works began to emphasize the significance of the merchants and the apprentices (Wright, 1958:25). In these literary works, the authors aimed “to instill a class pride into the minds of the apprentices” who would be significant representatives of trade in the world (Wright, 1958:21). Popular writers often needed “to flatter the apprentices in an effort to win their favor” (Wright, 1958:27) in works such as Heywood’s *The Four Prentices of London* (acted c. 1592), Richard Johnson’s *Nine Worthies of London* (1592), William Vallans’s *The Honourable Prentice* (Wright, 1958:25-6).

May Day was a yearly festival celebrating the coming of spring during which social rules and hierarchy were suspended. As Mikhail Bakhtin clarifies, the May Day was by nature carnivalesque (1984:258-9). It is a process in which “the official world is absent” (Bakhtin, 1984:258) and status quo is put aside (259). On May Day, one had the freedom to disrespect the order of the world (262). Therefore, it was a time of anxiety for the upper classes (Zacharias, 2008:111) since they, though temporarily, lost their privileged social positions, becoming equal with the lower classes. In spring 1607, the May Day festivals in the Midlands of England got out of control, turning into rebellions which became the final major peasant revolt in England’s history (Zacharias, 2008:103), justifying the fears of the upper classes.

The Midlands Revolt was basically against “agrarian capitalism” (Martin, 1983:161) because there were economic problems in the Midlands such as insufficient harvest and the danger of famine accompanied by the problems caused by the enclosure

laws⁴⁷ (Martin, 1983:161). For this reason, during the rebellion, thousands of people demolished the enclosure fences in the countryside (Zacharias, 2008:103) which went on for several days since it was not easy to destruct the miles of hedges even by a large number of rebels (McMullon, 1994:41). Through the end of May, the rebellions started to occur more frequently and spread from Northamptonshire to Warwickshire and Leicestershire with no sign of appeasing, arousing the anger of the Privy Council. Soon, it was decided that strict measures had to be taken. On May 30, a declaration was issued by James I to announce that the riots would be suppressed by the militia in arms (McMullon, 1994:42). In the end, about fifty peasants and their leaders were killed. It was this year that Beaumont produced his play in which Rafe, an apprentice, first becomes the leader of the May Day celebrations, and then the head of a group of armed men.

The Knight begins with the performance of *The London Merchant*⁴⁸, a city comedy⁴⁹. As soon as The Prologue (the narrator) starts to speak, a Citizen (George), who is sitting among the audience with his Wife (Nell) and their apprentice (Rafe), jumps to the stage and interrupts the performance. He complains that the play is going to mock the middle class citizens (Induction). Soon, his Wife climbs up the stage, too, and they ask the company to perform a play of own their liking, a chivalric romance⁵⁰, turning the play into a carnivalesque world in which theatrical order is subverted (Bennett, 2011:2). The

⁴⁷ Enclosure means the separation of the cultivable lands. Without enclosure, the community had the right to make use of the land for agriculture or grazing their animals. However, with the enclosure, to denote that they were owned by individuals, hedges were placed around certain parts of this land stopping the practice of common grazing and agriculture on it (The Editors of Encyclopaedia, *Encyclopedia Britannica*) (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/enclosure>).

⁴⁸ Noyce Jennings Burleson states that *The London Merchant* (1731) by George Lillo is a reference to this inner play (1968:86). There are some striking parallels between the two plays. Firstly, Lillo's play is a domestic tragedy, or bourgeois tragedy, which focuses on the middle class like the city comedy. Secondly, its hero, George Barnwell, is an apprentice like Rafe. The play portrays Barnwell's tragic fall because of his relationship with Sarah Millwood, a prostitute.

⁴⁹ City comedy is a genre of comedy at London theatres in the seventeenth century. It deals with the contemporary lives of the middle class and satirizes their values and manners.

⁵⁰ Chivalric romance, a Medieval genre, was still popular in England when the play was written.

company agrees to perform the ordered play, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, along with *The London Merchant*.

In I.i the actors perform a scene from *The London Merchant* in which Jasper Merrythought, merchant Venturell's apprentice, makes plans to elope with Venturewell's daughter Luce because Venturewell plans to marry her to Humphrey. In I.iv Jasper's mother, Mistress Merrythought, decides to leave her husband, Old Merrythought who has spent all their money in drinking, eating and singing. She rejects Jasper and decides to live with her younger son Michael. She and Michael arrive in the Waltham Forest where she drops her money (II.ii). Rafe arrives in the forest (II.iii) and takes Mistress Merrythought and Michael to an inn (II.v). The host of the inn informs him that Barbaroso, a giant barber, barbarously tries to treat several people suffering from syphilis, and asks him to save these people (III.ii). Rafe defeats the giant and saves them (III.iv).

However, George and Nell demand more thrilling adventures for Rafe (IV.i) and the actors make up a scene in which Rafe is in Moldavia to meet a princess, Lady Pompiona (IV.ii). Yet, Rafe rejects the princess as he loves Susan (IV.ii). Jasper feigns death and his coffin is brought to Venturewell's home (IV.iii). In Interlude 4, Nell demands that Rafe appears as a May Day Lord which is accepted by the actors. In V.i Jasper rises from the coffin, pretends to be a ghost, scares Venturewell and makes him expel Humphrey (V.i). In V.i Nell wants Rafe to become a militia leader, which happens in the next scene. In V.iii Mistress Merrythought reconciles with her husband; Jasper reveals that he is not dead; the merchant allows his daughter to marry Jasper. But, George and Nell ask for a more heroic ending for Rafe and he is killed by an arrow. Throughout the play, scenes from the two inner plays constantly intersect with each other as well as George and Nell's commentaries on the production.

At the very beginning, the Prologue addresses the audience,

From all that's near the court, from all that's
great,
Within the compass of the city walls,
We now have brought our scene - (Induction) (Beaumont, 2002:1076)

This introduction points to the separation between the classes at the time. It implies that The Blackfriars Theatre is not supporting the King and the plays they perform do not display the “great” lives of the King or the upper classes. Instead, their plays are about ordinary people. The programmed play consists only of these three lines because George, a grocers’ guild member⁵¹, climbs the stage from among the audience, breaks the illusion, and wrecks the main play. He asks the Prologue to stage “something notably in honor of the commons of the city” (Induction). His demand for such a play “is a cry from the heart of a class that was sensitive about its own emerging”, which feels that its significance for London’s social and economic life has been overlooked in its representations in plays like *The London Merchant* (Barker and Hinds, 2003a:231).

As George says, he has been an audience at The Blackfriars for seven years, and, therefore, he knows how their plays portray the middle class (Induction). Thus, he is sure that *The London Merchant*, too, is going to mock this class. But, as Wright comments, as he has been resented by the insults of such plays, he cannot bear seeing another satire (1958:616). He is fed up with “stale, stereotypical roles” which constantly attacks the Citizens (Leinwand, 1986:65) to entertain the upper class audience. In fact, he is right about his concerns because, as Engle and Rasmussen observe, the play depicts Venturewell as an oppressive father (2014:155), for instance. Instead of such a play that is going to ridicule his class, he suggests that the company should perform “what they consider to be a proper play” (Engle and Rasmussen, 2014:155). George wonders why

⁵¹ In the medieval period, there were guilds which centered around certain trades. Later, liveries developed out of these guilds; their members were freemen. The livery companies had a major role in the rise of professional theatre because of their apprenticeship system. The apprentices were bound to masters like the grocers or the goldsmiths; they were also trained to become actors by the companies. Later, when they were grown up, some of them became professional actors (Kathman, 2004:1-2).

the company is not “contented [...] with” (Induction) such plays as “*The Legend of Whittington, or The Life and Death of Sir Thomas Gresham, with the Building of the Royal Exchange, [o]r The Story of the Queen Eleanor, with the Rearing of the London Bridge upon Woolsacks*” (Induction) [emphasis original].

The common feature of these plays is that they are all about various aspects of London city life, especially its economy. They portray characters who have either been in significant positions or remarkably contributed to London’s economic development (Bevington et al., 2002:1076). For example, Whittington (died in 1423) was the Mayor of London; Gresham was an opulent merchant who established and built the Royal Exchange in 1566-8; Eleanor was the queen of Edward I; and the restructure of London Bridge was possible by the taxes on wool (Bevington et al., 2002:1076). Clearly, George wishes to see a play which exalts his class demonstrating their striking contributions to the country’s financial life. He wants the hero to be a grocer who will “do admirable things” (Induction).

When the Prologue asks him: “What will you have him do?” (Induction), Nell intervenes: “Let him kill a lion with a pestle, husband. Let him kill a lion with a pestle, husband”, and George decides to do so. The image of the pestle is significant as it is a symbol of grocery. The implication is that Rafe will heavily defeat his enemies (Bevington et al., 2002:1070). Afterwards, George urges Rafe to prove his talent in acting and his knowledge of the theatre, and Rafe recites a passage from Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* with some mistakes in it:

By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap
To pluck bright honor from the pale-faced moon,
Or dive into the bottom of the sea,
Where never fathom line touched any ground,
And pluck up drowned honòr from the lake of hell⁵² (Beaumont,
2002:1078)

⁵² The original quotation is:

These lines are uttered by Hotspur, one of the rebels of Shakespeare, in *Henry IV* which is about the 1403 riot administered by Harry Hotspur Percy who attempted to depose King Henry. According to Zacharias, these lines should be taken seriously as they reveal Rafe's familiarity with the plays of the period like George and Nell's references to plays reflecting their ambition. If Rafe's lines are evaluated in the same way, we come across a highly passionate apprentice (2008:107). Therefore, this reference to Hotspur can be regarded as a foreshadowing of the change in the tone and the events in the course of the play: his transition from an apprentice to a May Day leader and then, to the head of militia.

George suggests that their play should be entitled *The Grocer's Honor* (Induction), but, probably to mock their desire to exalt their own class, the Prologue demands that it should be *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*⁵³. Influenced by the chivalric romance *Palmerin of England*⁵⁴, that he is reading, Rafe decides to be a "grocer-errant" (I.iii), a wandering grocer after exciting adventures like a knight, and, "in remembrance of [his] former trade", there will a burning pestle on his shield. His new title, the Knight of the Burning Pestle, blurs class divisions. While "the Knight" is a term of the upper class and nobility, the pestle is an emblem of citizenry, which can be an implication of what he will try to do in his adventures. His pestle is a ridiculous weapon which may be a pun on "pizzle", an animal's penis (Bevington et al., 2002:1070). Therefore, "burning Pestle" also bears an implication of "venereal disease" (Munro, 2006:195). Thus, it is implied that *The Knight* is going to be a play in which Rafe will fight with his enemies while also disgracing himself.

Hotspur: By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap
To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon,
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drownèd honour by the locks, (Shakespeare, 2008:1200).

⁵³ The title parodies *The Knight of the Burning Sword*, a popular romance (Hunt, 1990:210).

⁵⁴ A Portuguese romance of sixteenth century translated into English by Anthony Munday.

The confliction between the middle and the upper class is hinted as soon as Nell climbs the stage. George asks the other audience sitting on the stage to “make her a little room” and help her climb the stage (Induction), which exhibits that they do not know how to behave at a theatre, one of the points the plays satirizes. Through Nell and George’s inappropriate behaviour, the play satirizes the middle class who do not know how to behave in public places such as theatres. When Nell climbs stage, she explains to the other people sitting on the stage: “I’m a stranger here; I was ne’er at one of these plays” (Induction), suggesting that as a member of the middle class, she did not go to a private theatre before. But now, she is at the centre of this production. George asks for stools and they get a place on the stage. Janette Dillon comments on this “unruly incursion” (Angus, 2018:8) in colonial terms.

According to her, their intrusion onto the stage does not merely break the boundary between the audience and the stage; it is also an invasion of “the personal space of the gentlemen already seated on the stage” (1997:130). When these Citizens are let sit on the stage, they become equal with the upper class audience (Miller, 1978:67). What is more, their demand for the stools indicate that they will go on occupying the stage (Dillon, 1997:130). Therefore, the stage is a tool through which the class struggle is highlighted. The Citizens regard the stage as a tool to show to the upper class audience that, they can sit with them on the stage, that is, they are equal, because they have money. Therefore, their climb to the stage is not merely a physical act, it also symbolizes their ambition for social climbing.

George and Nell invade the stage further as they also call Rafe (Dillon, 1997:130) who appears in his apron, showcasing the possibility for any audience to become an actor. They even interfere in the secrecy of the backstage as they ask for some costumes for Rafe (Dillon, 1997:130). George also asks for shawms, making some “stately” music (Induction), but the company does not have such music. Then, George pays the company

to bring musicians from Southwark, to be included in the performance (Induction), and after they are convinced that the musicians will be brought, they finally sit on their stools. The Prologue starts to address the audience again, and ironically declares that the play does not aim to satirize anyone (Induction).

However, the Induction is already a satire on the middle class pointing out their attitude to theatre and art. As Engle and Rasmussen state, in fact, George cannot stop the performance of *The London Merchant*; all he can do is to buy a second play as he likes (2014:156). The company allows Rafe to perform this play since George “pays for it handsomely” (Engle and Rasmussen, 2014:156). For the musicians, they pay extra. George accepts to pay extra in case the company’s own play fails because of Rafe’s May Day speech (Interlude 4). In addition, Nell declares that she will pay for the costumes and accessories for Rafe’s scenes as the militia leader (V.i). “He [George] wants a play depicting the chivalric world where money has no meaning, but he needs vast sums of money in order to obtain it” (Engle and Rasmussen, 2014:159). These payments reveal that they regard theatre as a financial initiative, not as art (Engle and Rasmussen, 2014:157). The Citizens’ power and authority is based on their money. They believe that as they pay for them, the actors have to do whatever they want. Although the actors are often reluctant, in the end, they mostly do what they want (Anderson, 1998:78), showcasing “art’s corruption by commerce” (Bliss, 1987:43). The play satirizes the middle class’s view of art through Nell and George’s utilitarian approach to theatre. They do not like theatre as an art, they regard it as a tool for showing off and raising socially.

Although the company is known to address an elite audience, at the cost of destroying their own play, the actors do not hesitate to obey the orders of their lower class

audience when they are paid enough, through which they are satirized⁵⁵. Indeed, the play satirizes the actors for the same reasons as the Citizens. The Citizens are satirized as they rely on money to socially rise without any intellectual improvement. The actors are satirized since, when they get a satisfactory payment, they accede to dispense with their own play for which they probably rehearsed for weeks. As a result, they perform a second play to a lower class audience which is normally not their target. This proves that the classes which seem to be very different from each other, are, in reality, very similar. “By revealing similarities in characters defined by contradictory ideologies, Beaumont stresses the artifice of social roles” (Bennett, 2011:3), underlining the role of metatheatre to reveal the artificiality of the borders between different social classes in the play.

To show their economic superiority, the Citizens do not hesitate to oppress the children actors (Anderson, 1998:79), through which they are further satirized. While the boys are performing, the husband and the wife interrupt and comment on the production or talk to each other, commanding them when to stop and continue to act. For example, in I.ii Nell suddenly stops the performance: “Stay, youths, I beseech you, till I question my husband”. When the players give up acting, she talks to George about the actor who plays Humphrey and says that he is a very lovely boy. Later, she asks the actor if he was ever a scholar of Master Moncaster, exhibiting that she has no respect for the actors and the other audience. Then, she allows them to go on: “Well, my youth, you may proceed”, underlining their roles as “as theatrical patrons” (Hill, 2017:165). In this way, the play portrays them as mannerless and satirizes their rudeness.

However, the Citizens do not only rely on their money. They also declare that they can “use the law as a weapon” (Anderson, 1998:78). For instance, in II.iv Jasper beats

⁵⁵ Robert Zacharias states that although the play satirizes almost all groups in the society, it does not satirize the actors (2008:116). However, their acceptance to perform a second play in return for money can be regarded as a satire.

Rafe and Nell declares: “I am afraid my boy’s miscarried. If he be, though he were Master Merrythought’s son a thousand times, if there be any law in England I’ll make some of them smart for’t”. Similarly, when Jasper threatens to kill Luce for taking revenge on her father for being discharged from his service, in III.i, Nell orders her husband: “Raise the watch at Ludgate, and bring a mittimus from the justice for this desperate villain”. Such threats regarding law put forth that they regard law as something they can buy, another point the play satirizes as it reveals that the middle class does not respect law in the same way as they do not respect art. For them, law, too, is a commodity; if you have enough money, you may achieve justice.

The play also satirizes the concept of the middle class family in its both plots. In *The Knight*, the family institution is satirized through Nell’s accounts of her relationship with her children. Indeed, she talks of her children only twice, and in neither of these talks, does she imply any love to her children (Anderson, 1998:82). In the first speech, while she is praising Rafe’s talent in acting, she announces how they frighten their children with Rafe: “He will act you sometimes at our house, that all the neighbors cry out on him. He will fetch you up a couraging part so in the garret that we are all as feared, I warrant you, that we quake again. We’ll fear our children with him; if they be never so unruly, do but cry, ‘Rafe comes, Rafe comes!’ to them, and they’ll be as quiet as lambs” (Induction). In her second speech, she talks of her little child who was walking about the Thames, “almost, alone”, and it would have drowned if an oarsman had not saved it. She declares that, to comfort her, Rafe told her that he would find her another child as good as this one (II.v), which shows the meaning of family for the Citizens. Obviously, they regard children as the future owners of their trade. Therefore, as long as the business is run well, any child will do.

The same portrait of the dysfunctional family can also be observed in *The London Merchant* (Anderson, 1998:82). In this main plot, Venturewell wants to marry Luce, his

daughter, to Humphrey. He wants to marry Luce with the opulent and noble Humphrey instead of humble Jasper. For him, his daughter's marriage is a profitable business. He does not even ask Luce if she wants to marry Humphrey and, instead, tells Humphrey: "she's yours; upon my faith, she is yours" (I.ii). Humphrey, too, relies on his wealth to marry Luce. As Engle and Rasmussen point out (2014:157), he tries to impress Luce with his money as when he gives her gloves: "If you desire the price, shoot from your eye/A beam to this place, [...] /They cost me three and twopence" (I.ii). This, again, draws attention to the closeness between seemingly opposing social classes. Both the merchant and the noble class ignore love and value money instead. For both, money is more important than family.

Another example of the dysfunctional family in *The London Merchant* is the Merrythoughts (Anderson, 1998:83). After Jasper is fired from Venturewell's service, he goes to his mother to ask for her blessing but Mrs. Merrythought rejects giving him her blessing (I.iv). Anderson comments that (83) the reason for her rejection of Jasper appears to be that she regards him as "[his] father's own son, of the right blood of the Merrythoughts" (I.iv).

Charles's treatment of his son is also problematic (Anderson, 1998:83). He seems to be closer to him. In I.iv he welcomes Jasper and gives him his blessing. He gives him ten shillings and advises him to settle down, have a family, eat and drink well, help the poor and try to be happy in life. After this gracious speech, he leaves Jasper. He does not worry for him any more and goes on partying. When Venturewell informs him that Jasper has eloped with his daughter, Merrythought is not interested in the situation. He simply answers: "Your daughter? What a stir's here wi' your daughter? Let her go; think no more on her, but sing loud. If both my sons were on the gallows, I would sing" (II.vii). In both inner plays, the middle class family is satirized as a degenerated institution.

In *The Knight*, the Citizens' attitude to Rafe mirrors the oppression of the children in the main plot and they are satirized because of their propensity to apply to physical violence. They are ready to physically oppress anyone weaker than themselves as a display of their economic and social power. As Anderson states, the Citizens declare their love for Rafe, but they also oppress him with their orders and threats (1998:84). They decide what he will do and constantly give him orders to kill some characters. (Anderson, 1988:85). For instance, in II.ii, Nell tells George: "call Rafe again. I prithee, sweetheart, let him come fight before me, and let's ha' some drums and some trumpets, and let him kill all that comes near him". Soon George says to Nell: "Let Rafe come in and fight with Jasper" and Nell adds: "Ay, and beat him well" (II.iv). When Rafe is fighting with the giant Nell shouts: "To him, Rafe, to him! Hold up the giant! Set out thy leg before, Rafe"; "[u]p, up, up, up! So Rafe, Down with him, down with him, Rafe" (III.iv), displaying the crudeness of their taste for theatre. In the end, they order Rafe to die: "come away quickly and die, boy" (V.iii). Of course, this order is not for Rafe's real death, however, "it is emblematic of the adult's attitude throughout the play that children exist to do their parents' or any other adult's, bidding, whatever the cost or risk to the young people" (Anderson, 1998:85). This scene demonstrates that the middle class regards children not as individuals, but simply as the fulfillers of their wills and the future owners of their trade which will continue their name.

In I.iii Rafe appears as the Knight of the Burning Pestle. Simply by changing costumes, he becomes a knight which very clearly points out the function of metatheatre to reveal that the borders between the classes can easily be transgressed as they are not natural. He is reading *Palmerin of England*, and the scene is actually a satire on the romance genre. Like city comedy, romance address a certain class; it reflects the literary taste of the upper and middle classes. In *Palmerin*, a knight named Palmerin is fighting with a giant to save a princess from him. Influenced by Palmerin's courage, Rafe decides

to help people who are in need of distress. He decides that his apprentice Tim will be his squire; and the other, smaller apprentice, George, will be his dwarf, which can be regarded as a satire on the working class. Tim and George do anything Rafe asks them. Therefore, they can be seen as the representatives of the working class who obey their masters without questioning. Soon, he decides that, hereafter, he wants to be known as “the right courteous and valiant Knight of the Burning Pestle”, and demands that when they talk about a woman, they will call her “fair lady”, or “distressed damsel”; they will call the forests “deserts”, horses “palfreys”. He also makes some practice with Tim and George. He asks Tim what he would ask a knight if he saw him spurring. George answers he would say: “Sir, my master sent me to know whither you are riding”. However, Rafe does not like this answer. According to him, the proper answer should be: “Fair sir, the right courteous and valiant Knight of the Burning Pestle commanded me to inquire upon what adventure you are bound, whether to relieve some distressed damsel or otherwise”. The scene is a satire on the elevated style of romances. However, it does not simply satirize the romance genre⁵⁶; the artificiality and superficiality of the lives of the upper classes is also attacked.

In II.ii Mistress Merrythought and Michael are in the forest. Soon, Rafe, George (as dwarf) and Tim appear, too. Mistress Merrythought loses her money in the forest. In II.v Rafe takes them to an inn. They think that the host will entertain them, offer them good food and beds for the night with no charge. However, to Rafe’s shock, the host demands twenty shillings for all the services, and, if they do not pay the bill, he will have them arrested (III.ii), presenting a satire on knighthood. As Zacharias expresses, during the reign of James, knighthoods were sold for forty pounds (2008:109). Anyone paying this amount would be entitled a knight. Thus, knighthood, like the institutions of family

⁵⁶ Due to its satire on the romance genre, critics focused on the play’s association with Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*. According to some, the play was highly influenced by the novel, however, some of them disagree with this view.

and law is corrupt. Before leaving the castle, Rafe asks the host if he knows somewhere he can achieve fame or save some people who are in need of help (III.ii). The host talks to him about a giant barber named Barbaroso who is trying some medical treatments on some knights suffering from syphilis. Rafe beats the barber and frees the knights. The knights that Barbaroso is trying to treat are suffering from venereal disease,⁵⁷ which is a satire on the immorality of the knights. After Rafe beats the giant, Nell demands that “Rafe travel over great hills, and [...] be very weary” (IV.i). Then, Rafe appears in Moldavia to meet Lady Pompiona, the daughter of the King. She tells Rafe to take her to England to taste English food and drink (IV.ii), which reveals the shallowness of the aristocracy. However, Rafe does not want to take her to England for he loves Susan and for she does not believe in Christ. Apparently, he does not have any respect for other religious beliefs. George shouts that Rafe may convert her. Thus, Both Rafe and George declare the bigotry of the middle class in religious matters, another target of the play’s satire. As Rafe has learnt that hospitality is not for free in the chivalric world, before he is asked to do so, he pays for anyone who does him service in the King’s house, the steward, the cook, the horse-keeper, the maid washing his leggings, and the boy cleaning his boots, portraying a satire on knighthood.

In Interlude 4, the Citizen asks Rafe to appear on May Day as a militia leader and address London, which Rafe does:

London, to thee I do present the merry month of May.
[...]
My name is Rafe, by due descent though not ignoble I,
Yet far inferior to the flock of gracious grocery⁵⁸;
[...]
Rejoice, O English hearts, rejoice! Rejoice, O lovers dear!

⁵⁷ The knights that Barbaroso captures have the symptoms of syphilis. For instance, the second knight has a plaster on his nose, which is a common sign of the disease as it “eats away at the nose” (Bevington, et al., 2022:1112). In addition, his name is Pockhole, which implies syphilis (1113). The giant sends them to a cave in which there is a tub “heated smoking hot” which was used for the treatment of syphilis (1113).

⁵⁸ These two lines (31-2) parody Horatio’s introductory speech in *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Rejoice, O city, town, and country! Rejoice eke every shire!
 For now the fragrant flowers do spring and sprout in seemly sort;
 The little birds do sit and sing, the lambs do make fine sport.
 And now the birchen tree doth bud, that makes the schoolboy cry;
 The morris rings, while hobby horse doth foot it featously.
 The lords and ladies, now abroad for their disport and play,
 Do kiss sometimes upon grass, and sometimes in the hay.
 [...]

Now little fish on tender stone begin to cast their bellies,
 And sluggish snails, the erst were mute, do creep out of
 their shellies.
 The rumbling rivers now do warm, for little boys to paddle;
 [...]

March out and show your willing minds, by twenty and by twenty,
 To Hoxton or to Newington, where ale and cakes are plenty.
 [...]

Up, then, I say, both young and old, both man and maid a-Maying
 With drums and guns that bounce aloud, and merry
 tabor playing! (Beaumont, 2002:1127-8)

Obviously, Rafe describes a carnivalesque world. After introducing himself as May Lord, he heralds the coming of spring and emphasizes the sense of happiness that comes with it. Like people, the animals, too, are happy. There is life and regeneration everywhere. He asks Londoners to be joyful and feel the beauty of nature. He invites all the men and woman, the old and the young, to Hoxton and Newington in groups to eat and drink with music.

With this scene, Rafe leaves the role of the knight behind and becomes May Lord. It must be kept in mind that the May Day celebrations of 1607 began as a festival and turned into a riot. For this reason, Zacharias comments, grasping the play's reference to the riot, the upper class audience of the Blackfriars Theatre might have felt restless seeing Rafe as a May Day leader (2008:111). Therefore, Rafe's role as May Lord is not only funny; he must be taken seriously as a character. The husband and the Wife treat him as an "ignorant knight errant", however, he is, in fact, "an amateur actor who is *acting* [emphasis original] the fool" (Zacharias, 2008:108-9).

In V.ii Wife orders Rafe to call the youth of London with arms, banners, drums and march to Mile End. In the next scene, Rafe gathers his soldiers in The Mile End and addresses them:

Gentlemen, countrymen, friends, and my fellow soldiers, [...] bear yourselves in this fair action like men - valiant men and free men. Fear not the face of the enemy nor the noise of the guns, for, believe me, brethren, the rude rumbling of a brewer's cart is far more terrible, of which you have a daily experience. Neither let the stink of powder offend you, since a more valiant stink is nightly with you. To a resolved mind his home is everywhere. I speak not this to take away the hope of your return, for you shall see - I do not doubt it, and that very shortly - your lowing wives again, and your sweet children, whose care doth bare you company in baskets. Remember, then, whose cause you have in hand, and like a sort of trueborn scavengers, scour me this famous realm of enemies. I have no more to say but this: stand to your tacklings, lads, and show to the world you can as well brandish a sword as shake an apron. (Beaumont, 2002:1132)

Clearly, Rafe tries to persuade the soldiers to attend the war. He wants them to be brave and not to be afraid of the enemy. As long as they fight for their country, anywhere will be London for them, and their families will be proud of their courage. But, what is ironic is that there is no enemy to fight; there is no threat of war. Yet, the detail of Mile End is significant. Zacharias explains that during the Peasant's Revolt of 1381, peasants who revolted against high taxes met in the Mile End. There, they killed some noblemen before they could meet Richard II who suppressed the riot promising that action would be taken, but later went back on his word. Accompanied by Rafe's identity as an apprentice, it was rather possible for the audiences "to imagine themselves as the object of the militia's anger" (Zacharias, 2008:12-3).

In addition, in the period the play was performed, a lot of poor and desperate apprentices were a source of great fear for London's elite (Zacharias, 2008:111). For instance, in 1597, the Lord Mayor wrote a letter to the Privy Council for complaining about the apprentices:

we have found by the examination of diverse apprentices and other servants who have confessed unto us that the said stage plays were the

very places of their rendezvous, appointed by them to meet with such orders as were to join with them in their designs and mutinous attempts, being also the ordinary places for masterless men to come together and to recreate themselves (qtd. in Pollard, 2004:321).

This complaint brought about the closure of all the theatres in London, though temporarily. Thus, with Rafe, Beaumont dwells on the common fear that apprentices who get positions at local theatres might cause trouble (Zacharias, 2008:111-2).

In V.iii the tensions between the characters in both plots are resolved and Rafe has no more adventures. He is asked to die by his patrons. The boy actor comments that he should not die for no reason and Rafe comes in with an arrow through his head. He makes a speech before he dies in which he summarizes his adventures so far in the play. At the very end of his speech he cries: "I die. Fly, fly, my soul to Grocers' Hall!" Rafe's reference to Grocers' Hall is a meaningful coincidence because it was where John Pym and the other Parliamentarians escaped in January 1642 while King Charles ordered that they were arrested for treason. The Grocers's Hall was a refuge for the five members of the parliament, a headquarter for the Militia Committee, and the place where the first steps to Civil War were taken. "Seven years later, on a scaffold outside the palace of Whitehall, the Knight of the Burning Pestle had his revenge" (Hunt, 1990:234). Here, Hunt refers to Charles I's execution in 1649. He was first captured and then the High court of Justice accused him of treason:

the said Charles Stuart, being admitted King of England, and therein trusted with a limited power to govern by, [...] and by his trust, oath and office, being obliged to use the power committed to him for the good and benefit of the people, and for the preservation of their rights and liberties; yet, nevertheless, out of a wicked design to erect and uphold in himself an unlimited and tyrannical power to rule according to his own will, and to overthrow the right and liberties of the people. (qtd. in Gardiner, 1906:377)

With his reference to Charles' execution, and commenting on it as the play's "revenge", it can be commented that Hunt suggests that the play emphasizes the significance of equality and freedom for everyone in the society while satirizing kingship. Accordingly,

countries should not be ruled by kings who prioritize their own profits, not hesitating to violate the rights of the citizens just to remain in power. They should be administered on the basis of the equality and the freedom of each citizen. Though the play seems to be a social satire satirizing the mores of different classes, it is, in fact, a satire on kingship. As it is clear in Rafe's scene as a militia leader, the classes are not hostile to each other; indeed, they are very similar. It is the political system, the rule of the kings, that divides them into classes and foster hostility among them so that these classes do not come together and fight against the oppressive rule of the kings.

In the end, Rafe does not die heroically. It is not even clear who shot him with the arrow. It might be commented that Beaumont did not want to scare the audience by depicting a heroic death for him. Moreover, by reconciling the characters with each other, the playwright establishes the social order at the beginning of the play (Zacharias, 2008:114). The play is not a call for a revolution as it displays the failing sides of all the classes in the society. Therefore, in the end, it comes to "emphasiz[e] a universal humanity obscured by [class] divisions" (Bennett, 2011:1).

To conclude, *The Knight* is characterized as a metatheatre from its first lines on. It has two plotlines which, in fact, mirror each other. In the main plot, *The London Merchant*, the greediness of the merchant class, the corruption of the institutions of family, law as well as art is pictured while in the second plot, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, the corruption of knighthood, naivety of the working class and the shallowness of the aristocracy are portrayed. In this portrayal, the play focuses upon the similarities in both the domestic and the chivalric world. It is seen that in both worlds, economy is what the characters prioritize most. Therefore, the play shows that, in fact, both the middle and the upper classes have the same aspirations. So, metatheatre functions in the play to reveal the meaninglessness of class divisions. What it offers as a solution to the conflict between

classes is to get rid of the unnatural borders between them and create a classless society in which everyone will be equal.

2.3. Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor* as a Satire on Censorship and Despotic Monarchy

Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor* was written during the height of the puritan attacks on theatre and became a part of the antitheatrical discussions. As Morgan states, the intensity of the opposition of the Puritans to the theatre was unprecedented; it was much more severe than all the negative attitudes to the plays ever (1966:346). It seems that they made all possible (reasonable or unreasonable) arguments to assault theatre. The intensity of the opposition of the Puritans to the theatre was unprecedented; it was much more severe than all the negative attitudes to the plays ever (Morgan, 346). For them, theatre was chiefly "a rival to the Church of Christ" (Morgan, 1966:343). Plays performed on Sundays caused the biggest complaints because people neglected to attend the sermons. In addition, the apprentices often went to see these plays leaving their works. Other accusations against the plays were that they brought about traffic jam, accelerated the spread of plague, and provided the idle men with a place to gather in riotous meetings (Heinemann, 1980:31-2). For the English Puritans, theatre was "like syphilis", "a foreign import, an Italian disease", which would, along with dance and music, bring the end of the vitality of the English (Morgan, 1966:341). In England, the rise of enmity towards theatre intersects with the remarkable success of the distinguished playwrights like "Marlowe, Jonson and Shakespeare", which must not be a coincidence (Morgan, 1966:340). The antitheatrical critics were aware of the power of the plays on the public. They knew that the satirical plays had the potential to make people question the social

and political system. Therefore, with their depreciating writings, they aimed to cast a shadow on the power and potential of the theatre to cause any political or social change.

For instance, in 1579 Stephen Gosson wrote *The School of Abuse*. Heinemann emphasizes that Gosson himself was not a Puritan at all. In fact, he was a playwright who wrote successful plays. Yet, he was chartered by the City fathers to assault theatre in his writings (1980:29). It seems that Gosson is against any kinds of artists as he argues that, poets, actors and musicians drive people to “slouth, sleepe, sinne, and without repentaunce to death and the devill” (1841:32). For him, theatre is mere “ill speech” (51). Like the medieval critics, he accuses theatre of estranging people from God. Therefore, he advises that when people feel sad, instead of going to see a play to feel better, they should talk to a neighbour, or read at home (1841:50).

In 1625, Alexander Leighton (1568-1649) wrote *A Short Treatise Against Stage-Playes*. Leighton condemns theatre for several reasons. According to him, actors earn their living through ways God forbade. Sometimes, prostitution is committed at the theatres. Theatre is a threat to the family structure. When the fathers spend time at the theatres, their goods might be stolen. Or, their daughters or the maids might be defiled, or get married without the consent of the family. Thus, he defines theatre as a dangerous recreation for the institution of family. The plays might distort the words of God and Christ is insulted in the plays. People spend their valuable time at the theatres rather than worshipping God (<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A05288.0001.001?view=toc>).

The Puritan attack on the theatre peaked in 1633 when William Prynne’s *Histriomastix*, which condemns all types of theatre severely, was published:

popular Stage-playes [...] are sinfull, heathenish, lewde, ungodly Spectacles, and most pernicious Corruptions; condemned in all ages, as intolerable Mischiefes to Churches, to Republickes, to the manners, mindes, and soules of men. And [...] the profession of Play-Poets, of Stage players; together with the penning, acting, and frequenting of Stage-playes, are unlawfull. (qtd in Barish, 1981:84)

Like his predecessors, Prynne's denunciation of theatre is mainly based on religious concerns. For him, plays are hazardous not only for religion but also for the state since they affect the senses, thinking and behaviours of their audience. Therefore, anyone in the business of theatre from the playwright to the actor are doing illegal jobs. Morgan announces that Prynne was, in fact, not familiar with the plays of his time. Instead of providing his readers with relevant examples from the plays to prove his arguments, all he did was to paraphrase from the Church fathers (1966:340).

In 1642, the Puritan government ordered that all the theatres in the country were closed down, which "is probably the best-known fact in English theatrical history" (Heinemann, 1980:18). In the seventeenth century, all Puritans were assumed to be hostile to theatre, and those who negatively criticized theatre were assumed to be Puritans, Puritanism and hostility to theatre becoming almost synonymous (Heinemann, 1980:18). During the Puritan reign, the theatres were all closed and the discussions on the legitimacy of theatre died down. When, in 1660, monarchy was restored, the assaults on theatre started again, but not with the same vigour as it was in the Puritan Age (Morgan, 1966:340).

In addition to such depreciating writings, some works were also penned in praise of theatre in the period. For instance, in 1579 Sir Philip Sidney wrote *An Apology for Poetry* to explicate his opinions about the value of poetry which has been regarded as a reply to Gosson's *School of Abuse*. In the apology, Sidney states that he aims to defend poetry which has become "the laughing-stock of children" (1973:96). Sidney compares the poet to lawyers, historians, grammarians, rhetoricians, logicians and physicians. According to him, a lawyer speaks on people's decisions; a historian talks on the actions of people; a grammarian knows only the rules of the language well; a rhetorician and a logician deal with artificial rules; a physician is interested in man's body and what is good or bad for him. It is only poetry which makes things much better than they really are. It

can even invent new forms which do not exist in nature such as “Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies” (Sidney, 1973:100). Thus, he emphasizes the superiority of poetry to other knowledge and sciences.

Specifically, Sidney compares the poet with the historian and the philosopher (1973:106). As to virtue, poetry is “the most familiar to teach it” (Sidney, 1973:115). Therefore, he concludes that poetry is “the monarch” of all sciences (Sidney, 1973:113). In addition, he responds to the three accusations against poetry. Firstly, poetry is looked down on because, it is claimed that, there is some other knowledge which is more useful to men. As a response to this challenge, Sidney states that poetry teaches virtue in a most efficient way. A second assault on poetry is that it is a lie. As a reply to this blame, Sidney clarifies that among all the writers, a poet is the most reliable. Since he does not claim anything, he never lies (1973:123-4). The third accusation is that poetry, especially comedy, fosters hazardous passions (117). Sidney challenges this remarking that “a needle cannot do much hurt” (1973:126); poetry has destructive effects on people is a heavily exaggerated comment.

Later, in 1612 Thomas Heywood announced his support of theatre in *An Apology for Actors*. For him, plays are gifts for the city. To watch these plays, people who do not know each other, come together and get the chance to talk about their countries. Moreover, the plays refined the English language, which was rather crude and consisting of Dutch, Saxon, Welsh, Scotch and Irish words, making it unified and elegant, in which great poems could be composed. In addition, ignorant people got the opportunity to learn about history thanks to these plays (1972, n. p.).

The issues of theatre, performance and stage were not only discussed by philosophers, critics or writers. The playwrights also dealt with these issues in their works in the Caroline Era. Therefore, “Caroline drama is strikingly self-conscious” (Rochester,

2010:5). Compared to the different periods of all Renaissance drama, plays written in Caroline Era are remarkably concerned with the issues of performance and stage⁵⁹ and Massinger's theatre, too, should be evaluated within this context (Rochester, 2010:5). For instance, his *The Roman Actor* is the first of the Caroline plays which is strikingly metadramatic with an actor protagonist⁶⁰. Habicht states that even by the standards of the theatricality of many Jacobean and Caroline plays, *The Roman Actor* is exceptional. Along with the actor protagonist, it includes an apology for theatre, three plays-within-the-play, the metaphor of the theatrum mundi and "Domitian's God-game" (1992:359).

*The Roman Actor*⁶¹, Philip Massinger's first play for the King's Men, was written at such a time in which antitheatricalism had already risen. In 1625, as Reinheimer expresses, the government prohibited performances on Sundays (1998:317). At the time, Massinger had already been exposed to censorship several times. In 1619, his play *The Tragedy of Sir John van Olden Barnaveit*, co-authored with Fletcher, was largely censored by the Master of the Revels of the time, Sir George Buc. After that, he was exposed to censorship in 1623 with *The Bondman*, an anti-Buckingham satire. Later, his *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1624), in which he satirized Buckingham's relative Sir Giles Mompesson, was also censored (Reinheimer, 1998:319). In 1638, The King checked the manuscript of his *The King and the Subject*, and commanded that some impertinent passages be rewritten (Herbert, 1996:69). Therefore, taking into consideration Massinger's personal problems with censors, and the issue of censorship as

⁵⁹ For instance, Massinger's *The Picture* (1629) and *The City Madam* (1632), John Ford's *Love's Sacrifice* (1633), Richard Brome's *The Antipodes* (1640) and *A Jovial Crew* (1652) are also metatheatrical.

⁶⁰ Its only real pioneer is *The Knight*. However, Rafe in *The Knight* is not a professional actor while Paris is. Moreover, the correlation between theatre and political power does not matter for Rafe. But, Massinger's tragedy is based upon the controversy between theatre and political power (Rochester, 2000:156).

⁶¹ Massinger declared that *The Roman Actor* was his best play, "the most perfit birth of [his] Minerua" (Gibson, 1978:xi), however, his most popular play has been *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*.

one of the play's major concerns, as Reinheimer expresses, the play is a response to antitheatricalism of the time (1998:319). It is "a condemnation of the practice and the politics of censorship" (Reinheimer, 1998:317). In spite of strict censorship and anti-theatrical bias, "subversive" ideas could still be voiced in the plays in the 1620s (Heinemann, 1980:viii), and *The Roman Actor* was one of them.

The Roman Actor begins with a conversation between three actors, Paris, Latinus and Aesopus, the members of the same troupe. They complain about the poor status of acting and the problems of actors (I.i). Soon, two lictors⁶² come to inform Paris that he has to go to the Senate⁶³ to account for some charges. When the actors and the lictors leave, three Senators, Aelius Lamia, Junius Rusticus⁶⁴ and Palphurius Sura, complain of the oppressive rule of Caesar (Domitian). They agree that during the reigns of Caesar's father Vespasian and his brother Titus⁶⁵, life was much better in Rome. In I.ii Parthenius, a slave of Caesar's, comes to see Domitia⁶⁶, the attractive wife of Aelius Lamia to inform her that Caesar wants to marry her. Domitia is eager to marry Caesar, but she is worried that her husband will not accept to divorce. Caesar's soldiers rush in and they force Lamia to sign the bill of divorce.

In I.iii Paris appears in Senate. In Caesar's absence, he is charged with treason against the state and Caesar by Aretinus, an informer of Caesar's. Paris defences himself and his profession with a long and impressive speech. Parthenius announces that Domitian is in Rome. In I.iv Domitia's arrival upsets the other female members of the court, Domitilla, Caesar's cousin and previous beloved, Julia, his niece and previous

⁶² In ancient Rome, a lictor was a member of the magisterial system.

⁶³ In ancient Rome, Senate was a basic part of the constitution as an advisory.

⁶⁴ Aelius Lamia (43 BC-33 AD) and Junius Rusticus are real, historical characters. They were members of the Senate in ancient Rome.

⁶⁵ Vespasian (9-79 AD) and Titus (39-81 AD) are real, historical characters, father and brother of ancient Roman King Caesar Domitianus (51-96 AD).

⁶⁶ Domitia Longina (53-130 AD) was the wife of Caesar Domitianus.

lover, and Caenis, Vespasian's concubine. Caesar confronts Lamia and claims Domitia as his wife (I.iv).

In II.i Parthenius grumbles about his father's stinginess. The old man is so stingy that, although he is rich, he wears tatty clothes and shoes and lives in misery to save up money. Paris tells Parthenius that he once watched a tragedy in which there was a murder. One of the audience was so much influenced by the horror of this play that he confessed a murder he committed. Based on this, Paris suggests that they stage a play, *The Cure of Avarice*, to show Philargus the inaccuracy of his attitudes, which Parthenius accepts. In the meantime, the resentment of the court members at the nonchalance and cruelty of Caesar rises, and Aretinus gives him a list of those making complaints about him, including Lamia, Rusticus and Sura.

In III.i the court women complain about Caesar's rising cruelty and Domitia's pride. In III.ii, Domitian orders that Hunius Rusticus and Palphurius Sura are executed. The two men are tortured, but, to the shock of Caesar, they resist persecution with calmness and dignity⁶⁷. Domitia stages a play about two lovers, *Iphis and Anaxarete*. She declares her admiration for Paris's acting and Aretinus realizes her love for him. In IV.i Aretinus, accompanied by Domitilla, Julia and Caenis inform Caesar that Domitia and Paris are having an affair. In IV.ii Domitia tries to seduce the actor, they kiss and Caesar sees them. Caesar orders that Paris stages a play entitled *The False Servant* where the disloyalty of a servant to his master reflects Paris's unfaithfulness. In this inner play, Domitian performs as the husband and kills Paris. In V.i an astrologer named Ascleterio tells Caesar that he is going to die the next day, on October 14 at five o'clock. Caesar

⁶⁷ In the play, they are the students of Thrasea Paetus, a historical character lived in Rome in the 1st century AD., known for his interest in Stoic philosophy which teaches that constraint and steadiness are tools to deal with devastating situations.

becomes furious and has the astrologer expelled. In V.ii Domitia, Parthenius, Stephanos, Entellus and Sejeius kill Caesar.

At the very beginning of the play, like in *Hamlet*, the actors are talking on their next performance. It launches with Aesop's metatheatrical question to Latinus: "What do we act today?" (I.i). Latinus answers: "Agave's frenzy, /With Pentheus' bloody end", revealing that the company is rehearsing Euripides's *Bacchae*. The Theban king Pentheus prohibited the worship of Dionysus, his cousin and the god of theatre, as he claimed that he and his followers were destroying the order and the laws in Thebes. Dionysus became furious with him and caused all Theban women to go to Mount Cithaeron in a frenzy. Pentheus imprisoned Dionysus, but the chains of his prison fell off and he became free. Then, disguised as a woman, Dionysus lured Pentheus to attend Bacchic rites. There, women pulled him down and smashed him into pieces as they assumed him to be a wild animal. *Bacchae* was the most popular tale of his terrible end in the seventeenth century. Thus, it "engages its audience playfully in metadrama at the outset" (Angus, 2010:448).

Soon, Paris, Caesar's favourite actor, starts to complain of lack of interest in theatre in Rome. He remarks that their amphitheatre, "great Pompey's work"⁶⁸, which hosted fifty thousand spectators in a day, is like an "unknown desert" now. As a result, the actors are earning so little money that it can only meet their daily expenses (I.i). Aesopus adds that, their greater problem is the informers who are spying on the citizens and the actors. They have been informed by Aretinus that "[h]e would silence [them] for ever" since he was mocked in their last comedy (I.i). Apparently, there is strict censorship in Rome; the actors are punished by authorities in case they satirize political figures, or complain about Caesar's rule. Highlighting censorship a serious problem for actors in

⁶⁸ Pompey was a rival of Caesar's. He built a colossal theatre in Rome in 55 BC.

Caesar's reign, Massinger uses metatheatre to satirize Caesar's oppression on his subjects since his persecution of the actors mirrors his tyranny of all the people.

Upon finding out that Paris is called to the Senate for staging a satire, Latinus criticizes such an enforcement as he ironically reports that there is such great peace and order in the country, and so, the authorities have so much free time that, they turn to the actors (I.i). In a similar vein, Paris satirizes this execution of censorship as he remarks that in Senate, significant decisions regarding the kings and princes were discussed once, but now, it is a place where what is negotiated over is "the censure of a bitter word, or jest, /Dropp'd from a poet's pen!", both of which are examples to display metatheatre's function as a means of political satire. The actors also reveal the oppression of the politicians on the citizens portraying a picture of ancient Rome under Domitian's rule. Lamia tells that because of the fear of the spies, no one can express their ideas about the king and the state freely. Domitian's tyrannous regime owes its continuity to this system of informing network (Angus, 2010:447). Rusticus states that no one can sleep safely since every action of the citizens are watched; the fathers and sons blame each other. To have a connection with a court member, the most virtuous women do not hesitate to dishonour themselves. The only citizens who are safe are those who "soothe the prince's appetite, /And serve his lusts" (I.i).

In addition, Rusticus underlines Domitian's hubris as he declares that during the Vitellian War, he built a temple in honour of Jupiter and placed his own figure in the god's bosom (I.i). "Not content with being a 'little God' [...], Domitian sees himself as equal to, and in the heart of, the king of the gods, placing himself in the centre of Jupiter's statue. He also claims Jupiter's prerogative of thunder as his own" (Dyson, 2016, Chapter 2). He also described himself as a god in the edicts. With such a description, he appoints a divine status to emperor's commands disregarding the laws (Dyson, 2016, Chapter 2). In I.ii he defies laws to have Domitia divorce and marry him, which demonstrates his

“abuse of his position as ruler, and his usurpation of heavenly privileges” (Dyson, 2016, Chapter 2).

In I.iii Paris appears at the Senate to defence himself against the charges of treason. Aretinus blames him for mocking the senators with “satirical, bitter jests”. Paris answers:

If I free not myself
(And in myself the rest of my profession)
From these false imputations, and prove
That they make that a libel which the poet
Writ for a comedy, so acted too,
It is but justice that we undergo
The heaviest censure. (Massinger, 1978:112-3).

He implies that he has to defend himself and his profession, otherwise, achieving justice will be even more difficult, and emphasizes the role of the actors to show their audience the injustices in the society. Enraged with Paris’s boldness, Aretinus asks him, “Are you on the stage, /You talk so boldly?”. Paris’s reply “The whole world being one, /This place is not exempted” reveals the *theatrum mundi* metaphor of the play. He further defences theatre:

Actors may put in for as large a share
As all the sects of the philosophers.
They with cold precepts (perhaps seldom read)
Deliver what an honourable thing
The active virtue is.
[...]
But ‘tis urg’d
That we corrupt youth, and traduce superiors.
When do we bring a vice upon the stage,
That does go off unpunish’d? Do we teach,
By the success of wicked undertakings,
Others to tread in their forbidden steps?
We show no arts of Lydian pandarism,
Corithian poisons, Persian flatteries,
But mulcted so in the conclusion that
Even those spectators that were so incin’d
Go home chang’d men. And, for traducing such
That are above us, publishing to the world
Their secret crimes, we are as innocent
As such as are born dumb. (Massinger, 1978:113-4)

With this metatheatrical defence, Paris declares that actors are as much significant people as philosophers because, though they are mostly ignored, they teach people what is virtuous and what is not. He also rejects the blame that they corrupt the moral values of young people and slander those who are at high positions. When they show some evil on the stage, the doer is always punished, and so, justice is established. Therefore, their way of teaching is always ethical. They extol nothing which is against moral norms. Thus, even those spectators who have an inclination for depravity change their attitudes. Obviously, Paris underlines the reformatory function of theatre in his defence. He “casts himself as a kind of moral informant to society, offering theatrical correctives for the sins of the day” (Angus, 2010:452).

In his speech, Paris speaks for himself as well as all the actors of his time. What is censored is not the voice of a particular actor, but theatre itself. The oppressors do not regard theatre as a form of individual entertainment; they are aware of its politically subversive potential. In addition, with this oration, the distance between play and speech collapses, and the whole play becomes “a metaphoric oration and the speech an oration-within-an oration” (Reinheimer, 1998:323). That is, Massinger’s play is itself an oration in honour of theatre since the trial scene is a response to the anti-theatricalism of the time. The whole play is itself a metatheatrical written to satirize the oppression of the actors and people, which are closely related, under a tyrant’s rule. Moreover, although the speech is “a conventional apologia for acting” (Angus, 2010:452), a manifesto in dramatic form with similar arguments as in Sidney’s and Heywood’s earlier declarations, as Angus reminds, the setting is extraordinary. Paris claims theatrical authority at the center of all the legal authority in Rome (2010:452). In this scene, “[t]he law court becomes a theater” (Goldberg, 1983:204), blurring the boundary between theatre and law, which underlines that like theatre itself, the institution of law, represented by the Senate in this play, is constructed. Both its formation and execution are determined by the rulers, in the same

way as a play is composed by a biased playwright and put on the stage from a director's perspective.

In II.i the first inner play, *The Cure of Avarice*, is performed to force Philargus to quit his covetousness. Paris performs as a physician and Latinus plays the old, mean man sleeping with the key of his iron chests in his mouth. Aesopus, performing as the old man's son, informs Paris that the key has been in his father's mouth for such a long time that it has got rusty, he even eats with the key in his mouth. Paris tries to take the key out of his mouth. Meanwhile, Philargus is watching the play, but, in opposition to the aim of the performance, he sympathizes with the man as he says that he would not entrust his gold with anybody, either. He remarks that the old man is an "honest, thrifty man!", and Paris and Aesopus are there to steal his gold.

The old man awakens and blames both men for attempting to murder him to get his gold. He adds that he denied himself all the pleasures to make a treasure and he will not leave it to any heirs. Paris tries to persuade the man to change his attitude as he tells him that, as long as he goes on living in this way, he will have experienced nothing, no pleasures, no happiness, when he dies. Yet, the old man insists that he will not change his behaviour. At the end of the performance, Ceasar asks Philargus: "Thou wretched thing, hast thou seen thy sordid baseness?". He asks him if he will give up this nasty way of life, but Philargus says he will die as he lived, and Ceasar commands that he is hanged.

In III.ii Domitia stages *Iphis and Anaxarete* in which Paris acts as Iphis and Domitilla acts as Anaxarete. Anaxarete is from a higher social class than Iphis, and she looks down on him and his love for her. During the performance, Domitia praises Paris's talent for acting and shows too much excitement, so Aretinus realizes her love for Paris. In IV.ii Aretinus and Domitilla tell Domitian that Domitia and Paris have an affair. Meanwhile, Domitilla is with Paris and Caesar sees them kissing. Then, he commands

Paris that a play entitled *The False Servant* is staged in which a servant has an affair with his master's wife when his master is away. During the performance, he kills Paris.

As Arthur Brown explains, the three inner plays have specific functions in the plot (Davison, 1963:40). The first one includes a reformatory message for the miser of the main play (Angus, 2010:447). The second one reveals that Caesar's wife is in love with his favourite actor as "she confuses the inner play with her own reality" (Angus, 2010:447). The third one is a means for Caesar to take revenge on the unfaithful actor in which he "deliberately invad[es] this dramatic world with the 'real' effect of his own authority" (Angus, 2010:447). One might wonder why Massinger composed such a complicated play with three inner plays in it. The answer might be that he wanted to make use of theatre as much as possible to challenge the attacks on it (Davison, 1963:43), underlining metatheatre's role as a tool of satire.

Yet, the third inset play has a distinct function. It displays the fate of theatre under an oppressive regime in which the actors are silenced through censorship. Caesar uses his authority on the stage to take personal revenge. "In effect, the inset play ritualizes the death of the stage: with one blow of his sword, Domitian executes both Paris and his profession. The State has killed off the Stage" (Reinheimer, 1998:325-6). "He also displays the effect of the death of the stage on the state itself" (Reinheimer, 1998:326). Thus, this inset play demonstrates that the fate of art, theatre in this play, depends largely on the attitude of the rulers to it. If the ruler, like Caesar, wishes to suppress it, then art has little chance to exist in such a society. Yet, the playlet also demonstrates that when art is suppressed and the artists, actors like Paris, are persecuted or silenced, this will also bring the end of that ruler, revealing the relation between the state and the stage. When a ruler executes tyranny, he also paves the way for his own decline. The third play-within-the play also emphasizes the relation between theatre and life most remarkably. In the main play, which is "equated with real life", Paris expects to be killed by Caesar because

of Domitia's flirtatious manners to him. In the inner play, "equated with make-believe", Paris performs a role, but is killed by Caesar (Davison, 1963:51). "Thus, real life and make-believe are shown as one" (Davison, 1963:51).

About these inner plays, one of the issues that has been focused on is that they either do not reach their purposes, or produce unexpected consequences. In the first inset play, Philargus does not learn his lesson and this causes his death. With the second one, the unfaithfulness of King's wife is revealed, which exasperates him, and the third one is a secret plan made by the King to kill Paris. For some critics the failure of the first inner play and the unforeseen outcomes of the other two inset plays are indications of the inefficiency of theatre's corrective function. As Yusuke also declares, due to the failure of the inner plays, some critics even label the play as "antitheatrical"⁶⁹ (2016:151). Therefore, the play has been regarded as a both supporting absolutism and attacking it (Rochester, 2000:153).

According to Greenberg, however, the play is not antitheatrical⁷⁰ (2011:165). In a similar vein, in this study, it is argued that the play is not antitheatrical, in contrast, it is an ardent defence of the power and agency of theatre. The inner plays do not reach the expected outcomes because those who stage them insert them into the main plot to produce certain meanings and consequences that would be beneficial for themselves, interfering into the plays' relation with their own audiences. In the case of Philargus, for instance, Parthenius aims to correct his father's behaviour, but Philargus enjoys representation of the miser, which reveals that the audience has a personal relation with theatre which cannot be shaped by outer factors. In the second playlet staged by Domitia, Domitia's aim is to see Paris more on the stage. However, during the performance, she

⁶⁹ See Barish, 1986:198-202; Butler, 1985:159-60.

⁷⁰ She does not read the play politically. Therefore, she does not deal with the reasons why the play is not antitheatrical. Her focus is on the flaw of catharsis in the play.

loses her emotional control and reveals her love to him, which implies that even the director does not have total control on the performance. The third one demonstrates that theatre might be used by rulers as a tool of continuation of their reigns, since, by killing Paris, he does not only kill his wife's lover, but also the leading actor of the city who performs in plays satirizing his rule. The dissertation also argues that the play is a satire on absolutism without any support for it, which could be understood better considering the play's historical references since it is possible to find striking parallelisms between the Roman King Caesar, Caesar in the play and Charles I.

The Roman Emperor Domitian was born in Rome in 51 AC. As Southern explains, there are no documents providing information about the first eighteen years of his life (2013:1). However, it is known that from his early ages, he behaved as “a depraved tyrant” (Southern, 2013:2). For many political writers of the early modern period, he was “an example of the usurping, excessive tyrant” (Greenberg, 2011:174). Indeed, in his early years, he was not much ferocious. It was in his later years that he became cruel so much so that “his savage nature emerged and his cruelty knew no bounds, as if he needed to make up for lost time” (Southern, 2013:34).

From the beginning of his reign, Domitian emphasized the reality of his autocracy and the aristocracy was aware of it. For him, this was the nature of ruling, and, since he did not have the experience of Vespasian or Titus, he did not hide this. The country was his “personal monarchy”, and he regarded himself as “a benevolent despot” (Jones, 1993:161). As a censor,⁷¹ he had the authority to control the membership of the Senate (Southern, 2013:49) and he could fire or appoint any members. For instance, he expelled

⁷¹ A censor in ancient Rome was a senior magistrate responsible for supervising public morals and the taxes.

a member as he performed in pantomimes, and, although there was much support for him, he did not appoint Palfirus Sura, who was dismissed by Vespasian (Southern, 2013:49).

The seventeenth century witnessed the rise of absolutism in Europe, especially in France. Through the century's end, it arose in many European countries. Even in Republics like Holland and Venice, absolutist ideas could gain ground. In England, too, absolutism sometimes became possible and it could only be prevented by either the dismissal or the execution of kings. The absolutists asserted that the rulers derived their political authority directly from God. Therefore, they believed that the King was merely responsible to God, and that the citizens had to obey all his commands without questioning as long as they did not contradict with divine laws (Sommerville, 1991:347-8).

For instance, both James VI (I) and his son Charles I agreed that kingship was a divine right (Cust, 2005:11). Charles had the authority to make all the decisions and he hated the House of Commons, this was the base of his domestic policy. In 1626, he dissolved the Parliament. In addition, he sought for ways to increase the revenues (Cust, 2005:62), and his most important domestic attempt was the forced loan, which was, in fact, a tax, collected between October 1626 and the end of 1627. It was labelled as "forced" because those who could not pay it or those who rejected paying it were either summoned before the privy council, or had to serve in the army, or sent to prison. The tax was rather profitable as it produced more than 243.000 £. Yet, it brought about some social and political problems. More than a hundred gentry members were imprisoned for refusing to pay it. In addition, Five Knights' Case⁷² produced a national objection to this

⁷² Also known as the Darnel's Case. In March 1627, Sir Thomas Darnel, along with Sir John Corbet, Sir Walter Earl, Sir Edmund Hampden, and Sir John Hevingham, four other knights, refused to pay the forced loan imposed by Charles I, and they were arrested. The knights demanded that the King declared the reason for imprisoning them, or they had to be released on bail. However, the judges did not accept the bail. They were released in 1628. Then, Charles decided not to imprison those who do not pay the loan. Yet, this decision was not enough to

tax because it prevented the citizens from using their right to habeas corpus⁷³ (Cust, 2005:65). These remarkable similarities between the attitudes of ancient Roman King Caesar and Charles I reveal that Massinger turned to ancient Rome to show the tyranny of the English King. “Domitian’s behaviour to his three senators reflect Charles’ treatment of his members” (Davison, 1963:46). Many critics have stated that Domitian’s oppression does not allow the actors to achieve their social function, which parallels the oppressive rule of Charles (Pastoor, 2006:15). Choosing such a distant time and place for his satire, Massinger protected himself from the persecution of the censors, metatheatre allowing him to make his voice heard in a covert way.

Caesar’s “God-game” (Habicht, 1992:359) is another metatheatrical element of the play which reveals kingship as a performance as emphasized by some earlier writers and rulers. For instance, “Sir Thomas More had described politics as a king’s games: as it were stage plays, and for the most part played upon scaffolds” (Levin, 1998:114). The reflections of this view, as Carole Levin suggests, can also be seen in the life of Elizabeth I. Elizabeth did not write any plays, but she had a keenness for drama. She translated Seneca and often went to see plays. Theatre was not only an entertainment for her, (1998:113-4); it was a “means for her to rule successfully”. In this respect, the success of Elizabeth depends on her ability to hide her real self behind a mask of kingship. As she openly declares in her poem “On Monsieur’s Departure”, allegedly addressed to Robert Dudley with whom she was claimed to have a broken love affair, she could never show her real emotions, her sorrow and unhappiness publicly. Since she was the Queen, she always had to be self-controlled, hiding her real self. Similarly, James I addressed the

content House of Commons, and this tension paved the way for Petition of Right (1628) (<https://www.britannica.com/event/Darnels-case>), which demanded “no taxation without the consent of Parliament, no imprisonment without cause, no quartering of soldiers on subjects, and no martial law in peacetime” (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Petition-of-Right-British-history>).

⁷³ A writ of habeas corpus is employed to decide whether the imprisonment or the detention of someone is really legitimate.

Parliament on 21 March 1610: “Kings Actions (euen in the secretest places) are as the actions of those that are set vpon the Stages, or on tops of houses” (qtd. in Davison, 1963:50), demonstrating that both acting and kingship are performative.

Likewise, behaving like a God, commanding everyone, depriving them of the freedom of speech, Caesar performs a role. In the play, there are no clues as to his emotions or weaknesses. As Caesar performs as a King, some critics (Davison, 1963:51; Conn Liebler, 1976:234; Pastoor, 2006:14) comment that the play’s title, “The Roman Actor” refers to him as much as it refers to Paris. “[T]he social and political reality of the play is itself a theatrical illusion in which Domitian is the principle player” (Pastoor, 2006:14-5). That is, ancient Rome with all its institutions, is like a huge theatre in which all the social and political structure is organized by the rulers, and the citizens have to accede to the roles ascribed to them.

To conclude, *The Roman Actor* is an intensely metatheatrical play from the very beginning. Although it seems that a number of actors are suffering from censorship under Caesar’s rule, in fact, all the members of the society are oppressed by Caesar’s tyranny. For instance, if the King commands, laws can easily be violated, as in the case of Domitia and Lamia’s divorce. Similarly, anyone complaining of the King can be reported by the spies. Therefore, Massinger uses censorship and the problems of the actors as a mirror to show Caesar’s tyranny on all his subjects. Creating a totally metatheatrical world in his play, he pictures how metatheatre can be used to satirize the political conditions of the time. Choosing ancient Rome as the setting, the playwright demonstrates that Kings are oppressive and tyrannical in every age. Pentheus in Greek mythology, or Caesar in ancient Rome, or Caesar in the play, or Charles I, are, in fact, not different from each other. Therefore, on the way to people’s freedom, it is not the individuals that must be dealt with, it is the system of kingship that must be abolished.

As it has been demonstrated so far in the dissertation, throughout Renaissance, metatheatre was applied by playwrights in Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline Eras. In these periods, it was used, as Arthur Brown declares, “in order to stress a deeper reality” (qtd. in Davison, 1963:52), hidden behind the *façade* of what seems to be reality. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, displaying the problems of the lower classes to access justice, it is used to draw attention to the injustices in the legal system of the period. In *The Knight*, emphasizing the similarities between seemingly different classes in the society, it is used to satirize the class structure in England at the time. In *The Roman Actor*, holding censorship as a mirror to King’s oppression on the citizens, it functions to satirize kingship. The play both satirizes antitheatrical attitudes to theatre and the oppression of the Kings. Antitheatrical critics seem to blame theatre for religious reasons. However, their real fear was that plays would teach people to question the social and political order. For instance, as Barish clarifies, Nietzsche’s opposition to drama through the end of the nineteenth century largely depended on Plato’s accusations. For Nietzsche, in a good society, all individuals must live according to their appointed roles. However, individuals also discover that they do not have to care for hereditation, class, or fate. The danger of theatre emerges here for the antitheatrical writers. Theatre shows people that their lives do not have to be limited to the social or political roles ascribed to them. Since life is a theatre, anyone can write a role for himself (1981:413). Since such a realization would destroy the rule of the Kings, many writers accused theatre with religious pretexts, however, their real concern was theatre’s, which was like today’s TV or social media, power to influence masses to question and attempt to change the socio-political order. In these plays, the target of the satire may not always be a certain ruler. Although the rulers of the periods are highly satirized, what is really satirized is the institution of kingship itself. However, in the eighteenth century, certain plays directly target Prime Minister Walpole, like the plays of Henry Fielding.

CHAPTER III

DRAMATIC SATIRE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

3.1. Henry Fielding's *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* as a Satire on the Corruption of Walpole's Government

During the 1730s, Robert Walpole, a controversial British statesman and Whig politician, was not feeling secure as his authority was somehow being undermined by threats coming from many directions. Therefore, in order to grapple with such challenges, he turned to the theatres and passed a law which ordered that before they were performed, all plays be licensed by the Lord Chamberlain. Whereas there were many playwrights who satirized Walpole and his government, due to his popularity, “the bite of his inventive satire”, and the number and the rapidity of his work, Henry Fielding was the biggest threat for Walpole (Pagliaro, 1998:24). Indeed, as James Harris states, “The Legislature made a law, in order to curb one private man” (qtd. in Bree, 2007:10).

In the Preface to *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding expresses that the sole source of Ridiculousness is “affectation” which arises either from vanity or hypocrisy (1999:6). The readers like it more when the Ridiculous arises from Hypocrisy since it is a great pleasure for them to see someone who is exactly the opposite of what he seems to be (1999:7). In satirical dramatic pieces such as *Tom Thumb the Great* (1730), *Don Quixote in England* (1734), and *Eurydice Hissed* (1737), Fielding offers a trenchant critique of widespread political mismanagement which he directly associates with Walpole's hypocrisy.

Among these plays *The Historical Register* is regarded as the best and the sharpest dramatic satire of the period, and, as a result, it caused the enactment of the Licensing Act. While this section will mainly focus on *The Historical Register* as a metatheatrical satire from the period for these reasons, a general survey of the political

condition of the time in addition to an overview of plays with similar qualities will be provided first in order to grasp better why the number of dramatic satire rose remarkably in this period.

The drama of the Restoration lacked the spontaneity and uniqueness of the Elizabethan drama. The playwrights in this period followed the three unities and separated comedy and tragedy in order to draw strict boundaries between genres, which resulted in the production of plays and characters with artificial tinges that lacked the theatrical vividness of the Renaissance. While these plays mostly aimed to imitate the characteristics of the wealthy and the fashionable society, in terms of dramatic creativity, the Restoration was an uninspiring age without the spontaneousness and variety of the Renaissance (Nettleton, 1914:3-4). This is to say that the energetic flux of human passions, suffering, desire, and power relations on the Renaissance stage left their places to an arid world of drama. In addition, the eighteenth century was featured by a persistent concern for reason as the most privileged guiding principle in life, as well as with an interest in neo-classical values in literature. Writers aimed in this age to correct the failing sides of humans and the society, and for these reasons, satire rose as a literary genre in the period. Besides, it was a turbulent age and there were evident political reasons for the rise of satire.

Firstly, there was a disagreement over Queen Anne's heir⁷⁴. The Jacobites, a group within the Tories, were the supporters of James Francis Edward Stuart, James II's son. They wanted to determine the monarch, and therefore, they were in constant conflict with the Parliament. When the Parliament dethroned James II and commissioned his daughter Mary II, a Protestant, and her husband William I in 1688, the Jacobites

⁷⁴ The Bill of Rights (1689) had maintained a system of the succession of the heirs of Mary II's, and Anne and William III's. However, neither daughter of James had any surviving heirs. Therefore, the Parliament wanted to ensure the Protestant succession. According to the 1701 Settlement Act, George, Elector of Hanover, became the king as George I in 1714.

advocated James II and his heirs. This issue was one reason among many other for the continuing polarity between these two power holders. The other reasons were the conflict between the Whigs and Tories, and the financial crisis known as the South Sea Bubble⁷⁵. However, the most notable cause was the irrepressible and illicit rise of Robert Walpole (Şenlen Güvenç, 2014a:520-2).

In 1715, the Jacobite Rising in support of the son of the dethroned James II and against George I was suppressed. As this process pointed at the Pope as a potential Jacobite sympathiser, his two companions were arrested for accusations of involvement in the plot. As a result of the Hanoverian accession, the Whigs came to power again which endangered the known Catholics as well as the suspected Jacobites and caused the rise of Robert Walpole (Baines, 2004:50). Ultimately, due to extent of his power, the beginning years of the eighteenth century in England were characterized as the Age of Walpole.

Walpole first became the Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer⁷⁶ under George I and kept this position when George II ascended the throne. He readily became the favourite of the new king and thus the most powerful minister. Therefore, most historians cite his administration as the beginning of modern premiership (Dedalus Burch, 2008:76). The king's lack of a strong will and the Parliament's increasing authority gradually transformed the relation between the King and his ministers, which

⁷⁵ Known as the first economic crash in the world, The South Sea Bubble refers to the British joint stock company named The South Sea Company established in 1711. It was a private and public partnership which aimed to reduce the national debt as well as increasing trade in the America. It was also allowed to trade African slaves to Spain and Portugal. At first, the company offered %6 interest to those who brought stocks. But, as a result of the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, there was no remarkable increase in trade since Britain was allowed only very limited trade and lost some of its profit to Spain. Spain also put taxation on slavery and limited the number of the ships Britain could call for. In 1718, King John began to manage the company and this led to a further increase in the stocks and the bubble started to die down. The stocks sold very well bringing out a higher interest, which increased the price of the stocks as well as the demand for them. It was in 1720 that the bubble withered. Stocks dropped losing much of their value, hitting the investors and frustrating many Londoners (Stewart) (<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/South-Sea-Bubble/>).

⁷⁶ Like the Minister of Finance.

meant that the ministers began to be thought of as the ministers of the Parliament rather than of the king (van der Voorde, 1966:13-4).

At the period, the success of a political unit was largely depended upon the skill of its administrator, and manipulating the English political system, Walpole turned the premiership into a position of immense authority. Due to the controversies surrounding his character and administration, he was attributed with both positive and negative implementations. Along with being credited with forming the cabinet government and bringing stability to the country securing the Hanoverian succession, he was also charged with bribery, corruption and promoting (Devine, 1964:13) in addition to buying politicians (Dedalus Burch, 2008:77). He used the Sinking Fund to suppress the opposition, and it was also rumoured that he paid 50.000 £ out of the Secret Service to his supporters (van der Voorde, 1966:18). For some people, he was “a public robber”, or “an ignorant manipulator of the public funds” (Hall, 1910:34).

Henry Fielding’s theatrical career coincides with this period that was marked by the controversies raging over the political practices of Walpole administration. However, as it has been stated earlier, Fielding was not alone in making a case for an anti-Walpole dramatic style. For instance, in *The Beggar’s Opera*, the character Mr. Peachum, a leader of a gang of highwaymen, thieves and prostitutes, recalls Jonathan Wild who was a well-known criminal and the chief of a group of extortionists at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Since there were many parallels between Walpole and Wild in terms of the similarity of strategies they adopted to achieve their goals, the play was a biting satire with direct allusions to the former. In I.iv for example, the play makes a reference to Bob Booty (Gay, 2012:2792), Walpole’s nickname at the time, as a man who spends all his time with women. Moreover, Peachum is portrayed as a wicked man with no code of honour; when his thieves are not useful to him, he betrays them in the court. In addition, he and his wife, Mrs. Peachum, think of killing Macheath, their daughter’s husband, for

his money (Gay, 2012). *The Beggar's Opera* was the most known play targeting the Walpole administration and the Whig politicians in general. It was an unprecedented stage success, and, upon discovering that he was one of the targets of the play, Walpole tried to ban it.

Another play by Gay satirizing the Walpole government was *Polly*, *The Beggar's Opera's* sequel, published in 1729. In the play, Macheath has a bigamous relationship, which satirically addresses Walpole's affair with Maria Skerrett during his marriage (Gay, 1926). *Polly's* production was forbidden by the Lord Chamberlain who thought that it was "a filthy and libelous work" (Dryden, 2001:539). Yet, the play's printed version became very popular.

Henry Carey's *Chrononhotonthologos* (1734) is a short play, a nonsense verse which insinuates that George II's wife Queen Caroline was in a secret collaboration with Walpole to grant him more power (Carey, 1743a). In *The Dragon of Wantley* written in 1737, Carey, this time, satirizes the heavy taxes imposed by Walpole's government (Carey, 1743b).

When Henry Fielding began his literary career, he regarded himself as a successor of Aristophanes (Downie, 2009:69) and followed the tradition of Old Comedy (Battestin, 2000:181) as a satirical playwright. At first, he wrote some unsuccessful plays such as *Love in Several Masques*⁷⁷ (Bree, 2007:7). His *The Grub Street Opera* is a satirical allegory where the characters represent the royal family as well as Walpole and the members of his government (Fielding, 1968). Ridiculing Walpole as "Robin the butler", the play never appeared on the stage (Bree, 2007:10).

⁷⁷ Published in 1728, the play is about courtship, love and marriage.

In 1734 Fielding wrote *Don Quixote in England* in which Don Quixote and his squire Sancho appear in an English town where all they see is corruption⁷⁸. Reflecting Fielding's early interest in blending satire, drama, and metatheatre, the play launches with a metatheatrical prologue recited by the Manager and the Author where a Player tells them that the audience is impatient to see the play (Fielding, 1902a). Metatheatrical expressions such as these imply that the audience is going to see a fictional work, which hints at Fielding's argument for a kind of theatre that tries to move beyond mere illusional enjoyment and towards a dramatic style that aims to draw the audience's attention to serious political mismanagement taking place in the wider workings of the world outside the realm of theatre.

This line of interpretation finds many resonances in the play which builds on the familiar Don Quixote concept. In I.i Guzzle, the innkeeper, ironically says that in England, "no one is above the Law" (1902a:15). Similarly, in an ironic way, in I.ii Sancho warns Don Quixote that if he violates any laws in England, he will be in gaol in two days (16) and Don Quixote answers: "gaols in all countries are only habitations for the poor, not for men of quality. If a poor fellow robs a man of fashion of five shillings, to gaol with him: but the man of fashion may plunder a thousand poor, and stay in his own House" (Fielding, 1902a:17). Clearly, Fielding builds here an analogy between the England on the stage and the England he and his audience is inevitably a part of. Through an outspoken criticism of the legal discourse of his time, the playwright satirizes the legal institutions that rely on a class-based morality which reveals itself in their unequal treatment of the rich and the poor.

⁷⁸ The play is obviously based on Cervantes's famous novel *Don Quixote*. However, as Ernst Dolder clarifies, the first imitation of the novel is *The Knight*, Ralph representing Don Quixote and Tim representing Sancho (1907:15).

As the play progresses, the analogies between the stage world and the outside world become more and more direct. In I.viii believing Don Quixote has come to the town to participate in the elections, Mayor suspects that Don Quixote is a rich man. Mayor also believes that Sir Thomas Loveland, another candidate for the elections, will not face any strong challenge and, therefore, he plots to propose Don Quixote as an opposition candidate. Such interferences in the elections are references to Walpole. However, in the aftermath of such bizarrely orchestrated political plots and absurd sequences, Don Quixote is discovered as a mad man, a fact that is also accepted by himself (Fielding, 1902a). Fielding in this sense puts the motifs of madness and politics side by side in order to lay bare the so-called rationality behind the widespread authority of politicians.

*The Golden Rump*⁷⁹ written in 1737 is another play thought to have been written by Fielding satirizing Walpole. However, it was with his third play, *The Author's Farce*, a rehearsal play, through which he turned to a new form of playwriting and started to change the direction of his theatrical style. Under the signature of Scriblerus Secundus, he produced a dramatic piece which contains “an anarchical mix of ballad opera, gossip, satire, and farce” and is regarded as Fielding’s first attack on those who exploit other people’s talents to make fortune (Bree, 2007:8).

It was with *Tom Thumb the Great* and its revised version, *The Tragedy of Tragedies* that Fielding proved himself a successful playwright. Being the chief playwright in the British theatre for several years, his plays were performed in London playhouses as well as at the fairs (Bree, 2007:8). In *Tom Thumb*, Walpole is again at the epicentre of Fielding’s barrage of criticism. This time, Walpole is associated with the puny General Tom who is described by Noodle, one of the courtiers, as a scourge on

⁷⁹ The play was not performed or printed, and no manuscript has survived.

England, and, in spite of his physical grandeur, he is depicted as a despicable and wretched man (Fielding, 1902e).

In 1736, Fielding wrote *Pasquin, A Dramatic Satire on the Times* which “was a box-office and critical sensation” (Deadalus Burch, 2008:76). Including two plays-within-the-play, *Election*, a comedy and a tragedy titled *The Life and Death of Common Sense*⁸⁰, a tragedy, *Pasquin* is a metatheatrical piece that shows the playwright’s growing interest in this mode. The comedy written by Trapwit is about the elections between the Whigs and the Tories and suggests that Walpole bribed in the elections in 1734 (Fielding, 1902c).

The historical and cultural context so far reveals the extent to which Fielding’s dramatic style is embedded in the notions of satire and metatheatricity. Following the playwright’s early experiments, *The Historical Register*⁸¹ (1737) was “a much bolder and more objectionable” satire even than *Pasquin*. (Dolder, 1907:45-6). The play was first staged in March in 1737 at the Little Theatre in Hay Market. Like *The Pasquin*, it is a rehearsal play which makes it possible for the playwright to choose a wider target area and satirize a variety of institutions and individuals such as politics, the army, the upper class, certain newspapers of the time and Robert Walpole.

At the outset of the play, 1 Player and 2 Player talk about the old days when *Pasquin* was being performed. For them, those were better times, but now they cannot earn enough and are mostly hungry. 1 Player claims that he can write a play himself:

1 Player: I fancy I could write a thing to succeed myself.

2 Player: Ay; pry’thee, what subject wouldst thou write on?

1 Player. Why, no subject at all; sir, but I would have a humming bird of satire, and I would repeat in every page, that courtiers are cheats and don’t pay their debts, that lawyers are rogues, physicians blockheads, soldiers cowards, and ministers -

⁸⁰ The tragedy does not have a political content. Queen Ignorance, accompanied by Law, Physic and the Priest Fireberand, kill Queen Common Sense. Like a medieval allegory, it is a general satire on religion, law and physic exploited by priests, lawyers and physicians.

⁸¹ *The Historical Register* was a periodical reporting the occurrences of the year.

2 Player: What, what sir?

1 Player: Nay, I'll only name 'em, that's enough to set the audience a hooting.

2 Player: Zounds, sir, here is wit enough for a whole play in one speech. (Fielding, 1902d:240).

Opening with a satirical outlook on different social institutions like the court, law, medicine and the army, the play reveals how political power attained by corrupt figures can impose a heavy strain on the economic and intellectual freedom of artists. However, while pointing at the widespread corruption across all social sphere, the play chooses ministers as its main target. As 2 Player implies, a whole play can be written describing their depravity, and the audience is aware of this corruption. Again, at the very beginning of his play, Fielding resorts to theatre as a medium to challenge the political and discursive authority represented by Walpolean figures.

Dramatic language ripe with a theatrical jargon sets the initial tone in the play. When Sourwit, Lord Dapper and the author Medley come in to see the rehearsal, Sourwit asks Medley how the actions of a whole year will be staged in twenty-four hours. Medley answers: “if I comprise the whole actions of the year in half an hour, will you blame me, or those who have done so little in that time? [...] if I say little or nothing, you may thank those who have done little or nothing” (241). Dramatic theory of unities is wittily used here to present Medley's criticism on the government members who work very little throughout the year producing almost no solutions to social problems. As Sourwit asks Medley questions about his own play such as what its moral is, Medley answers:

[S]ir, my design is to ridicule the vicious and foolish customs of the age, and that in a fair manner, without fear, favour, or ill-nature, and without scurrility, ill-manners, ill-nature or common-place; I hope to expose the reigning follies in such a manner, that men shall laugh themselves out of them before they feel that they are touched. (Fielding, 1902d:242)

Like Fielding, through his satirical play, Medley aims to expose the evil and the folly of his age as satirists in all ages do. Since the play is an account of the political events in the previous year, Sourwit wonders what kind of a connection there is between politics and

theatre, and Medley explains: “O very easily - when my politics come to a farce, they very naturally lead me to the play-house, where, let me tell you, there are some politicians too, where there is lying, flattering, dissembling, promising, deceiving, and undermining, as well as in any court in Christendom” (242). With such an explanation, Medley underlines the similarity between theatre and politics. Like theatre, politics is a form of make-believe, and any court in the Christian world is deceptive like theatre; politicians, like actors, are merely doing what their positions call for. Therefore, the metatheatrical device of the play-within-the-play works to display the fictionality of politics as an institution and points at a need to rethink what performance essentially means in both politics and theatre.

Fielding incorporates other mediums like songs in order to further his satirical stance. Providing a history of the year, a song entitled “Ode to The New Year” is sung in the prologue:

This is a day, in days of yore,
Our fathers never saw before:
This is a day, ‘tis one to ten,
Our sons will never see again. (I.i:243)

The song voices a criticism against the odes written by Colley Cibber for the King’s birthday or the new year (Şenlen Güvenç, 2014b:106). It portrays the administration of Walpole as the worst age in the whole English history, and it is such a corrupt period that there will not be such a time even in the future. Nationwide mismanagement takes many forms like professional incompetency. For example, in the first inner play, five actors performing as politicians appear in Corsica discussing foreign relations:

2 Politician: Is King Theodore returned yet?
3 Politician: No.
2 Politician: When will he return?
3 Politician: I cannot tell.
[...]
2 Politician: These mighty preparations of the Turks are certainly designed against some place or other; now, the question is what place they are designed against? And that is a question which I cannot answer.
3 Politician: But it behoves us to be upon our guard.

4 Politician: It does, and the reason is, because we know nothing of the matter. (1902d:244-5)

Apparently, the politicians are not competent enough to deal with issues such as foreign policy and national security. Not even knowing whether their King has returned or not, these politicians do not have the professional skills to know which part of their country might face a threat of war. However, their lack of knowledge and interest in serious issues is replaced by a deep interest in personal finances. No sooner they demonstrate their inadequacy in state affairs than they are immersed in a finance-driven communication. 5 Politician suggests that they discuss matters of money instead:

5 Politician: Hang foreign affairs, let us apply ourselves to money.

Omnes: Ay, ay, ay.

2 Politician: All we have to consider relating to money is how we shall get it.

3 Politician: I think we ought first to consider whether there is any to be got, which, if there be, I do readily agree that the next question is how we come at it.

[...]

2 Politician: I have considered the matter, and I find it must be by a tax.

3 Politician: I thought of that and was considering what was not taxed already.

2 Politician: Learning: suppose we put a tax on learning.

3 Politician: Learning, it is true, is a useless commodity, but I think we had better lay it on ignorance; for learning being the property but of a very few, and those poor ones too, I am afraid we can get little among them; whereas ignorance will take in most of the great fortunes in the kingdom.

Omnes: Ay, ay, ay. (1902d:245-6)

Here, while Fielding draws attention to the avarice of the politicians of his time in general, their tendency to tax everything can be read as a specific reference to the Excise Bill and the Gin Act (Şenlen Güvenç, 2014b:108). Before the 1734 elections, Walpole wished to please the gentlemen and the land tax was reduced to one shilling in the pound. As a result of the loss in revenue, there was a need for extra income, and to make up for the loss, The Excise Bill was proposed by Walpole to put tax on certain products such as tobacco and wine. Moreover, the consumption of gin had increased in the eighteenth century and it was held in the popular thought to be the cause of moral and mental decay. Aiming to reduce the consumption of gin, The Gin Act of 1736 imposed a tax on gin in addition to

the annual licenses for the sellers. The law not only became unpopular, but also caused riots. Both these taxes were restrictive over people's freedom, and while The Gin Act was in force until 1743, the Excise Bill was repealed on April 11. It can be argued that what is common to both these implementations is that they contributed to the formation of a Walpole image as a corrupt politician who relies on heavy and irrational taxation to provide the financial means for his power. When the characters think about "what was not taxed already", they can only find "learning" and "ignorance", which points at the irrational tax politics of Walpole government.

Fielding's metatheatrical satire is of course not limited by its focus on financial issues; its target is the whole field of politics which is epitomized by Walpolean sensibility. In II.i the second short play is set in London, and this time women politicians populate the stage where they appear to talk about petty gossip, such as a woman who has a child by Farinello. Sourwit asks Medley how this scene relates to history and Medley says that this is the most interesting thing happened in the whole year (1902d:249), which suggests that no significant thing has happened throughout the year. Again, politics is here portrayed as an ineffective field which is unable to produce significant changes in human life.

In another scene, Mrs. Screen and Mrs. Barter are seen in an auction. Mr. Hen, the auctioneer, greets the buyers and initiates the auction which consists of allegorical representations of long-forgotten virtues collected by Peter Humdrum. The auction scene, drawing an allegorical framework for the widespread dissolution of virtues among the elite circles, offers the audience with a chance to see Fielding's witty satirical perspective again. The names of the items are highly suggestive of the underlying disintegration in values which are crucial for the maintenance of a politically, legally, and culturally healthy society. The items such as "Remnant of Political Honesty", "a most delicate piece of Patriotism", "three grains of Modesty", and "one bottle of Courage" do not attract

much attention from buyers. There are different approaches to these items. For example, Banter buys “a most delicate piece of Patriotism” for five shillings as it will be very useful in the elections whereas nobody buys “three grains of Modesty” which is described by Mrs. Screen as “out of fashion”. A similar stance is observed in Lot 4 where “one bottle of Courage” formerly owned by Lieutenant-Colonel Ezekiel Pipkin is sold. Hen informs the buyers that it merely works at home, and evaporates when taken abroad, which is a witty satire on the soldiers or the so-called patriots who are seemingly brave at peace time but coward when there is a real threat of war. It is sold to an officer for three shillings (1902d:254-5). In the same vein, “Wit”, which belonged to Mr. Hugh Pantomime, a composer of theatre entertainments, and, Mr. William Goosequil, a writer of political papers supporting a ministry, is put for sale. Banter remarks: “Put them by, who the devil would bid for them unless he was the manager of some house or other? The town has paid enough for their works already” (255). The “works” is a reference to the works of journalists who were writing to flatter the government at the time. Also, the reference to Goosequil recalls the government’s support for *The Daily Gazetteer*⁸² (Şenlen Güvenç, 2014b:111). Then, “a very clear Conscience”, which was formerly used by both a judge and a bishop, is displayed for sale. Beau bids one shilling but does not buy it in the end. It can be inferred here that the common disinterest in these items exemplifies Fielding’s satirical approach to the demise of virtues in the upper-class English society. In a theatrical style which resembles medieval morality plays, Fielding addresses the fundamental change in values, which provides the impetus behind his satirical outlook on the political and moral transformation taking effect in almost every sphere of social reality.

⁸² Founded in 1735, the newspaper functioned as a propaganda organ for Walpole.

However, there is an item that buyers show a lot of interest. In lot 8, when “Interest at Court” is announced for sale, the buyers compete with each other to obtain the piece:

Hen: Lot 8, a very considerable quantity of Interest at Court; come, a hundred pound for this interest at Court.

Omnes: For me, Mr. Hen!

Hen: A hundred pound is bid in a hundred places, gentlemen.

Beau: Two hundred pound.

Hen: Two hundred pound, two hundred and fifty, three hundred pound, three hundred and fifty, four hundred, five hundred, six hundred, a thousand; a thousand is bid. (1902d:256)

Although the buyers do not show much interest in the previous pieces, there is visible interest in the Interest at Court. Through the buyers’ overt concern with Interest at Court, Fielding satirizes the buyers’ ambition for social rise which, it seems, is possible through connections within the court at the time.

The auction scene comes to an end with unsuccessful attempts to sell several other items. A gentleman bids eighteen pence for “Cardinal Virtues” but realizes that there has been a mistake. The gentleman assumes he would buy a Cardinal’s virtues, but they are simply Temperance, Chastity and other Cardinal Virtues; therefore, he decides not to buy them. In lots 10 and 11, when “a great deal of Wit” and “a little Common-Sense” are put for sale, none bids for them and Hen keeps Common-sense to himself (1902d:256-7). Making use of allegorical abstractions like these, Fielding again points at the waning of old values and satirizes the moral decay in the upper classes of the society which seem to be immersed in opportunist relations that would supplement their self-interests.

Similar to the beginning of the play, Fielding resorts to theatre to further explore the relation between theatricality and real life. After the auction is concluded, a sudden sound is heard outside. A gentleman informs that Pistol⁸³, who thinks of himself as “a great man”, walks through the streets with fiddles and a drum, which drives everyone at the auction to rush to see him. When Sourwit tells Medley that Pistol is a highly

⁸³ He recalls Theophilis Cibber, an actor and son of Colley Cibber.

exaggerated character, Medley replies that, rather than his acting talent, they exaggerate his ministerial. Sourwit gets surprised and asks: “His ministerial?” Medley explains:

you may remember I told you before my rehearsal that there was a strict resemblance between the states political and theatrical; there is a ministry in the latter as well as the former; and I believe as weak a ministry as any poor kingdom could boast of; parts are given in the latter to actors, with much the same regard capacity, as places in the former have sometimes been, in former ages I mean; and though the public damn both, yet while they both, yet while they both receive their pay, they laugh at the public behind the scenes; and if one considers the plays that come from one part, and the writing from the other, one would be apt to think the same authors were retained in both. (1902d:257-8)

Again, Medley underlines the parallelism between politics and theatre. Both actors and politicians are given certain roles to perform, and even though most people condemn the ways they conduct their affairs, they still advance themselves financially and laugh at the public in the background. Thus, the ministers are, in fact, performing like actors, which exposes again the fictional and performative dimension of politics. It can be argued that Fielding examines this parallelism from a satirical perspective and employs theatrical strategies to work against the grain of political performativity.

Metatheatricality continues to inform the play significantly, and of course, satirically. In III.i Shakespeare’s *The Life and Death of King John* is cast by the Prompter and Apollo. During the casting, dramatic jargon is employed with a satirical intent. Prompter offers that Pistol plays King John and his cousin 1 Player plays Robert Faulconbridge, (representing Walpole) who is a warrior. But, the player says that he cannot perform as a warrior as he does not know how to fence. Apollo comments that as long as he can look fierce and speak well, he does not have to know anything more to be a warrior (261), which showcases the play’s satirical take on authorities who appoint incompetent people to significant positions. Prompter claims the character Faulconbridge has a liking for land; it is not a very important role; anyone can perform it; and if you leave it out, the play will not be destroyed, reminding Walpole’s greed and depicting him as a man of trivial matters.

The final scene takes place in Corsica again and involves four Patriots⁸⁴ and five politicians. The Patriots chant slogans:

- 1 Patriot: Prosperity to Corsica.
- 2 Patriot: Liberty and Property.
- 3 Patriot: Success to trade.
- 4 Patriot: Ay, trade - to trade - particularly to my shop. (1902d:265)

There is an evident lack of consensus among different patriotic perspectives. Even though the first three Patriots wish for the welfare of their country, the last one places self-interest above expressing a wish for collective betterment. Then, the Patriots talk about the threat of war, which again lays bare the general lack of agreement among the patriots concerning their attitude towards battle. The first patriot says that even if there is a war, he will drink; the second one agrees with the first; the third one is a sword-cutler and thinks that a war will flourish his business; the fourth one simply drinks. Quidam, representing Walpole, pours a purse on the table and tells them to share the money which he earned through honourable means. They take the money and all leave dancing. In the end, Medley says to Sourwit:

Sir, every one of these patriots have a hole in their pockets, as Mr. Quidam the fiddler there knows; so that he intends to make them dance till all the money is fallen through, which he will pick up again, and so not lose one halfpenny by his generosity; so far from it, that he will get his wine for nothing, and the poor people, alas! out of their own pockets, pay the whole reckoning. (1902d:267)

Obviously, Quidam tricks the Patriots through petty tricks. By making them dance so that all their money falls out of their pockets, he robs the patriots and never loses money. This fragment is again relevant to the play's historical context. Marron comments that Fielding satirizes here "those renegade members of the Opposition who were induced by the bribes of the prime minister, characterized as Quidam, to abandon the principles of their party and to parrot the slogans of the government" (1964:16).

⁸⁴ The Patriots, or The Patriot Party, was a group within the Whigs. They were in opposition to Walpole and the government.

Eurydice Hissed is an afterword to *The Historical Register*. Spatter says he has written a play about “the damnation of *Eurydice*”, his earlier play, and it is being rehearsed now. The earlier play was loathed and he believes that its damnation will be liked (1902b:297). Pillage, an author and a theatre manager who is referred to as “the great man”, is staging a play also called *Eurydice* and asks some actors to perform in it. As a bribe, Actor 4 asks from him some money to buy gloves, and Pillage says he will order them. He asks Honestus to watch the play and applaud it, but he rejects it. The motif of the “bribing man” again resurfaces here. Evidently, the character Pillage stands for Walpole and his giving bribe to the actors recalls Walpole’s bribery in the elections.

Such a depreciating portrayal of Walpole in *The Historical Register* became the triggering reason for the enactment of The Stage Licensing Act which was “a stringent piece of antitheatrical legislation” (Keymer, 2007:17). Following the act, only two theatres remained open, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, in London (Keymer, 2007:7). At the age of thirty, Fielding gave up his career as a playwright and decided to be a lawyer (Bree, 2007:10), and never wrote a play again. Thus, “The most popular and critically acclaimed playwright of his day, was silenced from the stage” (Dedalus Burch, 2008:86). The act was in force for 231 years until it was repealed in 1968.

As a conclusion, the eighteenth century was a politically contentious age. In this historically turbulent period, playwrights naturally turned to politics as a subject matter and aimed to point out to the faults and the follies of the politicians. The de facto Prime Minister Robert Walpole was known to consort to illicit practices such as bribery to ensure support from the voters, and he could not escape being a target of the playwrights. Although some other playwrights also attacked Walpole government in their works, Henry Fielding was the most famous and competent among them, with his satire being harsher. In *The Historical Register*, his satirical subject matter was Walpole himself,

which not only brought about the end of his career as a dramatist, but profoundly influenced the future of English drama.

As can be inferred from this section, satirical drama in the eighteenth century was rather topical. It dealt with the most recent problems and focused on the lives and politics of certain figures well known to the public. Walpole was the main target of almost all the satirical plays. Therefore, satirical convention in this period had a rather narrow scope which was limited to the urgent issues of a certain geography. However, in the twentieth century, the range of satirical activity expands towards the global and playwrights satirize the universal problems inherent to all societies. Rather than simply focusing on certain names, dramatic satire in this period confronts universal ideologies and ways of thinking, as will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV: POLITICAL SATIRE IN THE POSTMODERN AGE

4.1. Howard Brenton's *The Churchill Play* as a Satire on National Historiography

The previous chapters were centred on the idea that satirical sentiment was common in the Renaissance and the eighteenth-century drama. As opposed to the earlier centuries when satirical drama was mostly immersed in domestic politics, in the twentieth century it is rather centred on universal human problems and conventional models that Jean-François Lyotard (1984) calls “grand narratives” of modernity and aims to demythologize these entrenched styles of knowing, as in Howard Brenton's *The Churchill Play* (1974).

Known for his overt socialist stance, Howard Brenton (1942-) is one of the most radical playwrights of his time. Through plays which are both technically and thematically innovative, Brenton portrays the lives and predicaments of characters who are, rather than as independent and autonomous agents, presented as the members of a social group in the midst of a morally and politically corrupt world. In his neatly woven dramatic works, theatricality is mostly in the foreground by which he mainly draws attention to the universality of human problems by making a case out of the urgent political issues and providing a critique of the political authorities of his time.

As a man of theatre, Brenton contends that “[a]ll plays [...] are political” (Hay, Roberts, Brenton, 1979:135), which could be useful vehicles to create a “better” world. He believes that a Marxist-Leninist Revolution would not bring about efficient solutions for the scourges of the society (Bay, 2010:168; 2012:37); therefore, rather than a revolution, he emphasizes the need for “change”. “Brenton's strategy is not to preach

revolution but to harness the impulse for change, which he believes is common to everyone” (Patterson, 2003:105)⁸⁵.

In an interview, Brenton explains his purpose as a dramatist: “I’m a straight, traditional writer, trying to write truthfully about the society I’m in and trying to intervene to help the good in it and discourage the bad. All writers - those who are not hopeless hacks - do that, be they socialist or no” (Hay, Roberts, Brenton, 1979:135). He thinks that playwrights, whether socialist or not, must show people what actually happens in the world and help them move towards the good. For him, “a more communitarian world” is possible and he is writing “hopefully” to help this come true (Wu, 2000:18). His “purpose is to agitate by satire” (Hay, Roberts, Brenton, 1979:140).

As a dramatist, one of Brenton’s major concerns has been history as he himself declares: “if you don’t understand the past, you’ll never understand the present, let alone the future” (Hay, Roberts, Brenton, 1979:136). Exploring history through theatrical means, the task of the artists, for him, is to show the “unreliability of historical accounts” by emphasizing “the fictionality of the stage” and underlining the similarity between the fictionality of the stage and that of the seemingly objective official historical narratives (Cantoni, 2019:6). In this way, he aims to question historical personages so that history is demythologized (Zeifman, 1993:132). This is his main project in *The Churchill Play*.

The play is featured as what Knowles theorized as “historiographic metadrama”, dramatic works that “[use] metafictional self-consciousness to highlight the reader’s active role in the interpretative recreation of history” (1987:228) in which the playwrights offer subversive versions of history. Later, Alexander Feldman termed “historiographic metatheatre” (2013). According to him, located within the theoretical framework of

⁸⁵ His trust in “change” also reflects his affiliation with Situationism which emphasizes that the modern society represses and exploits the individuals, and this must be changed. To read more on Situationism see Peacock, D. Keith. “Freedom and Good Order”. *Radical Stages: Alternative History in Modern British Drama*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991. pp. 64-7.

postmodern theory, historiographic metatheatre has always functioned as a self-reflexive tool of political and ideological criticism in contemporary drama. The term is the dramatic counterpart of Linda Hutcheon's concept of "historiographic metafiction", the basic mode of postmodern novels (vi). Such plays, like postmodernist novels that follow the critical path of historiographic metafiction, do not merely portray history as an ideological space; they also draw attention to the urgent issues of their own times (Feldman: 2013:5).

The Churchill Play, an example of historiographic metatheatre, was written in 1974 and performed by The Nottingham Playhouse in the same year for the centenary of Winston Churchill's birth. Although it was written in 1974, the play is set in Camp Churchill, "the twenty-eighth internment camp" (Brenton, 1986:118), "somewhere in England" (Brenton, 1986) in 1984. The dystopic atmosphere of the play recalls the oppressive regime portrayed in George Orwell's *1984*. The Churchill Camp recalls the Long Kesh Internment Camp in Northern Ireland⁸⁶ (Peacock, 1991:115). In mixing different periods and spaces, the playwright announces that the whole play "is a satire which says, 'Don't let the future be like this...'" (Brenton, 1986).

It took Brenton about five years to complete his play (Bay, 2010:164; 2012:34), and during these five years, there was a constant social and political unrest in Britain. As Patterson describes, through the beginning of the 1970s, civil liberties were constricted. On 9 August 1971, three hundred people were arrested and brought to the camps without any charge in Northern Ireland. Although some of these people were suspects as terrorists, some were merely civil rights activists. In the meantime, the trade unions were oppressed under the government of Edward Heath, and it resulted in a miners' strike in the first two months in 1972, which led to the declaration of State of Emergency on February 9 (Patterson, 2003:102). In Northern Ireland, there were also problems which culminated

⁸⁶ During the Troubles (1971-2000), The Long Kesh Detention Center in Northern Ireland was used to keep the prisoners who were suspected to be paramilitaries.

in the Bloody Sunday⁸⁷ in 1972 (Bay, 2010:164-5; 2012:34). In February 1973, Diplock Courts, which allowed the judges to try and sentence the accused without any proper trial, were introduced. It was only after 1974 that the policy of internment was abandoned since it did not become an efficient tool to suppress terrorism (Patterson, 2003:102).

Written in the wake of such a stormy period, *The Churchill Play* opens with a catafalque on the stage draped with the Union Jack. Four young servicemen in mourning mode are standing at each corner of the catafalque. They are an Army Private, a Naval Marine, an Airman and an Ordinary Seaman. The Private (Ted Barker) is a Londoner, the Marine (Jack Williams) is Welsh, the Seaman (Mike McCulloch) is a Scot, and the Airman (Jimmy Umpleby) is a Yorkshireman. After a long silence, the Private speaks:

(roaring his lines. Choked, awkwardly). Body! (A pause.) Body a! (A pause.) Body a Sir Winston! Churchill! (A pause.) Laid in State! (A pause.) West-minster Pal-ace 'All (A pause.) January Nineteen-'un-dred an' Sixty-five! (A pause.) An' 'ere we are! (A pause.) Three A.M.! (A pause.) Filthy wevver! (A pause.) England! Filthy wevver! Three A.M.! Back 'ere! Inna nineteen-bloody-sixties! Be-fore Eng-land fell a-part!

A silence.

An' back here! Be-'ind me, anme mates! Why! Wha's left a' the greatest, the biggest, 'blood-y most monument-al Englishman that ever lived! (A pause.) Daddy of'em all! (A pause.) An'I a poor sold-i-er! Guardin' 'is remains! (A pause.) Great 'onour! (A pause.) M'Mum cried when I told 'er. Loved 'im! Loved 'im, she cried. M'Mum cried. (A pause.) Yeah. Dyin' ferra fag. (Brenton, 1986:111)

The Private refers to January 1965 when Winston Churchill died, and defines the 1960s as “bloody” years before England lost its power. He suggests that after Churchill died, England could no longer maintain its political authority in the world. In addition, he describes Churchill as “the most monumental Englishman that ever lived” and the father of the English nation. For him, people love Churchill so much that the soldier’s mother

⁸⁷ On January 30, 1972, British soldiers killed twenty-six unarmed citizens who attended a protest march in Derry, Northern Ireland.

cried when he died. Obviously, from the point of view of a Londoner soldier, Churchill is a national hero.

All of a sudden, the Seaman says that a knocking sound comes from the coffin. It is heard several times and soon the catafalque shakes. The Private gets panicked and screams: 'E can't come out!' (Brenton, 1986:113). The Marine answers:

He'll come out, he'll come out, I do believe that of him. Capable of anything, that one. (*Fiercely.*) To bugger working people. (*He coughs. Recovers. Fiercely.*) We have never forgiven him in Wales. He sent soldiers against us, bloody man. He sent soldiers against Welsh mining men in 1910. Three were shot. The working people of Wales know their enemies. He was our enemy. We hated his gut. The fat English upper-class gut of the man. When they had the collection, for the statue front of Parliament... All over Wales town and county councils would not collect. No Welsh pennies for the brutal man to stand there. (Brenton, 1986:113)

As opposed to the loving compliments of the Londoner soldier, the Welsh soldier expresses his intense hatred for Churchill by noting that, for the working class people in Wales, Churchill is a scourge. Upon hearing this, the Private defends Churchill: "But 'e won a war. 'E did that, 'e won a war", the Marine refuses: "People won the War. He just got pissed with Stalin ..." (113). With such contradictory perspectives of the two soldiers over the myth of Churchill, Brenton points at the fact that Churchill, who is a hero for the Conservative circles, is not a hero for everyone in the country. This critical take on the historiographic myth of heroism is of course not without a postmodernist orientation. The counter-argument against the heroic narrative of Churchill can be associated with what Linda Hutcheon declares: "Facts are events to which we have given meaning. Different historical perspectives [...] derive different meanings from the same events" (1989:54). Historical meaning is in fact always already multiple, but it is power relations producing dominant ways of thinking that privilege one perspective over the other. This lack of impartiality is what Brenton satirizes in historiographic weaving of meaning regarding the Churchill myth.

As soon as the Marine finishes his sentences, Churchill, aware of his theatricality, speaks from within the coffin: “England! Y’ stupid old woman. Clapped out. Undeserving. Unthankful. After all I did for you. You bloody tramp!” (113). Voicing his fury with the British citizens who do not approve of his actions, Churchill comes out of the coffin. Patterson comments that Churchill’s resurrection is “a profound shock, providing an exciting moment of theatre” (2003:98). From another perspective, Churchill’s coming into life reflects the fears of the socialist writers like Brenton that England might move towards Conservatism leaving behind the policy of social state⁸⁸ (Bay, 2010:167; 2012:36). Churchill goes on speaking:

There was an Empire. Is it burnt? Drowned? Dust. Ash. Cast away. Like on the edge of some hellhole, of some mining area. Those bitter men. Today I may as well be scattered there. (*A slight pause. Then again, enthusiasm*). Still, I can say I bludgeoned. (*With a great pout of his jaw and a gesture with his cigar hand.*) Onto...History’s stage! (*Sees the cigar isn’t lit. Then to the Sailor.*) Lad. Give us a light, lad. (1986:114)

Churchill emphasizes that his empire has lost its greatness and like it, he might lose all his grandeur as a hero. However, he adds that he forced his name into history to make himself an unforgettable iconoclastic figure. His reference to “history’s stage” reveals the fictionality of history like theatre, driving the play into further metatheatricality.

After a short time, Colonel Ball calls from within: “Could we stop. Could we have light. Could we get all this out of the way please” (114). This is the exact moment when the audience finds out that the events so far are parts of a play-within-a-play, and the soldiers are the internees of a camp who are rehearsing a play on an aircraft hangar. It is a play they have been producing themselves titled *The Other Second World War*, or *You won’t believe where I’m going to put my cigar!*”, which is to be presented to the Members of the Parliament who are going to pay a visit to the camp. The implication here is that,

⁸⁸ This prediction came true in the 1980s when Thatcher came to power. The policy of social state was abandoned, capitalism spread to the country and services like education and health became chargeable.

through the metatheatrical element of the play-within-the-play, the prisoners get a chance to express their opinions about Churchill. Allowing both positive and negative opinions to be heard, the device invests in the emergence of further theatricality by at the same time multiplying historical meaning on a plural plane of thought. Indeed, this is what Brenton aims to show in the play: that historical narratives are products of ideologies and personal point of views, which means they are not inherently neutral and therefore should not be readily trusted.

When the rehearsal is interrupted by Colonel Ball, one of the guards at the camp, Joby, the actor performing as Churchill, takes off the Churchill mask from his face. The mask, which is an epic element creating alienation effect, functions to show that the Churchill that is seen on the stage is a mere performance, a make-believe; by only putting on the mask again, Joby can turn into Churchill. A highly symbolic scene like this suggests that all historical figures might be fictional like Churchill. It shows the audience that “Historical figures are as much a ‘construct’ as are characters in a play - ‘airy nothings’ conjured into illusory existence” (Zeifman, 1993:134).

As a historical figure, Winston Churchill, like the Churchill in the play-within-the-play, was both loved and hated. On the one hand, as Feldman comments, he was regarded as a symbol of British statesmanship and nationality thanks to the power of his rhetoric and talent for strategic thinking (2013:109). In the same vein, many people thought he was “a champion of peace and freedom and human dignity” (Irving, 1987:xix). He was the *Weekly Standard*’s nominee for the greatest man of the twentieth century. In 2002, a BBC poll of one million people declared that Britons thought that he was “the greatest Briton of all the time” (Buchanan, 2008:351). Similarly, in an essay titled “Mr. Churchill”, Isaiah Berlin wrote of him: “A man larger than life, composed of bigger and simpler elements than ordinary men, a mythical hero who belongs to a legend as much to reality, the largest human being of our time” (*The Atlantic*).

For some people, however, Churchill was a cruel tyrant. At the wartime summits with Stalin, he approved the ethnic cleansing of millions of German people and agreed to Stalin's use of German people as slave labourers. He also agreed on the compulsory repatriation of millions of Russian, Ukrainian and Cossack people, which meant they were left to an authoritarian Asiatic regime (Buchanan, 2008:378). In 1943, he gave consent to Stalin's seizure of much of Poland (380). Historical data like these show that there are always two sides of the coin when looking into historical narratives. The contradiction between these two perceptions of Churchill can be read through postmodern way of thinking, especially with Hayden White's:

different historians stress different aspects of the same historical field, the same set or sequence of events, because they actually *see* [emphasis original] different objects in that field, provisionally group them into different classes and species of historical existence, conceive the relationships among them in different terms, and explicate the transformations of those relationships in different ways in order to figure different meanings for them by the structure of the narratives they write about them. (1973:274)

Since different historians focus on different characteristics of Churchill, the historical accounts about him vary based on their subjective and ideological interpretations. As Buchanan clarifies, if Churchill's career is analysed from its beginning to the end, from 1911 to 1955, it can be observed that these almost fifty years cover the process of the collapse of the British Empire. During this period, India, Egypt, the Suez Canal, and Palestine were lost, and Russia and America were becoming the world's new powers, and the Dominions turned to America as their protector and leader. Britain had lost its status as the world's greatest power (Buchanan, 2008:407-8). As much as his achievements, these failures are also parts of Churchill's military and political career.

The Churchill Play addresses such multiplicity through the play-within-the-play that brings various responses together. While some of the characters in *The Churchill Play* and the inner play see the character Churchill's achievements, some others focus on

his weaknesses. Colonel Ball, for instance, thinks that he is a great man and opposes to the play's performance:

Ball: Impossible. Out of the question. To present such a spectacle to Members of Parliament. Here as a select committee officially inspecting the camp? No.

Thompson: The men have worked hard preparing the entertainment for the Select Committee. It has raised morale. The costumes, the props, the words of the text... They have taken six months to prepare.

[...]

Ball: This is an Internment Camp. Not a school, for schoolboys.

Thompson: (*tight*). I know what place this is, Sir. The men need recreation. They'll go down, otherwise. Deteriorate, already. Some have. In a few months. (Brenton, 1986:116-7)

Thompson is the only guard at the camp who empathizes with the internees and, as the Recreation Officer, he thinks that they need some recreation to keep sane at the camp, and putting the play on the stage can be a good way to help them. In addition, The Parliamentary Committee ordered that some recreational facilities are offered in the camp. After some hesitation, Colonel Ball agrees to the play's performance on condition that it is softened and some patriotic comments are added in it (119). Ball's order draws attention to censorship on theatre. The authorities suppress art unless it serves their purposes. Colonel Ball further remarks: "Winston Churchill saved this country from one thousand years of barbarism. So no disrespect to the memory of that great man" (Brenton, 1986:119). Like the Private in the play-within-the-play, Colonel Ball regards Churchill as the saver of his country, and feels that people have to respect him.

Soon after the Colonel stops talking, an actor performing as Dervish with a face dyed in black, appears in the midst of the wreckage of the catafalque. His clothes are blood-stained and in rags, and his left arm is deeply wounded "*hanging by a sliver of flesh. He clutches the arm. With a spine-curving twist he pulls. The wounded arm comes away in his hand. He screams*" (Brenton, 1986:119). The Dervish introduces himself through a reference to a historical event: "Dying wounded Dervish, Sergeant. At the

Battle of Omdurman. Tenth of September 1898” (119). During the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of Sudan, the Battle of Omdurman was fought between the British Egyptian forces and the Sudanese army on September 2, 1898. The Anglo-Egyptian forces were led by Major General Horatio Herbert Kitchener, and the leader of the Sudanese army was Abdullah al-Taashi, the successor of Mahdi, Muhammed Ahmad. The followers of Mahdi were known as Dervishes. In the end, the Sudanese army was heavily defeated. Winston Churchill, then a young soldier, was also present in the battle. Thus, it can be said that with the character Dervish representing the Sudanese soldiers who fought against the British in the battle, another perspective on Churchill is introduced, this time one from outside Britain. With a wounded arm and blood-stained and ragged clothes evoking an atmosphere of war, the Dervish reveals his loathing for Churchill: “(at once, fast). Strong hot wind, foul and tainted...The Dervish Army, slaughtered there...Churchill young sightseer rode across us...” (119). Like the Welsh soldier, Dervish does not consider Churchill as a great soldier or statesman, and through him, Brenton’s satirical take on Churchill’s myth expands towards a critique of colonialism.

The contradiction between Ball and Dervish’s perception of Churchill further demonstrates the fictionality of historical accounts. It also reveals that historiography reflects the views of the powerful as it is the voice of dominant ideology, which historiographic metatheatre challenges. “Historiographic metafiction [historiographic metatheatre in this case] [...] refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems” (Hutcheon, 2004:93). Brenton’s satirical view, in this respect, is directed at historiographic claims for absolute accuracy, and metatheatricality works for repeatedly underlining the lack of a neutral basis in official narratives.

The play goes on with the dialogue between Mike McCulloch and Sergeant:

Mike: I have my convictions.

Sergeant: Well, yeah... You play with 'em, quietly. In your corner.

Mike: I was a union man. I had dignity. I was a union man.

Sergeant: And what are you now, Michael?

Mike: (*A slight pause.*) A crank behind the wire. (Brenton, 1986:121)

Before he was brought to the camp, Mike was a unionist and had ideals to fight for. It is not known how long he has been in the camp, and as he implies, he has lost all his energy and desire to struggle for his and other people's rights, which displays the dehumanizing effects of the conditions of the camp. Indeed, none of the internees is sure of why they have been kept in the camp. Since no trials were done, they might have been detained for any reason, or for no reason at all. In the case of Mike, he might simply have been retained for being a unionist who tries to raise awareness for the members' rights at work. Since he does not work for the money-holding class, he might have been regarded as a threat to the political and economic structure within society, one which must be put under control.

The play shifts its focus from the individual story of Mike to its major concern, the unreliability of historical narratives, as when Sergeant explains to Thompson:

Sergeant: I read a lot of military history. Do you know what it tells me? In medieval times before a defeated city, they cried havoc. And for three days the city was the common soldier's. Rape. Burn. Loot. Dance in the blood, wine, stuff yourself. Disgustin' eh? Morning of the fourth day, king'd send 'is aristocrat officers in with staves, an' dogs. Clear out the common soldier. And then send in the Archbishops to consecrate the place... So the king and his retinue, a fat ermine-robed lot, politicians all, could ride in. Unsullied. To thank God for their delivery and freedom. The point of my story is that running amok, the havoc, the sacking of the city, why that was the soldier's pay. (Brenton, 1986:127)

Sergeant narrates that in the medieval period, when a city was defeated, it was thought to be the common soldiers' achievement at first. The soldiers were allowed to feel victorious for a few days. Soon, however, the king's aristocrats would arrive and the soldiers would be forgotten. After the city was blessed by the archbishops, the king and his retinue came to the city in furry clothes to thank God for the loot and the freedom they got. What the soldiers got was only broken psychologies, devastation and pillage. Although this is a story from the past, it is still relevant in the period the play was performed in. Through

historicization, Sergeant underlines that soldiers still cannot get the reward for their success as military success is usually attributed to big names that acquire a mythical status. However, as Calder claims, “If a mythical version of the war still holds sway in school textbooks and television documentaries, every person who lived through those years knows that those parts of the myth which concern his or her activities are false” (1969:15). The reality of wars is in fact common knowledge, but ideologies and power relations prevent them from coming into surface.

The camp is a carceral space where inmates with different personal histories are kept for no major reason. Reese is another internee who does not know why he is at the camp:

Reese: All I know is I am detained, I am somewhere in England, I have a broom in my hand and I have been asked...to sweep his aircraft hangar. [...] I know I am in a camp. I am detained. Please, let my family know where I am. That I'm well. I've three children. Let my wife know. (Brenton, 1986:129)

Reese's situation exemplifies the human condition under the dystopic regime in the country. Anyone can be brought to the camp without any charge. Joby, for example, says that he was a journalist and a scab during the miners' strike in 1980. There was a row and he hit a policeman, that is why he has been kept in the camp for four years. Similarly, Peter was brought to the camp for “[p]etty vandalism” (139). These cases point at the fact that the dystopic regime takes full measures against those who might pose a challenge to status quo, whether through peaceful protest or petty violence. Law works against the freedom of expression, which is portrayed through Brenton's blending of satire and theatricality.

The second act opens with the internees - Ted, Jimmy, and Jack - playing football with old oil cans. While in the game, Jack speaks to himself: “All they want...(Scuffs.) To humiliate us. (Scuffs). Make us look daft” (132). He feels that they are forced to become “entertainments” for the members of the Parliament and resents it:

Jack: I'm no puppet scarecrow. To be stood up before ladies and gents of the House of bloody Commons. What do they think I am? Want me to get up and do a turn 'bout Winston Churchill do they? Oh what a funny little man, they'll say. But how happy he must be, to stand up there. Jerk his arms about. He must almost like it, they'll say. And they'll think I'm being rehabilitated. Which is the word of the Government for total, abysmal humiliation. I mean what are we? Performing bears? To stand up in our chains? Our great paws held out to say... (*He adopts a pathetic posture, hands held out like a beggar.*) Look we're not savage after all. We're in chains. And we won't hug you to death. For we're silly bears. W' grins on our muzzles. [...] Recreational Activity? Rehabilitation? Winston Churchill? We should stuff the whole ragbag right up their throats. (Brenton, 1986:133)

Under the pretext of recreation, the prisoners are kept occupied and the authorities force them to stand for the dominant ideology in their play. Jack does not want to perform in it since he feels humiliated. He is aware that the real reason for staging the play is not their rehabilitation; instead, theatre is employed as a means of upholding the status-quo and showing their loyalty to the state and its ideology which could be associated with the Foucauldian concept of Panopticism. Originally coined by Jeremy Bentham, panopticon signifies an architectural design with a circular building at the periphery. At the centre, there is a tower with wide windows. The building at the periphery is divided into cells with two windows, one on the inner side corresponding to the windows, the other outside allowing the light to cross the cell throughout. The cells are filled with patients, madmen or the condemned, and a supervisor is placed in a central tower (Foucault, 1991:200). "Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (1991:201). Panopticon signifies much more than a certain architectural design and refers to the control of certain groups like patients and the convicts, who are at the periphery of the power structures of the society, through a sense of continual visibility. In the case of the prisoners, keeping them at the camp, the government officers can observe the prisoners including "possible dissidents" like journalists or unionists. The performance about Churchill's birthday functions as a tool for the officers to keep their actions under

surveillance. Brenton evidently addresses the political reverberations of theatre here by revealing that state-sanctioned art might have a hidden agenda, and he builds a contrast between his left-wing dramatic satire and right-wing ideological performances where official narratives are fostered for political purposes. In any case, theatre and theatricality offer a space for discussing these questions.

While the play focuses on relations of power that operate in the camp, it also shows how the system abuses its own representatives. This is exemplified in the beginning of Act Three with a conversation between Thompson and his wife Caroline:

Caroline: (*bitterly.*) I don't know why you have to feel so guilty.
Thompson: I don't 'Feel guilty'.
Caroline: You feel guilty. Because you're in the Army and because you're a doctor. In a prison camp.
Thompson: I do not 'Feel guilty'.
Caroline: Guilt. It drips off you. Like a runny nose.
Thompson: All right. I feel guilty. Yes, wonderful, fine. That's me. The English leper. (Brenton, 1986:147)

Caroline is aware of her husband's reluctance for working at the camp. It can even be argued that, like the prisoners, Thompson is a victim of the system. Formerly a civil doctor, he is somehow bound to the dystopic workings of the system. Caroline, however, wishes a different future for her family. She is afraid of the prison and wants his husband to be a civil doctor as in the past. She also reveals that working in the camp has deeply deteriorated his psychology. All she wants is a home with a garden in the South. Juxtaposing Caroline's small utopia with the system's dystopic working, Brenton suggests that it is not only the detainees who are oppressed in the camp; the guards, who represent the authority of the state, and their families are also under oppression.

As this section has already argued, Brenton is not calling for a simple critique of Churchill's persona. On the contrary, he is drawing attention to the prevalence of political degeneration in every circle of society. In Act Four, a stage is erected with a Union Jack

curtain and chairs are placed before it. The Select Committee arrives at the camp and St. John introduces himself to the guards:

St. John: As Chairman of the Committee I am, of course, of the party of the Government of the Day. But since that government is a coalition of the Conservative Party and part of the Labour Party...not the part to which Mr Morn still stubbornly adheres to... (Brenton, 1986:153)

According to Richard Boon, this coalition reminds the one Churchill established at the time of war (Bay, 2010:179; 2012:45). The representative of the Labour Party is in the camp to see the performance, and therefore, he is one of the oppressors of the detainees who are reluctant to perform the play. This can be taken as Brenton's critique of the Labour Party which claims to stand by the rights of the individuals. Instead of promising the individuals more freedom and equality, the party has somehow been integrated into the dominant ideology. Therefore, the play-within-the-play lays bare the working of this unexpected coalition between seemingly opposing ideologies.

Ball informs the members of the committee: "The men have prepared an entertainment, in the nature of something like a play. Since your Committee's terms of reference are to look at the welfare of the detainees...this may be of interest to you" (157), and the performance begins. The scene is the same as it was at the beginning of the play. A catafalque draped with the Union Jack is placed on the stage. At each corner, there is a serviceman. The parts are performed as in Act One. Ted begins:

Ted: Body of Sir Winston Churchill. And I a poor soldier guarding his remains. My Mum cried when I told her. Loved him, loved him, she cried. My Mum cried. Yes, something to write home about. To say I was there, night they laid him, there in the dark. (Brenton, 1986:159)

As in Act One, Ted expresses his sorrow for Churchill's death. Soon after this moment, Churchill opens the lid of the coffin and sits up. Jimmy, Ted, Jack and Mike are shocked to see him alive:

Ted: Living dead?

Jimmy: Straight case. Like Dracula, come back for blood and young women's necks. Take a stake through the heart to get him back in the grave. Or a cross. Or a twig of wolfbane. Or sunlight, the first rays of

dawn. [...] Maybe they're all the living dead. All the leaders of the world. Vampires. Imagine them in the Gents Toilet at the United Nations, sucking each other's necks. (Brenton, 1986:161)

Jimmy thinks that all the world leaders are vampires feeding on people's blood, voicing Brenton's satire on the concept of political leadership. Accordingly, there are no good or bad leaders; all leaders are vampiric power-holders exploiting their citizens. Then, Churchill talks to the soldiers revealing the political persistence of mythic leaders:

Churchill: Where am I?

Mike : At your funeral.

Churchill: Shovelling me away are they, after all these years?

Mike: Shovelling you away.

Churchill: Won't go. Won't! Won't, even now, let go.

Mike: Want to be Prime Minister again?

Churchill: Why not?

Mike: You're dead, that's why not.

Churchill: That has not stopped others.

Mike: Britain ruled by a corpse?

Churchill: I'm a fresh corpse. The country will get used to it. They were always fond of me. I always felt love rising to me from English crowds, sweet, sticky affection. (Brenton, 1986:162)

As it is clear, although Colonel Ball ordered that the tone of the play be softened, it still maintains its satirical take on Churchill in a harsh way. Although Churchill is dead, his ghost still haunts England. He reminds that there are other late leaders who still rule their countries though the myths they left behind, and he wants to do the same. His desire to rule is still alive and he believes that people still admire him, which Brenton challenges:

The idea that Churchill is universally admired by people who went through the war is not true, but what they always say, and what my parents say, is 'He gave us freedom.' And the question of freedom becomes paramount - you say, 'What freedom? What do we do with that freedom? What have done with it?' And the answer at the moment is, we are in danger of throwing it away - and also that it's not freedom. (Brenton, 1981:95)

Churchill assumes that people believe they owe their freedom to him, which is his major argument as a national hero. However, the play makes it evident that military victories did not bring freedom to people. Having defeated their rivals under Churchill's government, now they are prisoners in their own countries under an oppressive regime in England. Not only the ideology of Churchillian conservatism but also the mythic

memories of him contribute to the maintenance of this regime, out of which Brenton again and again makes a satirical case.

The discrepancy between dominant and individual memories resurfaces many times. Churchill says that he likes Mike's town, Glasgow, and reports his memories of the town. He recounts his visit to the city in June in 1945 when people of all ages listened to him from the roofs and the trees, and women waved flags from the windows for him. Yet, for Mike, Churchill means war and loss to Glasgow. His version of this period is quite different than what Churchill says. On March 1941, there was the first German raid, people left the town, walked to the moors and stayed there for weeks. On March 14, there was a second raid and thousands of houses were hit (162-3). In this context, Brenton emphasizes the gaps in the dominant accounts of history by giving a voice to the memories and experiences of marginalized groups. The myth of Churchillian heroism is thus demythologized through minor voices.

From this moment on, the play goes on as a confrontation between Mike and Churchill:

Mike: Churchill, you left us nothing. Few statues of you, in your boiler suit. Your name in a kid's skipping rhyme. Adventure story from some lost, colonial war. Bit a gas from our fathers about some darkest hour years ago. Gas only, not a single human thought. Not a single true, human remain. (Brenton, 1986:164)

Mike's words echo Brenton's criticism that Churchill left no human ideas behind; all he left were some statues and heroic war stories. At the end of the performance, the Union Jack curtain closes. Captain Ball sends Sergeant Baxter to see what is going on behind the curtain. The curtain opens again and Baxter appears tied up with a gun Mike is holding to his head. Mike orders Ball to give him the key to the armoury. Jimmy takes the key and says: "Key t'Utopia" (173), showing his hopes for living in a free and democratic state, which he knows does not exist. Jack orders the committee members to stand on their chairs. Morn comments:

Morn: (*rambling, to himself*) We should have done it. Years ago. Factory floor, street level. Taken means of production, given power into people's hands. '45. '64. '78. We had the democratic space. But somehow there were always good reasons. Day to day. Little crisis. For not. Not. (Brenton, 1986:174)

As the representative of the Labour Party, Morn makes self-criticism and puts the blame on himself and the other party advocates who have not taken real action to solve political problems. They always found some excuses to delay taking action, and now, they have to face the consequences, showing Brenton's satire on the passivity of the masses. Jimmy, Ted and Jack are running about the hangar shouting. Offstage, Jimmy fires the gun through the wall. Sergeant warns them that they cannot go out with the hostages in the sunset. No one will let them pass through people's gardens with guns. He tries to persuade them that leaving the camp in such a way is not a good decision. Similarly, Ball tries to convince Jimmy, Ted and Furry to stay in the camp. If they stay there, he promises to bring a ping pong table to the camp. The prisoners are still not sure about what to do; Jack wants to leave while Ted wants to make bargain. Mike declares their helplessness:

Mike: Breakthrough we thought. Freedom we thought. Get to a big city, lose ourselves among the people. Go to the hills. Or only...reach the sea, eh? Be on a beach in winter. Clean, in the clean air. Joby, Ted, Furry, Jimmy, Jack, Peter. But we all know. Nowhere to break out to, is there? They'll concrete the whole world over, any moment now. But either way, for me, I declared war on the bastards a long time ago. (Brenton, 1986:176)

The internees think of escaping, but they are not well-organized for such a risky action. As Boon comments, "Brenton felt it was vital to get English people to believe that democracy was not some kind of sacred flower that is always going to grow in England, not a natural thing" (qtd. in Wu and Chen, 2014:313). That is, to gain freedom, people have to organize and struggle against their oppressors in a conscious way. As Mike announces, they are aware that life outside camp is not different since all the country has been turned into a concentration camp. The lights go off; the doors of the hangar are opened; they remain on the stage.

As a conclusion, the play, “a black satire” as Richard Boon defines (qtd. in Wu and Chen, 2014:313), portrays a society shaped by nationalist ideology. Although he is dead, the phantom of Churchill still haunts England as the myth he created is still alive and drives many people to assume that they owe their freedom to him. The play-within-the-play allows opposing views to blend and clash, which foregrounds the constructedness of history. As Patterson comments, rather than giving a political message, the real achievement of the play is to create an imaginative theatrical world (2003:101), through which a parallelism between the fictionality of the stage and history is established.

Questioning history as a master narrative, what Brenton satirizes through a postmodernist perspective is the mythic premises in historical narratives about national figures. The term metanarrative, or master narrative refers to stories which underlies or gives legitimacy to a culture’s chosen stories (Skordili, 2001:164). As Lyotard explains, postmodernism basically means an “incredulity toward metanarratives” (1984:xxiv). In this vein, history in the play is held as a grand narrative which must be deconstructed in order to underline its lack of objectivity. While satirizing Churchill and authoritarian leaders like him, the play also challenges the political culture where masses believe in heroic myths without questioning official narratives. As in his other plays, the playwright’s aim is to “[hit] the audience” (Bertolini, 1982:614) to bring change. However, the focus of satire is not limited to the 1970s; rather, through historicization, the play weaves a general satire on national(ist) historiography and becomes a warning piece against the possible outcomes of blind beliefs in master narratives like history.

4.2. David Hare's *A Map of the World* as a Satire on Eurocentrism

1960s and 1970s witnessed an increase in the number of politically-oriented plays in British drama. During this period, a number of playwrights with left-wing political commitments focused on questioning the politics of the capitalist world system. Alongside such playwrights as Caryl Churchill (1938-), Howard Brenton (1942-) and David Edgar (1948-), David Hare (1947-)⁸⁹ also dealt with questions of equality, collective welfare and the relationship between art and politics⁹⁰. As Judy Lee Oliva argues, David Hare's work in the 1970s echoes "a sense of 'national crisis' in postwar Britain" (1990:91). Many of his characters are living through disappointment in a post-1939, decaying Britain⁹¹ (Bull, 1984:62).

However, with the start of 1980s, Hare's theatrical sensibility undergoes a change in direction and scope. Whereas his previous work bears a domestic tone, his plays in the 1980s focus on "either international political issues or universal private dilemmas" (Lee Oliva, 1990:91). Since he believed that writing plays which focus only on the issues of England⁹² would limit him as a playwright, he decided to reflect universal problems in his plays (Parlak, 2013:28), and therefore, composed works which draw attention to the "collapse of formal structures of meaning" in both private and public spheres (Lee Oliva, 1990:91). *A Map of the World* (1982), which is often studied under the category of Hare's Asian plays⁹³, reflects this change in focus. Hare's focus on the global aspect of human

⁸⁹ Both Howard Brenton's and David Hare's dramatic careers seem to have followed a similar path since both playwrights started with fringe and moved towards mainstream theatre. In several plays such as *Lay-By* (1971), *Brassneck* (1973), *Deeds* (1978) and *Pravda* (1985), they collaborated with each other. In addition, Hare directed Brenton's National Theatre production of *Weapons of Happiness* (1976).

⁹⁰ In an interview with Georg Gaston, Hare declared that theatre has the power to tell the truth as it shows the discrepancy between what people say and do. Therefore, in an age of fraudulent politicians, theatre is a functional tool to discuss politics as it is practised (1993:225).

⁹¹ In 1968, with Tony Bicat from Cambridge, he established The Portable Theatre, a touring company, to introduce theatre to the places where it did not go to.

⁹² Such as *The Great Exhibition* (1972), *Knuckle* (1974), and *Plenty* (1978).

⁹³ His other Asian plays are *Fanshen* and *Saigon*.

experience in the play can be analysed with reference to the cultural and academic atmosphere of the eighties which were under the influence of postmodern thinking. Coinciding with a period when Margaret Thatcher's neoliberal policy was at its peak, postmodern culture of the eighties, which often emphasizes the clash between the domestic and the global, can be regarded as an impetus for Hare's turn to a larger context, which enables him to question both art and politics through multiple lenses.

A Map of the World, "a play which argues with itself, a play full of worry and confusion" (Hare, 1991:91), offers a worldwide perspective on the issue of poverty in third world countries. Two journalists, Elaine le Fanu and Stephen Andrews, meet at a hotel lobby in Bombay, India, where an international conference on poverty is organized. Victor Mehta, a right-wing novelist with Indian origins, joins their conversation, which is followed by an apparent tension between him and Stephen. While on the surface their conversation is about world politics and the clash of civilizations, underneath the argument, they actually want to win the favour of an American actress, Peggy Whitton, who is in Bombay for a film shooting, which displays that the real reasons of political discussions can be much different than they appear to be. Their political views are not neutral, they are mixed with their personal desires.

The play involves both the fragments from the real events at the hotel lobby and the filming of Mehta's novel which is centred on his first-person account of his experience at the UNESCO conference. Various themes - political and personal rivalry, colonialism, poverty, the art of fiction - are mixed in the course of the play and conveyed through different mediums - theatre, cinema, and novel. As Hare himself announces in an interview with Hersh Zeifman, the play is "a rich mess – [...] there's all sorts of stuff in it" (1994:15). Reality on the stage becomes complicated as it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between fact and fiction. From time to time, the film shooting is interrupted with the discussions of the characters. The actors who seem to be so real in their roles,

start to quarrel with each other a moment later. The stage is populated by actors that represent the characters in Mehta's novel and the real characters that experience the UNESCO event.

It is possible to comment that Hare's own experiences as a film director contributed to this multi-layered structure of the play. Russell Brown argues that the reason why Hare left cinema for theatre might be because he wished to escape the "omniscient" position of the film-maker so that he can find new meanings in the society he lived (1994:65). Hare himself expresses that he wanted the theatre to have the same freedom of movement the cinema has, and made plays which show this fluidity of place and time on the stage (Zeifman, 1994:19). Breaking the "static limitation" of the stage (Russell Brown, 1994:49), in *A Map of the World*, Hare "writes as a film-maker about film-making" (Russell Brown, 1994:45), showing the quick shift of time and places which help various discussions and point of views of the characters to be heard without suppressing each other.

For being satirical, the play reflects a common characteristic of Hare's plays. Peter Ansorge declares that Hare is "the brightest literary satirist in the underground" (1975:11). As he announces in *Writing Left-Handed*, Hare was initially reluctant to affirm the primacy of satire in his work:

satire depends upon ignorance. It is based on the proposition, 'If only you knew.' Thus the satirist can rail, 'If only you knew that Eden⁹⁴ was on benzedrine⁹⁵ throughout the Suez crisis, stoned out of his head and fancy-free; if only you knew that the crippled, stroke-raddled Churchill dribbled and farted in Cabinet for two years after a debilitating stroke, and nobody dared remove him; if only you knew that Cabinet Ministers sleep with tarts, that Tory MPs liaise with crooked architects and bent off-shore bankers: if only you knew.' But finally after his railing, the satirist may find that the audience replies, 'Well, we do know now; and we don't believe it will ever change. And knowing may well not affect what we think.' (1991:27)

⁹⁴ Anthony Eden, British Prime Minister between 1955-7.

⁹⁵ A kind of drug used to treat disorders such as depression, narcolepsy and fatigue.

Here, David Hare is pointing at the fact that satire may not cause a change in common perception, and that it might not be so efficient as the satirist might assume it to be since people may not care for what he talks about. It is probably for this reason that he avoids being labelled a satirist. However, he soon accepts that his early works might be regarded as satire (1991:73).

According to FitzPatrick Dean, Hare is not chiefly a satirist or a playwright with radical political opinions (1990:6). Rather, he is a political playwright whose plays do not have sharp political messages (Yeşilyurt, 2005:1) since he does not use theatre as a tool to indoctrinate his own worldview (12). He never ardently advocates a certain ideology, and allows the readers/audience to grasp their own meanings from his works (Parlak, 2013:29). His characters are not “doctrinaire”; they are “complex” (FitzPatrick Dean, 1990:ix). Hare’s moderate tone in political criticism as well as the complexity of his characters overlap with the postmodern mode which dominates *A Map of the World*⁹⁶.

The satirical mode in *A Map of the World* has been observed by several critics (Gindin, 1993:169; Homden, 1995:118; Mangan, 2007:228). Like many satirists before his time, Hare resorts to various metatheatrical strategies in his play to enhance the effect of his satire. Lee Oliva argues that *A Map of the World* is Hare’s “most complex play in terms of content, form, and style” (1990:96). Nicole Boireau (2003) states that “metadrama is a functional principle in David Hare’s intensely visual writing” (35). While Hare is still attached to some ideals, like socialist democracy, he avoids a definitive social view with the help of metatheatre which multiplies reality through aesthetic means.

⁹⁶ In an interview, Hare compares his sense of humour to that of Howard Brenton’s and remarks that Brenton’s is “blacker” than his. In the plays he wrote with Brenton, written by “Howard Hare” as he puts it, there is “a tone of caustic, abrasive, satirical confidence, a tone without doubt, if you like” (Gaston, 1993:224). However, his own “work is marbled with doubt” (224), underlining his postmodern approach.

The beginning of the play clearly addresses this mode of thinking. Hare begins his play by citing from Oscar Wilde's "The Soul of Man under Socialism": "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail" (1983). As can be inferred from the epigraph, Hare stresses the importance of having utopian ideals when building a perspective on the world (Fraser, 1996:155). Postmodern culture may have challenged the notion of having definitive ideals, which, according to Lyotard's famous conceptualization (1984), originate from the "grand narratives" of modernity, but Hare's play challenges this by opening a moderate space for a socialist utopian agenda. Accordingly, socialist democratic state should be one country among many, so that it can be a destination for those who want to "land" there. It is clear here that Hare is not supporting a single, universally valid system but, instead, arguing for a multiplicity of destinations, which again drives his work towards a postmodern framework.

This political view is swiftly connected with dramatic satire in the play. No sooner the audience is introduced to the dramatic world of the play than Hare's satirical view is activated. The UNESCO conference on world poverty contradictorily takes place at a luxurious hotel with "[c]rumbling grandeur" (11), and the main characters, Elaine and Stephen, complain about the low quality of the service at the hotel:

Elaine: *Why [emphasis original] are there no waiters?*

Stephen: Because the bar is nowhere near the lounge. In India no bar is anywhere near any lounge in order that five people may be employed to go backwards and forwards between where the drinkers are and where the drink is. Thus the creation of four unnecessary jobs. Thus the creation of what is called a high-labour economy. Thus low wages. Thus the perpetuation of poverty. (Hare, 1983:12)

In the words of Janelle Reinelt, such contradiction is "obvious and amusing" (2007:211) as it swiftly addresses a bizarre context in which poverty is discussed alongside bourgeois

pleasures. While the play's satirical content becomes implicitly visible, Stephen openly voices the discrepancy between the conference's agenda and the way it is organized:

Stephen: Is there not something ludicrous in holding an international conference on poverty in these spectacular surroundings, when all we would actually have to do is to take one step into the street to see exactly what the problems of poverty are?

Elaine: Most of the delegates have.

Stephen: Then why is their interest entirely in striking attitudes and making procedural points?

Elaine: Because that's politics. (Hare, 1983:13)

Clearly, Stephen critiques the organizers of the conference for choosing a showy hotel to discuss poverty since the streets in Bombay already display to what extent it has reached, reflecting the play's satire on the indifference of the Western world to the suffering of the people in India. In these lines, different perspectives clash, and as the play progresses, it can be observed that these two characters read the situation through different ideologies. Elaine is a black American whereas Stephen is an English journalist with left-wing aspirations. While Elaine seems to be more liberal minded when looking at other cultures, Stephen has certain biases:

Elaine: I can't stand to see people making value judgements about other people's ways of life. The hippopotamus, if I may say so, may be perfectly happy in the mud.

Stephen: And the Indian, I suppose you think, is perfectly happy in his excrement.

Elaine: No, I didn't say that.

Stephen: Well!

Elaine: But it's arrogant to look at the world...

Stephen: I'm not.

Elaine: ...through one...

Stephen: All right.

Elaine: ...particular perspective which is always to say, 'This is like the West. This is not like the West.' What arrogance! (Hare, 1983:14)

Stephen's mindset is oriented towards a strict understanding of poverty and progress. For him, poor countries, instead of fighting against poverty through political means, "hug their misery and call it wisdom" (24). He despises them for accepting poverty and presenting it as a way of life, which shows the play's satire on the non-Western people

for their passivity to improve their lives. Elaine, however, insists that the way people live in India may be their own preferences with which they are happy. Apparently, the two characters have clashing views on the meaning of misery and progress, through which the play invites the readers/audience to interrogate the essence of these issues. Obviously, the play does not take side either with the Western or the non-Western societies for the economic problems in poor countries. Instead, it implies that both sides are responsible for the situation, and invites the readers/audience to question it.

The political debates acquire a new dimension when Victor Mehta, a conservative novelist with a rigidly Eurocentric mindset, joins the conversation at the hotel lobby. Stage directions, which describe his initial entry into the scene, point at the fact that Mehta's presence will bring further discontent: "*He is an Indian, but his manners are distinctly European*" (15). Several critics, including FitzPatrick Dean (1990:87), Donesky (1996:123), Mangan (2007:228), Ansorge (2007:103), and Reinelt (2007:213) argue that Victor Mehta is somehow modelled on Nobel Prize winning author V. S. Naipaul as both figures share some similarities such as their strong support for Eurocentric ideals⁹⁷. Elaine and Stephen's discussion over world politics is overshadowed with Mehta's integration into the hotel lobby. The centre of discussion, from this moment on, moves to the disagreement between Stephen and Mehta who interpret and define civilizations through strictly ideological means. Stephen, for example, compares contemporary China and India and says, "the way the one is so organized, the other, India, so..." (Hare, 1983:17). There is evidently an ideological bias here. The socialist regime in China is the primary

⁹⁷ Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (1932-2018), born in Trinidad, was a British writer of English fiction and non-fiction works. With his novel *In a Free State*, he won the Booker Prize in 1971. In 1990, he received a knighthood in England, and got the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001. Although his works, which dealt with the matters of first and the third world countries, were critically acclaimed, they also aroused conflict. As Ansorge clarifies, Naipaul did not put the blame on the Western countries for the problems of India and Africa. Moreover, he believed that old civilizations were much superior to the new ones (2007:103). Victor Mehta shares similar ideas with him in the matters of the plight of the third world countries as well as the contradiction between old and new civilizations.

attraction for Stephen whereas Mehta finds the Chinese civilization, not the socialist experiment, admirable as he says: “I admire nothing in the experiment. I admire China itself” (18). This proves that there is a fundamental division between the two characters, and the rest of the communication between them is deeply affected by this difference in perspective.

Hare’s satirical tone is visible throughout these moments. Both Stephen and Mehta argue over whether old civilizations like Europe and China are better than the new ones like America and Australia in quite simplistic terms. They cannot go beyond simple biases that claim to reflect cultures entirely. Mehta, for instance, although he is an acknowledged novelist, analyses “new civilizations” through entirely prejudiced formulas:

Mehta: All old civilizations are superior to younger ones. That is why I have been happiest in Shropshire. They are less subject to crazes. In younger countries there is no culture. The civilization is shallow. Nothing takes root. Gangs of crazy youths sweep through the streets of Sydney and New York pretending they are homosexual. But do you think they are homosexual really? Of course not. It is the merest fashion. City fashion, that is all. In the old countries, in Paris, in London, when there is a stupid craze, only one person in fifty is infected, but in the young countries there is nothing to hold people back. (Hare, 1983:18)

As an acclaimed novelist, Mehta’s criticism of the new civilizations is rather shallow, which makes the reader hesitate to trust the validity of his ideas as well as his intellectuality. Here, again, the play invites the readers to evaluate political opinions critically. Apart from his ultra conservative perspective on gender issues, Mehta’s rigid definition of civilization echoes what Samir Amin famously called “Eurocentrism” (1989). According to Amin, the European civilization since the Renaissance has been attributing to itself “a mythic construct” (11) which today “manifests itself in a variety of ways, as much in the expression of received ideas, popularized by the media, as in the erudite formulations of specialists in different areas of social science” (viii). He defines Eurocentrism as:

a culturalist phenomenon in the sense that it assumes the existence of irreducibly distinct cultural invariants that shape the historical paths of different peoples. Eurocentrism is therefore anti-universalist, since it is not interested in seeking possible general laws of human evolution. But it does present itself as universalist, for it claims that imitation of the Western model by all peoples is the only solution to the challenges of our time. (Amin, vii)

Even though Eurocentrism presents itself as a universalist mode of thinking, it is, in fact, centred on the Western civilization. Taking Europe as the norm for a proper civilization, Eurocentric ideal excludes its others (non-Western civilizations) by means of specialities in certain areas. Following this line of thinking, it can be seen that, in the case of Mehta's Eurocentrism, the field of expertise is literature. Through fictional constructs where Mehta takes Europe as the norm, the other civilizations, mostly young ones, are excluded as places for "stupid craze". Mehta even goes further to come up with a formula to use when assessing a civilization: "a worthwhile civilization takes two thousand years to grow" (18). Thus, the beginning scenes of the play depict a series of confrontations between differing ideologies and biases, adding the play quite a serious tone.

This seriousness is reflected in the emotional tone in Stephen's contempt over the organization of the conference in a poor surrounding. (*He gestures to the ceiling of the room*): "This sad, pathetic imitation, this room, this conference, these servants - that all this goes on, like a ghost ship without passengers. Form without content. Style without meaning. The India of the rich! How I despise it!" (23). However, not long after this proclamation, the audience is faced with another aspect of Hare's satirical project. The politically intense quality of these discussions leaves its place to fundamentally personal directions. Mehta says that he has asked Peggy Whitton out for a dinner, while she also has another appointment with Stephen. This is the beginning of a rivalry between the two. Soon, satire is accompanied by powerful metatheatrical strategies by which Hare draws the attention of the audience to the fictionality of all these serious manners. Soon after Stephen tells Elaine about how Mehta's arguments are "so odious, so offensive" (24),

“*great cries*”, that is, stage directions, reveal that the whole scene was in fact a movie set where one of Mehta’s novels is being filmed. A whole film crew populate the stage instantly, and the former serious tone is replaced with a noisy film production process in which theatrical language gives way to a film-making jargon:

Angelis: Lights!
Boom Operator: Sound!
Sound Recordist: Speed!
Angelis: Turn over!
Cameraman: Rolling! (Hare, 1983:25)

With such cries, “[t]he apparent realism of the play is exploded” (Mangan, 2007:229), and its metatheatricality which “confused the original critics” (Reinelt, 2007:215), is highlighted, which reveals that what we have been reading/watching so far is actually a part of a filming process focusing on a novel of the real Victor Mehta. With this transition to cinematic mode of representation, the illusional framework of the play is fundamentally disrupted, making the audience question the serious moments in the discussions among the three characters, which shows the play’s critique of contemporary political arguments. Like a movie, contemporary political arguments are artificial. Their only function is to hide the real problems and poverty of some parts of the world. Metatheatrical direction, in this respect, re-orientates the play towards questioning the boundary between theatre, fiction and politics. “The rehearsals, film, and novel all focus on the relationship between Mehta and Stephen. Simultaneously, that story is a love story, an intellectual debate, and an account of the transformations of Mehta, Peggy, and Stephen” (FitzPatrick Dean, 1990:88), blurring the boundary between different types of narration.

This line of criticism, focusing on the play’s metatheatricality, has attracted the attention of many critics. Mangan states that the ideological clash between the characters and “the metatheatrical disquisitions on the nature of fiction and its relationship to reality [...] struggle against each other for artistic and intellectual headroom” (2007:229). Similarly, Fraser points at the metatheatrical dimension in the play and says that “the text

blurs the distinction between what is apparently real action and what is artificial” (1996:155). With a focus on the filming process, James Gindin (1993) argues that “Film is constantly connected with fiction, at times both talked of as if they can generate truth, more often discussed as similar lies” (167). John Deeney observes a “debate” at the centre of the play which, according to him, is “located between left-wing idealism and the plight of the third world in dialectic exploring the relationship between art and reality” (2006:430). Finding a humorous wording for the metatheatrical aspect of the play, Carol Homden (1995) states that this is a “play-about-a-film-about-a-book-about-real-life” where “the question of misrepresentation is inserted into the very fabric of the writing” (122). Joan FitzPatrick Dean claims that “Hare’s manipulation of art and reality demonstrates how ironically they coexist” (1990:90). Finally, Nicole Boireau (2003) asserts that “the reflexive structure shatters all certainties” (35) as Hare’s dramatic invention, with the help of cinema, “is able to invade more extensive territories, in order to revisit radical views, to foreshadow the existence of other worlds and thus to introduce mainstream subversion, a pleasurable enough *tour de force*⁹⁸” (37). All these views show that Hare’s combination of theatre, cinema and fiction help to extend the limits of theatre and bring a further commentary on the relationship between fact and fiction, which sheds light on the relation between fiction and politics.

From this moment on, that is, after the revelation that filming and theatre goes hand in hand, the play begins to ask questions whose political dimension is more complicated than mere ideological arguments. With a novel being filmed in the background, which is in fact based on real life events that are being put on stage, the central question then becomes whether it is possible to represent things, events, and persons through aesthetic means. In other words, ideological questions are interwoven with questions of identity, aesthetic value, and the limits and ethics of fiction. This is

⁹⁸ Success, achievement.

again a feature of postmodern culture. Linda Hutcheon states that while, on the one hand, “life in the postmodern world is utterly mediated through representations”, on the other hand, “its particular philosophical and artistic consequences [...] moved into a state of crisis in representation” (1989:29). Against this background, real characters in the play are juxtaposed with the actor characters, and through this confrontation, the audience is left unsure about the reliability of the real-life accounts that both these categories claim to represent. The actress, Peggy, for example, confronts Angelis due to the discrepancy between the real character and fictional:

Peggy: Angelis, you could understand everything and still not be able to show it. That’s what writers do. They make you see it, and on this film you don’t have one. (*She shakes her head.*) Elaine, for instance. I mean, she wasn’t direct like that. Not Elaine. She always just insinuated. She was always just there. (Hare, 1983:30)

“Not being able to show” things is an important aspect of this discussion. The audience is initially made to believe that the characters on stage are real Elaine, real Stephen, and real Mehta, but with the revelation that they are simply fictional constructs, it becomes rather difficult to decide who these characters really are and what kind of personalities they have. In the words of Mangan, “[t]he [relationship] between the various fictional levels of the play are complex and not always clearly delineated” (2007:229); even the seriously ideological passages need to be re-evaluated as they might be the products of a novelist, a film director, or even Hare himself. In this respect, combined with postmodern notion of multiplicity and metatheatrical device of the play-within-play, *A Map of the World* urges the audience to reconsider their interpretive position when deciding on the ultimate meaning of dramatic works. While doing this, it also highlights that like dramatic works, politics is also a fiction, and its meanings may change depending on who shapes or employs it.

Postmodernism, which, as Simon Blackburn clarifies, is usually regarded as “a reaction against a naive and earnest confidence in progress, and against confidence in

objective or scientific truth” (2008:283). In other words, as grand explanations no longer provide accurate and adequate answers, politics need a delicate handling, and hence, political satire in contemporary literature. For this reason, *A Map of the World*, which was written during the heyday of postmodern culture, delves into questions of politics in a way that reflects the postmodern need for addressing the insecurity of idealist positions while pointing at the need for ideals as well.

This kind of dilemma is echoed in the play when Victor Mehta is given a preliminary statement to be read before his talk which says: “Fiction, by its very nature, distorts and misrepresents reality, so in a way a man who stands before you as a writer of fiction, as I do today, is already some way towards admitting that as a historical witness he is unreliable” (36). With a deeply conservative worldview, and as a writer of fiction, Mehta declines the offer first, but Peggy convinces him and he says he will “negotiate” with the person who has written this statement. It is ironic that he accepts this because “[Peggy] is beautiful” and she has “thighs and arms, and hair that falls across the face” (37). However, when he learns that Stephen was one of its writers, he gets furious and immediately refuses to read it.

Then again, the play makes it clear that ideals, which supposedly originate from ideologies and perspectives of education, can in fact be overshadowed by personal value judgements, and even personal grudges, which portrays their unreliability and bias. Politics, whether personal or collective, exemplifies the “symbiotic relationship between personal prejudice and political viewpoint which exists on both ends of the political spectrum, and indeed, in between” (Fraser, 1996:162). Therefore, Hare draws attention to the critical point where it is hard to differentiate between the objective and the subjective analyses of political situations.

Among these moments of theoretical contemplation, Hare draws attention to another aspect of the discussion. The Western characters in the play and in the movie-

within-the-play argue over the issue of representation through a western eye. That is, for them, representation and misrepresentation is a specifically aesthetic issue. However, M'Bengue, a Senegalese delegate in the conference, shows the other side of the coin by pointing out the political, imperialist and colonialist, aspects of misrepresentation:

M'Bengue: We take aid from the West because we are poor, and in everything we are made to feel our inferiority. The price you ask us to pay is not money but misrepresentation. The way the nations of the West make us pay is by representing us continually in their organs of publicity as bunglers and murderers and fools. I have spent time in England and there the yellow press does not speak of Africa except to report how a nun has been raped, or there has been a tribal massacre, or how we are slaughtering the elephants - the elephants who are so much more suitable for television programmes than the Africans - or how corrupt and incompetent such-and-such a government is. If the crop succeeds, it is not news. If we build a dam, it is called boring. [...] Yes, he will give us money, but the price we will pay is that he will not seek to understand our point of view. Pro-Moscow, pro-Washington, that is the only way you can see the world. All your terms are political, and your politics is the crude fight between your two great blocs. Is Angola pro-Russian? Is it pro-American? These are the only questions you ever ask yourselves. As if the whole world could be seen in those terms. In your terms. In the white man's terms and through the white man's media. (Hare, 1983:40)

Apparently, the Western world reads politics through "two great blocs", that is Eurocentric ideology, representing themselves and the others. M'Bengue, however, clearly points at the need to redefine what politics means from a plural perspective, not merely through Eurocentric means. Here, it is possible to comment that the play satirizes the well-off countries for misrepresenting the poor countries, while it satirizes the poor countries for being dependent on the financial help of the West. Again, rather than siding with one of the parties, the playwright only shows their flaws. The quotation also underlines that politics is essentially a matter of power.

M'Bengue's challenge to Mehta's viewpoint is not limited to the ethics of representation. He also addresses the ethics of satire and humour which are central to Mehta's literary career:

M'Bengue: You distort things in your novels because it is funny to distort, because indeed the surface of things is [emphasis original] funny, if you do not understand how that surface comes to be, if you do not look underneath. Just as a funeral may be funny to a small boy who sees it passing in the street

and does not know the man who is dead. So also no doubt in Africa it is superficially funny to see us blundering about. But who makes the jokes? The rich nations. [...] Jokes, Mr Mehta, are a product of security. If one is secure, one may laugh at others. Even - this is the really telling thing - one may laugh at oneself. 'Look at my little heap, ha ha,' the white man says, knowing full well it is a big heap. I may pretend to be low by joking, by making jokes about myself, which are really a way of saying I am so high I don't have to care. I can say anything. That is the truth. Humour, like everything, is something you buy. Free speech? Buy. But what is this freedom? The luxury of the rich who are sure of what they have. (Hare, 1983:41)

These challenges to the fundamental aspects of Mehta's career and, in fact, the whole satirical literature of the Western world are obviously quite political. By initiating a political attack which questions the commonsensical meanings of aesthetics, ethics of representation, and satirical humour, M'Bengue's speech makes it evident that a more extensive realism which finds a basis in the material realities of the colonized nations is necessary for a pluralist understanding of these concepts. To put it in other words, Hollywood aesthetic that claims to adapt a novel by a postcolonial writer cannot be adequate for this kind of questioning. Hare, in this sense, by making use of the richness of postmodern way of thinking which shows itself through the metatheatrical devices, creates discourses within discourses and calls for a rethinking of what it means to follow a politics and represent things in an age marked by complexity. As Oliva puts forth, "[t]he multiple themes" presented in the play "express the idea of multiple misrepresentation in art, politics, and life" (1990:104). Metatheatre, in this context, provides the means for discussing such complex issues by providing an aesthetic space where it is possible to blend various mediums and discourses without one overthrowing the rest.

So far, it has been made clear that Victor Mehta plays a crucial role in providing a satirical outlook on the various layers of the text. At the intersection of political satire and metatheatre, Mehta stands as a pivotal figure due to his vibrant yet provocative stance in certain issues such as postcolonial identity and definitions of civilization. His main argument is that the Western world, which used to practice reason as a governing

framework, has “overthrown” it (67). For him, the West is adopting the irrational approaches of the East:

Mehta: Instead of sending the Third World doctors and mechanics, we now send them hippies, and Marxist thinkers, and animal conservationists, and ecologists, and wandering fake Zen Buddhist students, who hasten to reassure the illiterate that theirs is a superior life to that of the West. What hypocrisy! The confrontation of the decadent with the primitive, the faithless with the barbarian. (Hare, 1983:67)

Through Mehta, the play critiques the hypocrisy of the first world countries which do not offer help to the third world countries in a real sense and leaves them in a continuing destitution. Hare also declares his satire on the international institutions, namely the United Nations, which does not produce any concrete solutions for the plight of the poor countries:

Mehta: Words! Meaningless words! Reports! So many reports that they boast from New York alone there flow annually United Nations documents which, laid end to end at the Equator, would stretch four times round the world! Yes! Half a billion pages! And this...this week one of the year's seven thousand major UN meetings. With working papers, proposals, counter-proposals, records, summaries. A bureaucracy drowning in its own words and suffocating in its own documents. The wastepaper basket the only instrument of sanity in an otherwise insane organization. Last year a Special Committee on the Rationalization and Organization of the General Assembly was set up to examine the problems of excessive documentation. It produced a report. It was *two hundred and nineteen pages long* [emphasis original]. I ask you, what fiction can there be to compare with this absurdity? What writer could dream up this impossible decadence? [...] [T]he UN is a palace of lies, run by a bureaucracy whose only interest is in the maintenance of its own prosperity. Forty per cent of UNESCO's income is spent in the administration of its own Paris office. A fact. A fact which I have mentioned in my books and for which I am attacked. (Hare, 1983:67-8)

Obviously, the UN means nothing for Mehta since it merely deals with official papers bringing out no real solutions. Hare emphasizes that even though there are major problems in poor countries, neither the West nor the poor countries themselves take any serious action to deal with them. Under the guise of dealing with official politics, the international organizations are, indeed, indifferent to these problems.

Another satirical attitude is exemplified in Mehta's argument against the way his novel characters are put into a cinematic production as he declares: "A moral story has been reduced to the status of a romance, transferred to a vulgar medium and traduced" (75). He argues that "There is a balance in the book. Each of the characters is forced to examine the values of his or her life" (75) whereas in the film version the whole content is turned into a commercial style. While he is happy that "the money has arrived", he still wants to have a say in "the matter of meaning" (75). Here, the play's attack on the movie industry which treats works of art only as trade can also be seen. In the end, Mehta is not content with the way his novel is turned into the movie.

In conclusion, *A Map of the World* urges the audience to question the ready-made stances through which meaning in dramatic works and politics is produced. Drawing analogies between the fictionality of the movie and the politics, the play essentially emphasizes that world politics is prescribed by Eurocentric ideology in the same way as a movie is shaped from its director's perspective. By employing a multi-layered metatheatrical structure, it both displays the enlarged scope of the metatheatre as a tool of political satire in contemporary drama, and showcases that the meanings of works of fiction as well as politics are not always so clear or objective as they seem to be. As it has been underlined, the play does not harshly satirize a certain ideology, rather, it shows the complexity of the relationship between them and leaves the final comment to the readers. But, it foregrounds that to deal with the problems of third world nations, the dominance of Eurocentric ideology in world politics should be challenged first to enable the people of these countries to make their own criticism of both themselves and the West. As Hare himself remarks: "*A Map of the World* seeks to sharpen up people's minds, to ask them to remember why they believe what they do. To ask, in fact, whether they still do. Or should" (Hare, 1991:92). It is a play which constantly shatters the established ideas or common views in the matters of art and politics.

4.3. Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* as a Satire on Neoliberalism

Timberlake Wertenbaker (1951-) is one of the pioneering female playwrights in English drama whose work has drawn comparably less attention than most of her contemporaries'. In her plays, she consistently deals with "problematization of the global politics of identity", offering a panorama of late twentieth-century Britain through which she analyses different "others" created by sexual, racial or national hierarchies (Carlson, 2000:134). Along with the meaning and value of art, power, corruption, enforced silence, crime and civilization (Stephenson and Langridge, 1997:136), "exile, displacement and loss of home" are the fundamental topics her plays engage with (Roth, 2001:11).

In an interview with Hilary de Vries, Wertenbaker declared that: "the whole thing about being a writer is that you have a floating identity" (qtd. in Bush, 2013:1), suggesting that an author does not belong to this or that social or cultural background; rather he/she blends various, and clashing, identities in his/her own life. Similarly, in her work, she "privileges the absence of fixity" and underlines "[p]lurality" (Carlson, 1993:267) in identity politics. Her plays concern "identity", and the relation of the individuals with the society, which cannot easily be defined through national, gender-based or ideological affiliations (Carlson, 1993:268). All of these concerns reveal the postmodern essence of her plays.

As a playwright, she has a solid trust in the power of theatre as a cure to individual and social suffering as she announces in an interview with Stephenson and Langridge: "I think art is redemptive and the theatre is particularly important because it's a public space. That's the crucial element. It's discursive and it's public. And there are very few of those spaces left" (1997:141), underlining that theatre offers a unique opportunity to the society

to confront its troubles and come up with solutions. Such a trust can be seen in her *Our Country's Good*, her most popular and critically acclaimed play⁹⁹.

Our Country's Good, an intertextual play based on Australian novelist Thomas Keneally's *The Playmaker* (1987), shares thematic similarities with the other plays in this chapter. Consisting of two acts and twenty-two scenes, the play starts with a scene on a ship that carries many convicts from England to Australia in 1787. Based on historical information¹⁰⁰, the play employs "history as source material" (Taylor, 1991:333), but does not simply try to depict historical accounts of the English colonialist project in Australia in the 18th century. Rather, it brings history and theatrical imagination together in the form of a rehearsal in which colonial officers in an Australian convict camp try to produce George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) with the convicts that were transported from England¹⁰¹.

Like the previous plays analysed in this chapter, *Our Country's Good* tackles politics from a wider perspective, and instead of challenging specific figures or institutions within a recognizable context, it scrutinizes and satirizes ideologies and ways of thinking which always try to shape life, including the postmodern age. As certain critics (Dymkowski, 1988:125; Sullivan, 1993:141; Feldman, 2013:153) have observed, while the play is set in the 18th century Australia, its concerns are primarily contemporary. In this context, the metatheatrical discussions that take place within the play, in fact, reflect

⁹⁹ In 1988, with this play, the playwright received both the Olivier Award for Best Play and the *Standard's* Outstanding Young Playwright Award.

¹⁰⁰ In 1787, under Captain Arthur Philip's command, the First Fleet, of eleven ships, after an almost nine-month-voyage, really transported about 1500 convicts to Botany Bay, New South Wales, Australia, to set up a penal colony which would become the first English settlement there. Some of the officers in the play have the name of the real officers. *The Recruiting Officer* was the first European play performed in Australia. The performers were the convicts.

¹⁰¹ In the Preface of the play (1991), Wertenbaker expresses that in the summer of 1988, in the HMP Wormwood Scrubs, with the actors, director and assistant director of *Our Country's Good*, she saw a performance of Howard Barker's *The Love of a Good Man*, performed by convicts. The experience, which showed the worth of theatre, triggered the writing and shaped the performance of *Our Country's Good*.

the anxieties and problems of the contemporary world. Therefore, it might be useful to look at the social and political convictions of the age, which the play aims to question.

The 1980s were marked by Margaret Thatcher's dominance in British political life, and in an unprecedented fashion, these years were shaped by neoliberal policies. Unsurprisingly, one of the most notorious expressions that were attributed to Thatcher during these years was that "There is no alternative", a slogan which strongly emphasizes that market capitalism is the only system that works, and that it is not necessary any more to discuss the efficacy of political systems that derive from capitalism. In the period, as Dymkowski clarifies, the manufacturing systems were damaged, the trade unions were disempowered, and public utilities were sold by the Conservative government (1988:127). While the poor, the powerless, collectivism and imagination were ignored and despised, the opportunities of the wealthy as well as the ideologies of the free market and individual enterprise were praised (127).

Thatcherite form of neoliberalism exercised its political agenda not only within the field of economics but also in the areas of arts and culture, which resulted in significant cuts in the funding of public art organizations such as Arts Council. Mathilde Bertrand (2021) states that during the early years of her political power, Thatcher was "primarily concerned with the prestige and international attractiveness of national institutions, the preservation of national heritage sites, and the economically successful productions of the West End's commercial theatres"; therefore, she was determined "to root out what she identified as the cultural legacy of the 1960s countercultural left, which included the community arts movement"¹⁰² (6). Clearly, Thatcherite politics of art and culture reflected her conservative mindset which always privileged the individual over

¹⁰² The Community Arts Movement consisted of artists whose careers began in the 1960s and 1970s. Their main interest was in the theatre and they believed that as long as they had the resources, anyone could create art. They were against the idea of individual practise in art, and, instead wanted to make art collaboratively.

the public. The significant cuts in public funding for cultural activities which aimed to foster the collective social spirit among British citizens mirror Thatcher's another notorious slogan, "There is no such thing as society". In his significant work, *Culture and Consensus* (1995), Robert Hewison observes that in Thatcher's time, "all aspects of social life – including the arts – were seen through the lens of economic anxiety", which meant that "The British soul was to be remade, by creating a new myth of economic individualism to replace the old ideas of community and collectivism" (212). Arts and culture, in this context, were primarily discussed through deeply ideological tendencies of Thatcher's conservative perspective.

As this insight into Thatcher's neoliberal policies of arts and culture reveal, the 1980s saw the dissolution of the notion of public arts which was supported by public funding. This is not only a change in the economic structure of cultural life, but also a big change in perspective about the relationship between public life and arts. It is obvious that the cultural life in Britain was being reshaped through the ideological principles of Thatcherite conservatism, which prioritized the individual over the collective, and the commercial over the artistic.

Several critics, including Wilson (1991:23) and Baker-White (1999:100), argue that the play depicts the emergence of a "utopian" society which functions as a form of resistance against such hierarchies. However, when the play is read carefully, it can be argued that, in a postmodern way, Wertenbaker avoids utopian ideals and instead foregrounds the emergence of a "heterotopian" community which can include many characters from different backgrounds in a more democratic and realistic way. Thus, this section aims to show that Wertenbaker's political satire, which confronts the neoliberal policies of its time, underlines the need for a new kind of social imagination, and metatheatrical strategies like the rehearsal-within-the-play support the building of this sense of community technically, thematically, and philosophically.

The play begins in a rather disturbing way. In Scene One, one of the prisoners, Robert Sideway, is being flogged by the officers on the ship, and Ralph Clark, the Second Lieutenant, counts the lashes: “Fourty-four, forty-five, fourty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight, forthy-nine, fifty” (Wertenbaker, 1991:1). Another convict, John Wisehammer describes the experience of being transported to Australia: “Spewed from our country, forgotten, bound to the dark edge of the earth [...]. Alone, frightened, nameless in this stinking hole of hell” (1). John Arscott complains about hunger (1). However, just after this, in Scene Two, the Aborigine on the shore says, “A giant canoe drifts onto the sea, clouds billowing from upright oars. This is a dream which has lost its way. Best to leave it alone” (2). The arrival of the convicts, for the Aborigine, is something that is “Best to leave alone”, which shows that there are multiple perspectives on the stage. The rest of the play revolves around this multiplicity of perceptions, which foregrounds the play’s postmodern nature.

The fact that there are multiple views, perspectives and ideologies embedded within the play is made clear at the very beginning when colonial officers in Scene Two, titled “Punishment”¹⁰³, hold a discussion on the nature of crime, penal law, and capital punishment while shooting birds. During this discussion, it is revealed that there is a disagreement among the officers about the execution of the criminal law. Tench, for example, believes that convicts should be hanged as “Justice and humaneness have never gone hand in hand. The law is not a sentimental comedy”, whereas Philip objects to “the spectacle of hanging” (3), since it will not cause any positive change in the convicts’ attitudes. The confliction between the officers’ views of punishment is further exemplified:

Harry: The convicts laugh at hangings, Sir. They watch them all the time.
Tench: It’s their favourite form of entertainment, I should say.

¹⁰³ The play has an episodic structure and each scene has a title that reflects the content of that scene.

Phillip: Perhaps because they've never been offered anything else.
(Wertenbaker, 1991:3)

For Harry and Trench, hanging is very common for the convicts. However, Philip, who adopts a more liberal perspective against punishment, is critical of the way the convicts are treated by the authorities. He believes that these people committed crimes because of the dire circumstances they were in. Trench, however, argues that “the criminal tendency is innate”. (4). Similarly, hanging convicts means, for Collins, “The quick execution of justice for the good of the colony” (5). Obviously, the officers have opposing opinions about crime and punishment.

The play also underlines that the concepts of crime and punishment are relative and context-bound. In Act One, Scene Four, Harry's confessional remarks exemplify this: “Sometimes I look at the convicts and I think, one of those could be you, Harry Brewer, if you hadn't joined the navy when you did. The officers may look down on me now, but what if they found out that I used to be an embezzler?” (7). Wertenbaker clearly problematizes the concepts of crime and punishment in a relativistic manner, a quality that postmodern way of thinking offers. Thus, it can be inferred that the play considers identity as a mutable process, and that crime is not an “innate” quality but a relative and contextual situation in which anyone can find themselves at any moment.

Wertenbaker's satirical view on crime and punishment is not limited to their relative definitions. The playwright also addresses the ideology behind what counts as crime. Wilson (1991) underlines the fact that the prisoners experience “a profound sense of loss” as they are “expelled from their country and denied a sense of belonging to the nation” because of “petty crimes against property” (24) such as stealing food and candlesticks. Thomas Barrett, a seventeen-year-old convict, for instance, is there for stealing a sheep; while the eighty-two-year-old Dorothy Handland is convicted for stealing biscuits. In other words, despite the fact that the convicts' crimes are relatively

minor, they are exiled from their homeland and denied a sense of national identity, which seems quite unfair from a contemporary perspective. However, this is not without a political dimension. As stated previously, this play is a response to Thatcherite neoliberalism, and this ideology upholds capitalist conservative values such as profitmaking and private property. When common people commit crimes against property, it means that they pose a challenge to the basic structure of this political system and show that the system can be easily stolen from. It is because of this economically small but politically huge challenge against the power structure that they are sentenced in rather unjust terms, showcasing the play's satire on neoliberal ideology.

In Act One, Scene Six, for example, Johnston states that "Most of the convict women have committed small crimes, a tiny theft", but Tench responds to this in quite a Thatcherite manner by stating that "A crime is a crime. You commit a crime or you don't. If you commit a crime, you are a criminal" (Wertenbaker, 1991:19) and later adds that if it is possible to educate the convicts, this education should be much more pragmatic:

Tench: I would simply say that if you want to build a civilisation there are more important things than a play. If you want to teach the convicts something, teach them to farm, to build houses, teach them a sense of respect for property, teach them thrift so they don't eat a week's rations in one night, but above all, teach them how to work, not how to sit around laughing at a comedy. (Wertenbaker, 1991:22)

His remark indicates the totalizing ideology behind the strict measures taken for protecting the interests of the ruling classes. In the words of Stephen Weeks, in the play "Nearly every facet of power, including class, wealth, hierarchy, and gender, is put up for examination" (2000:154), and clearly, by discussing these issues around the notions of theatricality and fictionality, Wertenbaker points at the artificiality of these hierarchical structures and offers a deeply satirical perspective against the neoliberal ideology represented in her time by Thatcher's government. Very much like the convict's play, this ideology is man-made.

Wertenbaker's critique finds again a theatrical expression within the dramatic dynamics of the play. Since most convicts have to spend huge amounts of time in the Australian camp, the authorities of the prison seek to find new ways to keep them somehow occupied, and if possible, "educate" them. Act One, Scene Six is therefore titled "The Authorities Discuss the Merits of the Theatre" where the audience learns that theatre, for more liberal officers like Philip, is a civilizing means for the convicts to "be reformed" (18). A series of opposing views regarding the value of theatre find voice on stage. A religious figure, Reverend Johnson, discusses the issue from a theological perspective: "By the grace of God and a belief in the true church, yes. But Christ never proposed putting on plays to his disciples. However, he didn't forbid it, either. It must depend on the play" (19). Ross argues against the idea of producing a play since the "prisoners are here to be punished and [they're] here to make sure they get punished" (18). Tench agrees with Ross, arguing that convicts "have a habit of vice and crime. Many criminals seem to have been born that way. It is in their nature" (18). For Philip, however, "theatre is an expression of civilization" and if prisoners are given a chance to perform in a play, they will be "speaking a refined, literate language and expressing sentiments of a delicacy they are not used to. It will remind them that there is more to life than crime, punishment" and "together, for a few hours [they] will no longer be despised prisoners and hated gaolers. [They] will laugh, [they] may be moved, [they] may even think a little" (21). Tench further argues that if prisoners are allowed to spend time producing the play, they will "lose the labour of the convicts", which is "an unnecessary waste" (23).

Özmen Akdoğan (2022) reads the play through the Foucauldian concepts of "crime" and "punishment", and comments that the play satirizes cruel punishment, and, instead, offers theatre as an alternative for the rehabilitation of the convicts. Foucault explains that the aim of penal detention is to transform the behaviour of the convicts (1995:269). In this respect, Philip's idea of putting a play on the stage to correct the

convicts' behaviour is quite Foucauldian in its essence. Theatre is also one of the "exercises" Foucault offers as a way of correcting the prisoners' manners: "it [exercise] is to be found in military, religious, and university practices either as initiation ritual, preparatory ceremony, theatrical rehearsal or examination" (1995:161).

However, no sooner the views on the usefulness of theatre are expressed than the direction of the discussion takes a rather ideological turn. Ross questions the content of the play which might teach the prisoners "insubordination, disobedience, revolution" (23), and later adds that because of this play "order will become disorder. The theatre leads to threatening theory" (25). What starts as a discussion among prison officers about the usefulness of theatre turns into a discursive battle where the very essential meaning of theatre is interrogated from ideological perspectives. Ross and Tench's conservative views evidently reflect the authoritarian practical thinking whereas Philip stands for the left-liberal intellectual who believes in collective recuperation that theatre might bring about in even the direst conditions: "Some of these men will have finished their sentence in a few years. They will become members of society again, and help create a new society in this colony. Should we not encourage them to think in a free and responsible manner?" (21). What is more important here is that all these discussions in fact address serious questions about the relationship between life, politics, and art. To put it in other words, the importance of these dialogues go beyond the medium of theatre to comment on life in general. In this respect, Wertenbaker's play points at "a re-visioning of values" by underlining "the transformative powers of theatre" (Carlson, 1993:276).

Sullivan puts forth that theatre here is portrayed as "a force which both literally and figuratively empowers individuals to act" (1993:144). This is to say that convicts whose liberty has been stripped off due to mostly economic reasons acquire a sense of "agency" through theatre (Weeks, 2000:155). Prisoners, when they are assigned theatrical roles, have the opportunity to become someone else other than criminals. For instance,

Mary copies the text of *The Recruiting Officer* for other players and Wisehammer is able to rewrite certain parts of the play. Also, the communication among the officers and the convicts during the rehearsals is more egalitarian than before. In Act One, Scene Eleven, titled “The First Rehearsal”, Ralph addresses the prisoners as “ladies and gentleman”, which surprises inmates like Dabby who says “We’re ladies now. Wait till I tell my husband I’ve become a lady”. (Wertenbaker, 1993:40). Ralph further surprises the prisoners with a manner of speech that involves a quite polite rhetoric: “It is with pleasure that I welcome you” (40). This scene might have a comic effect, but, by revealing a clear change in communicative mode, it points at a fundamental change in the relation between the officers and the convicts. The rehearsal process also enables the convicts to have dreams for the future. Wisehammer wants to be a writer; Sideway wishes to build a theatre company; Liz and Ketch want to be actresses in his company. The rehearsal-within-the-play marks the beginning of a new sense of community which rests on a more egalitarian value-system than the one previous penal structure imposed. Again, Wertenbaker weaves her political satire by metatheatrically resorting to theatre as an alternative set of norms which can pose a radical challenge to oppressive political systems. Ultimately, theatricality offers a chance to rethink the social system in the colony which derives its power from strictly authoritarian practices.

The turn to “a more democratic society” (Weeks, 2000:149) becomes more and more evident with the apparent change in communicative content. Rather than simply talking about the mundane activities of prison life, both the officers and the prisoners adopt a theatrical language in which they use dramatic jargon such as “comedy”, “acting”, “directing”, and “rehearsing”. Convicts have a chance to experience a different reality in their prison lives, and theatre provides this opportunity. Philip’s liberal mindset is the primary motive behind the emergence of this new conception of community. He believes in “redemption” of humanity by giving a chance to better their situation, as exemplified

in his treatment of Liz, a convict who is a difficult person to handle: “How do we know what humanity lies hidden under the rags and filth of a mangled life? I have seen soldiers given up for dead, limbs torn, heads cut open, come back to life. If we treat her as a corpse, of course she will die. Try a little kindness. Lieutenant” (58).

For Philip, “Unexpected situations are often matched by unexpected virtues in people” (59). What is more important here is that Philip blends all his liberal perspective and his critical stance through the metaphor of *theatrum mundi*. In a response to Ralph, Philip says: “A play is a world in itself, a tiny colony we could almost say. [...] . And you are in charge of it. That is a great responsibility” (60). Wertenbaker makes it obvious here that the microcosmic world of theatre reflects the macrocosm of the outside world, so the way the relations within theatre are organized is reflexive of a worldview. In Philip’s case, this is liberal perspective which is expressed through an inclusive discourse that embraces convicts as potentially civilized members of society. It also shows that, like a theatrical piece, worldviews and political organizations are constructed.

Wilson (1991:23) and Baker-White (1999:100) observe a “utopian” potential in the building of this small community in the colony. A utopia is, as Chris Baldick defines, “[a]n imagined form of ideal or superior (usually communistic) human society” (2008c:348); however, the sense of community building in *Our Country’s Good* is hardly utopian for several reasons. Firstly, the civilizing mission attributed to theatre might have colonial (and in fact, imperial) echoes. Wilson, too, observes this dimension of the play by stating that “the social function of theatre, while having the capacity to affirm human experience and generate social change, can as easily legitimize the social position of a dominant class” (33). Sullivan agrees with Wilson but also adds that the rehearsal of *The Recruiting Officer* is problematic in that it was the first play performed in Australia for the occasion of the King’s (George III) birthday, “which becomes a celebration of English values”; moreover, while Wertenbaker’s play “serves as a critique of the ideology and

practices that built the Empire”, that critique is also “deprioritized as theatre is extolled for its humanizing capacity” (144). Rebecca Clode also points at the colonialist dimension of theatricality by claiming that convict rehearsals can be seen as “an analogy for the rehearsal of nation” (2014:155); Philip’s “colonial project” is “still contained within the power politics of empire” (177). Finally, Weeks state that the rehearsal process is “fraught with ideological contestation” (2000:154) as evident in the power dynamics which require the convicts to adopt the “civilized” language of the Imperial centre.

Another problematic issue regarding the utopian potential of the play is that neither the rehearsal-within-the-play nor the play itself present theatre as a utopian solution to all the perils of contemporary society. In fact, as Dymkowski also underlines, the play does not take theatre as a “simplistic solution to personal and national problems” (1988:128); on the contrary, Wertenbaker is quite realistic about what theatre can and cannot do. For instance, Dabby in the play says that theatrical experience has limited power “Because it’s only for one night” (85), pointing at a more realistic consideration of art, rather than calling for merely utopian thinking. This line of thinking acquires further ground through the end of the play when Wisehammer, the convict with poetic skills, offers a rewriting of Farquhar’s prologue to make it more relevant to their condition:

From distant climes o’er wide-spread seas we come,
Though not with much éclat or beat of drum,
True patriots all; for be it understood,
We left our country for our country’s good;
No private views disgraced our generous zeal,
What urg’d our travels was our country’s weal,
And none will doubt but that our emigration
Has prov’d most useful to the British nation¹⁰⁴. (89)

Officer Ralph likes the prologue very much, but he is unable to include it in the play because it is “too political. It will be considered provocative” (90). He further says that:

¹⁰⁴ For the original prologue see Farquhar, George. *The Recruiting Officer and Other Plays*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995. p. 163.

“The theatre is like a small republic, it requires private sacrifices for the good of the whole” (90). As can be easily inferred, Wertenbaker points at the fact that there are bigger forces than theatre which might strictly limit the freedom of expression. Politics is a complex structure which might have a more potent influence over individual will.

However, the above-mentioned observations do not mean that Wertenbaker avoids an idealist perspective. Rather, the play addresses a series of potentials in constructing theatre as a polyphonic space where multiple histories, experiences, identities, and artistic expressions can find a place to voice themselves simultaneously. In this respect, Wertenbaker imagines theatre as a heterotopian possibility rather than a utopian project. In his seminal essay “Of Other Spaces”, Michel Foucault explores the concept of heterotopia as places “which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality” (1986:24). Heterotopias, for Foucault, “take quite varied forms” (24), and theatre is a primary example of heterotopia as it “brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another”¹⁰⁵ (25). In *Our Country's Good*, multiple realities, times and spaces are brought together in a heterotopian fashion which challenges simple utopian thinking. Multiple differences – ethnic, gender, linguistic – make up a heterotopian space, and stage reality reflects this multiplicity of realities in theatrical terms. Following this line of thinking, Maya Esther Roth observes:

in Wertenbaker's political imaginary, there is always somewhere else to go...another space and different country; another historical moment; a different mode of performance; some other future. To these somewhere else, the plays go: making each theatrical space far more complex and multiple

¹⁰⁵ To read more on politics of space, see Chaudhuri, Una. *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama*. Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 2000.

than typically imagined, conjuring heterotopias and a drama where more complicated, fluid notions of space structure experience, politics, gender, identity, and thought. (2001:iv-v)

Roth's observation on the heterotopian potential in Wertenbaker's dramatic works proves useful for understanding the multitude of voices in her theatrical style. It is no coincidence that *Our Country's Good* starts with a sea voyage. For Foucault, the ship is "a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea"; both a "great instrument of economic development" and "the greatest reserve of the imagination", the ship is "the heterotopia *par excellence*" (1986:27). With this in mind, it can be argued that from the very beginning of the play, it is clear that the sea journey is a travel to a different mode of existence, to another style of experiencing the world where the old habits of living can be potentially challenged. Avoiding utopian simplicity, the play incorporates a series of heterogeneous experiences belonging to various characters and places and opens theatrical space up to a rich variety of identities.

One example how the play weaves a heterotopian place is that it addresses the Aboriginal reality side by side with colonial and liberal perspectives. On the one hand, the officers and the convicts produce a comedy in honour of the English king; on the other hand, the Aborigine comments on the colonial presence from an anticolonial perspective: "Some dreams lose their way and wander over the earth, lost. But this is a dream no one wants. It has stayed. How can we befriend this crowded, hungry and disturbed dream?" (62). Clearly, Wertenbaker seeks to find theatrical means to include the colonized experience of the Aborigines, and this search for plurality drives the play further away from utopian naivety.

However, the rehearsal process also highlights the heterotopian quality of the play. Baker-White claims that with rehearsal "all is process" (1999:15) and theatre is demonstrated as "disjunctive, fragmented, incoherent, contradictory, interrupted, and

interruptible enterprise” (16). He further asserts that rehearsal involves a “multivoicedness” (18) and provides “a model for ethical activity, a paradigm for engaging others in a way that both respects their alterity and allows for serious personal interaction as well” (22). What the rehearsal ultimately reveals is the production of “new meanings” (100) in prisoners’ lives and the building of “an unfamiliar space” (103) where “the boundaries of identity imposed by the rigid social structure of the prison colony erode” (104). Wisehammer is a Jewish writer from England who is also marginalized in his own country; Caesar is a black person from Madagascar who refuses to “think English” and wants to “go back to Madagascar and think Malagasy” (54); and all of the convicts are imprisoned for crimes that they committed to survive. All these characters come together to produce a comedy from the Irish playwright Farquhar, and Wertenbaker brings these heterogeneous voices together to rework theatre as an alternative communal space built on positive feelings. In this heterotopia, the “idea of a class-based morality” is questioned (Dymkowski, 1988:122), “difference” is encountered as a “crucial civic negotiation” (Roth, 2001:171), the Australian colony is made “an explicitly transnational, multilingual space” (Roth, 2001:194), “the multiple, partial, and imperfect histories of a contradictory set of characters” are interwoven together (Bligh, 2008:177), and fiction suggests “new patterns through which to comprehend possibilities and engage with them” (Rokotnitz, 2011:77). The play ends with the beginning of *The Recruiting Officer*, Wertenbaker does not allow the authorial voice to be heard¹⁰⁶. Therefore, Wertenbaker’s political satire, which finds a structural voice through metatheatrical strategies, addresses the possibility of positive sentiments when focusing on complex and controversial issues such as colonialism, the ethics of fiction, the wealth and limits of theatre, and the

¹⁰⁶ To read on Carol L. Yang’s analysis of the play through the concepts of “minor” and “major literature”, see “Towards a Minor Theatre: The Task of The Playmaker in *Our Country’s Good*. *Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture*. Vol 5. 2 (June 2012): 25-48.

possibility of building a community in an age marked by neoliberal policies of dissolution.

In conclusion, *Our Country's Good* offers a notable example in which political satire is mingled with metatheatrical devices. Timberlake Wertenbaker constructs a satirical stance against ideologies which continually attempt to dissolve the idea of community with neoliberal motivations. In a historical context overrun by conservative values of Thatcherite government, the play calls for affirming the possibility that society still exists and there are other ways to develop communities built on mutual trust and democratic values. It also shows that collective art can help individuals build a more communitarian and civilized society. However, Wertenbaker also points at the difficulty of such projects by highlighting the complexities that might emerge during this process. The play also underlines the difficulty of differentiating between liberal progressivism and neo-colonial enterprise: the moment a character tries to move away from the colonial condition, s/he might endorse colonial and imperial discourse. In order to cope with such difficulties, Wertenbaker foregrounds the redemptive power of theatre without adopting a utopian oversimplification. Therefore, the play points at the fact that trying to find new ways of thinking and living together might be a much better option than finalized solutions.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has set out to explore the interactions between political satire and the metatheatrical form. I have argued throughout this work that the coupling between these two domains has been an evolving one in that it has acquired new functions and new qualities through centuries. In this respect, metatheatre as a form of political satire has repeatedly proven its organic quality, especially due to the fact that it has been able to sustain itself on the stage for centuries. This dissertation, in this sense, points out the durability of political satire and the metatheatrical form; both have displayed a continuing existence in theatre practices by demonstrating a considerable flexibility in their modes of representation. It is this flexible nature of satirical drama and metatheatrical strategies that made it possible for theatre practitioners and playwrights to provide political and satirical commentary on the entrenched and emerging problems around their times. Therefore, theatre has offered a valuable forum for discussing the diversified aspects of human existence across political and satirical spectrums due to the thematic and structural means that the metatheatrical form has provided.

“Introduction” presents my argument on metatheatre as a tool for political satire and offers a brief preview of chapter contents. Chapter I, titled “Satire, Metatheatre and Theatre”, lays the ground for a theoretical overview of the concepts that I have explored throughout this work. First providing a literature review of scholarly works on satire in “Satire: Some Critical Perspectives”, the chapter then moves on to the next section, “Dramatic Satire and Metatheatre”, where I outline the historical intersections between satire, drama, and the metatheatrical form. Technical and thematic similarities between satire and drama are drawn in this section by also alluding to how metatheatrical strategies help to intensify the overall satirical effect that theatre has been able to produce for centuries. The rest of this section focuses on the definitions and discussions of metatheatre with references to prominent figures such as Abel and Hornby. A specific attention is

paid to the “play-within-the-play” device which is one of the most significant elements of metatheatre. Then the section is concluded through similarities between what satire and metatheatre aim to achieve through dramatic representations.

The next section, “Metatheatre in English Dramatic Satire”, provides a series of examples from English drama through centuries where playwrights resort to metatheatrical strategies for satirical purposes. Examples include plays from Ancient Greek and Roman comedy as well as Medieval plays. Renaissance plays are offered as examples to the crossover between dramatic satire and metatheatre, which are followed by plays from the Restoration period and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This section is concluded with examples from modern and contemporary period. As the plays from different centuries suggest, the coupling of dramatic satire and metatheatrical devices is neither new nor rare; on the contrary, it can be easily argued that English drama has been showcasing the potentials of this inter-generic blending for centuries in order to draw attention to the political and satirical dimensions of human relations.

Chapter II, titled “Justice, Class, Art: A Satirical Look at Renaissance England Through Metatheatrical Lenses”, provides my detailed readings of three plays from the Renaissance: Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, Beaumont’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and Philip Massinger’s *The Roman Actor*. Offering a panorama of social and political life in the Renaissance England, each of these plays offers critical insights into the specific aspects of a society in turmoil. While *The Spanish Tragedy* focuses on how the outdated justice system in the period is unable to constitute an equal ground for every member of the society and underlines the need for a modern concept of law, *The Knight* attacks the remnants of medieval culture in which social identities are shaped by strict class hierarchies. *The Roman Actor*, on the other hand, openly challenges the despotic regimes where artistic expression is censored for the advantages of the ruling body of the system. All three of these plays resort to metatheatrical devices in order to initiate their satirical

projects. In these plays, social and political life are explored in theatrical terms. The plays underline that a new model of modern state based on a neutral system of law and equality, in which class boundaries are dissolved and the citizens can express themselves freely, has to be established.

Chapter III, “Dramatic Satire in The Eighteenth Century” functions as a kind of interlude in this study. In 3.1, the focus is on neither the Renaissance nor the modern period, it nonetheless is centred on a period in which dramatic satire was somehow in its golden age. The period marks the beginning of modern parliamentary system in England, which means that individual politicians were gaining more visibility than ever in the public sphere. It is for this reason that the plays from this age were specifically attacking individual politicians, most notably, Robert Walpole. Again, theatricality is the one medium through which playwrights like Fielding were laying bare the lack of essential merits in the newly emerging political spectrum.

Chapter IV, “Political Satire in the Postmodern Age”, examines three plays from the twentieth century. These plays make it evident that, despite significant changes in its scope, dramatic satire is still relevant in the twentieth-century drama. However, we observe a transition from lampoon to satire on institutions and universal values. The biggest change is of course related to the multiplication of meaning that postmodern condition repeatedly puts forth. Now that it is impossible to totalize meaning due to the disintegration of conventional values and “grand narratives”, dramatic satire has found new ways to challenge the perils of human condition in today’s world. *The Churchill Play* satirizes the nationalist historiographies that produce mythical constructs around political figures and events by deconstructing the mythic aura circulating around such narratives. *A Map of the World* takes on a similar task by a critique of Eurocentric ideology in modern age. *Our Country’s Good* further elaborates on the relevance of dramatic satire by weaving a forceful attack on dissolution of the sense of community under the power of

neoliberal ideology. On the one hand, these plays show that it is still possible to initiate dramatic satire in an age marked by the continuing dissolution of intellectual positionings; on the other hand, they affirm the power of postmodern condition and each attempt to multiply meaning in line with postmodern approaches, a quality which is actualized through the diversified treatments of metatheatrical strategies. In this respect, it is possible to call these plays “postmodern satires”.

While the list of implications can be further extended, it is necessary to reach at certain conclusions. One concluding idea is that, as the history of the convergence between dramatic satire and metatheatricality shows, there is a symbiotic relationship between the two modes of representations. The plays studied here suggest that whenever a playwright employs metatheatrical devices, a satirical element is also present, addressing a dissatisfaction with an already functioning political, social or cultural system. The way these two modes blend undergoes change through time, so do the satirical targets. In the Renaissance, the target of the metatheatrical satire is the remnants of the feudal system which maintains its existence across a wide spectrum: legal system, economic structure, and art. *The Spanish Tragedy* exemplifies the dramatic challenge to the justice system whose source of legitimization is the feudal relations taking effect within the social system. Hieronimo’s search for justice is an act of defiance not only against specific individuals but also against the system itself. *The Knight* similarly attacks the class system which finds its legitimate basis within feudal relations that are organized around inherited bloodlines. The clash between different actors is symptomatic of the clash between various classes within the social order, which addresses the presence of a class conflict. *The Roman Actor*’s target is the monarchic power to limit artistic expression, which again points at a theatrical act of resistance against the feudal set of norms. In this context, satire is directed towards the old system of values, and metatheatrical devices allow room for a realization of such satirical projects.

This line of thinking opens up a space for another argument. Looking into how the Renaissance plays tackle issues of power, it can be argued that they voice concerns over individual liberties, which means that the idea of a worldly liberty was somehow flourishing during the period. Considering that feudal system privileges hierarchical order over individual freedom, any act of defiance of it showcases the emergence of liberty as a new paradigm, which also implies that the idea of the modern state was forming as well. Constituted around the notion of human liberty, the modern state, or the nation-state, privileges the notion of liberty, which means that old set of values based on feudal and religious bindings are to be reconsidered for worldly ends. In this respect, the plays that I have included from the period are indicative of an emerging form of modernity, and so they express modern concerns.

This line of interpretation can be applied to Henry Fielding's theatrical sensibility in the eighteenth century. Like his Renaissance predecessors, Fielding sides with the notions of liberty and justice against oppressive systems and figures. However, it is not the feudal system that oppresses people this time; it is political leaders themselves. In this sense, it can be observed that modernity, now a system at its full force due to the establishment of reason as a governing paradigm, poses challenges to individual and collective freedom similar to those of the Renaissance. In this sense, Fielding's theatrical sensibility draws attention to the dangers of political systems regardless of their promises of freedom and welfare.

The plays that I have studied under the framework of postmodernism show signs of change in dramatic satire's focus and scope. While the plays from previous chapters address the necessity of liberty in a just society, postmodern satires, as I have called them, question the notions of liberty and nationhood with an attempt to multiply their definitions from a global and cosmopolitan perspective. These plays, with left-wing tinges to their dramatic make-up, problematize the ready-made meanings of entrenched concepts like

nation, history, and liberty and address the wide range of influences that these concepts might have on individual lives. In this respect, these plays, on the one hand, affirm the dissolution of modernity's nation-state which traditionally finds its legitimacy through totalizing structures, and on the other, call for a new kind of social organization that is built on plurality.

Another implication that these plays carry is related to the ontological messages that the metatheatrical devices, especially the play-within-the-play, deliver. All the plays analysed in this study include a play-within-a-play or a rehearsal process, which complicates the ultimate meaning that the frame play encompassing the whole action tries to impose upon the text, characters, and spaces. In a way, the frame play represents the power structure where certain individuals rule over others due to their positions within the social hierarchy like kings, rulers, politicians, prison managers, colonial officers who have privileged positions. However, there are also people from the margins, those whose power to change things are relatively limited, and it is in their search for agency that the play-within-the-play device emerges as a counter discourse. In a way, if the main frame represents the privileged center, the play-within-the-play stands for the marginal space, which implies that power relations take place not only within the thematics of the plays but also in their formal constitution. Whenever a character seeks change in power relations, the play-within-the-play allows room for exploring that possibility by opening an intricate space for a clash, or sometimes, negotiation, between different positions. In this way, the privileged centre (authority) meets the disenfranchised (subjects) through the crossovers between the main frame and play-within-a-play, and life as a theatrical process is re-explored through theatrical means. From an ontological perspective, those on the margins acquire a sense of agency through metatheatrical devices which allow them to weave plays of their own and voice their perspectives: through theatrical means, Hieronimo takes matters into his own hand; *The Citizens* subvert the class hierarchy;

Paris voices concerns over censorship; Fielding satirizes political corruption; prisoners demystify the myth of Churchill; Hare lays bare the limits of Eurocentric ideals; and convicts manage to constitute an alternative sense of community beyond neoliberal tendencies. This is to say that theatricality attains an ontological frame of reference as it provides a forum for bringing together voices from the margins.

Pertinent to such analysis is the way the metatheatrical form helps to resurface alternative realities buried under the hegemonic forms of knowledge. Specifically, the play-within-the-play assists the marginalized groups to constitute a means to challenge the dominant centre by raising the visibility of oppressed groups. Following this line of thinking, it can be argued that this device weaves together counter-discourses and, sometimes, counter-memories when the focus is history or historical figures. A counter-discourse means a mode of thinking that challenges established discursive mechanisms whereas a counter-memory refers to a model of remembering where memories of marginalized groups clash with those of official narratives. By foregrounding these alternative set of discourses and memories, the metatheatrical form provides a pointed satirical commentary on hegemonic structures. In the Renaissance and eighteenth-century plays studied here, metatheatrical strategies like the play-within-the-play enable the playwrights and the characters to implement counter-discursive strategies against the privileged centres of power; this device in modern plays, on the other hand, helps to find out counter-memories which reveal that history is in fact full of clashing forces and that there are other voices which are not heard due to the power structure operating within the political and social system. *The Churchill Play*, for example, problematizes the mythic historiography woven around the cult of Winston Churchill by giving a voice to other perspectives that do not share in this myth whereas *A Map of the World* interrogates the reliability of historical representations through a multiplicity of narrative voices.

One last conclusion that can be drawn from this study is related to the evolving nature of the play-within-the-play device. The plays from the Renaissance and the eighteenth century incorporate a performance of an inner play within the main frame whereas modern examples pay more attention to the rehearsal processes. In other words, it is possible to claim that there is an evolution from the play-within-the-play to the rehearsal-within-the-play, which raises significant questions regarding the overall meaning of the metatheatrical form. An inner performance within a play, as Baker-White argues, constitutes an “implement of closure” (1999:17). While rehearsal foregrounds “provisionality, contingency, unsettledness, flexibility and multivoicedness”, performance addresses “stability, predictability and finalized qualities” (1999:18). In other words, performance is marked by a sense of “closure” (1999:17) whereas in rehearsal “all is process” (1999:15). Showing theatre as “a disjunctive, fragmented, incoherent, contradictory, interrupted, and interruptible enterprise” (1999:16), the presence of a rehearsal within a play “signals a dispute over the locus of authority in the making of theater” (1999:17). “Through rehearsal, voices are brought out from mute personalities” (1999:100), which means that the power relations, resistance, and negotiations that take place in real life are conveyed into a theatrical universe through the medium of rehearsal-within-a-play. Following this line of interpretation, it can be safely claimed that an evolution from the play-within-the-play into the rehearsal-within-the-play marks a turn from certainty, stability, and closure into flux, alterity, and boundary crossing. Kalin Smith (2022) informs that while “every age produces them anew”, “it is on the Restoration and eighteenth-century stage that rehearsal plays begin to both take-on and takeoff a more familiar and modern theatrical experience” (3), an argument which can be supported with an addition that rehearsal plays continue to populate the English stage in the twentieth century by further innovations, both philosophical and technical. As can be inferred here, the presence of rehearsal on stage parallels the progression from

modernity into postmodernity, from certitude into fragmentation, and from hierarchy into erosion of boundaries. Baker-White says, “rehearsal provides a model for ethical activity, a paradigm for engaging others in a way that both respects their alterity and allows for serious personal interaction as well” (1999:22). Again and again, theatre and theatricality reflect the possibilities for expanding the meaning of what it means to have a political existence.

As final remarks, this dissertation has tried to explore the political implications that might arise from the symbiosis between dramatic satire and metatheatrical strategies. It has been noted that self-reflexive nature of performance significantly foregrounds the power of satire while acknowledging the artificiality of theatre. In this vein, theatre as an artistic field offers an intellectual space where complex social and political issues can be explored. As it has been indicated, English dramatic satire has characteristically been metatheatrical in that expressions of theatricality often find a satirical ground for laying out the political, social, cultural and ideological mechanisms. While metatheatrical strategies are constant throughout centuries, the ways they weave their satirical projects and their targets show variety across different periods, reflecting the literary, philosophical and theoretical turnouts visible in these specific historical moments. As this dissertation has tried to show, such qualities have been present on British stage for centuries, and it is evident they will continue to remain as essential components of theatre in the future, too.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to explore the aesthetic and political implications that arise from the convergence between dramatic satire and metatheatrical strategies as exemplified in *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582-92) *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607), *The Roman Actor* (1613), *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* (1737) *The Churchill Play* (1974), *A Map of the World* (1982) and *Our Country's Good* (1988). It is frequently noted in the study that while acknowledging the artificial dimension of theatre and creating a sense of playfulness and flux, self-reflexive nature of the plays significantly enhances the impact of dramatic satire. Indeed, metatheatre becomes a very efficient vehicle for satire in theatre. This claim is supported via a number of examples from the Renaissance, eighteenth-century and twentieth-century plays where the satirical tone is largely dependent upon various metatheatrical employments, basically the play-within-the-play.

In fact, metatheatrical analyses of plays from these centuries is not a new topic of study. What is specific to this dissertation is that metatheatre is not merely handled as a technical innovation, an element shattering the traditions of realist drama by foregrounding the play's self-referentiality. Instead, focusing on the symbiosis between satire and metatheatre, it aims to highlight the political and ontological dimensions of this crossover.

The study argues that the interplay between satire and metatheatre addresses a stage reality where politics and theatricality are fused into one another and dismantle conventional ways of thinking and stage representation. In this respect, politics, law, class systems, social hierarchies, oppression, historiography, colonialism, Eurocentrism and neoliberalism are explored through the intersection between satirical drama and metatheatrical devices. While analysing the incorporation of satire and metatheatre, the

transformation of satire, the new meanings it has gained throughout the centuries, and its flexibility are also demonstrated.

Keywords: satire, metatheatre, the play-within-the-play, Renaissance, twentieth-century English drama



ÖZET

Bu tez, *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582-92), *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607), *The Roman Actor* (1613), *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* (1737), *The Churchill Play* (1974), *A Map of the World* (1982) ve *Our Country's Good* (1988) oyunlarında ele alındığı üzere, tiyatro hiciv ve metateatral stratejiler arasındaki kesişimden doğan estetik ve politik sonuçları incelemeyi amaçlar. Tezde sıklıkla, özgönderme (self-reflexivity) unsurlarının tiyatro oyunlarının kurgusallığına ve akışkan doğasına dikkat çekmelerinin yanı sıra, bu metinlerin hiciv yönünü de pekiştirdiği ve ön plana çıkardığı üzerinde durulmuştur. Esasen, metatiyatro son derece güçlü bir politik hiciv aracı olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu görüş, İngiliz tiyatrosunun farklı dönemlerinden – Rönesans, on sekizinci yüzyıl, yirminci yüzyıl – seçilen ve hicvin daha ziyade başta oyun-içinde-oyun (the play-within-the-play) olmak üzere çeşitli metateatral unsurlar üzerine kurulu olduğu oyunlardan örnekler aracılığıyla desteklenmiştir.

Aslında, bu dönemlerden seçilen oyunların metatiyatro açısından ele alındığı çalışmalar daha önce de yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmaya özgü olan, metatiyatronun özgöndermeli (self-reflexive) doğasını vurgulayarak geleneksel tiyatronun kendine has kurallarını hiçe sayan, salt teknik bir tiyatro terimi olmasının çok ötesinde bir yaklaşım olarak ele alınmış olmasıdır. Çalışma, hiciv ve metatiyatro arasındaki bağa odaklanır ve bu ilişkinin politik ve ontolojik sonuçlarını ortaya koyar.

Bu tezde, hiciv ve metatiyatro arasındaki etkileşimin, siyaset ve teatrallığın iç içe geçtiği ve alışagelmış düşünce biçimlerini ve sahne temsillerini alaşağı ettiği yeni bir sahne gerçekliğini ortaya çıkarması tartışılmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, siyaset, hukuk, toplumsal tabakalaşma, baskı, tarih yazımı, sömürgecilik, Avrupa-merkezcilik, neoliberalizm gibi kavramlar hiciv ve metatiyatro arasındaki ilişki üzerinden ele alınmıştır. Hiciv ve metatiyatro arasındaki ilişki üzerinde durulurken, aynı zamanda,

hicvin yüzyıllar içerisinde uğradığı değişim ve kazandığı yeni boyutlara da dikkat çekilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Hiciv, metatiyatro, oyun-içinde-oyun, Rönesans, yirminci yüzyıl İngiliz tiyatrosu

