

**TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ
ANKARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI
(İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI)
ANABİLİM DALI**

**CENSORSHIP IN TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURY BRITISH DRAMA: REPRESENTATIONS
AND RESPONSES**

Doktora Tezi

Pelin DOĞAN

Ankara-2017

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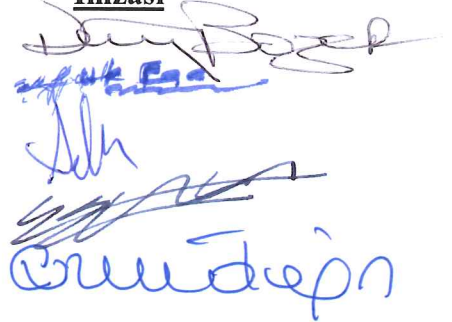
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TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ
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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

Bu belge ile, bu tezdeki bütün bilgilerin akademik kurallara ve etik davranış ilkelerine uygun olarak toplanıp sunulduğunu beyan ederim. Bu kural ve ilkelerin gereği olarak, çalışmada bana ait olmayan tüm veri, düşünce ve sonuçları andığımı ve kaynağını gösterdiğimi ayrıca beyan ederim.(.05../.12../2017)

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INTRODUCTION: THE NEW FACE OF CENSORSHIP

The National's production of Richard Bean's immigrant satire has attracted plenty of controversy; a racist portrayal of London's East End or just a riotous comedy? (Espiner 2009)

On 4 February 2009, Richard Bean's *England People Very Nice*, under the direction of Nicholas Hytner, was premiered at the National Theatre. During its run, the National Theatre experienced its first stage occupation in its 32-year-history. Two protestors – Hussain Ismail (a playwright) and Keith Kinsella (a teacher) – jumped on the theatre stage with placards in their hands to protest Richard Bean's preshow talk, declaring that the playwright was racist and anti-immigrant, and the play offensive to their community sensitivities. While Ismail accused the play of portraying Muslims as “extremists”, Kinsella described the play as “anti-Irish” (Dodd 2009); Ismail also charged Nicholas Hytner with being “reckless and irresponsible” for staging an intentionally racist play (Adams 2009). He further threatened to call for a boycott of one of the sponsors of the theatre, the currency conversion company Travelex, and to picket audiences (Haydon 2009). The play, however, completed its run at the National Theatre, despite growing unrest and discomfort, without withdrawal or further intervention and received wide coverage in the British press.

The case of the attempted, semi-successful, disruption of *England People Very Nice* illustrates some of the complexities and issues around censorship and free speech on the stage that this dissertation examines. Focusing upon responses to and representations of censorship both in the immediate aftermath of the official abolition of formal state censorship in the United Kingdom in 1968, and over the following 50 years, this dissertation looks at how playwrights, directors and theatre practitioners have responded to issues such as those raised by the *England People Very Nice* debacle.

Firstly, four decades after the official abolition of state censorship by the Theatres Act of 1968, censorship is still alive and kicking. The removal of the Lord Chamberlain's Office does not mean that censorship has simply disappeared, but rather it has persisted through evolving and metamorphosing to more diverse, complex and multi-layered forms. Secondly, the role of the officially appointed government censor has been assumed by different censorial agents – self-proclaimed representatives of ethnic and religious communities in this case– with shifting preoccupations in particular spatial and temporal circumstances. Thirdly, the way the protestors disrupted Richard Bean's preshow talk, blocking and obstructing communication and interaction between playwright and spectator, raises complicated questions as to the boundaries between free speech, censorship and hate speech. On the one hand, this protest against the play and the playwright might be regarded as the exercising of a democratic right to free speech. On the other hand, this act of intervention becomes problematic in three ways: in the first place, the playwright Richard Bean is also at liberty to put his play on stage as part of his right to free expression; then, the theatre auditorium is in the public sphere and the protest disrupts the audience's right to listen to this speech or see this play; finally, this act of intrusion by the self-proclaimed representatives of a particular ethnic or religious community runs the risk of reducing the whole community to one monolithic voice.

In the discussion of the boundaries between free speech and censorship, political correctness is another term to be considered in terms of its problematic implications for censorship. It "has too often degenerated into a form of etiquette about what can actually be said; it's about saying the right thing rather than doing the right thing" (Wilson 2007: 523). Being 'politically correct' often serves as a veil for the writer or speaker to avoid actually having to specify the details of what is being discussed - in other words, obfuscation rather than clarification. This act of stage invasion connects to another recently controversial issue: no-platforming. Although the practitioners of no-

platforming do not consider this act censorship, but rather the right to free speech, it is quite controversial as it involves blocking any dialogue or interaction with persons holding opposing views. Considering the current increase in ‘no-platforming’ and ‘safe space’ protests, one might anticipate this form of intervention to be observed in the theatre, an art of live performance.

The instance of *England People Very Nice* also problematises the question of censure. Censure does not by definition limit an artist’s freedom of expression and, indeed, it is itself a manifestation of freedom of expression; however, as a matter of degree and impact, this might result in an act of defamation and exclusion of this person from the public sphere. In this case, censorship and censure appear as two closely linked activities; an act of censure arguably functions in a similar role to a censor.

This protest also brings up issues relating to funding. As the main financial sources of the theatre in the UK depend on state subsidies, private sponsorship and ticket sales, Ismail’s threat to call for a boycott of one of the sponsors of the theatre company could place a financial burden on the play and the theatre. Significantly, ongoing debates within censorship discussions point out that state funding is perhaps even more obviously politically loaded, having the potential to transmute into a tool of censorship, or at the very least of control.

One final matter remains to be considered: the role of the censorial agent has been undertaken by different institutions as well as public censorship. This practice of intervention in a play might encourage a culture of bullying and intimidation due to fear of potential violence, targeting, controversy, and lost funding. It causes self-censorship which operates on an insidious level, creating pressure on institutions of theatre and the playwright.

This dissertation aims to explore and problematise the above-mentioned implications of the complex and intellectually-challenging issue of censorship in

twentieth and twenty-first century British drama. As the *England People Very Nice* debacle illustrates, old models based on a conception of censorship as something carried out through state power, centralised in a governmental official, seem ill-equipped to explain or resolve such cases. One major focus of this dissertation is to trace the significant discursive transformation in the understanding of censorship after the official abolition of state censorship. While doing so, this study points to and problematises the increasingly complex relationships between authority, authorship and censorship.

The dissertation is structured in three parts. Part One and Part Two bring together the historical, cultural, literary and theoretical contexts necessary for the study of censorship in the theatre in post-war period up to the present. In this respect, Part One addresses the theoretical issues raised by censorship in its various forms, engaging with the considerable body of literature available on this topic. Over the last three decades, the traditional view of censorship, principally based on political dichotomies between the left and the right, has come under challenge. In the academic field, there has been a new appeal to theorise censorship. This section will first examine what necessitated or led to this new interest, what new ways of understanding censorship have emerged, and the reasons for this discursive transformation. Then, it engages in a critical dialogue with the different conceptualisations of censorship offered by the interdisciplinary work of scholars in this field. Finally, it provides insights into the complicated nature of censorship and difficulties in theorising and classifying censorship due to its multifaceted forms and operations.

Part Two offers a critical survey of the history of censorship in Britain. At the core of this Part is the Theatres Act of 1968, which abolished official censorship of the British stage. It will consider how the Act came about, setting it in the wider context of post-war cultural shifts, and the decline of the culture of deference in the 1960s in particular. It will then deal with the ways in which various forms of censorship endured after this formal

abolition, and survey the history of how British drama, and more widely society, responded to these changes. This Part will begin with the years leading up to the Second World War, rather than its immediate aftermath, as it is necessary to briefly describe the legacy of censorship prior to the War, by focusing not only on what was happening on the stage, but also what was happening in the auditorium and beyond, including in the press, and shifting social attitudes towards and public censure of particular events.

Part Three of the dissertation consists of detailed studies of works by three prominent British dramatists of the second half of the twentieth and twenty-first century, all of whom confront issues relating to censorship more or less directly in their work: Joe Orton, Anthony Neilson, and Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti. One chapter is dedicated to the work of each dramatist, and the historical, cultural and literary contexts and the theoretical insights provided in Part One and Part Two are brought to bear on each of these case studies.

Chapter One focuses on Joe Orton's *What the Butler Saw* (1967), embedding it in its very particular historical and cultural context (the play was written just before the Theatres Act of 1968, but first performed after it, and after Orton himself had been murdered and his text 'revised' by his friend Sir Ralph Richardson). The play functions as a bridging text, positioned on two significant thresholds. Firstly, it is a document of both the weakened power of the Lord Chamberlain and the changing mood of the times. The revolutionary spirit of the decade called into question many institutions and figures of the established order. These social and cultural shifts are reflected in the chaotic world of the play. Secondly, within this framework, the play, written before the abolition of official censorship yet performed afterwards, straddles pre- and post-1968 and so offers a peculiar case study for the exploration of censorship. Although the post of the Lord Chamberlain was abolished by the Theatres Act of 1968, on this occasion the play was effectively 'censored' by Sir Ralph Richardson, who was himself starring in the premiere.

Anticipating potential censorship and public censure, Richardson made a huge intervention in the play and changed its ending: a cigar substitutes for Churchill's penis in the Richardson version, which would also be transferred to the first publication of the script. The struggle to come up with a description for this censorial intervention prompts us to explore some complex questions in relation to representations of and responses to censorship. It also deploys some of the insights of psychoanalytic theory, in particular that of Lacan, to offer a rereading of the apparent act of censorship by Sir Ralph Richardson of the amputation of the penis from a statue of Winston Churchill in Orton's holograph manuscript.

Chapter Two focuses on Anthony Neilson's *The Censor* (1997), which is another key text in the study of censorship. Written 30 years after official censorship was abolished, the play explores the relationship between the public and the private, between external censorship and inward self-censorship and repression. The strength of this play resides in the fact that it connects the socio-political background and issues with the private. When the play was first performed, some significant debates were already on the public agenda: the demise of political dichotomies, heated arguments over pornography within feminism, reconceptualisations of censorship, the availability of the Lord Chamberlain's archives and the existence of the BBFC. As with *What the Butler Saw*, this play was also performed at a crucial historical moment. On the one hand, when the contextual framework into which it was produced is taken into consideration, the play reads as a political statement. On the other hand, the character of the Censor in the play is an image of self-censorship and a metaphor for "all things we hold down and cut out of our minds" (Sierz 2001: 83).

Chapter Three focuses on two plays by Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, *Behzti* (2004) and *Behud* (2010), which added a further dimension to discussions of censorship. The *Behzti* Affair has probably been the most influential censorship scandal in British theatre in the

twenty-first century. In 2004, the first production of *Behzti* at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre initiated debates over free speech and censorship. Principally based on post-immigrant family dynamics and religious hypocrisy, *Behzti* provoked outrage on the part of Sikh community elders, particularly with its rape scene set in a *gurdwara* or Sikh temple. Parts of the community found the play offensive to their religious sensitivities, and initially peaceful protests turned violent; the play was pulled from its run and the playwright, who received death threats, was forced to go into hiding. This successful censorship of the play also raised many questions relating to the silencing of women through intra-communal censorship, leading to stronger self-censorship. The events surrounding the *Behzti* Affair enable us to explore not only how censorship has persisted in Britain into the twenty-first century, through evolving into new forms, but also how the frontiers of free speech are contested and how measures of (un)acceptability fluctuate in accordance with particular socio-historical circumstances.

In 2010, Bhatti broke a six-year silence with a new play, *Behud*. *Behud* is a fictionalised representation of, and an imaginative response to, the controversial *Behzti* Affair, and Bhatti's experiences in its aftermath. The play functions as a key text on two levels. Peopled with community elders, the police, a politician, a director and a journalist, it offers a very acute exploration of censorship in its diverse contemporary forms. Significantly, not only types of censorship but also the people or the bodies involved who are performing this new kind of censorship is worth exploring. Formal state censorship has evolved into public censure, police defence, community pressure groups, and self-censorship. In addition, and more significantly, the primary focus of the section on *Behud* is concerned with the ways in which Bhatti meditates on the internal processes of self-censorship. *Behud* is a play in which the author figures as a censor and controlling figure over her characters and she turns inward to break down her own authoritarian position as author. The play leads to a kind of interiorized exploration of questions about the

authority of the author, the relationship of the author to the characters, and the internal processes of censorship. Thus, *Behud* is not simply an anti-censorship play or a direct attack on censorship, but rather an artistic response to the experience of censorship.

This study could have taken as its focus works like Harold Pinter's *Mountain Language* (1984), Caryl Churchill's *Softcops* (1984), Tariq Ali's *Iranian Nights* (1989), Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain* (1980), Samuel Beckett's *Catastrophe* (1982), David Greig's *Damascus* (2007), Tom Stoppard's *The Professional Foul* (1977) and Howard Brenton and David Edgar's *Pravda* (1985). These works are all more or less directly concerned with various forms of censorship. A fuller and more complete study of this topic would also have to consider these texts; however, the works I have selected as the focus of this dissertation provide material for a broader and multidimensional exploration of the topic. The four selected plays in this study offer a complete exploration of these historical shifts in its broader sense within the scope of this study. These plays function as exemplars of the above-mentioned significant periods, offering a case study for exploration of key shifts in the understanding and reconceptualisations of censorship. Due to its peculiar position, having been written before 1968 and performed and censored afterwards, Joe Orton's *What The Butler Saw* blazes the trail in tracing the consequences of the removal of formal state censorship. As a bridging text between pre-1968 and post-1968, the play lies across the threshold with regard to reflecting shifting social and cultural values, as well as the persistence of censorship in more complicated ways. Anthony Neilson's *The Censor* reads as a political statement as well as a shorthand for internal processes of self-censorship; the play more or less directly engages with the debates within feminism over pornography. As for Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti's plays, *Behzti* and its eventful reception point to increasingly more complicated and subtler ways of censorship and the new major targeting of censorship by religious and ethnic minorities; *Behud*, meanwhile, with its particular focus on the authorship, authority and censorship

triangle, leads to a kind of interiorized exploration of questions about the authority of the author, the relationship of the author to the characters, and the internal processes of censorship.



PART ONE
THEORIES OF CENSORSHIP

CHAPTER I

CONTEMPORARY GENEALOGY OF CENSORSHIP

Recently, censorship has come to be seen as a stimulating, dynamic and attractive territory for research. Over the last three decades, there has been new interest and rigour in theorising censorship.¹ *The Administration of Aesthetics* edited by Richard Burt (1994), *Circles of Censorship* edited by Nicholas Harrison (1995), *Censorship and Silencing: Practices of Cultural Regulation*² edited by Robert C. Post (1998), and *Censorship and Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age* edited by Beate Müller (2003) are the essential works already available on this topic for any attempt to conduct a serious study of theory of censorship.³ Each includes several articles reflecting on the issue from a number of

¹ In her essay titled “Censorship and Cultural Regulation: Mapping the Territory”, Beate Müller draws attention to the “proliferation of publications on censorship” and provides a list of internationally acclaimed scholars who work in this field including Jan and Aleida Assmann, Robert Darnton, Michael Holquist, Jonathan Dollimore, Stanley Fish, Richard Burt, Andrew Ross, and Annabel Patterson (2003: 1).

² This comprehensive study consists of valuable articles written by distinguished scholars including Judith Butler and evolved from a symposium entitled “Censorship and Silencing: Practices of Cultural Regulation”, which was held at the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 15-16 December 1995. “Censorship: Phenomenology, Representation, Contexts” was held at the University of Newcastle in September 2000, “Freedom of Expression in the Late Medieval and Early Modern World” was held at the University of California-Santa Barbara in February 2000. “Culture, Censorship and the State in 20th Century Italy” was held in London, October 2002. “East Germany Revisited: Second East German Studies Conference” was held in Berlin, October 2003. “Censorship and Self-Censorship: Theory and Ethics” was held at Oslo University College, April 26-27, 2012. Most recently, with the participation of eminent scholars such as Janet Clare and Richard Dutton, another conference entitled “New Perspectives on Censorship in Early Modern England: Literature, Politics and Religion” was held at Blaise Pascal University in Clermont-Ferrand, 1-3 December 2016. Online conference recordings are readily available: http://videocampus.univ-bpclermont.fr/index.php?cmd=rqCollection&id_collection=39

³ There are other various works published on the issue including Annabel Patterson’s *Censorship and Interpretation* (1984), Sue Curry Jansen’s *Censorship* (1988), Hyland and Sammells’s *Writing & Censorship in Britain* (1992), Richard Burt’s *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship* (1993), Michael G. Levine’s *Writing Through Repression* (1994), Adam Parkes’s *Modernism and the Theater of Censorship* (1996), *Giving Offense* edited by J. M. Coetzee (1996), Janet Clare’s *Art Made Tongue-tied by Authority* (1999), Richard Dutton’s *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England* (2000), Donald Thomas’s *Freedom’s Frontier: Censorship in Modern Britain* (2007), Ilan Stavans and Veronica Albin’s *Knowledge and Censorship* (2008), Leonard Freedman’s *The Offensive Art* (2009) and Iannaccaro and Iamartino’s *Enforcing and Eluding Censorship: British and Anglo-Italian Perspectives* (2014). The comprehensive studies on this issue also include two major encyclopaedias: Derek Jones’s four-volume *Censorship: A World Encyclopedia* (2001) and Jonathan Greene and Nicholas J. Karolides’s *Encyclopedia of Censorship* (2014). Furthermore, since its first publication in 1972, the quarterly journal *Index on Censorship* has been dedicated to promoting and protecting free speech. The journal helps artworks to be published which are otherwise censored or banned in their own countries around the world. In Turkey, an online platform named ‘Siyah Bant’ was founded in 2013 to record the instances of censorship. What is significant to note here is that this new appeal to censorship is not restricted to British scholarship; rather, it is of international concern all around the world.

different angles. More recently, Helen Freshwater has effectively engaged with these re-conceptualisation debates on censorship both in her article “Towards a Redefinition of Censorship” (2003) and in her monograph *Theatre Censorship in Britain: Silencing, Censure and Suppression* (2009).⁴ The increase in publications and conferences which set out to problematise the definition and operations of censorship signifies a newly-emergent tendency to consider its elusive, multifaceted and complex nature. Prior to the revival of this enthusiasm in censorship, Robert Post claims that it “used to be a very dull subject”, promising “little of analytical interest” (1998: 1). This widely-held traditional assumption has dramatically changed. The recent diversity of ongoing theoretical and methodological debates indicates that the conventional dichotomy in the understanding of censorship has come under sustained theoretical attack. This chapter will begin by examining what necessitated or led to a new curiosity and new ways of understanding censorship.

Censorship has traditionally been understood in terms of a simple political dichotomy: liberals versus conservatives. In the British context, there is an obvious political alignment, with the libertarian or anti-censorship attitude mostly associated with the left and the Labour Party, while the pro-censorship camp has been mostly associated with the right and the Conservative Party. To put it simply, the right favours it, the left opposes it; “the right acts as an agent of censorship, the left is its victim; the right is for ‘safe’ or ornamental art without sexual content, the left accepts confrontational public art with graphic sexual images; the right is for artistic decency, the left is for artistic diversity” (Burt 1994: xii-xiii). Thus, in this traditional view of censorship, by implication, whoever is censored is regarded as a target and smart while the censor is assumed to be narrow-minded, philistine and bigoted. This simplistic perception of the

⁴ For a summary of recent work on the theorisation of censorship, see Helen Freshwater’s article “Towards a Redefinition of Censorship”, pp. 225-245 and her book *Theatre Censorship in Britain: Silencing, Censure and Suppression*, pp. 3-15.

issue relies on the very crude dictum that censorship is bad and freedom of expression is good. It might be more difficult to actually find examples of that than one might suppose but it is surely connected to the legacy of pre-1968. The long-running existence of explicit and external state censorship up to 1968 might have played a significant role in contributing to this political dichotomy because it ideologically positions people, either for it or against it.⁵

Helen Freshwater identified this dichotomy in the thinking of the earlier theorists⁶ of censorship, including Richard Findlater, Nicholas de Jongh and Steve Nicholson (2009: 4). Freshwater argues that they adopt an openly “hostile attitude” towards censorship and their analyses are “predisposed towards critique and condemnation, rather than defence or justification” (2009: 4). They become, thus, ideologically positioned in this oppositional perception of censorship. Although all share common ground in condemning theatre censorship as a regressive act on the development of British theatre, their differences are matters of degree and treatment of the issue. The former Comptroller John Johnston’s work *The Lord Chamberlain’s Blue Pencil* (1990) lacks the open hostility towards censorship that Jongh, Nicholson and Findlater shared. Still, through his narration of the Lord Chamberlain’s archives, his work by implication proposes that the

⁵ A famous opponent of censorship, G. B. Shaw was a founding member of the socialist Fabian society and called the Lord Chamberlain “the Malvolio of St James’s Palace” (qtd. in Nicholson 2003: 1, 9). In a similar vein, the libertarian theatre critic Richard Findlater was asking in his column in *the Evening Standard* on 19 October 1956 “Do we still need the censor?” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 113). On the other hand, on 30 September 1956 in *Sunday Times*, Harold Hobson, a major conservative theatre critic of the time, sided with the censor, with an unusual justification for the Office “The reason that more good plays are being written in America than in England is not that America has no Lord Chamberlain. It is quite simply that America has more good dramatists” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 114). What is more, a very conservative organization the Public Morality Council, whose members mainly consisted of clergymen and upper class people, put pressure on the Office for ‘lax decisions’ and often called for stricter impositions on ‘inappropriate’ works for the good of society. Furthermore, the state subsidies channelled to the theatres through the Arts Council fluctuated in accordance with the shift in the administration: it was cut under conservative governments while improved by the Labour governments. As the household of the monarch, the Office itself, with its censors, mostly reflected conservative aristocratic order. The post of the Lord Chamberlain seemed to be a central figure to take sides with or against in this assumed political dichotomy.

⁶ The availability of the Lord Chamberlain’s archives in the early 1990s attracted some scholars into digging into this concealed system of censorship and bringing its secrets to light. Richard Findlater’s *Banned!* (1967), Nicholas de Jongh’s *Politics, Prudery and Perversions* (2000), and Steve Nicholson’s multi-volume *The Censorship of British Drama 1900–1968* (2001) are the fundamental and comprehensive works which are essentially based on the accounts of these archives.

regulative and external force of the licencing system of the censor before 1968 had had bad effects on British theatre.

Now that the basic idea of political alignment with respect to free speech has been introduced, a perhaps even more revealing way of addressing this question would be to trace its premise and epistemological foundations. In British literary tradition, the valorised position of free speech seems to have its roots in two oft-quoted landmarks: John Milton's satirical tract *Areopagitica* (1644) and John Stuart Mill's treatise *On Liberty* (1859). These classic works both celebrate freedom of expression and condemn censorship which restricts freedom of the press.

John Milton's *Areopagitica*⁷ (1644) champions free speech and the freedom of the press. The title of the tract "imitates the *Areopagiticus* of the Greek orator Isocrates (436-338 BC)" (Birch 2009: 70). In this rhetorically written work, Milton's target is the Presbyterians then in power and his essential aim is to "persuade Parliament to repeal its licensing order of 14 June 1643 [the Press Ordinance of June 14, 1643], which effectively reinstated Stuart press censorship" (Birch 2009: 70). He contests the licensing system which forces authors to submit their works to get a licence prior to publication. The rationale behind his argument is that

⁷ In 1945, the P.E.N. Club held a meeting to commemorate the 300th anniversary of John Milton's famous pamphlet *Areopagitica* and to criticise the repressing effects of censorship. As a participant of this meeting, George Orwell wrote a defiant essay entitled "The Prevention of Literature" to assess this organization one year later. To Orwell's dismay, no one tackled the question of freedom of press or even bothered to quote Milton's *Areopagitica*. He further argues that "[n]or was there any mention of the various books which have been 'killed' in England and the United States during the war. In its net effect the meeting was a demonstration in favour of censorship" (Orwell 2010: 1). Some attendants spoke for free sexual expression, some for the freedom of press but the one in India. But there was no mention of political freedom of speech. It is significant to note that this meeting was held just after the Second World War. Before and after this war, the world witnessed many dictatorial regimes (Franco, Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, McCarthy). During these politically delicate times, books were burned/banned/licensed in several countries. In Britain, during the Second World War, playwrights were prevented from touching upon political points through stricter licensing policies. Many works of art were exposed to censorship in order not to offend allies or enemies. Orwell expresses his dissatisfaction with the organization in a footnote to his essay: "It is fair to say that the P.E.N. Club celebrations, which lasted a week or more, did not always stick at quite the same level. I happened to strike a bad day. But an examination of the speeches (printed under the title Freedom of Expression) shows that almost nobody in our own day is able to speak out as roundly in favour of intellectual liberty as Milton could do 300 years ago – and this in spite of the fact Milton was writing in a period of civil war" (2010: 325).

such measures have only been used by, and are only fit for, degenerate cultures. In the regenerate English nation, now “rousing herself like a strong man after sleep,” men and women must be allowed to develop in virtue by participating in the clash and conflict of ideas. Truth will always overcome falsehood in reasoned debate (Greenblatt 2006: 1816).

To Milton, bad and good are inseparable; people should be allowed to read both bad books and good books and should be free to choose for themselves whether they are good or bad. Ideas should have a free market place in which the good will emerge and the bad will disappear. In Milton’s understanding, “Virtue lies in resisting evil, not being shielded from it. Truth is scattered, and can be removed only by active search” (Birch 2009: 70).

Milton believes that books have spirits and can never be dead, and he further maintains that the prevention of their access to the public and their repression through various forms of censorship, in his own words, means to kill a book. For him, “who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God’s image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God” (Milton 2006: 1817). However, in this defence of free speech, John Milton “excludes Roman Catholics from freedom to publish, regarding them as enemies of freedom themselves” (Birch 2009: 70) and Roman Catholicism as “priestly despotism” (Hill 1977: 154).

In a similar vein, John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* (1859) puts emphasis on individuality and the liberty of thought. In particular, Mill poses his critical challenge against the tyranny of majorities over individuals. By his own account, “If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind” (Mill 2001: 18). To him, human beings are given an important faculty – the faculty of reason, to enhance individual strength, diversity and originality. A blind reliance on prescribed traditional values creates masses, or, in Mill’s own words, “collective mediocrity”, imitating each other (2001: 62). Just like John Milton, Mill’s liberal aspirations or “tolerationist” attitude draws the line at

some point (Sammells 1992: 4). There is one caveat: to him, “this doctrine is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties”; and presents the logic behind this idea as follows:

We are not speaking of children, or of young persons below the age which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood. Those who are still in a state to require being taken care of by others, must be protected against their own actions as well as against external injury. For the same reason, we may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as in its nonage (Mill 2001: 14).

While these liberal assumptions hold that censorship of freedom of expression results in “a dull conformity”, Marxists like Herbert Marcuse regard free speech as conformity (Sammells 1992: 4). Drawing upon Mill’s *On Liberty*, Marcuse challenges these liberal views in his *Repressive Tolerance* (1965). Marxist understanding of free speech and censorship offers a unique analytical vantage point to which I will later return to further explore its implications in a discussion on the theoretical foundations of discursive transformation in political dichotomies. All in all, although both Milton and Mill draw lines at particular points, their glorification of free speech is significant in realising how traditional understanding of political alignments have been constructed and maintained.

Over the last 40 years, the reliability and credibility of this oppositional relationship set between two camps has been difficult to justify. The contested debates within feminism over pornography, coined “feminist sex wars”, seem to be a good example of how attitudes and criticisms of censorship have more broadly shifted since the 1960s (Long 2012: 12).⁸ In the 1960s, sexual permissiveness and promotion of free sex alongside increasing numbers of pornography and sex shops, particularly in Soho, were regarded by the left-liberals as part of the revolutionary positives of the decade and interpreted as a decisive break away from the conservative watchdogs of morality. For

⁸ Even the perception of the 1960s either as legendary for its sexual permissiveness or as the source of immoral degeneracy in British culture reflects deeply divided oppositional perspectives: the clash between counter-cultural/leftist and old-established/conservative values. For detailed discussion of the issue, see Part II, Chapter II: Censorship in the 1960s in this dissertation.

left-liberals, pornography signified two central freedoms: “freedom of expression and the freedom of the individual within the private realm” (Long 2012: 23). However, as the Swinging Sixties gave way to the 1970s, the feminist movement, which had ostensibly been associated with liberal politics for a long time, started to divide on the issue of pornography (Orr 1990: 171).

Opposing views within feminism might be roughly divided into three separate factions: pro-pornography feminists (also identified as ‘sex-positive’ feminists), anti-pornography feminists (identified as ‘radical feminists’) and anti-censorship feminists (identified as ‘liberal feminists’).

Pro-pornography feminists believe that pornography has potential benefits for women as well as the feminist movement. In essence, building upon the dictum ‘woman’s body, woman’s decision’, they support a woman’s right to participate in and consume pornography of her own will. A pro-porn feminist Wendy McElroy opens her book titled *XXX: A Woman’s Right to Pornography* with the following defiant words: “Pornography benefits women, both personally and politically” (1995: 1). She further claims that a woman has the right to explore and “pursue [her] own sexuality without shame or apology, without guilt or censure” (McElroy 1995: 1).

The defence of pornography on the grounds that it benefits women or is an exercise of their own free choice is bitterly dismissed by anti-porn feminist Dorchen Leidholdt as “a felicitous lie” (1990: 131). Wendy Stock argues that pro-pornography feminists have been brainwashed into false-consciousness so that they identify themselves with their oppressors “much like [...] concentration camp prisoners with their jailors” and thus serve to promote the patriarchal expression of female sexuality (1990: 150). Accordingly, radical feminists condemn pornographic films as they provide a derogatory and humiliating portrayal of women as the object of men’s erotic desire. They further maintain that pornography should be limited and controlled so as to “protect the

reputation and image of women” (Downs 1989: xii). To this end, they even call for a governmental clampdown on pornography.

Anti-censorship feminism takes a middle path between these two views and essentially advocates freedom of expression where “liberalism respects a private sphere within which government – that is, other people – ought not to find itself” (Wolfe 1990: 212). It should be left to the discretion and personal integrity of consenting adults. Like pro-pornography feminists, they support free circulation of sexual expression as they believe that censorship is worse than pornography, although they sometimes do not approve the content. Like anti-pornography feminists, they condemn patriarchal domination but reject any call for governmental intervention. Geoffrey R. Stone states, censorship is more harmful than pornography because “[l]aws prohibiting the distribution of obscene expression spill over and significantly limit the distribution of constitutionally protected expression as well” (1990: 175).⁹

Thus, considering anti-pornography feminists’ ideological interpretation of pornography, it can be concluded that advocacy of free speech unquestioningly is not something to be celebrated in all circumstances and censorship is not something to be resisted by any means. The rationale behind such an argument might be appropriately extended to include other marginalised or “vilified groups, such as gays and blacks” (Sammells 1992: 3). Similarly, such delicate and contentious issues as child abuse and pornography, animal porn, snuff films, hate speech, and racial and religious representations have tended to complicate and thwart any political dichotomies in recent discussions. The complexities of the debate over attitudes and criticisms of censorship might be observed in similar instances: while supporters of abortion rights call for restrictions on political demonstrations, “conservative pro-life groups defend the freedom

⁹ For further discussions over pornography, see Rae Langton’s “Subordination, Silence, and Pornography’s Authority”, pp. 261-283, and Leslie Green’s “Pornographizing, Subordinating, and Silencing”, pp. 285-311.

to picket” (Post 1998: 1). In a similar vein, “critical race theorists join with Jesse Helms to regulate hate speech” (Post 1998: 1).

Sexuality and its representation seem to have never fallen out of fashion and have usually become the concern of the state authorities in the United Kingdom. Unsurprisingly, other than these ongoing debates within feminism, pornography is also a prime example of an area in which the state has recently begun to intervene in new as well as old ways, showing that the ‘old’ focus of censorship may still not be entirely irrelevant. In December 2014, a new list of bans on the content of online pornographic films produced in the United Kingdom was introduced by the Conservative government. According to this proposal, tough measures will be implemented on improper content of pornographic films,¹⁰ the British Board of Films will be the regulator of these restrictions, porn websites will be exposed to the same measures imposed upon commercial DVDs, and porn web-sites will use an age-verification system to ensure their viewers are not over 18¹¹ (Griffin 2016). Since then, the forthcoming internet legislation has brought about some controversy. While introducing this new law concerning obscenity, David Cameron stated "I'm not making this speech because I want to moralise or scaremonger, but because I feel profoundly as a politician, and as a father, that the time for action has come. This is, quite simply, about how we protect our children and their innocence" (qtd. in Holehouse 2015).¹² However, the act has been attacked by many critics as “arbitrary” and “sexist” (Quinn 2014). Hooten claims that “the measures appear to take aim at female pleasure” (2014). In particular, the ban on female ejaculation has become a much-discussed issue. There was considerable discussion of the ban, especially by makers of

¹⁰ This new legislation will ban some sexual acts on the grounds of being harmful to minors and “life-endangering”: to name a few: aggressive whipping, caning, spanking, female ejaculation, face sitting, penetration by any object associated with violence, strangulation, physical restraint, and physical or verbal abuse, regardless of consent (Hooten 2014).

¹¹ Many people are not happy with this age verification system as it will reveal their identity and thus their private habits.

¹² Theresa May’s administration continues with this issue, firstly initiated by the previous Prime Minister David Cameron.

(self-declared) feminist pornography, who suggested that making female ejaculation illegal, but not male ejaculation, was problematically patriarchal.

These recent developments within the censorship debate signify a substantial disintegration of the simple pattern of traditional political dichotomies. This discursive transformation has multiple historiographical reasons. One might be simply that there is obviously a paucity of research in this field: many scholars have only just begun to tackle the question of theorising censorship, having realised that there is in fact no current theory of censorship. 1968 is a good starting point as a significant historical moment because any attempt to historicise and reveal the causes of this remarkable collapse of political camps necessitates going back to the abolition of state censorship within the British context. With the sudden break of this long-time pressure – the official licensing system exercised by the Lord Chamberlain – playwrights were suddenly liberated from the dictating rule of the blue pencil regarding what could be said and shown on the stage. Thus, many playwrights took up new experimental and outspoken varieties of form and content that defy censorship. More importantly, as discussed above, the regulative rules of St James' Palace dictating the British theatre might have channelled anti-censorship debates into a preoccupation with institutionalised state intervention. This seems to be one of the basic causes of this transformation.

However, it is tempting to say that this simple dichotomy was not ultimately true even then. Among many instances of this ilk, one is that, in March 1949, the Conservative MP and playwright Edward Percy Smith introduced a private members' bill in opposition to censorship and the Labour MP Michael Foot was his supporter. Ironically enough, although the post of the Lord Chamberlain was officially abolished under the administration of the Labour Party, the archives have later revealed that the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson was unwilling to remove the system completely, which procrastinated the finalisation of the system almost one year. He was worried about

offending materials that would humiliate public figures of significance. Thus, 1968 – the abolition of the cruder forms of state censorship and of the post of the Lord Chamberlain – sheds light upon an already ongoing disintegration of this simple political dichotomy which subsequently becomes more and more visible.

Robert Post and Beate Müller are unanimous in the idea that the end of the cold war was another significant factor among many historical causes of this discursive transformation in the discussions of censorship around the world (Post 1998: 1, Müller 2003: 3). The fall of the Berlin wall, the demise of the Soviet bloc, and public accessibility to “official records and other archival material” belonging to those repressive times, have played a crucial role in the dissolution of political polarization as well as in the upsurge of studies on censorship (Müller 2003: 3).¹³ Curiously, in the early 1990s, the Lord Chamberlain’s official records and archives were also readily made available to the public, three decades after the official abolition of the post in 1968. This huge pile of correspondence, memoranda, records and notes on the manuscripts submitted to the Office has provided invaluable insights into the workings of the Lord Chamberlain’s Office. The accessibility of this historical documentation might be only one cause, of course.¹⁴

Within the British context, the diversity of competing discourses circulating in the public sphere might be regarded as another cause of this transformation. In particular, with the advent of the dictum ‘personal is political’, consciousness-raising groups flourished and party politics has mostly given way to identity politics, addressing a variety of groups including feminists, supporters of gay and lesbian rights, pacifists, environmentalists and anti-racists.

¹³ Aleks Sierz writes that the fall of the Berlin Wall culminated in the fact that “the old ideological certainties disappear into the dustbin of history” (2001: 237).

¹⁴ For further reading, see Helen Freshwater’s article titled “The Allure of the Archive” where she underlines the “temptation” of archival material for the researchers (2003a: 6).

Societies cannot be regarded as homogenous due to the conflicting social attitudes of its citizens. In addition to rising identity politics, from the late 1960s onwards, Britain, as an increasingly multiracial society, has gone through significant social and cultural changes. In accordance with this development, the unquestioned celebration of freedom of speech has been problematical. Debates as to where the boundaries of freedom of speech should be drawn have become even more heated. Although best exemplified in the debates within feminism over pornography, many other contentious issues including the privatisation of art through sponsorship, political correctness, hate speech, and the questions concerning ethnic and religious minorities have been brought into discussion in the public sphere (Müller 2003: 3). This chapter will deal with these issues later.

At first glance, the removal of the official authority – the Lord Chamberlain’s Office – might have seemed to promise a secure atmosphere for free speech to flourish. It was, however, obvious that the abolition of institutionalised censorship did not mean that censorship ultimately went away. Rather, it persisted, evolving into different forms which were not necessarily state impositions. To borrow Raymond Williams’ terminology, one might argue that the newly ‘emergent’ forms of culture in the aftermath of the 1960s were not immediately incorporated into the prevailing ‘dominant’ culture.¹⁵ In other words, socially and culturally stigmatised or internalised matters are not expected to change overnight; it is not easy to suddenly do away with ‘residual values’ or social and cultural conditioning. Such issues as obscenity, homosexuality, religious and political satire were still kept on the public agenda as offensive matters for a long time, although they could be dealt with in a more liberated way. After the abolition, according to Aleks Sierz, “the nation’s moral guardians are no longer concentrated in the centre, but are diffused throughout society. The authoritarian model has been replaced by the plaintiff

¹⁵ For more on the concept of the ‘emergent’, see Raymond Williams’ “Dominant, Residual, and Emergent”, pp. 121-127.

model” (Sierz 2012b). Mary Whitehouse, known for her social conservatism, was the foremost name of this ‘plaintiff model’. She often brought prosecutions in cases she deemed unacceptable and corruptive for the nation’s good and morality. However, these given issues have been overshadowed by the controversies over representation of different racial and religious communities on the stage. This issue will be thoroughly examined in terms of the *Behzti* Affair in Chapter 5. More significantly, the establishment of The Broadcasting Standards Council under Lord Rees-Mogg in 1988 by Margaret Thatcher’s government indicated that the post of the Lord Chamberlain was in fact only substituted and that the state’s censorial intervention would now function more euphemistically and indirectly.

Over the last 50 years, censorship has acquired predominantly notorious associations.¹⁶ The hostile attitude towards the term was so deeply rooted that, as Frederick Schauer argues, “to praise an act of censorship is to verge on committing a linguistic mistake” (1998: 147), while Timothy Murray describes it as “anti-censorial prejudice” which means the “equation of liberty and anticensorship” (1997: 219). Murray further argues that preoccupation with the defence of free speech at all costs might be detrimental to thematic content as it “responds primarily to the chilling reality that censorship, not misogyny, homophobia, or racism, is what the sympathetic politicians, journalists, and patrons seem to accept as an identifiable and unacceptable threat to the arts” (1997: 217). This over-preoccupation with free speech might then lead to a disregard for significant social subjects. Thus, paradoxically, while unquestioningly defending free speech as an essential human right, some ideas might be silenced and underrepresented.

¹⁶ For a different reception of censorship, see Debora Shuger’s article titled “Civility and Censorship in Early Modern England”. Shuger gives the example of poems written in the immediate aftermath of a severe censorial intervention, the Bishops’ Ban. These poems deliver praiseworthy remarks on how rightful the act of censorship is (Shuger 1998: 89). They condemn satirists with the claim that their works tell lies, “maliciously defame their victims” and “violate the basic norms of Christian love” (Shuger 1998: 89).

In opposition to censorship, there also seems to be a consensus in the political arena between the left and the right who “adopt the same rhetoric” and say “they are against censorship and for diversity; each side accuses the other of trying to exercise censorship” (Burt 1994: xv). Thus, irrespective of political lines, censorship has come to be associated with bigotry and other pejorative connotations. This agreement on the condemnation of censorship resonates with Jean-Jacques Pauvert’s account of censorship as

one of those convenient words which are widely used today because they allow people to seem, with a minimum of effort, decent and right-thinking, the same as everyone else these days. The Left, the Right and the Centre all agree that one should be anti-censorship, anti-war, anti-racism, pro-human rights or freedom of expression (qtd. in Harrison 1995: 1).

Yet, Pauvert concludes his remarks with the caveat that “these are impressive convictions, which don’t last five minutes when they are put to test (qtd. in Harrison 1995: 1). One of the instances that justifies Pauvert’s claim is the use of the British Board of Film Classification instead of Film Censorship in the United Kingdom. Even this ‘pejorative’ word is avoided and euphemistic¹⁷ expressions are substituted. Thus, obviously censorship has not gone away but has maintained its existence albeit more moderately. Yet, the paternalistic and interventionist state, by implication, is still manifest.

Most significantly, many scholars including Helen Freshwater, Robert C. Post, Judith Butler, Nicole Moore, Paul Hyland, and Neil Sammells have underscored that this new discursive transformation is heavily indebted to Michael Foucault’s repressive hypothesis and theory of power. However, before embarking on an exploration of Foucauldian ideas, it is first necessary to examine Herbert Marcuse’s ideas on the concept of free speech, which predate Foucault, to complete the essential picture of the theory’s foundations.

¹⁷ The preference of euphemistic expressions, Beate Müller argues, “bear[s] an uncanny resemblance to Orwellian Newspeak” (2003: 13).

This transformation was seen as a necessity by the German philosopher and neo-Marxist thinker Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), a prominent figure among others like Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer in the Frankfurt school which particularly challenged the tenets of modernism and mass culture.¹⁸ They drew upon the Second World War experience and believed that fascism fed on modernism. Marcuse was also an influential figure in the 1960s movement and asserted that the working class movement must be replaced by student activism and several minority groups as the “gravediggers of capitalism” (qtd. in Sim 2004: 44). The logic behind this argument was that Marcuse, writing in the 1960s, realised that the tenets of the post-industrial society were remarkably different from that of Marx’s time and believed that in this “one-dimensional or non-oppositional society”, a change in the traditional left was rendered indispensable. This transformation refashioned the nature of politics, moving the emphasis from class-based politics to the notion of identity politics.

As stated earlier in this chapter, Herbert Marcuse challenges the liberal or “tolerationist” theory which describes censorship as dull conformity, as it is traditionally echoed in Milton’s *Areopagitica* as well as Mill’s *On Liberty*. Marcuse finds freedom of expression a compliance and states that “paradoxically, freedom is to be found in censorship” (Sammells 1992: 4). Contrary to its glorified and valorised status in theory, Marcuse believes that free speech not only turns out to be empty but also harmful as people are, in practice, subjected to pseudo-liberty. Free speech as an outlet of expression impliedly assents to the authority maintaining and reproducing the prevailing system. In his *Repressive Tolerance*, Marcuse first identifies the characteristic of liberal considerations of freedom of expression and then argues how it is flawed, so rendering it meaningless:

¹⁸ Significantly, as Stuart Sim states, “Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse challenged entrenched aspects of orthodox Marxist thought- such as the role of the Communist Party and the concept of class. Adorno and Horkheimer’s jointly authored *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) even questioned the validity of the Enlightenment project itself, of which Marxism is regarded as a constituent part” (2004: 40).

[T]he all-inclusive character of liberalist tolerance was, at least in theory, based on the proposition that men were (potential) *individuals* who could learn to hear and see and feel by themselves, to develop their own thoughts, to grasp their true interest and right and capabilities, also against established authority and opinion. This was the rationale of free speech and assembly. Universal toleration becomes questionable when its rationale no longer prevails, when tolerance is administered to manipulated and indoctrinated individuals who parrot, as their own, the opinion of their masters, for whom heteronomy has become autonomy (1970: 90).

According to Marcuse, the concept of tolerance only serves to perpetuate servitude to the dominant authority. Contrary to liberal ideas championing freedom, Marxist understanding puts emphasis on equality. Without equal terms, to have freedom means nothing much at all. Thus, for Marxists, freedom is a big lie. Feeding on false consciousness, the capitalist system only offers controlled domains of freedom. The promise of free speech closes off radical potentialities, instead leading to reconciliation with the tenets of the status quo. As Marcuse believes, no genuine liberation is possible unless false consciousness is broken (1970: 111). This might be possible through “stopping the words and images which feed this consciousness” (Marcuse 1970: 111). He exemplifies the ways of “resistance at particular occasions, boycott, non-participation at the local and small-group level [which] may perhaps prepare the ground” (Marcuse 1970: 101). Otherwise, people will be reproducing what is presented to them by the authorities within the capitalist system. Thus, censorship might work in two ways: firstly, ideological resistance might flourish best under pressure or censorship¹⁹ and, secondly, Marcuse obviously points at how censorship might also function as a countermeasure. By his own account, “To be sure, this is censorship, even precensorship, but openly directed against

¹⁹ Herbert Marcuse’s contention that pressure and censorship might ultimately yield to stronger resistance is resonated in Slavoj Žižek’s words in his article entitled “The Populist Temptation” in the very recently published *Great Regression* in April 2017, pp. 185-197. With the contribution of very distinguished figures, Arjun Appadurai, Zygmunt Bauman, and Nancy Fraser, to name a few, the book principally argues that, as its title signifies, the world is going through a great regression and tackles the questions of growing anti-immigrant tendencies, xenophobia, nationalism, and extreme right-wing policies. In the concluding words to his article, as well as to the book, Žižek states “Trump’s victory has created a totally new political situation, with opportunities for a more radical political left. Now is the time for the hard work of forming that left. Or, to quote Mao: ‘There is disorder under heaven; the situation is excellent’” (2017: 197).

the more or less hidden censorship that permeates the free media” (Marcuse 1970: 111). What is important here is that this censorship must be creative rather than repressive (Sammells 1992: 5).

At this point, Marcuse’s discussion of free speech as a pseudo-liberty and controlled territory of the capitalist system brings another figure into the picture: Jürgen Habermas, who is one of the major philosophers of the Second World War period. As the assistant of Adorno and the last representative of the Frankfurt School, Habermas is termed post-Marxist as he diverges from its principles in many aspects such as his perception of the dynamics of conflict in society, and his solutions to the problems. In his first major book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), Habermas deals with his best-known theory of the public sphere and offers a critical take on late capitalism. Habermasian theory describes the public sphere as an informal, free social arena where people come together and engage in critical thinking about the contemporary issues of the day. Through this method of argumentation, instead of jumping at hasty conclusions, they arrive at rational solutions to the present problems. This platform has an inclusive nature, and accordingly, as Habermas states, “[a]ccess is guaranteed to all citizens” (2010: 1571). Regardless of social and economic status, everybody can participate in argumentation and deliver his/her opinions because only better ideas count in this place. As a result of this reasoning, public opinion is generated to hopefully have an impact on governmental decisions. Thus, political power will be divided among more people, which will render the political system more legitimate.

When Marcuse and Habermas are considered together, both philosophers condemn the logic of capitalism and look for a solution. However, they differ from one another in terms of the basis their doctrines rely on. Unlike Marcuse, Habermas does not negate the impact of free speech and promotes public spheres where free speech can flourish to offer solutions to the failing aspects and shortcomings of the system. The

fundamental point here is that Habermas offers a solution from within the system itself, his suggestion is to rehabilitate and perhaps reshape it into a form of ‘smiling capitalism’. In other words, if the system cannot be changed, it might be reformed as much as possible. Conversely, Marcuse negates the idea of free speech in a capitalist society. He dismisses the promises of free speech as pseudo-liberties as long as the capitalist system remains and advances on false consciousness. Rather than looking for solutions within the capitalist system itself, he advocates that a root and branch change through socialism might bring about a genuine solution.

In a similar vein, the French philosopher Michael Foucault (1926-1984), who was interested in the ways power operates, also dates this change in power relations back to the 1960s and marks 1968 (the year of student activism and the peak of the Swinging Sixties) as a crucial historical moment in Western countries. Unlike some who claim that the 1960s were a failure and disappointment, for Foucault, “after 1968 people in France, and to a certain extent in the rest of the world, were open to ideas that they would not previously have even considered” (Oliver 2010: 33). The real success was the change in the minds of ordinary people (Oliver 2010: 49). This is best exemplified in the ‘culture of deference’ within the British context. A deep-rooted phenomenon and traditional practice in British society, the ‘culture of deference’ became a much-discussed issue when people started to question it in the 1950s and the 1960s. The fact that people started talking about it indicates that it was then coming under threat and class structures became more difficult to defend. Although this deferential positioning in society still perpetuates the hierarchical operations of power albeit less conspicuously, it has, in effect, weakened.

Marcuse’s emphasis on creative censorship seems to be a precursor to an examination of Foucault’s writings on the ‘repressive hypothesis’. Foucault’s inquiry into the question of the repressive hypothesis goes back to repression or censorship of sex, which is primarily a Victorian problem that has remained with us. Famously known for

its prudery, the Victorian age stigmatised sexuality as taboo, an unmentionable subject in society. Instead, Foucault refers to the eighteenth century, when sexuality had become an economic and political question:

At the heart of the economic and political power of population was sex: it was necessary to analyse the birth rate, the age of marriage, the legitimate and illegitimate births, the precocity and frequency of sexual relations, the ways of making them fertile and sterile, the effects of unmarried life or of the prohibitions, the impact of contraceptive practices (Foucault 1998: 25-6).

Due to this close policing of sexual matters, “between the state and the individual, sex became an issue, and a public issue no less; a whole web of discourses, special knowledges, analyses, and injunctions settled upon it” (Foucault 1998: 26). This stigma of sexuality strengthened in the Victorian era. Thus, the triangular relationship of sex, power and repression worked “according to the simple and endlessly reproduced mechanism of law, taboo, and censorship” (Foucault 1998: 84). However, paradoxically, its repression functioned as “a factor which brings sex into discourse” (Horrocks and Jevtic 1997: 126). The discourse of sexuality came into being through proliferative and creative disguises, possibilities and forms. It effectively sneaked into social discourse, as well as practice, breaking with “the dangerous margins: the brothel and the mental hospital” to which it had been supposedly prisoned (Sammells 1992: 5). Repression brings about incitement to transgression; in other words, censorship not only paradoxically underpins “the peculiar allure of the censored”, but also “the defiance of taboos seems an act of self-assertion, a declaration of individuality, and a form of political statement” (Sammells 1992: 6). Foucault states that

If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom” (qtd. in Sammells 1992: 6).

Foucault revolutionised the perception of power, extending Gramsci's exploration of the concept of 'hegemony'. He realised that the exercise of power was not necessarily about its concentration or localisation in the hands of a sovereign. State power is crucial again but power does not tend to reside in one person. Thus, the state does not hold a monopoly of power but rather power is spread or diffused in many different directions; that is, power is partially divided across bureaucratic institutions, organisations and the whole network of social relations. For Foucault, power is "an intrinsic element of all human relations" which underlines its constitutive nature in social relations (Oliver 2010: 43).

Providing this complicated and dispersed view of power, Foucault introduced the possibility to "escape from the limited field of juridical sovereignty and State institutions, and instead base our analysis of power on the study of techniques and tactics of domination" (Foucault 1980: 102). The conceptualisation of power as diffused and sophisticated shows that states do not have the monopoly of power. It has, thus, refashioned the traditional understanding of censorship which relies on the concentration of power in the hands of a censorial agent (Post 1998: 1-2, Freshwater 2003b: 4-6). In accordance with the Foucauldian reformulation of power, one might argue that any absolute reliance on the straightforward or vertical relationship between the censor and the censored runs the risk of falling into over-simplification. All in all, this dichotomising attitude has been defied and transformed into a much more complicated and nuanced discourse.

Due to the above-given multiple historiographical and epistemological causes, there has been an influential shift in theories of and approaches to censorship over the last 30 years. The conventional or 'prohibitive' understanding of censorship, arguing that the censorial act is implemented primarily through an external force by act of law, has come under sustained theoretical challenge in recently published books and held

conferences as given in the beginning of this chapter. In these current arguments of censorship, many scholars²⁰ have put emphasis on the contention that the conventional conception of censorship has fallen out of fashion.

While Annabel Patterson defines the conventional conception of censorship as “the direct control over the bodies of writers exercised by men with sovereign power” (1990: 901), Beate Müller states that it “was seen as a set of concrete measures carried out by someone in a position of authority” like the Lord Chamberlain or the Master of Revels (2003: 4). Neil Sammells states that the traditional view of censorship is defined as “the repressive intervention of authority, its presence traced most clearly in the operations of law” (1992: 1). In a similar vein, Judith Butler maintains that according to this traditional view of censorship, “the power is usually presumed to be wielded by a subject who speaks and who declares that another shall not speak or that another’s speech is not to qualify as “speech” in a restricted sense” (1998: 247). As is obvious from the above given descriptions, this traditional view of censorship is formed upon the dichotomising relationship between the censored and the censor or the oppressed and the oppressor. This understanding of censorship is not completely wrong, of course. It is still possible to see repressive state interventions in artworks and free expression around the world, which will be discussed later.

Over the last 30 years, the ‘new censorship debate’ has posed a serious challenge to the accepted traditional view of censorship or to “this faceless orthodoxy”, as Helen Freshwater would describe it (2003b: 2). Drawing upon the historical and epistemological transformation, many scholars of the ‘new censorship’ debate pointed to the shortcomings

²⁰ The new interest in the reformulation of censorship which has, broadly speaking, improved from the early 1990s onwards has been identified as the ‘new censorship debate’, with particular attention paid to the complexities, nuances and diversity of censorship. To name a few: Richard Burt and Helen Freshwater identify this as ‘the new censorship debate’ respectively in “Introduction” to *The Administration of Aesthetics* (1994: xi), and “Redefinition” (2003b: 1). Similarly, what Robert Post describes as the ‘remarkably innovative new scholarship’ in his “Censorship and Silencing” (1998: 2), Beate Müller defines as the ‘new censorship’ in her “Censorship and Cultural Regulation: Mapping the Territory” (2003: 1).

and narrowness of the traditional view of censorship. The argument was that the conventional conception of censorship over-accentuates the state-driven or institutional act of prohibition at the expense of the more complicated and nuanced nature and workings of censorship. Judith Butler argues that when

power is instanced as the act of censorship, figured as an efficacious action that one subject performs upon another [...], power is reduced to that which is externally imposed upon a subject. Subjects are understood as outside power, relaying the effects of power, but not considered one of those effects (1998: 247).

The traditional assumption of censorship implies that “the censor demands cuts from the text, and the author or an editor seeks to circumvent the censor by replacing the cut material. Censorship is implicitly defined as a strictly repressive activity centered in the court and implicitly opposed to the antithetical practice of uncensoring” (Burt 1998: 17). Thus, overemphasis on one-way or the straightforward regulative and prohibitive model of censorship risks underestimating the potentiality of a text or resistance and experience of the artist.²¹ In other words, it runs the risk of reducing the text to an inactivated and passivized position. More significantly, to consider censorship as an external coercion on the artwork or the artist’s speech suggests that an artistic work or speech would be otherwise completely free of any censorial influence.

Thus, rather than this restrictive model, they have tended to provide a broader definition or wider application of censorship. As stated above, this new reformulation has been significantly informed by Foucault who asserts “censorious power circulates amongst different agents, rather than residing in a single institution or central authority, initially appears to reassure” (Freshwater 2003b: 12). Drawing upon Foucault’s theorisation of power, many scholars of the new censorship debate have underlined that censorship is not only omnipresent and ineluctable but also productive in effect. This

²¹ This point has been raised by Richard Burt, Judith Butler, Michael Holquist, Annette Kuhn, and Helen Freshwater respectively in their works (Burt 1998: 19, Butler 1998: 247, Holquist 1994: 17, Kuhn 1988: 4, Freshwater 2003b: 1).

constitutive model of censorship will be explored here with alternative definitions of the scholars who have engaged in this re-evaluation process.

Constitutive forms of censorship concentrate on the “omnipresent, structural necessity” of censorship (Freshwater 2003b: 1). Unlike that implicated by the traditional view of censorship, no utterance can come into being free from the sophisticated social network woven through power relations. There is no polarity or radical opposition between the censored and free speech or repression and freedom. Free speech has traditionally been glorified as an idealized notion in libertarian and pluralistic societies but there is no ideal like unfettered speech. In his defiance of the traditional view of censorship,²² this ‘either/or’ binarism of freedom and repression is identified by Michael Holquist as naivety because “the resulting illusion, that censorship is a vice to be overcome through morally guided will, assumes that there either is censorship or not – that a complete absence of censorship is somehow possible” (Holquist 1994: 16). Embracing a constitutive understanding of censorship, he further states “To be for or against censorship as such is to assume a freedom no one has. Censorship is. One can only discriminate among its more and less repressive effects” (Holquist 1994: 16). Thus, for him, as censorship is unavoidable, “the removal of overtly repressive institutions, or the introduction of legislation which promises to deliver ‘free speech’, are merely palliatives” (Freshwater 2003b: 3).

Annette Kuhn asserts that “to assume that censorship only prohibits or represses is to forget that censorship might equally well be productive in its effects”: failure to recognise the complexity of censorship leads to diminishing the censored object into an “inert, passive” position, subordinated to the censorial body (1988: 4). The interrelationships between the text and censorial dynamics bear a complexity that

²² He describes the traditional understanding of censorship as “the who-whom model” or “the persecutor-victim model”; and believes that it is, if not completely wrong, then inadequate to explore the complexities of censorship because there is not “an absolute choice between prohibition and freedom” (Holquist 1994: 16).

transcends the limiting forces of a ‘conventional understanding of censorship’. Kuhn offers her own definition as follows:

Censorship is not reducible to a circumscribed and predefined set of institutions and institutional activities, but is produced within an array of constantly shifting discourses, practices and apparatuses. It cannot, therefore, be regarded as either fixed or monolithic. [It] is an ongoing process embodying complex and often contradictory relations of power (1988: 127).

The conception of censorship as constitutive is reiterated by Richard Burt’s “more complex and nuanced model” which puts emphasis on the prohibitive as well as productive nature of censorship” (1998: 17). Burt states that censorship no longer has a stable or fixed place, it “can be located virtually anywhere: not only in the marketplace and in government agencies [...] but also in the institution of criticism itself (one man’s criticism is another man’s censorship)” (1998: 32). In opposition to the old fashioned dichotomising understanding of censorship, he presents his “deconstructive” definition of censorship: *dispersal* and *displacement* instead *removal* and *replacement* (Burt 1998: 17 [Burt’s emphasis]).

In her definition of the ‘new censorship’, Beate Müller claims social communication is not only constituted by “institutionalized, interventionist (‘regulatory’)” means of censorship but also it is highly affected by “‘constitutive’ or ‘structural’” censorship (2003: 1). Censorship as a structural necessity virtually encompasses the whole practice of social life from the simple to the most complicated social networks. Robert Post construes a new scholarship

that has taken a more rigorous and uncompromising view [...] If censorship is a technique by which discursive practices are maintained, and if social life largely consists of such practices, it follows that censorship is the norm rather than the exception. Censorship materializes everywhere (1998: 2).

This view of censorship is informed by Pierre Bourdieu's "economy of symbolic exchanges" (Freshwater 2003b: 6; Müller 2003: 37; Burt 1998: 18-9).²³ Bourdieu draws attention to the structural necessity of censorship:

The specialized languages that schools of specialists produce and reproduce through the systematic alteration of the common language are, as with all discourses, the product of a *compromise* between *an expressive interest* and a *censorship* constituted by the very structure of the field in which the discourse is produced and circulates (1991: 2 [Bourdieu's emphasis]).

In other words, choosing between the speakable and the unspeakable entails both censorship and expression. Any single utterance comes into being through a process of selection and exclusion. According to Bourdieu, the need for explicit censorship imposed by the authority diminishes as the workings of internalisation become stronger. He gives rational ground for that as follows:

Censorship is never quite as perfect or as invisible as when each agent has nothing to say apart from what he is objectively authorized to say: in this case he does not even have to be his own censor because he is, in a way, censored once and for all, through the forms of perception and expression that he has internalized and which impose their form on all his expressions (Bourdieu 1991: 138).

Thus, the choice of exclusion and selection is fundamental to the construction of speech or identity. Another theoretician who foregrounds the structural necessity of censorship within language is Stanley Fish. He maintains, "Interpretation is the source of texts, facts, authors, and intentions. Or to put it another way, the entities that were once seen as competing for the right to constrain interpretation (text, reader, author) are now all seen to be the products of interpretation" (Fish 1980: 16-7). The reception by that "interpretative community" confirms the integrity of each statement (Fish 1980: 104).

²³ Helen Freshwater's examination of the theoretical foundations underlying this shifting understanding of censorship includes, alongside Foucault, Fish and Bourdieu, Freud, Lacan, Althusser, Derrida and Judith Butler. For a detailed discussion, see her introduction to *Theatre Censorship in Britain: Silencing, Censure and Suppression*, pp. 1-15.

Judith Butler describes this new model of censorship with a concept borrowed from psychoanalysis, “foreclosure”, in which there is “a primary form of repression, one that is not performed by a subject but, rather, whose operation makes possible the formation of the subject” (1998: 255). As the integral part of communication, Butler further states, this form of censorship operates “as the constituting norm by which the speakable is differentiated from the unspeakable” (1998: 255). People are constituted as social subjects through the exercise of censorship. It is so inherently embodied in people’s social lives. It is not a norm imposed by an external agent but is dispersed across social relations.

In a similar vein, Sue Curry Jansen dismisses the idea of ultimate freedom after the abolition of official censorship as a “Good Lie” (1991: 4).²⁴ She puts emphasis on the constitutive and all-encompassing nature of censorship in her alternative description of censorship:

My definition of the term encompasses all socially structured proscriptions or prescriptions which inhibit or prohibit dissemination of ideas, information, images, and other messages through a society’s channels of communication whether these obstructions are secured by political, economic, religious, or other systems of authority. It includes both overt and covert proscriptions and prescriptions (1991: 221).

Censorship becomes not only ineluctable but also constitutive. As Jansen maintains, it involves a number of dynamics working at once such as the institutions of criticism like censure, media pressure, and dominant ideology or values. In other words, censorship encompasses the whole practice of social life from the simple to the most complicated social networks.

²⁴ According to Sue Curry Jansen, this idea goes back to the Enlightenment where the Age of Reason liberated thought from the dictating power of church, state censorship and patronage (1991: 4). However, she claims that this was “Liberalism’s “Good Lie” as “censorship is an enduring feature of all human communities” (1991: 4). It still perpetuates and direct methods of social regulation have merely been replaced by more indirect constitutive forms like market censorship (Jansen 1991: 4).

The constitutive understanding of censorship partially draws a pessimistic picture within these encompassing, ineluctable and omnipresent censorial mechanisms. However, it is Foucault again who claims that limitations and transgression are interdependent: “a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgressions would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows” (Foucault 1977: 34). The emergence of confrontational and subversive art entails the presence of pre-existing norms and restrictions. More importantly, for Foucault, transgression does not lead to the ultimate disappearance of limits but just “affirms limited being” (1977: 28). Thus, Foucault “severs transgression’s traditional association with liberation or progression” (Freshwater, 2003b: 13). He sees censorial restrictions as not only inevitable but also necessary. Power is, according to Foucault, “productive, as constructing knowledge and social practices” (Post 1998: 2). Thus, according to this new scholarship, there is an analogy between censorship and productivity, “not as one or more discrete acts of repressive control over free expression, but as a ‘normal’ and ‘constitutive’ part, indeed, a very condition, of free expression” (Couvares 1996: 10).

This broader definition of censorship as a constitutive and structural necessity introduces a further complication. One might give a wide application of the concept as involving all discursive mediums in communication. Yet, there is one caveat: one might also argue that this may be “misleading because it runs the risk of equating very different forms of control by confusing censorship with social norms affecting and controlling communication” (Müller 2003: 9). Embracing the latter argument, the new censorship debate, Robert Post argues,

tends to veer between the concrete mechanisms of silencing and the abstraction of struggle. The result seems to flatten distinctions among kinds of power, implicitly equating suppression of speech caused by state legal action with that caused by the market, or by the dominance of a particular discourse, or by the institution of criticism itself. It tends also to flatten variations among kinds of struggles, de-emphasizing the difference

between, say, the agonism of poets and that of legal aid clients. The challenge is thus how to preserve the analytic force of the new scholarship without sacrificing the values and concerns of more traditional accounts” (1998: 4).

In a similar vein, Helen Freshwater maintains that this broad definition does “often fail to acknowledge the experience of those who consider themselves censored” (2003b: 1). Without this concern over the experience of the censored, she further states, one might run the risk of “perpetuating procedures of exclusion” (2003b: 1). Her redefinition also rejects the constitutive model’s tendency to “denounce an unsophisticated, or popular, apprehension of censorship” (2003b: 4). Helen Freshwater recognises the power of constitutive censorship but she notes that it is important to remember the specificity of a particular historical moment which should not be overlooked because “norms are not fixed, but are instead subject to constant change” (2003b: 9). Furthermore, theoretically speaking, utterances might come into being through processes of exclusion and selection but one should acknowledge that cruder forms of censorial intervention are possible as well as conscious manifold challenges of domination and censorship (Freshwater 2003b: 9).

This idea is reiterated in Michael Levine’s *Writing through Repression* where he describes a style of writing in which “opposing forces are bound to each other in a relationship of conflictual interdependence [...] censorship functions as an obstacle that *cannot* and yet *must* be overcome, as an impediment whose very resistance makes another, more equivocal and double-edged style of writing possible” (1995: 2 [Levine’s emphasis]). Thus, censorship might be thought “as a debilitating impediment and [...] as an impetus to stylistic innovation” (Levine 1995: 2). The constitutive role of censorship in bringing the writing subject into being is simultaneously inhibitive as well as provocative. Drawing on the Freudian idea that repressed psychic material returns in different forms, like displacement or condensation, Levine applies this idea to stylistic

devices and strategies used by authors to outwit or circumvent the censor (Levine 1995: 4).

Judith Butler identifies a similar subversion in the conventional regulations of censorship as “performative contradiction” in which the effort to restrain becomes dysfunctional and paradoxically results in proliferation (1998: 250). Censorial statements might be counter-intuitive as they re-stage the undesirable banished subject and culminate in its generation. Judith Butler argues that “the regulation that *states what it does not want stated* thwarts its own desire, conducting a performative contradiction, saying precisely what it does not want said” (1997: 250 [Butler’s emphasis]).²⁵ “That censorship necessarily includes the other it seeks to exclude”, Michael Holquist maintains, is “a hopeful sign that any set of prohibitions, no matter how stringent, has loopholes” (1994: 15). It is promising because “If overt censorship heightens awareness of excluded material, it may also generate sophisticated and complicit audiences who are aware of the dual structure of the censored text” (Freshwater 2003b: 10). This idea is reiterated in American political scientist James C. Scott’s words: “Subordinate groups must find ways of getting their message across, while staying somehow within the law. This requires an experimental spirit and a capacity to test and exploit all the loopholes, ambiguities, silences, and lapses available to them” (1990: 138). There is no fixed meaning irrespective of its interpretive reception. Holquist says “Censors intend to construct rather than prohibit. What they wish to make is a certain kind of text, one that can be read in only one way: its grammatical (or logical) form will be seamlessly coterminous with all

²⁵ Elsewhere, Richard Burt counter-argues Judith Butler’s performativity idea: “If everything is a performance, it seems that certain performatives, particularly those having to do with the law, are not subject to the irony: they are totally serious. Apparently not everything can be folded into subversive parody” (1998: 33). Leo Bersani more severely criticises Judith Butler’s argument of ‘performative contradiction’ as exaggeration of “the subversive potential of merely inane behaviour” and further claims that “Resignification cannot destroy; it merely presents to the dominant culture spectacles of politically impotent disrespect. Is this truly subversive, and, more fundamentally, what does subversion mean? Subversion, still a central term in Butler’s thinking, means first of all, according to the dictionary, overthrowing a system, but in current academic political discourse it seems to mean something weaker than that, referring to behaviour that undermines general principles. In any case, it is extremely doubtful that resignification, or redeployment, or hyperbolic miming, will ever overthrow anything” (1995: 48).

its rhetorical (or semiotic) implications” (1994: 22). However, this desire is counter-intuitive, self-subversive or undermines its own claim.

A text still tends to have potential to evade censorship through transgression by benefiting from flexibility of language. Furthermore, as Michael Holquist argues, “one of the ironies that define censorship as a paradox is that it predictably creates sophisticated audiences. The reader of a text known to be censored cannot be naïve, if only because the act of interdiction renders a text parabolic” (1994: 14). According to Richard Burt, censoring is a version of *fetishism* as it “permits or blocks access and entry to the literary field” and more importantly, it makes the text more desirable “either because it is the uncensored version or because it is the censored version” (1998: 19). That is the allure of the censored text, best exemplified in the case of D. H. Lawrence’s *The Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. The publishers of the book, who had been charged with violating the Obscene Publications Act of 1959, were acquitted in 1960. After this release, “the novel sold six million copies in Britain alone over the next twenty years” (Sammells 1992: 7).

The ways of challenging censorship might be through Aesopian language, as Lev Loseff puts it. Even the absence of unspeakable material might be telling. To Pierre Macherey, a book “circles about the absence of that which it cannot say, haunted by the absence of certain repressed words which make their return. The book is not the extension of a meaning; it is generated from the incompatibility of several meanings, the strongest bond by which it is attached to reality, in a tense and ever-renewed confrontation” (1978: 80).

From the early 2000s onwards, the constitutive model of censorship has come under theoretical attack. In particular, Helen Freshwater, Beate Müller and Nicole Moore point to the shortcomings of the constitutive view of censorship in their different writings. The contention is that if one is ineluctably surrounded by social networks afflicted with censorial mechanisms, then there is almost no possibility to confront it or outwit the censor and one is desperately condemned to reproduce these operations at the expense of

one's personal autonomy or resistance. It does not provide room for any confrontational step.

Freshwater argues that “the wide application of the term can certainly appear to overwhelm or trivialise its significance” (2003b: 16). Michael Holquist puts emphasis on the dual nature of the censored text. In doing so, he underscores that censorship is ubiquitous with a caveat – “it is arbitrary as well” (1994: 18). For him, saying all texts are censored is a loose description because “at this overabstracted level, the concept begins to lose its usefulness” (Holquist 1994: 23). Freshwater believes that the “heterogeneity of censorship” should be foregrounded with particular attention to different materialisations of censorship, from the traditionally repressive imposed by an institution of the state, to the administrators of charity organisations, censure, local governments, corporate sponsorship, and subsidies (2003b: 17). She offers her own reconceptualisation: “an inclusive model of censorship, which acknowledges these diverse manifestations, is required by the individuals who are subject to such acts of critical exclusion, authoritarian intervention and institutional interference” (Freshwater 2003b: 17).²⁶ The emphasis should be on socio-historical specificity and the experience of the person who claims to be censored. To clarify her stance in this argument, she regards censorship “as a continuum, upon which it is possible to place the brutal extremes of incarceration or murder at one end, and the shadowy operations of constitutive exclusion at the other. Their connection is thus established, without negating their differences” (2003b: 18).²⁷ Her definition tends to recognise censorship as “a process, realised through the relationships between censorious agents, rather than a series of actions carried out by a discrete or isolated authority” (2003b: 1).

²⁶ In her redefinition of censorship, Freshwater borrows Richard Burt's description of censorship as “dispersal and displacement”, but she underscores that her theorisation differs from Richard Burt's on the grounds that she pursues a model of diversity with an appreciation of different measures of imposition and regulation (1998: 17, 2003b: 18).

²⁷ Helen Freshwater borrows the idea of ‘continuum’ from Judith Butler (1998: 249).

According to Beate Müller, this broader and constitutive view of censorship as a structural necessity risks “equating censorship with any kind of social control” to the detriment of its “heuristic potential” (2003: 1). According to Beate Müller, any act of censorship cannot be considered without regard to its “political and historical context” as “it is this context which structures the way in which censorship can operate, ranging from the legal framework of a given society – especially its constitution, but also its penal code – to the political system in place” (2003: 18). She continues, “By identifying essential elements of censorship, historical developments and local variants can be integrated into the larger picture as optional elements” and this view which distinguishes between “core and periphery” might be helpful in “negotiat[ing] the difficult relationship between relatively permanent general principles of censorship and locally (or historically) conditioned characteristics which are *ipso facto* subject to change” (Müller 2003: 15). Beate Müller suggests that any analysis of censorship should embrace Wittgenstein’s conception of ‘family resemblance’²⁸ in order to “distinguish between central and peripheral characteristics of censorship” (2003: 1). Each case necessitates a closer exploration to identify the effect of censorial forces.

Beate Müller argues, “we stand to lose if we push the meaning to the limits by suspecting it at work wherever and whenever any kind of social and discursive exclusion occurs” (2003: 11). Müller asserts that traditional and constitutive forms should not be separated. She offers to explain by family resemblance as well as by a communication model (2003: 1). Asserting that “the problem as posed is a question of degrees and

²⁸ Wittgenstein employs a “highly pluralistic” and heterogeneous description of language rather than a homogenous one (Fishelov 1993: 55). To exemplify the heterogeneous characteristic of language, he employs the games analogy to show “linguistic activities not only differ from each other, but have, as set, nothing in common” (55). In his analysis of games such as card-games, board games and ball games, he is unable to find something common to all. Instead of a common feature, he underscores the existence of similarities and relationships, which leads him to form the analogy of ‘family resemblance’. By this, Wittgenstein indicates “representations of a genre may then be regarded as making up a family whose sets and individual members are related in various ways, without necessarily having any single feature in common by all” (Fishelov 1993: 54).

effects”, just like Helen Freshwater, Müller offers to explore different cases and instances of censorship on a continuum.

Nicole Moore also identifies the constitutive view of censorship as problematic in separating constitutive and regulatory governmental censorship from each other. She further points out that in the critical reception of constitutive censorship, one point has been ignored: “censorship’s object is to draw the communicative boundaries of the nation; to delimit, institute and form the nation’s knowledge” (Moore 2013: 55-6). She puts emphasis on “nation-bound forms of regulation” (2013: 54). Moore favours a polyvalent view of censorship as even the different forms of regulatory censorship differ from each other “in their aims, effects and application” (2013: 54). She further states that “In as much as censorship is polyvalent in its relation to power, that polyvalency is determined at a geopolitical level, bound to sovereign government and enacted in the physical space of the boundary zone: at checkpoints, at ports of entry, on docks, in post offices, at airports” (Moore 2013: 56).

As to the taxonomy of censorship, in the traditional concept of censorship, it is, if not easy, then less complicated to make a definition or description of censorship. As discussed above, in the conventional model of censorship, the concept is limited to state censorship as the direct, governmental, institutionalised, interventionist and prohibitive form of censorship on the artist’s work. Within the context of the British theatre, this conventional regulation was done in two ways: pre-performance by a licensing system implemented by the Lord Chamberlain; and post-performance as a punitive and disciplinary force on those who transgressed the limits of permission, allegedly on behalf of public good. However, with the abolition of the Lord Chamberlain’s Office, and even during its existence, censorship has operated in various complicated ways and forms.

As the next section of this chapter will concentrate on the complexities and difficulties in defining censorship, this part might seem to be contradictory. However, the

logic of this brief section is to provide the general terminology of censorship, although it is frequently difficult to decide what can be counted as censorship and under which category it falls. In defining censorship, there are ongoing debates: while one group claims that censorship might be defined in a more extensive way or as an umbrella term, another group claims that this attitude trivialises the concept. Receptions of the issue have differed merely in terms of diverse nuances (This issue will be elaborated on in the next section). It seems inevitable to have to engage with a comprehensive and extended definition because censorship itself is multi-layered and dynamic. In what follows, I deal with different attempts to classify the types and implications of censorship. Broadly speaking, censorship might be categorized as ‘hard censorship’, ‘soft censorship’ and ‘self-censorship’. Richard Burt also differentiates between ““soft” forms of censorship (like critical censure) on the one hand and “hard” forms of censorship (like imprisonment) on the other” (1998: 18).²⁹

One definition of censorship is ‘hard censorship’, including brutal and violent implementations or direct state interventions in artistic material. This extreme dimension of censorship includes official punishment through fines or closures of theatres or limitations on the performance of a play, the burning and banning of books, exile, and death threats. Bernard Shaw asserts that, “assassination is the extreme form of censorship” because that person is silenced forever (qtd. in Holquist 1994: 15).³⁰ In Britain, the Lord Chamberlain’s Office stood as the repressive state power, which might also be shared among its censorial agents. For instance, until the abolition of theatre censorship, theatre managers, who primarily tended to favour the retention of official censorship, were the censorial agents. As they did not want to confront the Lord

²⁹ Having identified this categorical separation, he underscores that the constitutive model of censorship upsets any conventional hierarchy between “more or less repressive punishments insofar as it shows that no one form of legitimation or delegitimation necessarily had priority over others” (Burt 1998: 18).

³⁰ In his “Corrupt Originals: The Paradox of Censorship”, Michael Holquist quotes Roman Jakobson’s title “A Generation That Squandered Its Poets”, which epitomises the terror in the Soviet Union of the 1930s (1994: 15).

Chamberlain and risk their financial profit, their imposition on the playwrights had the quality of deterrence. However, managers were as much victims as agents of censorship so they surely occupied an interestingly liminal position in this respect.

‘Soft censorship’ is primarily the regulation and manipulation of the means of social media communication through indirect and non-violent methods such as withholding state subsidies and controlling advertisements. These measures include tight control of media coverage, including the amount of attention that television, radio and newspapers give to something, or the way in which something is reported. As the ideological device of the state, media works for the reproduction and legitimisation of the dominant ideology and public consent.

‘Self-censorship’ is the self-control exercised over what one says or does so as to avoid any potential offence to others or prosecution by the state, without actually being officially required to do so, knowing or assuming that without a form of self-censorship, they might confront the authorities or media or face public censure, who might then take on the role of the censor. A potential target of potential censorship is anticipated and cancelled. Any memory of censorial intervention, either in the past or recent times, triggers this act of cancellation. Self-censorship might be considered the most complicated part of censorship as one cannot be sure to what extent it is imposed on a work or deed by its artist.

In an attempt to define censorship, one should also focus on censure which arguably functions in a similar role to a censor. Essentially, *censure* and *censor* differ from each other in dictionary meanings: while the former is a kind of formal or official condemnation or severe criticism and disapproval of a thing or person, the latter involves an inspection of material (publication, performance of a theatre play, show or movie) to remove or modify the offending and/or improper parts. In the main, censure is a publicly expressed act; it might be censure by a politician, celebrity, a journalist writing in his/her

column, media coverage or otherwise public censure. For instance, a celebrity might be censured for his/her misogynistic remarks. Similarly, an MP might be censured for his discriminatory remarks by his party fellows, and if they amount to hate speech, legal procedures might be initiated. Otherwise, they are not dismissed from their positions but harshly condemned for their speech. If it is a book, it is not legally removed from sale but might be boycotted. Although this is not direct censorship, it might be argued that it falls under the umbrella term of censorship. It is not a direct suppression or removal or ban on market circulation, but censure might make an influential psychological impact. One might anticipate the potential public or media censure and its prospect might therefore intensify the pressure on the artist. Something censored might create a social or cultural stigma, for instance, public censure might endanger an artist's career. This might be subsumed into soft censorship, Richard Burt claims (1998: 18). But surely there is also a strong argument for maintaining the distinction. Censure does not by definition limit an artist's freedom of expression. Indeed, it is itself a manifestation of freedom of expression.

Censorship does not only intend to prohibit but also to construct certain kinds of idea and behaviour which the dominant ideology considers to be 'proper'. Certain things deemed as appropriate by government policies might be intentionally promoted. This is called *hortatory censorship*³¹ or "positively phrased guidelines" which is intended to encourage a particular kind of behaviour (Steen 2015: 116). For instance, if the official ideology is committed to encouraging people to pursue heterosexual and traditional relationships involving marriage and having children, this mainstream discourse will in itself negate and stigmatise non-traditional family structures. This hortatory type of

³¹ The term *hortatory censorship* is used by Michael Holquist with particular reference to the Soviet Union of the 1930s when the government not only dictated what could and could not be said but also what had to be said (1994: 15). Furthermore, he explains the insidious aspect of this model of censorship with an example from George Orwell's *1984*. Being tortured into saying two times two is five, Winston Smith does finally seem to believe in this.

censorship, according to Michael Holquist, constructs “government-dictated norms” and has highly “insidious consequences” because it “blurs the boundaries between censorship by state and by self” (1994: 15). This is ultimately perception management as to which behaviours are socially acceptable.



CHAPTER II

DIFFICULTIES IN THEORISING CENSORSHIP

“There seems no longer to be any consensus about what censorship is” in theory argued Sofia Rosenfeld at the turn of the century in 2001 (2001: 217). There seems to be well-founded reasons to justify this given claim. Condemnation of the word censorship has culminated in its random use to cover a wide range of activities. Richard Burt asserts there are two positions: “in one view, censorship must be broadened to include market forces, government agencies awarding grants, museum curators, newspapers, and so on. In the other, censorship must be kept to a narrow definition so as to avoid confusing it with regulatory mechanisms that are distinct from it (Burt 1998: 31-2).³²

Furthermore, ensuing from the disintegration of the long-established political dichotomies and newly-available theoretical foundations, new competing discourses have emerged in the public sphere including debates within feminism over pornography, hate speech, commodification of art due to increasing privatisation and sponsorship, political correctness, and questions concerning ethnic minorities and religious communities (Müller 2003: 3). Svetlana Mintcheva argues that sensitivities or ‘don’t go zones’ are all so over-accentuated that “the price of freedom is eternal vigilance” (YouTube 2012: 2:50-2:54). What further complicates censorship is that the boundaries between sensitivities and free speech are so loosely identified.

As stated above, it is not easy to present neat definitions or any clear division of the concept. What counts as censorship or does not has become a controversial and much-

³² Pelin Başaran, a Turkish cultural policy and management researcher and lecturer, argues for the use of censorship as an “umbrella term”, including from “the direct censorship exercised by the state” to “methods applied by different actors, such as threatening, targeting, delegitimisation, and discouragement”; and is also employed by other participants in the ‘Siyah Bant’ project which has set out to explore recent censorial events in Turkey (2015: 95). Beate Müller points out that censorship should not be confused with other forms of regulation. For a detailed discussion, see her “Censorship and Cultural Regulation: Mapping the Territory”, pp. 225-245.

debated issue, covering a broad spectrum of acts such as market censorship, state control over media, corporate sponsorship or privatisation of artworks, reduction in state subsidies to censure as the “institution of criticism” (Post 1998: 4). There are different kinds of power practices and variations in the operation of censorship. It is not always easy to differentiate between state censorship, market censorship and criticism as they overlap at times (Burt 1998: 25). There are also other ‘new’ forms of censorship-like behaviour including hortatory censorship whereby the particular way of life promoted by government or indoctrinated by the dominant discourse is encouraged. This has been presented in detail in the taxonomy section of this chapter.

Michael Holquist identifies that the complexity of censorship even lies in the etymological root of the word ‘censor’. In old Roman times, this important public official had two tasks: one political and one cultural: “As keeper of the tax rolls, he determined who was and who was not a citizen; he was the gateway between those who belonged and those who did not belong to the administrative unit called Rome. As arbiter of morals, he was the portal standing between those who were and who were not members of the community values called Rome” (Holquist 1994: 14). Thus, the role of the Roman censor, Holquist points out, evidences an essential feature of censorship: “its authority to prohibit can never be separated from its need to include” or to construct (1994: 14). The concept has an inevitably inherent duality in its structure, and the dual nature of the censored text culminates in “the simultaneity of a manifest and a suppressed level of meaning” (Holquist 1994: 14). This situation highlights the unavoidable presence of interpretation and “the shaping power of the interpreter’s situation” (1994: 14). Holquist further claims that censorship functions as “a particular kind of context, and it foregrounds the always present tension between text and context” (1994: 14).

According to Michael Holquist, “relations between censors and victims appear dynamic and multidirectional” rather than unidirectional (1994: 16). The censor is also

censored because censorship is doomed to failure in the long run. The logic behind this idea is that they are subject to “*negotiation*, an exchange with the works they seek to abridge” and “environmental restraints” (Holquist 1994: 17). Because of its inherent duality, censorship “is riven in its heart by a fatal division: the prohibition that separates what is banned from what is permitted also fuses them” (Holquist 1994: 17).³³ The censors are preoccupied with fixing and stabilising the meaning of a text, which seems to be an abortive effort, so they have to resort to “negotiation” (Holquist 1994: 17). Meaning is open to destabilisation as it ultimately relies on interpretation by the receiving party of that particular communication. This potentiality for arbitrariness of censorship might bring about “the vacuum censors most abhor, the slippage of meaning they most assiduously seek to fix” (Holquist 1994: 17). This emptiness is irritating and unsettling for them as they look for stable and fixed meanings.

As graphically explored by Michael Holquist, what essentially makes this re-definition difficult is the fact that any attempt to theorise censorship confronts its elusive, multifaceted and slippery nature. It is provisional, changing from society to society, time to time; its interpretation can take on many different varieties of meaning. The public sphere is in a constant flux of transformation, value judgements are changing and modern politics is changing. A play about homosexuality which is regarded as permissive and provocative in one age might be labelled as a pejorative treatment of the issue a decade or so later. In addition to the inherently formidable nature of censorship, what complicates the matter further is the immediacy of the particular historical, social and cultural moment that surrounds the act of censorship. Furthermore, the mantra of free speech comes concomitantly with a caveat. Freedom of expression is an essential human right, only

³³ This idea is reiterated by Walter Benjamin who says “In all language and linguistic creations there remains in addition to what can be conveyed something that cannot be communicated” (1969: 79). Just like Walter Benjamin, another victim of censorship Michael Bakhtin claims that “Potential other meaning [...] accompanies the word like a shadow”, which enables “the retention for oneself of the possibility of altering the ultimate, final meaning of one’s words” (1984a: 233).

within the limitations of the acceptable, whose tenets tend to change. What is acceptable changes from culture to culture, from one era to the next.

For an exploration of the issue, imagine different occasions that could be considered either as censorship or not. Firstly, a playwright cannot put on her/his play as the play has been rejected by the Lord Chamberlain. Secondly, Conservative Mary Whitehouse takes legal action against *Gay News* for their publication of an ‘improper’ poem about Jesus Christ and the editor was fined. Thirdly, in Tony Blair’s administration, Andrew Motion was chosen as Poet Laureate instead of the more-favoured candidate Carol Ann Duffy, who was thought to be a ‘scandalous’ candidate. Fourthly, a publication house or a library or a curator in an art gallery might tend to include and privilege canonical works at the expense of non-canonical new or experimental works. Fifthly, the Conservative Party under the administration of Margaret Thatcher resorts to a policy of cuts in the state subsidy to the Labour-governed local theatre organisations. Guinness might withdraw its sponsorship from a theatre for their unfavourable representation of alcoholic people. Sixthly, an academic’s article might be rejected by a journal. Seventhly, an academic might prepare a list of reading for the class, selecting certain works and excluding others. Eighthly, media might give full coverage to an event and not to another. Ninthly, a public figure might be criticised or boycotted for her/his remarks on a particular issue or a newspaper columnist might criticise that person in her/his column. Lastly, a small child might be “silenced by parental authority” (Müller 2003: 11).

In the first instance of censorship, the censorial act differs from the others categorically as the play is subject to official state censorship. Beate Müller argues that this intervention “meets all the requirements of the term censorship because [...] we have the case of an authoritarian intervention by a third party into an act of communication between the sender of a message (the author) and its receiver (the reader), a message intended for the public but prevented from ever reaching it” (2003:11). This legislative

regulation prevents the play from being performed on any British stage. In this way, its circulation and public dissemination is restricted. This falls into hard, explicit and direct governmental regulatory censorship.

The second case exemplifies one of the trials the veteran conservative Mary Whitehouse brought against what she deemed morally unfit for British society. Aleks Sierz calls it “the plaintiff model” of censorship which replaced the authoritarian model and this censorial practice is exercised by “religious groups and reactionary newspapers, by pressure groups and moral vigilantes” (2012). While the first was an official act, this seems to be a half-official act as an extension of the former. Mary Whitehouse represented the conservative, nationalist and mainstream perspective, as the Lord Chamberlain had previously. The editor of the magazine who was the object of censorship in this particular case was fined and the trial provoked controversies regarding religious sensitivities and the limitations of the acceptable. Although this form of censorship does not put a ban or restriction on further publications of *Gay News*, it might function as a deterring factor for the further treatment of this subject and consequently lead to self-censorship.

As to the third example, under normal circumstances, the choice of Andrew Motion instead of Carol Ann Duffy might be just a preference on the grounds of literary merits. However, in this case, this decision seems to be quite controversial. The Poet Laureate is officially appointed by the government, thus representing the state and the crown in the United Kingdom. In this particular case, the emphasis is on the issue of identity. Although Duffy seemingly has sufficient competence and qualification for the position, she is excluded or marginalised for her identity. Almost three decades after the official abolition of the Lord Chamberlain, the mentality he represented is alive and well, pushing heteronormativity and opting for an ‘idealised’ and ‘less scandalous’ candidate. This act blesses orthodoxy and the mainstream while excluding heterodoxy. It negates a person who falls short of reproducing the heteronormative forms of behaviour favoured

by society and state in this case. Here, this kind of normative behaviour, encouraged by social and cultural values, insidiously dictates how people should define themselves in accordance with these social codifications. By implication, this situation seems to be a kind of *hortatory* censorship or “positively phrased guidelines”, which has been extensively covered in the taxonomy section of this chapter (Steen 2015: 116).

In the fourth example, a publication house, library or gallery might prefer to opt for canonical works. In particular, a publication house or a gallery might tend to include mainstream works on the grounds of financial concerns or literary considerations. Although the intention is not primarily to censor, its outcome might exclude new experimental artists and their works. This attitude might sabotage public availability of such new experimental works. Erring on the side of caution, the officials in the position of decision-making might also look for less contentious works of art to avoid any outraged reaction from the visitors. When considered from another perspective, the visitors might in fact play a more direct and resolute role as censor, as in the case of the Indian painter MF Husain. His London exhibition was closed due to death threats and complaints from a Hindu Human Rights Group concerning paintings representing Hindu goddesses naked and India as a woman being raped. The first situation, in the case of the decision-makers, is a form of regulation or policy (perhaps conservative) so cannot be directly called censorship. However, it might change within temporal and spatial circumstances. In a strictly controlled country, it might be regarded as censorship as well as self-censorship. In the second situation, in the case of violent protestors, this is a vulgar form of censorship relying on a culture of the lynch mob and intimidation. It echoes Bernard Shaw’s description of assassination as the extremist form of censorship which intends to silence that person forever.

In the fifth instance, the core of the issue is state subsidies and sponsorship granted to the theatres. Whether subsidies or sponsorship should be considered as a form of

censorship or not will be further discussed in the coming part of this section. In this case, it is quite well-known that theatres, unlike cinemas for instance, tend to be more vulnerable to any deficiency in economic support. As it is a live performance, it cannot be immediately available to a large audience at once. It cannot financially support itself only by the number of theatregoers. Thus, withdrawal of state subsidies essentially condemns small-scale theatres to death. In this situation, mainstream performances to the general theatregoers will survive, the representation of new and experimental writing and fringe plays will be difficult and hence they will be subjected to an indirect and invisible form of censorship. Known for her rigid policies in subsidies granted to theatres, Margaret Thatcher carried out an ideological and political act rather than a preference. In the case of Guinness's withdrawing sponsorship, Thatcher again had an indirect role. Sponsorship and privatisation were introduced into the domain of art by means of Thatcher's neoliberal policies. However, they openly differ from each other in terms of impact and degree. Guinness acts out of economic interests and product advertisement, although it results in an indirect intervention in the play.

In the sixth example, ideally an academic publication is assessed for its scientific and academic qualifications and merits. As Beate Müller argues,

The academic whose article is rejected by editorial boards might feel discriminated against, but judgment is passed by peers, not by some outside authority. It is the academics themselves who decide whether a publication is worthy. This is self-regulation of what Bourdieu would describe as a specialist field (2003: 11).

This does not lead the academic immediately to the underground, she/he can apply to another journal for publication. However, this decision might depend on political causes rather than academic merits. Any dissenting voice which is at odds with state policy might be rejected at once. Similarly, an author known for contentious views might be rejected too. In this case, identity comes to fore again. If one is rejected on the basis of identity or

on political grounds, this is a form of censorship intended to silence or exclude a dissenting and controversial voice.

In the seventh situation, an academic might prepare a reading list or syllabus for a course in accordance with the particular needs of the class and/or students as this is her or his specialised field. In particular, in social sciences a lecturer might tend to include mainstream and less controversial figures, and this seems to be a preference. However, if the dean of the faculty or any other authority figure imposes this upon the academic, then this becomes a form of censorship. It changes from country to country or one era to another. If the country is going through politically delicate times, an academic might also resort to self-censorship. An academic might also be biased and impose certain readings with the exclusion of opposing ideas. It will be at odds with the idea of a university as a platform where various views should interact and flourish. It will decrease its scientific and ethical value. Ultimately, it seems to be an academic's preference, but if it is effected under political and authoritarian pressure, it is a form of censorship and self-censorship.

In the eighth example, media is the most effective and strongest device of state power. As Adorno and Horkheimer argued, it imposes a certain ideology on society and transforms it into mass culture (2002: 94-5). With the help of new technologies, propaganda through media can reach people anywhere and anytime. People have access to the public sphere through smartphones. Thus, states have developed various methods to create the 'ideal citizen'. The best known example for this is Joseph Goebbels who was the Minister of propaganda under Hitler. Through his oratory skills, he convinced the German people to believe in a favourable image of Nazis and so consensually go to war and be killed. Goebbels "controlled, besides propaganda as such, the press, radio, theatre, films, literature, music, and the fine arts. In May 1933 he was instrumental in the burning of "unGerman" books at the Opera House in Berlin" (Heiber 2015). Drawing upon this

example and the rigid pressure on the media in several parts of the world, media does not tend toward the soft kind of censorship but rather direct and hard censorship.

In the ninth situation, censure arguably functions in a similar role to a censor. It is not an official condemnation or severe attack but a publicly-expressed criticism. Censure does not by definition limit an artist's freedom of expression. Indeed, it is itself a manifestation of freedom of expression. A person might be censured for misogynistic remarks or hate speech discourse. However, it might eventually be a form of censorship, particularly in undemocratic countries, because when a person is censured, for example, for being atheist or homosexual, this person might turn into a target. This might result in an act of defamation and exclusion of this person from the public sphere. It's a matter of degree and impact.

Unlike the previous instances, the last one directly seems to belong to the private sphere. A child is brought up by her or his parents in accordance with the social and cultural values of their immediate environment. By implication then, censorship begins in the family which, as the smallest unit of society, represents a microcosm of state. Drawing upon the Foucauldian conceptualisation of power as more invisible, decentralised and dispersed across society, if power exists everywhere then censorship does too. Viewed from an Althusserian perspective, each individual is born into an ideology and shaped through it. Thus, as a prototype of the state, the family intends to bring up individuals as 'ideal citizens' for their countries. However, drawing upon Foucault's idea of transgression, if there is authority and censorship, there is inevitably resistance and opposition as well. Although it might cultivate the seeds of conformity or internalisation of state-promoted views, there will be counter-arguments too. Their implications will change from country to country in accordance with spatial and temporal particularities. For this reason, the traditional regulatory censorship and the constitutive

model of censorship cannot be separated; furthermore, each instance of censorship needs to be explored in its own particular circumstances.

It is significant to note that among the examples involving governmental intervention, except the first, they mostly involve invisible and indirect censorship. Within the British context, the starting point is the official abolition of stage censorship. Old forms of stage-driven censorship have been primarily replaced by more complicated forms of censorial interventions. However, it would be naive to believe that the state no longer engages in censorship. In his article “Governments and Non-State Actors Find Innovative Ways to Suppress the Media”, Joel Simon, the executive director at the Committee to Protect Journalists, argues that

In the days when news was printed on paper, censorship was a crude practice involving government officials with black pens, the seizure of printing presses and raids on newsrooms. The complexity and centralisation of broadcasting also made radio and television vulnerable to censorship even when the governments didn't exercise direct control of the airwaves. After all, frequencies can be withheld; equipment can be confiscated; media owners can be pressured (2017).

New information technologies, including social media platforms and smartphones, further complicate the matter. Anybody can publish books or broadcast videos or share comments; in short, anybody can make something public.

At this point, Marcuse's reading of free speech should be revisited to argue whether this liberty grants free speech or creates worthless information which just enables a release of energy. In this way, as Marcuse argues, these pseudo-liberties enable the system to perpetuate and manipulate people in false consciousness. Similarly, Joel Simon argues that this situation does not provide a promising picture and, pointing to the controversial election of Donald Trump in the USA, “concerns were raised about the rise of fake news and the hostile and intimidating environment created by Trump's heated rhetoric” (2017). Simon further argues that these days the supervision of information is

maintained under three general categories: ‘repression’, ‘masked political control’, and ‘technology capture’:

Repression [...] is an update on the worst old-style tactics, from state censorship to the imprisonment of critics, with new information technologies including smart phones and social media producing a softening around the edges. Masked political control means a systematic effort to hide repressive actions by dressing them in the cloak of democratic norms. Governments might justify an internet crackdown by saying it is necessary to suppress hate speech and incitement to violence. They might cast the jailing of dozens of critical journalists as an essential element in the global fight against terror. Finally, technology capture means using the same technologies that have spawned the global information explosion to stifle dissent, by monitoring and surveilling critics, blocking websites and using trolling to shout down critical voices. Most insidious of all is sowing confusion through propaganda and false news (2017).

Thus, the new technologies have introduced shifting parameters which render the situation more complicated.

Another example relating to the new technologies is provided by the author Lionel Shriver in her 2015 *Guardian* article titled “Why Filthy Literature Should Not Be Cleaned Up”. She complains about a newly-introduced application for reading e-books ‘The Clean Reader app’, which eliminates swear words or obscene words allegedly on behalf of “pure, untainted, unworldly, literarily chaste” readers (Shriver 2015). The application, which received a heated reaction from many authors, Shriver argues, “is censorship of a sort. Yes, countless works will be marred by these inane substitutions, though the real victim is not the author but the reader” (2015). She sarcastically puts that

In most texts, the word obscured is going to be obvious. When our puritan encounters FREAK in a giant balloon on-screen, what goes through this reader’s head? FUCK. Behind the veil of prissiness, the real word shouts more loudly than in the original text. How is this protection? (Shriver 2015).

Shriver also attacks *the Daily Telegraph* for employing “a similar editorial policy” with an example: “This week it reported: “Clarkson is said to have called Mr Tymon a ‘lazy Irish c---’”. What is being protected here? Can we not work it out? *The Telegraph* is

servicing its own vanity – perpetuating the conceit of the “family newspaper”, even in an age when the kids are all stuck into internet porn” (2015).

Besides manipulation of new technologies, another controversial platform under the shadowy presence of the state is the Arts Council. A post-World War II creation, it was established to fund and encourage art and cultural practices. It works as a ‘non-departmental public body’ relying on “substantial sums of tax-derived public funding” granted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (Gordon 2015: 3).³⁴ A brief consideration of the Arts Council in its historical context reveals its “politicised” nature and that “Its vaunted independence and neutrality have only ever been partially true at the best of times” (Gordon 2015: 33).³⁵ The fundamental expectations of art and culture practitioners from such an institution are based on two basic goals: firstly, “artistic decisions (on quality, repertoire and content) are independent, and seen to be independent of government and party politics”, and secondly, “the unpaid governing board (‘Council’) and its employed officials are likely to have appropriate specialised expertise, and to be drawn from relevant professional fields (i.e. unlike elected politicians or departmentally mobile government career servants/administrators)” (Gordon 2015: 34). However, Raymond Williams, once the Vice-Chairman of Arts Council, had the chance to observe its working mechanism from within and offers a critical assessment of the council:

Under its existing constitution [a Royal Charter] the Arts Council is wholly appointed by Government Ministers and its budget is annually determined,

³⁴ For a brief timeline of the Art Council’s history, see <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-organisation/our-history>

³⁵ Party politics were involved in the process of funding. The first UK Arts Minister, Jennie Lee, was appointed by Harold Wilson, the Labour Party Prime Minister. With the ascension of the Conservative Party to power, many things in the Arts Council were changed from “the appointment of key personnel” to “the rhetoric employed in policy and strategy documents” (Milling 2012: 38). Significantly, Richard Hoggart, who was a leftist scholar and among the founders of Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, was dismissed from his position as Vice Chairman of the Arts Council Board in 1981, as “Number 10 doesn’t like him” (Hewison 1995: 248). Hoggart had asserted his intention to transfer £1 million of the Arts Council’s budget to 41 theatre companies from which state subsidies had been withdrawn, which, according to Peter Smith, might have played a key role in his dismissal (1994: 31-2). Hoggart was replaced by pro-conservative William Rees-Mogg, as the Chairman of the Arts Council and Luke Rittner, as Secretary-General of the Arts Council. Hoggart later stated; “It confirmed that governmental intervention in such bodies started very early in the eighties. Fiats from Number 10 and compliance from some of her ministers” (1994: 232).

on no fixed public principles, by these same Ministers. Within these fundamental constraints it is given a kind of independence; it is even, to a fault, protected from detailed parliamentary questioning. It therefore requires an effort of will to describe such a body as intermediate in any genuine sense. It is in the pocket of Ministers and a Department of State, and its marginal independence has as many disadvantages as advantages... It is almost too easy, given the manifest and deep-rooted faults of the present Arts Council and its dangerous openness to charges of being unrepresentative, undemocratic and irresponsible, to devise alternative organizations... My own view is that we should not start from the central body and work downwards; we should start, instead, from forms of organisation appropriate for articular arts, and for different specific regions (Williams 1979: 170).

This system of funding which is “most often described as the UK model for cultural policy [...] seeks to make cultural administrations directly responsible to both tax-payers and professionals” (Koržinek 2015: 26). In this system, politicians or public servants are replaced with professionals. The rationale behind that is to eliminate too much power being concentrated in civil servants and rather to distribute power to render it more invisible.

As demonstrated in the case of new technologies and the Arts Council, it is obvious that state intervention has not gone away. As power is distributed across a wide range of censorial agents and society, the definition or description of censorship has extended. It has been quite difficult to differentiate between different forms of the processes of censorship. It is significant to note here that, as Helen Freshwater and Beate Müller argue, regulatory government censorship and constitutive forms of censorship cannot be separated from one another.

Within the new censorship discussions, there are ongoing debates as to whether non-funding might be regarded as a type of censorship or a state preference in relation to social and cultural issues. There has been much dissension over the shifting role of the state in the practices of art and culture. That the discourse of the market such as commercialisation, privatisation, enterprise and sponsorship has made its way into the realm of art and culture has its roots in the 1980s. Due to the neoliberal policies of

Margaret Thatcher, theatre practitioners have become familiar with this terminology. For instance, Sanford Levinson asserts that states avoid old-fashioned ways of suppression such as banning a book or its circulation; instead they resort to methods like non-funding as a way of censorship (1998: 195).

Obviously, monopolised media has a censorial effect as it blocks dissemination of certain things to public knowledge or, adversely, servicing and promoting certain things or even fake news to manipulate public perception of events.³⁶ A lack or excess of media coverage afforded to a particular event or the way something is reported insidiously shapes people's perception of it. In their report of 2014, The WAN-IFRA (World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers) draws attention to the growing and alarming threat of soft censorship; Lansner, the writer and editor of the review, claims that "soft censorship does not generate the international outcry evoked by killing journalists or shuttering publications" (2014: 4).³⁷ It does not mean that there are no violent acts of silencing anymore, as recorded by the CPJ, but the general tendency is to operate it through less visible methods. An embargo might be placed upon the works of a particular author who is regarded as a threat by a publication house or company which might not want to risk their commercial profit. An artistic work which might be a newspaper, a book or a television or radio programme to be published or broadcast might come up against editorial censorship as a result of pressure from the owner. Translation might be a kind of censorship considering what is lost in translation. What is more, there might be restrictions in its circulation in the market place as well. However, all these mechanisms of control and suppression are intricately intertwined; these interventions are invisibly operating in dark shadows.

³⁶ Censorship shades into what Chomsky calls 'manufacturing consent'.

³⁷ For news on journalists around the world see Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), which declares that "25 journalists killed in 2017, 259 imprisoned in 2016, 55 missing globally", (23 September, 2017), <https://cpj.org/>

Political correctness is another term to be discussed in terms of its problematic implications for censorship. It might have initially emerged to raise awareness to avoid offending any groups in society with insulting, pejorative, prejudiced and ignorant language. However, political correctness, described by Mark Starr from Newsweek as “the revenge of the liberals”, has gradually transformed into a problematic term (qtd. in Wallen 1994: 58). Importantly, its function is almost always inflammatory and obfuscatory, whoever is using it. It is almost always used to attack people, from one direction or another, either for not being politically correct, or for being politically correct.³⁸ In both cases, 'politically correct' serves as a veil for the writer or speaker to avoid actually having to get specific about the details of what is being discussed - in other words, for obfuscation rather than clarification. It is a mark of dog-whistle politics, on both sides. So overall, it has just become an unhelpful phrase - often used to deliberately muddy the waters, at other times doing so despite people's good intentions.

According to Elizabeth Wilson, “it has too often degenerated into a form of etiquette about what can actually be said; it’s about saying the right thing rather than doing the right thing” (2007: 523). With the example of the dole issue in Britain, Wilson explains how political correctness appear to be a kind of censorship: “we no longer talk about the dole, we talk about job seeker’s allowance, but the unemployed live in meaner circumstances even than they did thirty years ago. The stigma remains. Political correctness has become little more than another form of censorship” (2007: 523). As she further argues, “The suggestion that we protect sensitivities by not questioning, by not challenging, reinforces the tendency towards dogma rather than encouraging debate among those of widely differing beliefs. Furthermore, since in my view religion today is

³⁸ For an interesting use of the term, see Boris Johnson's celebration of Prince Philip's 'political incorrectness', <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/boris-johnson-political-incorrectness-prince-philip-tweet-foreign-secretary-a7875111.html>

primarily about politics, in silencing criticism of religion you also silence political debate” (Wilson 2007: 523).

To conclude, the realisation that censorship was a territory in need of theorisation was a significant development. There were certainly ideas about censorship but it was realised that there was no well-founded theory of censorship other than a very crude reception of the issue: censorship is bad and freedom of speech is good. Rigorous challenges by many scholars have provided invaluable insights into the field but have also manifested the difficulty in any attempt of theorising censorship as it resists any kind of neat and definitive definition.

When all these discussions are taken into consideration, rather than restricting the definition of censorship, it seems necessary to recognise its complications and arbitrariness, its multifarious operations, from overt and visible to more covert and invisible forms, from state-driven to non-governmental forms and agents, its self-imposed forms, from its extremist to its softer forms. It is also a matter that should be explored in its differing degrees and effects. In an assessment of any censorial case, as Helen Freshwater and Beate Müller effectively argue, the given instance of censorship should be explored in its own specificity, its own immediate socio-political and historical circumstances, with particular attention to its shifting parameters of spatial and temporal characteristics. As stated earlier, the parameters of the acceptable are in a constant flux: they change from country to country, culture to culture, and from one era to the next.

As Müller’s ‘family resemblance’ analogy and Freshwater’s ‘inclusive model of censorship’ propose, censorship operates across a spectrum or on a continuum “upon which it is possible to place the brutal extremes of incarceration or murder at one end, and the shadowy operations of constitutive exclusion at the other. Their connection is thus established, without negating their differences” (Freshwater 2003b: 18). Neither Freshwater nor Müller dismiss traditional or constitutive forms of censorship and these

scholars believe that they should not be considered separately. However, these two models fall short of explaining all cases of censorship. One should concentrate on the experience of the object of censorship; another way of saying that each case of censorship needs to be considered in its specificity is that each case is an individual case. It is tempting to say that proposing or establishing a theory of censorship is quite problematic. It runs the risk of generalisations or reductions at the expense of the particular constituents of a given case. In addition to this, we are living in a kind of post-theory stage which also contributes to a low potentiality of theorisation. In “The Resistance to Theory”, Paul de Man attempts to explain “why the main theoretical interest of literary theory consists in the impossibility of its definition” (2002: 3). For de Man, “Nothing can overcome the resistance to theory since theory is itself this resistance ... the more [theory] is resisted, the more it flourishes, since the language it speaks is the language of self-resistance. What remains impossible to decide is whether this flourishing is a triumph or a fall” (2002: 19-20).

CHAPTER III

CENSORSHIP AND AUTHORSHIP

An author is a person who produces or creates a literary work. In contemporary dictionaries, it is generally defined as “the writer of a book or other work; a person whose occupation is writing books” (*OED*). The view of the author as a ‘writer’ of a literary work is commonly the first sense of the concept given in dictionaries today. Etymologically, the term ‘author’ derives from the Latin word *auctor* or *augere* in its verb form, meaning “‘to increase’, ‘to augment’, or ‘to cause to grow’” (Kittang 2012: 17). While *augur* took on religious meaning, the *auctor* came to describe political purpose “such as proposing or authorizing laws, or, more generally, introducing something new into the public sphere” (Kittang 2012: 19). The word authority, originating from *augere*, means “strengthening”, “origin, source, cause”, and includes “security, credibility, opinion, advise, will, command, liberty, power, reputation, dignity, weight, model” (Donovan 2008: 4).

In the course of the history, the relationship between these two concepts author and authority has held various connotations. Since the 1960s, with the advent of newly founded theoretical pursuits, the concept of authority itself has fallen into disgrace. In a similar vein, with the advent of narratological and psychoanalytical studies, the focus has markedly shifted from the flesh and blood author to a narrative voice and has led to rethinking of the role of the author.³⁹ The decisive move away from the ‘authorial authority’⁴⁰ came with the poststructuralist announcement of “The Death of the Author”

³⁹ In the field of narratology, Wimsatt and Beardsley’s article warned against reliance too much on the real author of a work might lead to intentional fallacy; similarly, Wayne Booth’s coinage ‘implied author’ distances the narratological voice in the work from the real author. In a similar vein, psychoanalytic studies “have been more concerned with the ‘unconscious’ elements of writing than the deliberate expressiveness of any author” (Bell 1994: 4). All in all, language, the unconscious and reader/audience response have become more focal.

⁴⁰ This phrase is used in J. A. Cuddon’s dictionary (1998: 63) and by James Chandler in his article titled “Foucault and Disciplinary Authority” (2008: 47).

by Roland Barthes and “What is An Author?” by Michael Foucault. Accordingly, over the last 50 years, authorship and authority issues have come under sustained theoretical challenge and there has been a new interest and rigour in the exploration of the role of the author, the scope or degree of its authority and the author’s responsibility over the work. For a better understanding and establishing a framework of the issue, it will be useful to briefly explore shifting view of the relationship between author and authority in different sociohistorical times.

In the classical view of authorship, it is possible to argue that Plato has an ambivalent attitude towards the concept of the ‘author’. While, in his *Ion*, Plato attributes “a god-like” status to the poet who “pours forth beautiful poetry when inspired by the Muses’s power” (qtd. in Murray 2004: xxvii-xxviii), paradoxically, he banishes the poets from his ideal state *Republic* because of two reasons: first, the poet appeals to emotions which is an “inferior element in the soul” and second, the poet is a liar as his vision depends on the world of phenomena, not the world of ideas (Murray 2004: xxv). Thus, the poet as a “divinely possessed” figure, seems to be a mediator or transmitter of the god rather than an authorial authority (Habib 2005: 51). Differing from Plato, Aristotle describes the author as a “maker” (qtd. in Murray 2004: xxxii), who, “[l]ike the painter or any other image-maker[,] [...] must always represent things in one of three ways: either as they were or are, or as they are said to be or seem to be, or as they ought to be” (Aristotle 2004: 92). Unlike Plato, Aristotle favours verisimilitude and creativity in his understanding of the author. In a similar vein to Aristotle, Horace sets an agenda for the author concerning what and how to write in his *Art of Poetry*, where realism is accorded pride of place: “I would lay down that the skilled imitator should look to human life and character for his models, and from there derive a language that is true to life” (2004: 107). For Horace, poetry is a craft which requires labour and has a didactic as well as an entertaining role, leaving less room for creativity. Therefore, as regards the question of

authorship in the classical tradition, one might argue that while for Plato, “poets are nothing but interpreters of the gods, each possessed by his own possessing god”, for both Aristotle and Horace the author is granted with ultimate authority as the maker, creator, originator, and source of the work (Plato 2004: 6). Establishing a set of rules concerning what and how to write, Aristotle and Horace seem to have an ultimate authority over their works as creators, originators and source of explanation of meaning of the work.

In the medieval conception of authorship, the authority of the author⁴¹ is primarily “based [...] on divine revelation” (Donovan 2008: 3). The god is seen “as the Supreme Author” and the creator of the whole world, including the human-author (Donovan 2008:6). Thus, the author becomes a scriptor or the channel through which divine or godly knowledge is transmitted to the people. “Such a view of discourse at once elevates the poet or author as an elect figure – set apart from the rest of humanity via the gift of a divine afflatus – but deprives the author of the role of originating force” (Burke 1995: 5). In this sense, it is worth noting that the medieval view of the author shares much in common with Plato’s idea of the poet as divinely-possessed mediator. Furthermore, the monasteries had authority over the production of books and libraries. In the medieval view of the authorship, on the one hand, the author seems to have a prestigious status in relation to the high social responsibilities to guide and direct people into moral and spiritual improvement by god’s word; on the other hand, the author’s authority over his own work seems to be very questionable as the author is a mere transmitter of the divine knowledge.⁴² It becomes complicated when the author’s work clashes with the codes of the Christian doctrine. More importantly, for instance when the book burning as the censorial practice exercised upon the limited number of the manuscripts as well as other

⁴¹ During the medieval age, with its entrance into the European languages, the political function of the word *auctor* which was present in the Roman times evaporates and maintains its “creational” sense, “this has something to do with the influence of Christian thought and Christian theology” (Kittang 2012: 20).

⁴² Stephen Donovan also points to “the decline in the authority of the author” who “was endowed with ‘divine authority’” (2008: 6).

censorial pressure on the author of the work is taken into consideration, any act deemed as ‘heresy’ by the religious authority is subject to punitive system. The author has to take responsibility of whatever she or he has written.

The early modern view of human nature celebrated its potentialities leaving behind the restrictive principles of the medieval scholasticism. The author gains a considerable amount of autonomy, originality and “verbal inventiveness, collaborating with others in building an alternative social system”; however, “lost much of his role as authorized leader” (Donovan 2008: 3, 5). Relying on the patronage system for financial support, the author, in turn, should not be in conflict with the political stance of the patron. With the invention of the printing machine, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the mainly manuscript culture gave way to the mainly print culture. The control over their circulation was exercised by the Stationers’ company which held monopoly over the printed books. As Frederick Siebert describes, the Company was such “a masterstroke of Elizabethan politics” that it became their own police or censor (1952: 4). The punitive system was consolidated with the presence of the Privy Council. In this time, as Abrams points out, it is hard to determine which part of a given work is “the product of multiple collaborators, censors, editors, printers, and publishers, as well as of successive revisions by the reputed author” (1999: 16).⁴³

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were marked by the development in capitalist economy and literary market. The reliance of the author shifted from patrons to booksellers. In 1710, copyright⁴⁴ was granted to the authors, which positioned the author as the owner of its work in legal and economic sense. Thus, the relationship between the author and the work was commercialised. “The paradox is that as writers became more visible and more prominent in eighteenth century Britain, with the

⁴³ John Marston’s *The Malcontent* is a very good example of the instabilities of censorship and authorship in this period. Janet Clare offers an extended discussion of the issue in her “Marston: Censure, Censorship, and Free Speech”, pp. 194-211.

⁴⁴ Today, works are subject to copyright which expires 70 years after the death of the author in the UK.

spread of literacy and the growth of publishing, the social status of the author was radically diminished” (Bell 1994: 2). Several forms of co-authorship emerged.

In the Romantic view of the authorship, the author gained a new significance. This romantic creator or the original genius was blessed with huge authority over the work. The term author, Peter Jaszi points out, “took on a life of its own as individualistic notions of creativity, originality, and inspiration were poured into it. ‘Authority’ became an ideology” (1991: 467). This romantic creator and originator is valorised as the god in complete charge of and ultimate control over the work.⁴⁵ However, while this genius “creates his or her own autonomous world hovering above the mundane and commands a certain influence on a limited cultural elite”, at the same time “from the point of view society at large, has now lost much of the authority he or she ever had” (Donovan 2008: 6).

The twentieth century view of authorship has had a decisive break away from the preceding ones with the announcement of ‘the death of the Author’. As Barthes states in his famous essay:

The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions, while criticism still consists for the most part in saying that Baudelaire’s work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh’s his madness, Tchaikovsky’s his vice. The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it (2010: 1322).

To Barthes, there is no longer originator of the work, instead “the modern scriptor” who is not “equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing” (2010: 1324). Rather

⁴⁵ This idea of the romantic genius seems to have been influenced by Neoplatonist understanding of Plotinus as well. In *Enneads*, Plotinus attributes a supreme position to the artist and states “The kind of wisdom we possess is only an image of the original “wisdom in unity”, an image that reproduces the original in discursive form, in language, using reasoning (qtd. in Habib 2005: 131). The artist seems to have a more direct instinctual access to, as Plotinus puts it, “that wisdom in Nature which is embodied in himself; and this is not a wisdom built up of theorems but one totality, not a wisdom consisting of manifold detail co-ordinated into a unity but rather a unity working out into detail” (qtd. in Habib 2005: 131). Thus, Plotinus differs from Plato who describes poetry as appealing to the lowest faculties of the human like emotions, instead Plotinus “sees in art a means of access to the divine world, based on art’s reproduction of the beauty of that world, a beauty discernible not to the sense and passions but to the intellect” (Habib 2005: 135).

than the explanation of the text, the author becomes a scriptor or mediator of language. It is language that is speaking not a specific person or self. The text for him, is not “the ‘message’ of the Author-God [...] but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash (Barthes 2010: 1324). Text does not refer to a closed signified but is open to plural signifiers endlessly.

In his concluding remarks to “The Death of the Author”, Barthes argues, the mythicized idea of the author as the originator of the work needs to be defeated as “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (2010: 1326). The authorial presence of the author closes off multiple interpretations of a text. With its death, numerous interpretations can be done by the reader. Reading is no longer a passive act of receiving uncritically but an active role of writing a text. Meaning of a text is forever deferred.

With the twentieth century rethinking of the role of the author, it has become “a ‘person’ projected by the critic from the text, and a convenient catch-all for the critic, whereas the reader is at liberty to see the plurality of the text” (Cuddon 1998: 62). In the twentieth century, even before the poststructuralist announcement of ‘the death of the author’, the status and role of the author had come under theoretical attack. With the new critics, Wimsatt and Beardsley’s intentional fallacy, Wayne Booth’s coinage ‘implied author’, a distance was established between the flesh and blood author and the authorial voice of the text. Principally, the authority itself had fallen into disgrace with modernity, as Kathleen B. Jones argues, “either because truth or custom have been destabilised or because modern theories of subjectivity have created an irreconcilable tension between individual liberty and public order” (1995: 50).

In a similar vein, the idea of “‘the man and his work’” which is based on “the singular relationship that holds between an author and a text, the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it” (Foucault 1989: 139).

Writing is not about the communication from the author to the reader but circulation of language itself: “it is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears” (Foucault 1989: 139). Thus, writing is just performing a function. For Foucault, the relationship between death and immortality is reversed contrary to the one “designated to guarantee the immortality of a hero” (1989: 139).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Jeremy Hawthorne articulates his reservations about the complete redundancy of the real author. He states that although critics generally opt for not to “grant the author absolute interpretative authority” over the work, they tend to “demand that she or he have complete and relatively uninterrupted authority with regard to the establishing of a text – even though the establishing of a text has interpretative implications” (Hawthorne 2008: 81). He concludes his article as follows: “The author’s authority is not fixed: it varies – along with other forms of authority – in relation to what we want of a literary work” (2008: 88). For a detailed discussion of this argument, see Jeremy Hawthorne’s article titled “Authority and the Death of the Author”, pp. 65-88.

PART TWO
HISTORY OF MODERN BRITISH THEATRE CENSORSHIP

CHAPTER

CENSORSHIP DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

This chap complains
Because I keep the Drama bound in chains –
Of decency, of course ... Morality
(As I conceive it) ... for the merest fee,
For every play: He pays me my two guineas,
And then, no matter what his moral sin is,
The Law can't touch him – he's above the Law!
A sound insurance. Thus I censored Shaw,
Ibsen and Barker, – Housman – Maeterlinck:
Fellows whose names, like their opinions, stink!
(*Genius Limited*, 1945)⁴⁷

The term 'censor' derives from the Latin word 'censere', meaning "a taxpayer, valuer, assessor, [and] critic" (Skeat 2005: 99). The term dates back "to the office of censor established in Rome in 443 BC" (Mette 2001). In the classical age, the term referred to the public officers/magistrates who were in charge of detecting and correcting immoral behaviour as well as published materials, allegedly for the good of the public. The term appears in English for the first time at the end of the sixteenth century with a similar meaning; and from that time on it begins to evolve into a governmental act to repress any means of expression that resists the status quo (Harper 2015).

The control of information has been a central problem for governments since antiquity and was only magnified with the arrival of print in the mid-fifteenth century. The bastions of the established order, state and church, "quickly realized the power of the printed word to spread sedition and heresy" (Cuddon 1998: 118). To preserve their deferential power, every single printed work had to be scrutinised before its appearance in the public sphere, otherwise the banned or censored materials would arouse more curiosity and examination.

⁴⁷ The extract is taken from Wallace Wilfred Blair-Fish's allegorical drama which was written to criticise the Lord Chamberlain's censorial powers over the theatre.

Censorship was officially established by King Henry VIII in order to prevent “heresy, sedition, blasphemy, libel, or obscenity” in 1538 (Greenblatt 2006: A74). The Privy Council,⁴⁸ whose members consisted of senior politicians and members of court, undertook licensing for the ‘good’ of the state and the interests of the ruler, ergo the state. In 1557, in line with her father, Henry VIII’s daughter Queen Mary⁴⁹ gave a charter to the Stationers’ Company, which would be in effect for almost 150 years.⁵⁰ Having a monopoly on printing, the Stationers’ Company regulated the book trade, including seizure of unauthorised publications and illegal editions, and even the persecution of transgressors. Furthermore, in 1586, the Star Chamber introduced a decree “that no printing press might be set up in any place other than London – apart from one each in the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge” (Cuddon 1998: 118).

In the end of the sixteenth century, another important incident in the history of British censorship is the Bishops’ Ban. On June 1, 1599, John Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London, officially ordered the banning, seizure, and burning of a number books.⁵¹ Except for the books of Hall and Cutwode, most satires were publicly burnt at the Stationers’ Hall “as a part of the public

⁴⁸ The Privy Council members were counsellors of the king or queen about political matters.

⁴⁹ “In 1559, Elizabeth I, who re-established Protestantism, confirmed this charter in a number of “Injunctions” that stated that no book, pamphlet, play, or ballad should be printed unless licensed by the monarch, six members of the privy council, the chancellor of Oxford or Cambridge University, or certain ecclesiastical dignitaries. No political or religious work was to be reprinted without re-censorship. No work might be published without the inclusion of the name of its licensors. This system lasted in essence until 1695” (Greene 2005: 603).

⁵⁰ “The Stationers’ Company was an English guild incorporating various tradesmen, including printers, publishers, and booksellers, skilled in the production and selling of books. It was formed in 1403, received its royal charter in 1557, and served as a means both of producing and of regulating books. Authors would sell the manuscripts of their books to individual stationers, who incurred the risks and took the profit of producing and selling the books. The stationers entered their rights over given books in the Stationers’ Register. They also regulated the book trade and held their monopoly by licensing books and by being empowered to seize unauthorised books and imprison resisters. This system of licensing broke down in the social unrest of the Civil War and Interregnum (1640-60), and it ended in 1695. Even after the end of licensing, the Stationers’ Company continued to be an intrinsic part of the copyright process, since the 1710 copyright statute directed that copyright had to be registered at Stationers’ Hall” (Greenblatt 2006: A76).

⁵¹ Joseph Hall, *Vergidemiaryum*. 2 Vols. (1597-1598), John Marston, *The Metamorphosis of Pigmaliions Image and Certain Satyres* (1598), John Marston, *The Scourge of Villanie* (1598), Edward Guilpin, *Skialetheia. or, A shadowe of Truth* (1598), Thomas Middleton, *Microcynicon: Six Snarling Satires* (1599) T. Cutwode (pseud.), *Caltha Poetarum: Or The Bumble Bee* (1599), John Davies, *Epigrammes and Elegies* (1599), Ercole and Torquato Tasso, *Of Mariage and Wiving*, trans. Robert Tofte (1599), Anonymous, *The xv Ioyes of Marriage*.

performance of power” (Cressy 2005: 361). The satirical verses of Thomas Nash and John Marston were among the books publicly burnt. In accordance with this Order, famously known as the Bishops’ Ban, the further printing of satires and epigrams was banned (Sutherland 1982: 33). Furthermore, the printing of English history was not allowed without the official permission of the Privy Council (Clare 2000: 196).

In England, censorship on the English stage officially started with the appointment of a Master of Revels in 1495. From the late fifteenth century to the early eighteenth century, the Master of Revels had, among other responsibilities, the powers of censorship and licensing of theatre plays. No play could be staged without his written consent prior to its performance in public. If he recognised any offence, he had the power to demand excisions, modifications or additions. He would sign the text of the play, which was used as the licence by the company (Findlater 1967: 18-9). Needless to say, the Master of Revels was strictly overseen by the Privy Council and the Monarch. As Fowell and Palmer stated, “the theatre censor [...] had always served ‘as a sort of bodyguard to Authority’” (qtd. in Nicholson 2003: I, 295). Its dependency on the state and the monarch would remain constant until its abolition. His censorial powers reached a peak during the years preceding the closure of the theatres by the Puritans in 1642. After the Puritan interregnum, and the reopening of the theatres in 1660, the powers of the Master of Revels considerably dwindled. The spirit of the Age of Enlightenment⁵² went hand-in-hand with political satire.

The Stage Licensing Act of 1737 officially abolished the post of the Master of Revels, replacing it with the Lord Chamberlain, one of the senior members of the royal household, which would then oversee theatre plays until its official abolition on 26 September 1968. These statutory powers granted to the Lord Chamberlain were extended

⁵² For further detail, see Sıla Şenlen Güvenç’s article titled “Aydınlanma Çağı İngiliz Tiyatrosu ve Sansür: Henry Fielding’in ‘Başbakan’ Walpole’u Hicveden Tiyatro Eserleri ve ‘1737 Sahne Lisans Kanunu’”, pp. 519-530.

with the passing of the Theatres Act of 1843. In the nineteenth century, the government introduced a succession of laws to further supervise obscene and pornographic literary materials: the Vagrancy Act 1824, the Obscene Publications Act 1857, and the Customs Consolidation Act 1876 (Birch 2009: 206).

In accordance with the Act of 1737, any new play intended to be performed before a paying public audience had to be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain for official permission in advance of its performance – one week prior to performance. The Lord Chamberlain could refuse a play by demanding a number of alterations to the script, including many removals, additions, excisions, and/or omissions, before it was licensed to be performed on the stage. However, the Office's decisions were often arbitrary and not based on clear rules. In fact, in the aftermath of the Select Committee of 1909, the Lord Chamberlain famously listed the benefits of censorship, stating that a play could be banned or rejected for revision if it was considered:

- (a) to be indecent;
- (b) to contain offensive personalities;
- (c) to represent on the stage in an invidious manner a living person, or any person recently dead;
- (d) to do violence to the sentiment of religious reverence;
- (e) to be calculated to conduce crime or vice;
- (f) to be calculated to impair friendly relations with any foreign Power; or
- (g) to be calculated to cause a breach of the peace (qtd. in Nicholson 2003: I, 61).

The list lacks any kind of explanation or clarification of the rules, leaving gaps to be filled through interpretation and, inevitably, arbitrariness in decisions. Arthur Miller was very critical of this arbitrary intervention of the censor who “does not merely take something out, he puts something in, something of his own in a work that does not belong to him. His very purpose is to change a work to his own tastes and preconceptions” (1993: 3).

From this point on, for a better understanding of how censorship has become more complicated and diverse after the official abolition of censorship – which is the core of this dissertation – this chapter will provide a framework of censorship in modern Britain from the 1930s to the 1960s.

i. Legacy of War: The 1930s

From the 1930s onwards, the world witnessed growing tensions in world politics due to the rise of fascism across continental Europe. In opposition, literary works flourished to attack atrocities and crimes against humanity under fascist states, particularly those of the regimes of Mussolini and Hitler. In the realm of drama, the leftist playwrights considered the stage a political platform to indoctrinate and propagandise their views and organise people around communism.⁵³ Until the outbreak of the war, there was strict control over plays dramatising fascists and fascism on the stage. The Office's strategy was to avoid offending Nazi Germany; any explicit or implicit references to the issue were censored. After Britain declared war on Germany, there was a relaxation in the policy with still a careful treatment of the subject. Contrarily, the Office did not strive to keep communism off the stage. Dramatisation of communism was not considered a serious threat as on the whole it only appealed to a small number of people. At the same time, the Office did not want to trigger a counter-productive reaction. In this period, there was a strong collaboration and weighty correspondence between St James's Palace and governmental bodies as well as German Embassy. The Office had to act in accordance with the national and international politics of the time. This points to the highly politicised and dependent nature of the Lord Chamberlain's Office.

To begin with the dramatisation of Nazism on stage, plays including allusions to Nazis, such as costumes resembling Nazi military uniform, words resembling German, and even the short moustache cut with square corners reminiscent of that of Hitler, were modified or omitted for the sake of Britain's international political interests. Both explicit and implicit references to dictators or totalitarian regimes in non-specific times and places were carefully detected in collaboration with the Foreign Office. Plays dealing with the

⁵³ In the 1930s, there were productive leftist theatres: the Workers' Theatre Movement (WTM), Unity Theatre (which had many branches), Left Theatre and Group Theatre (they might differ in degree or nuance). They mostly preferred to perform plays on streets and similar venues.

issue were allowed after necessary amendments on condition that they would be performed outside the main cities.

In the 1930s, the most censored form of play was the revue, produced to raise the national morale as they mostly dealt with the recent events. In 1933, a scene named 'The Dictators' was removed from a Lupino Lane revue as the Lord Chamberlain insisted that "Mussolini or Hitler [cannot be] impersonated on the stage without objections being raised" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 10). In another revue at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, a reference to Hitler was excised while the one to the Prime Minister of Britain remained. The description of Hitler as "a tub-thumping little Austrian house-painter" and "a rum little beggar" were taken out for being disrespectful expressions as well as a reference to Mussolini and Hitler as "two dictator fellows" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 22).

In 1933, Alan Peters' *What Made the Iron Grow*, the first serious play attacking the Nazis, was rejected by the Lord Chamberlain's Reader George Street who described it as "a strong indictment of the atrocities and excesses committed by the Nazis" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 11). The play was resubmitted after substantial revision under another title *Whither Liberty* in 1934 and it was given a licence as it was going to be performed outside the main cities. In September 1934, Henry Daniell's *Lucid Interval* which was an assault on a tyrant of an unknown country was submitted to be performed in the Playhouse in London. Although the Office approved the play, the Lord Chamberlain consulted the Foreign Office and the play was rejected. Apparently, the particular concern over anti-fascist plays performed in London stemmed from the fear that a Nazi German (member of Embassy perhaps) could happen to see and report the play. As British theatre was being controlled by the Lord Chamberlain, this would be considered an organised or deliberate provocation of the citizens. The British-German relationships, already on a tightrope, would be harmed.

In his report to the Foreign Office in November 1934, the Lord Chamberlain's words reveal the pressure on the Office: "It is not easy to go on shielding the German from their misdeeds being depicted on the stage in this country" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 9). Furthermore, the German Embassy also put pressure on the Lord Chamberlain's Office in its decisions, which sometimes led to absurd situations: in 1935, the Germany Embassy complained about a Hungarian play in which the name Hitler was given to a page boy working in a Budapest hotel. The Foreign Office was also involved in the issue and demanded the name be changed. But this time, the substitution of the name "Gandhi" for "Hitler" caused offense to the India Office and the Indian National Congress (Nicholson 2005: II, 23).

In 1934, another anti-Nazi play *Take Heed* by Leslie Reade was submitted to the Office. The play was about the sufferings of the Jews at the hands of the Nazis. Although the Reader George Street described the play as a fair treatment of the issue, he wrote: "it would be unwise to allow a theatre to become the centre of anti-Nazi feeling and I cannot advise the Lord Chamberlain to take that risk" (Nicholson 2005: II, 17). Lord Cromer consulted the Foreign Office, who ensured that the performance of this play would undermine the government's priorities and offend the Germany Embassy.

In January 1939, Stephen Spender's *Trial of Judge* was granted a licence only after some changes were imposed on the play. Substantial cuts were forced on two plays produced by the Unity Theatre: Jack Lindsay's *We Need Russia* and part of a revue entitled 'Every Father His Own Führer' by Geoffrey Parsons and Robert Mitchell. After Britain declared war on Germany, although the strict rules were relaxed, the Office was still careful to avoid extremity.

Another anti-Hitler play was *Follow My Leader* by Terence Rattigan. This farcical play, disguised under the veil of a distant time and space, challenged totalitarian regimes and their leaders, in which Hitler was obviously the target. At that time, Nazi Germany

was expanding, occupying Austria, with Czechoslovakia the next target. Two Examiners of the Lord Chamberlain held different ideas about the play: Henry Game disapproved of the play and offered to consult the Foreign Office, while Geoffrey Dearmer recommended the play for a licence as he thought that it was “a light-hearted burlesque of fascism generally” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 140). When compared to his counterparts in the Office, in the case of *Follow My Leader*, Dearmer took on a defensive attitude “if the play is sent to the Foreign Office I think reference should be made to plays on the same subject already licensed” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 140). These were Elmer Rice’s *Judgment Day* and Shaw’s *Geneva*. The play was sent to the Foreign Office on 4 July. Significantly, the Foreign Office’s report on this issue is missing from the Lord Chamberlain’s files, except for the following line in a letter “the production of this play at this time would not be in the best interests of this country” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 141). As this brief note commands, a veto was exercised on the play within a month, indicating that the Foreign Office did not have a favourable view of the play. The Foreign Office wished that no foreign country with which Britain had friendly or delicate relations should be represented on stage in an offensive way.

The revised version of the play was resubmitted by Rattigan’s producer one year later, in July 1939. This time, the German embassy was consulted and sent a script of the play. The German diplomat Herbert Biloni wrote that the play “contains in its present camouflaged form without any doubt a lot of allusions which can’t but raise unfriendly feelings in the audience. Thus I don’t think it would be helpful in improving Anglo-German relations” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 144). As a result of the reassessment of the play in the Office, they again decided against offending Germany; at that time, the German invasion of Poland had begun in early September 1939. Terence Nugent and Norman Gwatkin had an interview with the playwright this time, explaining the policy of the Office. However, soon after, when Britain had declared war on Germany, Terence

Rattigan's agent A. D. Peters again asked for a licence and the attitude of the Office had completely changed: on 23 September the Lord Chamberlain noted that "there is no longer any reason why we should be anxious not to hurt Nazi feelings" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 145). The play was licensed. Similarly, Leslie Reade's anti-Nazi play *Take Heed*, rejected in 1934, was licensed in 1939, with a jocular note by the Lord Chamberlain on the file of the play "we need not now 'take heed' of German feelings" (Nicholson 2005: II, 21). The Lord Chamberlain's words underscore how the twists and turns of the prevailing political climate and the circumstances of the day can affect the Office's decisions.

The Lord Chamberlain's Office followed a different strategy about the plays on communism. One of the Unity Theatre's first productions was Jack Lindsay's *Who Are the English?* in 1937, a protestation of autocratic rulers in choric form. The Reader Henry Game saw it as harmless and gave it a licence since he presumes that the people who would attend the play were "already potential" and he wrote a scornful note "They may sing until they are as red in the face as their flag, without bringing the day of revolution a day nearer. It does no harm to allow people to let off steam" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 120). Similarly, Unity Theatre's two collectively written plays were also passed without any fuss: *The Fall of the House of Slusher* (1937) and *The Case of the Baffled Boss* (1938). The quiet reception of these plays depended on a strategy that was explained in Lord Cromer's words: "too much interference only gives a handle to propaganda" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 121). Quietly licensing plays was the strategy of the Office as they believed that Communism only appealed to a limited group, and rejection of these plays would be publicised and attract adverse consequences.

So plays such as Herbert Hodge and Buckland Roberts's *Where's That Bomb?*, Beverley Nicholls' play *When the Crash Comes* (1933), David Stewart's *Mutiny* (1936), and Alan Bush's *Peace and Prosperity* (1937) were reluctantly licensed by the Office due

to the above-given reasons. Furthermore, if a play fictionalised war between Britain and an unknown country, it was acceptable. However, it was not acceptable if the enemy country was specified, as in the case with F. Sladen Smith's *Skyscraper* (1936) in which Japan was the enemy; the enemy had to be unspecified in order to obtain a licence. Conversely, in the same year, Evelyn Millard's *Everlasting Hills* declared Russia as enemy but this time there was no opposition by the Office.

In the 1930s, homosexuality was another censored issue on the British stage for a very long time. In November 1932, Mordaunt Shairp's *The Green Bay Tree* was submitted for a licence. George Street, the Reader of the Office who was relatively liberal, wrote a positive recommendation for the play, which the Lord Chamberlain passed quickly. Its permission and many subsequent performances on the stage initiated controversies and brought St James's Palace under serious attack as there were many reactions to the play. Street defended his decision on the grounds that the play has no direct reference or implication of homosexuality, but just revolves around the relationship between a young man and his protégé.⁵⁴ It was found to be 'a repulsive topic' and 'repugnant to the normal individual' by many magazines including *Everyman*, which referred to it under the title "PLAYS THAT OUGHT TO BE BURNT" (1933: 137). However, the critic Ivor Brown in the *Observer* praised the play in his own way: "A dark place of society is uncovered; it is also disinfected" (1933: 11). Resentful of his decision and frustrated by overreaction from critics, the Lord Chamberlain thereafter paid special attention to the topic. Afterwards, nothing tangible or contentious about homosexuality was supposed to occur on the stage.

In other cases such as James Parish's *Distinguished Gatherings* (1934) was licensed only when the word 'invert' used to define a character was removed, as it might

⁵⁴ Mordaunt Shairp's *The Green Bay Tree* was republished in a collection of gay plays in the 1890s, in which editor Michael Wilcox noted that "Shairp's play treads as near to the dark edge of his subject as the times would permit" (1984: 7).

suggest 'pervert'. Similarly, in *Josephine* by Hermann Bahr, the following line was cut as a precautionary measure: 'Let's hope you satisfy the men better than you do their wives'. Noel Langley's *Murder on the Ship* was submitted to the Office in 1935. In the play, John's confession to Diana reveals that he has fallen prey to Winter's perverted intentions and he has been alienated from the world of 'normal people'. John, regretful, leaves Winter who throws himself into the sea and is eaten by sharks. The Reader who read the play was Game, not Street. This open reference to homosexuality was unacceptable for Game and he rejected the play, dismissing any suggestion of it being rewritten.

One of the most performed tasks of the Office was most probably blue-pencilling 'dirty' words and innuendos. 'Nancy', 'pansy', and 'cissy' were unacceptable words and automatically removed by the Lord Chamberlain.⁵⁵ Furthermore, any observation of feminine behaviour in a man was also disallowed. The Lord Chamberlain was also irritated by the cross-dressing scenes (mostly used in revues) in which men dress up and put on make-up like women; as he wrote in 1933, "I detest men making up as women" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 104).

In November 1934, the Lord Chamberlain brought a prosecution against the revue *West End Scandals* at the Garrick Theatre. The Lord Chamberlain's "regular inspector of revues, and the Office's acknowledged expert on women's bodies and costumes", George Titman attended the performance and observed that a dialogue licensed to be spoken between a man and woman was spoken man to man. He also added that the performance was based on dirty 'nancy' business. Upon this transgression, legal procedures were taken by the Office and the theatre was fined for this. What is significant is that the trial found wide repercussions in public (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 105). It might have been a

⁵⁵ Today, all of them remain offensive and pejorative words to describe a homosexual man or a man who behaves in a way that is considered to be typical of a woman.

deterrent example for both managers and playwrights who were proposing to deal with the issue in their next plays.

The Lord Chamberlain's Office found lesbianism as 'repugnant' as male homosexuality. The best example for this intolerance is Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* which was first rejected by the Office in 1935, and resubmitted many times until it was finally licensed in 1964. Within a period of less than one year (1934-5), four plays dealing with lesbianism were banned outright: *Emergency Exit* by W. S. Plymouth, *Love of Women* by Aimée and Philip Stuart, *Riviera* by Henry Broadwater, and Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*. As Helen Freshwater aptly puts, "dramatic images of lesbian desire created during the first half of the twentieth century are often homophobic, prurient, and deeply conventional in their reinstatement of the heterosexual norm" (2009: 50-1). Furthermore, the slightest implication, even an ambiguity, in a play troubled the Office, and they tended to reject the play out of hand. For instance, Henry Stare's *Dawn* (1936) was first rejected simply because of the Reader Henry Game's speculations as to the nature of relationship between two women teachers in the play. Although its revised form was submitted again, it remained in the Waiting box.⁵⁶

Besides homosexuality, incest was also a problematic issue for the Office. *The Gay Generation* by Anthony Gibbs was rejected as it ridiculed the idea of incest and even its revised form was rejected. In 1935, Jean Cocteau's version of the Oedipus myth *The Infernal Machine* created controversy. The Lord Chamberlain and his staff were confused because *Oedipus Rex* had been licensed as the ancient Greek tragedy, but this was a new translation of the play. It included the topic of incestuous relationships, which was an absolute taboo at that time. Street noted that "in Sophocles we are simply told of the

⁵⁶ If the Lord Chamberlain's Office demands a number of amendments to a work, the playwright is informed by his or her manager about them, and s/he might be willing to engage in a negotiation process with the Office through the manager or director, or, being discouraged, she or he might give up the idea of performing his or her play. This play is, therefore, left in the Waiting Box of St James's Palace. For further detail, see Appendix of this dissertation.

marriage; here we see the couple in their bedroom and witness playful love-making between them” and being aware of Freudian references to the play, he further noted that “the irony of Sophocles is vulgarly emphasised” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 115). Then, the Advisory Board was consulted. While David Cecil argued for it being licensed after a few changes, Sir Ian Malcolm condemned the play as a worthless version of an ancient play (Nicholson 2005: II, 116). Street suggested the Lord Chamberlain take the middle ground by demanding changes that would reduce references to the sexual relationship between Oedipus and Jocasta. However, it was not rewritten and could only be licensed in 1943.

The institution of marriage was to be protected from detrimental plays that would undermine its socially and culturally respectable position. Kenyon Nicholson’s *Sailor Beware* about betting on women was rejected as “American beastliness” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 65). Max Catto’s *Fig Leaves* (1934) was rejected as it concerned two women who decided to share the same men, and *The Loving Wife* (1936) was refused as it featured a married couple who engaged in adultery. A Hungarian play *Ehe* was first rejected as it dramatised marriage as a war based on hatred. But then the Office changed its mind because there was no erotic or sexually undesirable scene. Oddly, hatred between a married couple was more acceptable than their sexuality.

The Public Morality Council, founded in 1907 and active from the 1930s onwards, proved to be a considerable source of trouble for the Office. The Council’s members mostly consisted of clergymen and upper-class people who had secured a noticeable place in the culture of deference. As the guardians of morality, they intended to raise low moral standards and purify the immoralities afflicting the British society. Ostensibly assuming a superior position for themselves as being recipients of the ultimate form of morality and wisdom, they intended to protect particularly ‘impressionable minds’: children, women, servants, and the lower-class. They organised meetings and speeches at Hyde Park or

other places to provoke citizens and campaigned against the things they found morally unfit and degenerate. Their main targets included music halls, night clubs, private theatres, nudity on the stage, the advertisement of contraceptives, and restoration plays. They often wrote complaint letters to the Lord Chamberlain and visited the Office for their 'lax' decisions on the immoral plays.

After a visit by the Council's Secretary H. M. Tyrer to St James's Palace, the Office's attitude towards the Council is best reflected in Lord Clarendon's words noted in his file: "What a curse this fellow is" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 59). Ironically, the Lord Chamberlain and his staff supported the theatre many times against the Council including its complaints about Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), Ben Travers's farce *Banana Ridge* (1938), and Terence Rattigan's *First Episode* (1952) for their low morality.

The Public Morality Council campaigned against nudity on the stage so fervently that a small number prosecutions were instigated against theatres. Finally, the Office had to reconsider the limits of nudity on the stage: it was decided that nudity would be allowed on condition that there was no movement, no men on the stage and it took place under dim light. If the top half of the body was naked, it should be covered by a thin gauze and should not face the audience. In some cases, the Office asked for the photographs of the nude scenes to decide whether they were acceptable or not.

As to the rules concerning the representation of religion on the stage, rules were simple: impersonation of Christ was not allowed and that any quotation from Christ had to be used appropriately. However, there were many exceptions to these rules such as Anne Cundall's *The Birth of Christmas*, Reginald's *The Unknown Artist* (1938), and Margaret Duncan's *Voice of Love* (1939)) were given licence without hesitation. Some plays such as *The Trial of Father Diamond* by Alexander Ratcliffe and *Family Portrait* by Lenore and William Joyce Cowen including anti-Catholic propaganda created a lot of

controversy. *The Trial of Father Diamond*, about a Catholic priest who encourages a bank officer to steal money from his employers, was not given a licence while the licensing of *Family Portrait* caused a lot of trouble for the Office. Catholics objected to the play dramatising the family life of Christ and his mother on the grounds that it “humanise[d] their relationship and den[ied] the essential divinity which was fundamental to their faith” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 145). The Lord Chamberlain, however, did not withdraw his licence despite these controversies.⁵⁷

As the senior member of the household of the monarchy, the Lord Chamberlain strictly favoured the interests of royal family. The official attitude adopted by the Lord Chamberlain was an absolute ban on plays dramatising Queen Victoria on the stage as she still had living descendants. Following the submission of Louis Parker’s *Queen Victoria* (1923), the Lord Chamberlain asked for King George V’s opinion in a reverently written letter, to which his secretary gave an answer: “The King has read Mr Louis Parker’s play *Queen Victoria* and considers it is vulgar and in many instances historically incorrect: and permission for its performance in this country ought never to be granted during His Majesty’s lifetime” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 150). Similarly, in April 1935, *Vickie* by Consuelo de Reyes was rejected. Although the play glorified the Queen, there was no exception. It is quite striking because, although the Christ child was permitted to be shown on the stage, Queen Victoria could not be represented until the death of George V in 1936. Immediately afterwards, the ban on plays about Queen Victoria and her family was lifted. After 1937, there were portrayals of Queen Victoria as in Laurence Housman’s *Victoria Regina* (1937) and *Queen’s Ministers* (1937) with certain alterations as well as other monarchs on the stage, together with the introduction of the theme of abdication.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ In examining *The Family Portrait* in June 1940, the Lord Chamberlain, outraged by all the pedantic interventions in the historical accuracy of the play, desperately asked “why should beliefs, which we tolerate outside the Theatre become suddenly intolerable when they are made the theme of a dramatic work?” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 161).

⁵⁸ The Abdication Crisis refers to a series of events in British history when King Edward VIII (George V’s successor) decided to marry a divorced American woman, Wallis Simpson, in 1936. It was thought that the

The timing of the article entitled “The Throne is the Censor” by Willson Disher in 1937 raised a number of questions as to whether “the theatre is still under “Star Chamber” rule” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 147).

ii. Wartime: 1939-1945

When the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced that Britain was at war with Nazi Germany on 3 September 1939, the government took security measures due to the fear of the Blitz bombardments. In this respect, the Office of the Lord Chamberlain was moved from St James’ Palace to Windsor Castle and government prohibited all public gatherings for entertainment, including the theatres (Nicholson 2005: II, 166). Thus, once more in the history of Britain the theatres were closed.⁵⁹ The decision was officially announced in the newspapers: “All cinemas, theatres, and other places of entertainment are to be closed until further notice [.]” while “the Church and all other places of public worship” were not.⁶⁰ Although theatres were not the target of this closure, it led to indirect censorship. So while the government considered places of worship as uniting and motivating citizens into an atmosphere of nationalist and religious feelings theatre was seen as a distraction. The closure of the theatres did not last long, however, as the decision

British public would not accept a queen who had been divorced. Thus, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin advised Edward to abdicate. The couple were married in France in 1937, and Edward’s brother (George VI) became the next king in his place.

⁵⁹ This prohibition reminds of 1642 when with the outbreak of the First Civil War (1642-46) the parliament closed the theatres on the grounds that plays are “too commonly expressing lascivious mirth and levity” (Greenblatt 2006: 1254). It is significant to note that this was not the first closure; theatres were also regularly closed because of plague in Shakespeare’s time. As David Bevington clarifies “in an age with few resources against disease, the large crowds that assembled at plays could be a public health menace; and indeed, when deaths from plague rose too high the theaters were forced to close until the epidemic died down” (2002: xvi). The London theatres were usually closed for a few months, occasionally a year at a time. There may not be closure as censorship or for political reasons. But, it is also worth noting the popular argument that there are Shakespeare’s sonnets because theatres were closed. As Dr Patrick Hart puts it, “It seems probable that the financial pressures the plague exerted helped to convince Shakespeare to publish poems whose economic efficacy as a means to patronage, perhaps always dubious, has waned or been used up” (2011: 237). Thus, he could have time to devote to his sonnets for these reasons or at least perhaps he allowed them to be published. For further information, see Katherine Duncan-Jones’ ‘Introduction’ to the Arden edition of the sonnets, pp.10.

⁶⁰ “Britain at war with Germany.” *The Guardian*. Monday, 4 September 1939. www.theguardian.com/theguardian/1939/sep/04/fromthearchive.

was opposed by many people including G. B. Shaw, who defined this act as ““a masterstroke of unimaginative stupidity”” and advocated that just the opposite must be done in order to boost the morale of the public (Nicholson 2005: II, 166).

During the war, ENSA (The Entertainments National Service Association), CEMA (the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts) and ABCA (the Army Bureau of Current Affairs) were the major organisations that supported the production of theatre plays to improve the morale of the armed forces. Significantly, the plays performed by ENSA, CEMA, and ABCA fell beyond the scope of the Lord Chamberlain. However, the newly-established Ministry of Information and other governmental bodies took over the role of the censor. Inevitably, as theatre organisations relied on the government’s subsidies, they were subjected to state examination or, in other words, a “covert form of censorship” (Nicholson 2005: II, 169). Furthermore, the Minister of Information (Lord Macmillan) was appointed as the first head of CEMA to protect the interest of the government within the critical circumstances of the war.

As indicated earlier, the Lord Chamberlain’s Office continued its censorial practices in its new location Windsor Castle. The level of censorship increased even further due to the state of emergency during wartime. In such a delicate time, the function of theatre was reduced to entertainment, especially those that would improve national morale. To this end, contemporary political issues with ‘subversive’ content were not welcomed by the Lord Chamberlain’s Office as a subject matter on the stage.

During the war, the mobile group The Unity Theatre, which fell beyond the reach of the Lord Chamberlain’s censorial powers, performed plays at locations such as the streets of London and its underground railway stations. After May 1942, as the USSR sided with the Allies after being invaded by Germany, the Unity Theatre began to perform plays to support the new ally, the Soviet Union such as Louis MacNeice’s play *Salute to the Soviet Union*, subtitled *On the Anniversary of Lenin’s Birthday and His Return in*

1917, which was put on stage in the Royal Albert Hall with the official support and attendance of the government ministries and Russian guests, to celebrate the Soviet-British alliance against Nazi Germany.

It is apparent that times were changing. In September 1940, a sketch about Hitler and Mussolini, which had previously been rejected, was resubmitted to be performed for the Windmill and was licensed with the removal of references to the King of Italy. Since there was no longer any sensitivity about German feelings, the Lord Chamberlain allowed plays about Hitler on the stage as long as they did not cause offence. For instance, modifications were demanded of Douglas Reed's play *Downfall* for humiliating lines about Hitler, since it was thought to be "beneath our dignity to be vulgar about the wives of the Nazi officials" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 171). This was applicable to the plays about the monarch as well as in the case of *The Jersey Lily* which did not portray Edward, Prince of Wales favourably. Although private theatres were not legally subject to the Theatres Act of 1843, the threat of closure by the Lord Chamberlain was enough to persuade them not to stage the play.

In order not to offend ally France, *Roly-Poly* (1942) was rejected as it represented some French as egoist and materialist (Nicholson 2005: II, 190). For this decision, the Office consulted the Foreign Office and the French National Committee. Indeed, the play had been broadcast on radio. Irwin Shaw's *The Assassin* (1944), dramatising the assassination of Admiral Darlan, a right-wing collaborator with the Nazis, was rejected as the French Embassy did not like its dramatisation on the stage.

Although the spirit of a unified British nation was mythologised in wartime different standpoints including pacifists, communists, and nationalists emerged. Some favoured and some feared the prospect of a military coup by the communists in the chaos of wartime conditions (Calder 1969: 245). There were people from both left and right who opposed the war, though for different reasons. There was even a Fascist Party which

had allied itself to the Nazis.⁶¹ Aware of these multi-faceted attitudes towards the war, in the summer of 1940, the government passed an Emergency Regulation which “made it an offence for anyone to distribute any statement about the war ‘likely to cause alarm and despondency’” (Nicholson 2005: II, 175). The application of this regulation included the arrest of a Cardiff bricklayer for his subversive speech among a group of people and of a schoolteacher for promoting ‘defeatist’ theories to students in the classroom.

In a similar vein, the Ministry of Information controlled the circulation and publication of stories of the war in the news for fear that anything subversive could undermine the war effort and the spirit of national unity. It also founded its own Film Censorship Division and strictly supervised the BBC (Calder 1969: 246-7). In addition to wartime anxieties, as Calder argues, the nervousness of the government in the early years of the war stemmed from the fact that there was growing support for the left’s idea of ‘People’s government’. Accordingly, the official newspaper of the British Communist Party *Daily Worker*⁶² was closed in January 1941 and the BBC’s broadcasting of J. B. Priestley’s talks was banned.

The Lord Chamberlain’s Office adopted stricter attitude towards communism. However, the Office did not intervene in the Merseyside Left Theatre’s staging of Toller’s *Requiem*, which was a poetic tribute in which the ghosts of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht return, on the grounds that the play was ““too idealistic to be dangerous and too subjective to be subversive”” (Nicholson 2005: II, 177). But Sean O’Casey’s overtly communist play *The Star Turns Red* was not granted a licence since it was “subversive” (Nicholson 2005: II, 177). The Unity Theatre’s production of S. T. Frieze’s *We Fight On* was not welcomed by the Office as it was “a communistic glorification of the International Brigade” (Nicholson 2005: II, 180). Unable to decide what to do with the

⁶¹ The British Union of Fascists (BUF) was founded by Oswald Mosley in 1932. In 1940, the Party was officially banned and Mosley was interned by the government for duration of the war. He was released in 1943 and lived abroad for rest of his life.

⁶² *The Daily Worker* remained banned for eighteen months.

play, the Office consulted the Foreign Office, which demanded many excisions rather than banning it outright. Unity resubmitted the play with revisions of the parts regarding Franco, and justified their main aim which was the struggle against fascism. However, no matter how Unity tried to modify the play, the Lord Chamberlain did not consider licensing the play (Nicholson 2005: II, 181). Similarly, Unity Theatre's *The Spectre That Haunts Europa* (1941), in which there is a scene where the Establishment favours Fascism over Communism in the past and the present was rejected. Unity's *Comrade Enemy* (1942) by Alec Baron was given a licence only after the excision of the part promoting the need to fight the English Nazis. Limes Tomalin's *Lift the Ban* (1942), a protest of the ban on the *Daily Worker*, was first rejected since it was considered to be dangerous to the unity of the country under war conditions and treatment of class struggles was considered to lead to internal conflicts. However, the Lord Chamberlain sent the script to the Home Office, who suggested a licence to the play to avoid any counter-productive repercussions (Nicholson 2005: II, 179).

The Lord Chamberlain treated the plays dramatising the German air raids⁶³ with certain incredulity as they had a gloomy atmosphere which could have a negative effect on people. For instance, Unity's play *The Night of the Big Blitz* (1941), dramatising the bombing of Clydeside which lasted for two days, killing 500 people and injuring 800, and destroying many buildings and streets, was only licensed after certain alterations. Similarly, although Emlyn Williams' *The Morning Star* (1941), which is about London under the Blitz, was reluctantly licensed, Aimée Stuart's *London West One* (1942) was not licensed due to its bleak and despairing atmosphere (Nicholson 2005: II, 181). Surprisingly, Game wrote that "the public have the remedy in their own hands. If they disapprove, they can stop away from the theatres" and the play was subsequently licensed (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 182).

⁶³ In wartime, a genre had developed dramatising the Blitz attacks.

All in all, control of political plays was a wartime necessity for the government and the Lord Chamberlain's Office. The logic behind the censorial interventions in wartime was succinctly noted by Angus Calder as achieving three purposes:

One was to suppress news and views which should not be known. A second was to release, or to invent, news which should be known. A third was to give writers special facilities to report what was happening... with concomitant restrictions on the liberty both of the chosen few, and of those who were not given special privileges (1969: 502-6).

In accordance with the government's wishes, the Office favoured such plays as Laurence Olivier's propaganda film *Henry V*, which was dedicated to the British military forces at war. In this adaptation of *Henry V*, about 1,700 lines were omitted from the original version of Shakespeare's historical play. The revised version stimulated "a picture of Henry as a man of the people with a Churchillian resonance" and promoted the myth of unity when "Olivier's deft excision of images of conflict, usurpation and historical discontinuity creates a patriotic celebration of Henry's heroism and victory" (Whelehan 1995: 49-60).

While the country was at war and cities were being destroyed by aerial bombardments, for some people nudity and sexuality were more draconian enemies than Hitler. Not surprisingly, the Public Morality Council was the leading actor in these campaigns. Besides this, many complaint letters arrived at the Office criticising moral degeneracy on the stage. What is significant to note is that people did not know that private theatres and plays written before 1737 were not subject to the control of the Lord Chamberlain, so the Office was from time to time severely challenged over those beyond his supervision.

In January 1940, the Public Morality Council wrote a letter to the Office about "such gatherings as the ball described recently in the papers, where members of the Forces, A. R. P. wardens and many others danced in complete nudity" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 200). The Council believed that all this degeneration was spread from the theatre

and badly affected social norms. Similarly, *the Daily Telegraph* took many complaint letters about nudity on the stage. They were anxious for the future of British family life. Their condemnation involved both politics and nationalism: “The great mass of the people in this country do not want the bad imitations of Montmartre entertainments that are being thrust on them, or the even more futile emulation of American ‘striptease’” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 209). The discontented writer of this complaint letter advocated that the inherently pure British morals were endangered by can-can dances specific to the Montmartre region of France and striptease dance of Americans. Moreover, in 1942, the Public Morality Council complained about the play *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* for its inclusion of violence which was deemed an American influence. The Office rejected *Early American Murder* (1942) and *Wallflowers* (1944) for having the perceived lower American standard of leniency.

Due to these complaints, the Lord Chamberlain’s Office decided to organise a conference of the Licensing and Theatrical Associations to discuss the issue. On 16 April 1940, this conference was held in Windsor Castle.⁶⁴ After long discussions about the representation of nudity and low entertainments based on vulgar tastes, all were unanimous in agreeing to clampdown on nudity, except for the London County Council. The London County Council argued that a complete ban could not be explained on any justifiable grounds and all nudity could not be dismissed but must be strictly controlled.

As a result of the conference, the Office resolved to be tougher on nudity on the stage. Indeed, the rules on nudity in effect at that time were reiterated:

Actresses in movement must not wear less than briefs and an opaque controlling brassiere; actresses may pose completely nude provided the pose is motionless and expressionless, or is artistic and something rather more than

⁶⁴ The conference included the Lord Chamberlain and his staff, the County Councils’ Association, the Secretary from the Home Office, the Right Honourable Herbert Morrison (an MP and leader of the London County Council), the Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, the Association of Municipal Corporations, the Society of West End Managers, the British Drama League, the Theatrical Managers’ Association, the Entertainments Protection Association, and (weirdly) the Hotels and Restaurants Association of Great Britain (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 212).

a mere display of nakedness. The lighting must be subdued (Chambers 2002: 142).

What was newly-introduced was that any theatre play intending to show nudity on the stage must submit photographs of the nude scenes with the script before approval for the performance can be given. They even intervened in plays if the nude woman was not slender but full-figured, which would inconveniently attract more attention.

In addition to nudity, there was a fervent campaign against sexual innuendos and references on the stage as well as male revues.⁶⁵ They were considered to be lowering the moral standards of the society and posing a gross threat to the future of British family life. The Lord Chamberlain's Office was filled with complaint letters which called for a tighter control on theatrical productions.

There was also a strict ban on homosexuality as a taboo subject. The Office had not had notice of a 'disturbing' play about this issue for some time until *Queer People* arrived at the Office in 1940. All the staff were shocked by the play's overtness. A young man, Clifford, engaged to be married to Janet, bumps into his old school friend Jim after many years. Realising that they are in love with each other, Jim tries to persuade Clifford not to marry Janet. A lesbian woman Mavis arrives, a friend of Jim, and influences Jim to send Clifford to marry Janet. The play ends tragically with Jim shooting himself. This was a "revolting", "disgusting", and shocking play for the Office, unaware of what the post-war period would bring to the stage (Nicholson 2005: II, 232-3). The script was sent to the Home Office as the Lord Chamberlain was uneasy about the prospect of the play being published and then performed at a private theatre. The Office knew that a banned

⁶⁵ Males revues, among theatre plays the most popular form staged to raise the morale of the soldiers, were one of targets of these moral guardians during wartime. In the tense military climate of wartime, women were also impersonated by the male performers in these plays. In 1945, all-male revue shows such as *Soldiers in Skirts* and *Get in for Laughter* triggered a negative public reaction on the grounds that this was a derogatory depiction of the military forces, as stated in one of the letters of complaint sent to the Lord Chamberlain's Office: "What an insult to our soldiers who died for this country" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 320).

play would arouse the curiosity of people and private theatres were now using such rejections as a means of advertisement. Both the Home Office and the DPP (Director of Public Prosecutions), although sharing the Lord Chamberlain's unease, reminded him that his powers did not extend over publications and private theatres.

As a solution, the Office increased their visits to licensed revues and private (members-only) theatres to investigate whether they were manipulating the system. In early 1940, the Lord Chamberlain collaborated with the Metropolitan Police who sent plain-clothes officers to investigate whether theatres were overstepping legal boundaries. When they recognised a deviation from the original script, they would initiate a prosecution. For instance, the Torch Theatre was fined as they provided tickets and membership too easily (Nicholson 2005: II, 235).

In 1941, *Flower of Grass* by Frank Charlesworth was turned down. It was about a love triangle between Mike, Larry and Deirdre. Although there were no explicit references, the ambiguity of the play confused the Office. In August 1942, the Office did not like the title of a play: *No Pansies for Mr. Standish* by John Sayles and demanded it be changed because, although there were no pansies in the play, the title was misleading. In 1943, the Office was irked by Michael Robinson's *Baltic Passage* involving the relationship between a young man and an elder one. The Office demanded some excisions and modifications which would make obviate their closeness.

Heterosexual immorality was just as repulsive as homosexuality for the Office. In 1940, Charlotte Frances' *The Marry-Go-Around* was rejected on moral grounds. The play is about partner swapping between married couples for a night. The playwright wrote a letter to the Office stating that her work was corrective not promotive. The script was sent to the Advisory Board for consultation and once again rejected. After a short while, Frances's another play *Strange Sport* which deals with the story of a psychology professor and his flirting wife who enjoys attracting men, was also rejected. Two years later, in

1942, Francis submitted a contemporary adaptation of *Lysistrata*, only to be rejected again. A play written and performed in Athens in the fifth century BC was rejected in twentieth century Britain on moral grounds.

While ancient Greek plays were subject to censorship because of their contemporary translations and adaptations, seventeenth century British drama was beyond the scope of the Lord Chamberlain. Many complaint letters arrived at the Office about them as people did not know that the Lord Chamberlain could not intervene in them by law. In 1941, an MP who was disturbed by John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, sent a complaint letter to the Office. In accordance with the law, no proceedings were taken against the performance.

The Office was also frightened by even the prospect of the elimination of class division. Reginald Beckwith's *A Soldier for Christmas* (1943) created controversies just like *Miss Julie* had done previously. In the spirit of unity promoted in wartime, an aristocratic young woman invites a low class soldier to her home for Christmas. The woman is first sexually attracted to this working class man, then dismisses the idea. The Reader Game appreciated the satire, which according to him, attacked the people who believed the war would bring the dissolution of class boundaries (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 247). The play was only licensed when the scene where the woman takes the man to her room was excised. It would evoke a consummation of love for impressionable minds. Game's ideology is worth commenting on here. As the representative of the Office, he, just like the rest of the staff, appreciated plays promoting wartime unity. However, under this pretentious mask, the class-prejudiced ideas of the Office were revealed.

In February 1940, a last-longing controversy began between comedians and the Office. The Office was unhappy with some unauthorised jokes and gags used by the comedians. No diversion from the licensed script was acceptable. The comedian Vic

Oliver explained how detrimental this practice was to the comedian's art which required improvisation at times and further added:

spontaneity is the basis of every joke, and the biggest laughs of all are produced from topical patter. If the comedian was supposed to submit beforehand every topical joke he wishes tell his audience, it would [...] cease to be topical, and the comedian's reputation of being original and different would severely suffer (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 256).

At first, the Office insisted on its strict rule but later, after many correspondences, a slight deviation from the original script would be tolerated.

The biggest resistance the Office confronted towards the end of 1945 was an angry young playwright, Wallace Wilfred Blair-Fish who described the Lord Chamberlain as a "Star Chamber authority" and "an absolute tyranny in an absolute state" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 267). In March 1945, Blair-Fish's *Genius Limited* was submitted to the Office. Indeed, the script did not create any stir in the Office, but removal of the line "Nice, comfortable Chesterfield" was demanded as it apparently implied that the sofa in question was a cosy place for sexual intercourse. The manager of the Amersham Theatre informed the playwright about the change. Outraged by this intervention, Blair-Fish rejected any modification and challenged the Lord Chamberlain to restore this line to its original place. He wrote a letter to the Office, questioning the logic of this odd excision and blamed the Lord Chamberlain for "gratuitously abusing his already inherently abusive function" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 268). He finished his letter by threatening the Office with publishing the details of their correspondence. The Office did not take this opponent seriously at first. Game wrote, "the Lord Chamberlain can yield to reason but not to compulsion" and defined this act as a "foolishly adopted attitude of defiance to the Lord Chamberlain's authority" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 268). In turn, Blair-Fish attacked the Office more fiercely, stating that

This [treatment] is not only discourteous but exhibits the Censorship as a wholly arrogant, irrational, and an arbitrary authority. For, unless his Lordship holds himself bound to observe reasonable and consistent standards

of judgement and to reply rationally to arguments against his judgement [...] he is functioning merely tyrannically in mutilating or suppressing [...] in a manner which must be held to be intolerable in a supposedly free community which for more than five years believes that it has been waging a war for [...] freedom of expression (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 268-9).

His language and overt attack on the Office heralds the coming anti-establishment satire of the Swinging 1960s. Blair-Fish's next attack was to send a short allegorical play which very wittily satirised the Office and its relation to drama. In the play, the characters were Drama, Public Opinion and Dramatic Censorship who resembled half-human half-beast creatures. After further correspondence, the Lord Chamberlain desperately consulted the Home Office who stated that any attempt at prosecution would be disadvantageous to the Office and censorship. A letter was written to the Amersham Theatre informing that the offending line could be restored and *Genius Limited* could be performed without any modification in its original form (Nicholson 2005: II, 273).

iii. Post-war: From the End of War into the 1950s

"My dear friends, this is your hour. This is not victory of a party or of any class. It's a victory of the great British nation as a whole"⁶⁶

On V-E Day,⁶⁷ 8 May 1945, after six years of distress and misery, a huge number of people took to the streets of London to celebrate the ending of the war. The squares of the city were filled with large crowds of people waving flags for the future of Britain. On the one hand, "Britain was [...] a heroic victor, the country which had 'fought alone'" (Marwick 1991: 13). On the other hand, the war had had a terrible effect on Britain's political and economic power in the world, and domestic infrastructure. There had been

⁶⁶ This is an extract from Winston Churchill's speech delivered to officially declare the end of the war on a radio broadcast. He also greeted the people who filled the squares of London together with the royal family from the balcony of the Ministry of Health. "VE Day - 8 May 1945." *The Churchill Centre*. <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1941-1945-war-leader/124-to-v-e-crowds>.

⁶⁷ V-E Day stands for Victory in Europe Day.

many military and civilian casualties.⁶⁸ Due to the Blitz, city centres, schools, power supplies, railways, and theatres had been devastated, not only in England but also in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Davies 2000: 1). The British were traumatised by all these uncertain days of shortages and suffering. “In winning a war,” according to Greenblatt, “Great Britain lost an empire” (2006: 1832).

By the end of the war, due to the decrease in its political and economic influence, the previously imperial power of Britain had fallen behind that of the two emergent super-powers: the Soviet Union, and Britain’s former colony, the United States of America. This “brought about a painful reappraisal of Britain’s place in the world” (Greenblatt 2006: 1832). Worse still, Britain had to rely on subsidies from the USA during both wartime and the post-war years. Famously called “the empire on which the sun never sets”, Great Britain had to face up to the decolonisation process. Most significantly, the general picture in the aftermath of the war indicated that years of austerity lay ahead and the country would have to undergo a reconstruction process.

People who had experienced the horrors of the war were desperately in need of change and hope. A craving for transformation was first manifested in the general election held on 5 July 1945. Churchill, “the man who won the war”, lost power in the Parliament (Marwick 1996: 98). The Labour Party won the election with a crushing majority of 183, winning 393 seats with 47.8% of the vote, against 210 seats and 39.8% of the vote secured by the Conservatives.⁶⁹

The defeat of Winston Churchill was a huge shock to many who thought that “gratitude for Churchill’s leadership would ensure victory for him and his party” (Addison 2005b: 14). As David Childs puts it, the Conservative Party was considered to

⁶⁸ “In the Second World War 264,443 British servicemen, 624 members of the women’s auxiliary forces, and 30,248 merchant seamen lost their lives through military action; 67,635 civilians were killed in air raids” (Addison 2005b: 7).

⁶⁹ They had been in office from 1916–22 (in coalition), 1922–24, 1924–29, 1931–40 and 1940–45 (in coalition).

be “the party of privilege, wealth, stuffiness and nostalgia” while the Labour Party “was seen as the party of the underdog, of ordinary people and of hope” (2005: 3). Furthermore, it is likely that the harsh conditions of wartime were associated with the Conservative government under the leadership of Churchill. As he himself had stated 5 years earlier, (May 13, 1940) “I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this government, I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat” (qtd. in Ramsden 2004: 47).

The shift in political power ushered in the emergence of “a new kind of economic order” (Addison 2005b: 218): the establishment of the welfare state providing a range of free services to people such as medical care, care for the elderly, money for the unemployed, the foundation of the National Health Service and widespread nationalisations including “the Bank of England, coal, gas, electricity, and the railways” (Addison 2005a: 218).

The idea for the welfare state was based on William Beveridge’s social welfare programme of the Beveridge Report. Its policy was that the state would provide financial help and social security for its citizens, satisfying their most basic needs regardless of their social status or class.⁷⁰ In this regard, the welfare state was a significant move away from the deferential culture which had been deeply entrenched in British society.

During wartime, the Lord Chamberlain was Lord Clarendon (1938-1952) and with the end of the war he reorganised his staff and Advisory Board. The Comptroller and the Assistant Comptroller were Nugent and Gwatkin, respectively, and the Readers were Charles Heriot and Henry Game. The other members of the Board were the previous Lord Chamberlain, Lord Cromer, Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Professor Allardyce Nicoll,

⁷⁰ According to David Pattie, there is a Britain “caught between two irreconcilable ideas of itself. It can either be Modern Britain, providing care for all of its inhabitants – or it can be Great Britain, a superpower measuring itself against the US and the USSR. It cannot be both. He further argues that many problems afflicting the government from the late 1940s to 1960s “stem from the fact that it takes quite some time for this apparently simple fact to sink in” (2012: 7).

David Cecil, Dr Winifred Cullis, Colonel Peter Fleming, the Reverend F. H. Gillingham, and Cyril Maude.

In the aftermath of the war, the mood for discarding authority figures did not omit the Lord Chamberlain. This was a victory against Nazism – the very embodiment of authoritarianism whose essential policy was to restrict freedoms. This spirit of victory against prohibition and restriction did not want the continuation of any authoritarian entity which was reminiscent of wartime.

In March 1948, the British Theatre Conference was held under the chairmanship of playwright John Boynton Priestley to vote on whether censorship should be abolished or retained. The conference was attended by 450, out of which only 3 supported the preservation of censorship (Findlater 1967: 170). However, one notable group did not attend the conference: the Theatres National Committee.⁷¹ The result of this vote was presented to the House of Commons “to which the Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede, replied that there was no prospect of legislation to amend the Theatres Act” (Johnston 1990: 153).

The polemic against censorship could only be restrained for a further year. In March 1949, controversies were once more ignited with a ballot which enabled the Conservative MP and the playwright Edward Percy Smith⁷² to offer a private member’s bill (Findlater 1967: 170). The bill was “intended ‘to amend the law relating to the censorship of plays and licensing of theatre, so as to exempt the theatre from restrictions upon freedom of expression in excess of those applicable to other forms of literature’” (Johnston 1990: 153). Significantly, Smith’s bill was strongly supported by the Labour

⁷¹ It was “a composite body representing theatre managers from a number of organizations, such as The Society of West End Managers, The Theatrical Managers’ Association, the Independent Theatres Association, the Entertainments Protection Association, and the Association of Touring and Producing Managers” (Nicholson 2005: II, 279). It is significant to note that most of the managers and producers in these organizations advocated the preservation of censorship.

⁷² As a playwright, E. P. Smith’s play *Mr Lincoln Meets a Lady* was denied a licence and the previously granted licence to another of his plays *Felicity Jasmine* was withdrawn (Nicholson 2005: I, 280).

MP Michael Foot. This cross-party support for the abolition of censorship demonstrated that the foundations of the censorship mechanism were being shaken. However, the post would be there functioning for 19 more years.

Warned of the bill by the Home Office beforehand, St James Palace took action. In the meeting, the Lord Chamberlain's Office justified the continuance of the current system on the grounds that it is not "from selfishness or to defend its own territory, but out of altruism and duty" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 283). One cannot be sure whether diverse opinions were presented by the staff of the Office or this was simply the Office's opinion but the Comptroller Terence Nugent rejected the playwrights complaints about modifications requested without any clearly-stated reason or explanation. He further argued that the Lord Chamberlain rather

insists that any author or producer who wants to discuss any part of his play that has been cut, should be interviewed by Norman Gwatkin or myself. No-one, therefore, can say that they do not get personal service. Indeed, I think you would have to go a long way to find a more impartial and benevolent censor than the Lord Chamberlain" (Nicholson 2005: II, 285).

The playwright Sir Alan Herbert sided with the Office, stating "The Lord Chamberlain is not a horrid ogre. The gentlemen in his department do not simply say, 'Out with this line.' They sit there and think 'How can I help these people?' They are the most kind, considerate, helpful people in the world" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 277). Finally, the Lord Chamberlain wrote to the Home Office to clarify that the potential dangers inherent in the theatre outweighed any other kind of work of art. To further justify the necessity of the licensing system, he listed the benefits of censorship:

- 1) It protects the public from excessive vulgarity, especially in pantomimes, which are largely intended for children.
- 2) It prevents the production of plays on perversion and other unsavoury subjects.
- 3) It controls religious intolerance and blasphemy.
- 4) It checks plays and passages which might give offence to foreign governments.
- 5) It protects the individual or the family from hurtful publicity, which might arise from the personification of real people.

- 6) It protects the managers, producers and employees from loss of contract and financial hardship (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 285).

As a further benefit of the censorship system, the Lord Chamberlain suggested that “post-production censorship would be unsatisfactory [...] because it would put extra strain on the police and the judicial system” (Nicholson 2005: II, 285). In the list above, it was 2 and 5 that would much trouble him. Significantly, the Lord Chamberlain, who was essentially appointed to protect Sir Robert Walpole from political opponents, never ceased to shield political figures in power from critical attacks right until the last moments of his Office.

Although the Bill⁷³ was dismissed with some excuses about its technical shortcomings, it attracted public attention to the issue of censorship and opened it up to debate (Johnston 1990: 153-4). The prospect of the abolition of censorship was reflected in the newspapers: “The Censorship Farce May Be Ended At Last” (*The People*), “The Man Who Cuts Out Purple Passages may lose his job” (*Daily Mirror*), “Can we now rejoice that this monstrosity is to be brought to an end?” (the *Tribune*) while some supported the retention of the system and sided with the Lord Chamberlain (Nicholson 2005: II, 295). The Labour government took no position in this debate; however, the Home Secretary Chuter Ede concluded the debate “I do not intend to defend the existing position on the ground of logic [...] but there are many things that work in the British Constitution which cannot be defended on the ground of logic” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 294).

Although nothing came out of these contestations, the system of censorship was publicly discussed. Edward Percy Smith’s argument touched on a significant point: the

⁷³ Not surprisingly, a large number of playwrights favoured the bill, while the majority of theatre managers and directors, as usual, supported the retention of the Lord Chamberlain as the official censor. Through the official and centralised licensing system, they were guaranteed the play would run even in different parts of the country, without risking their profit. Otherwise, they would be subject to local authority post-performance censorship.

theatre is a medium to promote a multiplicity of ideas but restricting the liberty of this platform was ““an intolerable humiliation, to be compelled to submit every word [the playwright] writes to the close scrutiny of a public official”” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 289). Many plays were censored outright and thus were never performed in public. Many of the plays were subjected to mutilation, including many modifications, additions, and cuts before they were licensed to be performed on stage. Playwrights who refused to make the changes the Lord Chamberlain demanded either put their plays on stage in private theatres or clubs or, worse, they simply gathered dust in the Waiting Box.

The MP Michael Foot further noted that in addition to plays “whose heads have been cut off by the actions of the Lord Chamberlain’s guillotine” there were those “killed in the womb” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 289). In other words, ideas were killed in the mind before they could be poured onto the paper; although they had no existence, one had to take into consideration their non-existence. So many playwrights were even discouraged from attempting to write plays, as best reflected in words of H. G. Wells, one of the major authors of British literature: “The censorship with its quite wanton power of suppression has always been *one* of the reasons why I haven’t ventured into playwriting” (qtd. in Fowell and Palmer 1970: 191). In a similar vein, Henry James defined “the Censor’s arbitrary rights upon his work” as a “deterrent to men of any intellectual independence and self-respect”, while Joseph Conrad condemned the existence of censorship, stating “that a dramatic author may be shamefully hindered, and that such a situation is intolerable: a disgrace to the tone, to the character of this country’s civilisation” (qtd. in Fowell and Palmer 1970: 191).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, homosexuality was still an unwelcome issue to be represented on stage for the ‘heterosexual dictatorship’⁷⁴ of the Lord

⁷⁴ The phrase is taken from the name of Patrick Higgins’ *The Heterosexual Dictatorship: Male Homosexuality in Post-war Britain* (1996).

Chamberlain's Office. Any depiction or implication of homosexuality on stage was not permitted, if not unrecognised. Homosexuals were believed to be "more dangerous than mass murders or war criminals" to feature on stage in dramatic material (Jongh 2000b: 82). Many people thought it was an infectious illness which could easily influence impressionable minds. The Conservative politician Lord Hailsham went further and described homosexuality as a "proselytising religion" (qtd. in Rees 1955: 22). As homosexual relationships were illegal in Britain until 1967, legal sanctions were imposed on people caught in or reported to be in such a relationship.⁷⁵

Notwithstanding, homosexuality was not a new issue. In 1889, it was even revealed that a male brothel existed in Cleveland Street (Jongh 2000b: 86). Only its unacceptable status in society forced it to maintain an underground existence. In the immediate aftermath of the war, a sub-culture had been clandestinely constituted including drag balls, gatherings in public lavatories, clubs, bars, and other meeting places. Into the 1950s, homosexuality had become a widely debated issue on television and in the press. Furthermore, plays about homosexuality were running in music halls and clubs which were not subject to the rule of the Lord Chamberlain's Office. Most significantly, even licensed plays including furtive allusions to homosexuality were sneaking onto the stage through rhetoric and manipulation of words. Although the Lord Chamberlain and his staff were against homosexuality, the Office found itself in controversial positions from time to time.

In 1945, Rose Franken's *Outrageous Fortune* was rejected as it overtly dealt with homosexuality. Dail Ambler's *Surface* was also rejected on the grounds that two male characters, who are pejoratively described as 'pansies', "share a flat, the same bedroom

⁷⁵ In a trial in Rotherdam in November 1954, 17 men were charged with several homosexual crimes. The prosecuting counsel did not even condescend to articulate the word to describe the issue "There are no words which sufficiently describe the way he conducted himself. The acts he performed with these men are too disgusting for words and I do not propose describing them" (Westwood 1952: 22).

and there is every indication that they share the same bed!” (Nicholson 2005: II, 323). A *Man about the House*, meanwhile, was licensed only after substantial changes and cuts were imposed: the kept-boy in the play was turned into a kept-woman, and other references to homosexuality were removed.

Another controversial issue was lesbianism. Lillian Hellman’s *The Children’s Hour*⁷⁶ had been first rejected in 1935. It was put on stage as a club performance at the Gate until it was resubmitted to the Office in 1946, only to be rejected again. In the same year, Sartre’s *Huis Clos* to be put on stage by the theatre manager Binkie Beaumont was rejected on the grounds of references to homosexuality (Nicholson 2005: II, 324).

As plays dealing with homosexuality were increasing, the Lord Chamberlain gave order to the Comptroller Norman Gwatkin to prepare a report to consult the Advisory Board of the Office and certain religious leaders for their opinions:

Up to now the Lord Chamberlain has not, wittingly, licensed any plays dealing with perversion. It will be agreed that the present generation is outspoken on subjects which, previously, were not matters for open conversation. The subject of perversion occurs frequently in contemporary literature, both in fiction and autobiography. It may be these facts or, indeed, it may be part of the aftermath of two major wars but there is an impression that perversion is on the increase. The contemporary theatre is a valuable contribution to future history: it is also a powerful weapon for propaganda. It has been suggested that the production of serious plays dealing with the subject of perversion, its evils and its consequences, would act as a deterrent and would be of social benefit [...] Lord Clarendon would be most grateful if you could give him the benefit of your opinion on this matter (Nicholson 2005: II, 324).

The responses from these groups and persons, including the Eugenics Society, the Dean of Westminster, and The Free Church Federal Council were almost unanimous that its display on stage could have catastrophic effects in promoting and normalising ‘perversion’. Some, however, including the National Council of the YMCA, Violet Campbell (British actress), Peter Fleming (member of the Advisory Board), Violet

⁷⁶ The play is about a student who escapes from a girls’ boarding school and claims that the two head mistresses are in a lesbian relationship, which leads to their ultimate downfall.

Bonham Carter (a member of the Advisory Board), and David Cecil (Oxford University) favoured licensing these plays as the old taboo on homosexuality was broken. It is striking that they advocated lifting the ban on these plays merely on condition that the plays seriously and didactically dealt with the issue of homosexuality; it was not for artistic reasons.

Drawing upon these views, the Office decided that not every theatre or actor was capable of treating these issues in a proper and serious way. They considered offering “a restricted license” which would enable them to allow a performance in specific theatres for a specific time period (Nicholson 2005: II, 330). However, they had to consult the Home Office as to whether the Theatres Act of 1843 granted them this right. The idea was dismissed with the answer “there is no doubt that when a stage-play is once allowed, anyone can produce it without infringing the provisions of section 12 of the Theatres Act” (Nicholson 2005: II, 331).

In June 1946, the play *Oscar Wilde* dramatising Wilde’s trial was resubmitted by Leslie and Sewell Stokes, after the play had been performed in a private theatre ten years previously, following rejection by the Office. The Reader of the Office Henry Game’s words suggest that nothing had changed from the 1930s:

This play is about perverts and perversion, and that its central character has been erected into a sort of literary martyr does not alter the fact. We do not license plays about pederasts, and in my opinion, rightly so. During the period between the two World Wars a mistaken toleration gave a deplorable stimulus to the practice of abnormalities, and the Censorship is undoubtedly right in making perversion taboo as dramatic theme (Nicholson 2005: II, 333).

The play, once more put on stage in a private theatre, was interestingly refused again a further ten years later, in 1956, when homosexuality was no longer a taboo subject, because Wilde’s son informed the Lord Chamberlain that staging this play would offend him and his family (Nicholson 2005: II, 334).

Some plays about homosexuality were licensed like *Now Barabbas* by William Douglas-Home (1947) and *The Hidden Years* by Travers Otway (1947) with relatively minor changes. With the change of “You behave yourself” with “We’ll stand no funny business here”, the former play, which was about the intimate relationship between two prisoners in a male prison, was licensed. With this transformation, any reference to masturbation that the first statement would evoke had been evaded (Jongh 2000b: 107). Shirley Cox’s *The Gingerbread House* created controversy in the Office, with members divided on whether a licence should be granted. The play, about the homosexual relationship between a younger and an older man, in which the latter tries to discourage the young man from marriage. Asking the opinion of his predecessor, Lord Cromer, the present Lord Chamberlain Lord Clarendon decided not to give a licence. The play was condemned to the Waiting Box forever.

In 1948, Binkie Beaumont, a major manager and director, submitted Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire* for a licence. Some parts of the play alluding to homosexual activity riled the Comptroller Sir Terence Nugent: the protagonist of the play Blanche du Bois talks about her earlier marriage to a poet which tragically ended “By coming suddenly into a room that I thought was empty-which wasn’t empty, but had two people in it ... the boy I had married and an older man who had been his friend for years [...] Afterwards we pretended that nothing had been discovered” (Sc. 6) (Williams 1947: 109). The young husband thereafter commits suicide, which suggests that something ‘abnormal’ was going on in the room when two men were alone.

To kill any suggestion of homosexuality, the Office decided that changing “an older man” into “someone” was insufficient; it should be revised to a “Negro woman” (Jongh 2000b: 106). This act of double censorship on gender and race displays racism and a hypocritical understanding of morality. When compared to a homosexual relationship, interracial love was more acceptable for the Office. As the offending scene

was rewritten as a secret affair, it was preferable to make the other party a black woman, who was thus stigmatised as lacking the chastity British women possessed. Beaumont rejected this racist intervention, and the play could only be licensed when Blanche's entrance in the room was excised in 1949 (Jongh 2000b: 106).

Inconsistencies in its decisions and strict supervision of homosexuality brought the Office under serious attack again in 1951. With many others, Sir Arthur Beverley Baxter, theatre critic and Conservative MP (1935-1964), protested the practice of censorship and advocated that theatre should modernise and that the autonomy of the audience to choose what to see should be respected. Upon this, another consultation was called for by the Lord Chamberlain, who sent letters to many people and institutions for their advice on the issue, including the Home Office, The Bishop of London (who was currently the head of the Public Morality Council, known for advocating censorship), leading psychiatrists, Laurence Olivier, and many others. The majority remained against any relaxation of the measures of the censorship system, with some exceptions, such as Kenneth Walker who gave examples from Egypt and Greece of times where homosexuality was glorified and chose to use 'deviation' instead of 'perversion', a derogatory term. However, nothing came of these discussions again.⁷⁷

In 1952, *The Pink Room* by Rodney Ackland was rejected as three characters were ascertained to be homosexuals. In 1955, another play by Tennessee Williams was submitted: *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, the first play to express the difficulties homosexuals experience because of their exclusion from society, as well as "the agonies of concealment and self-loathing" (Jongh 2000b: 110). Unsurprisingly, the play was not welcomed by the Office; the Examiner Charles Heriot, speaking in the name of Office:

⁷⁷ Ironically, while the above-mentioned polemics and disputes were taking place as to whether homosexuality was an appropriate theme to be performed on the stage, lesbianism in film was surfacing and available to view by the public, despite the existence of the British Board of Film Censors (Nicholson 2005: II, 354). Surprisingly enough, the liberty cinema enjoyed was denied to drama. The potential effects of theatre plays were feared more than any other form of communication.

“Once again Mr Williams vomits up the recurring theme of his not too subconscious” (Jongh 2000b: 110). In a similar vein, Heriot condemned *The Maids* by Jean Genet: “a horrible deeply decadent and morbid play, quite unsuited [...] to public performance before mixed audience” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 111).

In 1952, when Lord Scarbrough (1952-1963) was appointed as the new Lord Chamberlain, Hellmann decided to resubmit *The Children’s Hour* in 1953, arguing that the play did not encourage lesbianism rather condemned its horrible outcomes. Lord Scarbrough decided to retain his predecessor’s ban on the play, in accordance with “strong support from a very wide field of advisers” (Jongh 2000b: 105). There is no specific information as to the identification of this wide group of people. Gwatkin suggested that lesbian love may be changed into a “more normal vice such as dope or men” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 105). Other vices can be tolerated as long as those involved participate in a heterosexual environment, which reflects the hypocritical understanding of morality. Even though the playwright consented to make changes the outcome remained the same. The ban on the play was eventually lifted 29 years later, after it was submitted to the Office, in 1964, when the last censor Lord Cobbold was in the Office. Even in the play *The Living Room* by Graham Greene, “the noise of a flushing lavatory”⁷⁸ would have to be silenced” as the noise was considered to be a strong innuendo for a homosexual relationship (Jongh 2000b: 107).

Phillip King’s *Serious Charge* did receive a licence in 1953. The play was about a single vicar (30) who was charged with being homosexual just because of his “passion for interior design, that most suspicious of male hobbies, who naturally suffers a

⁷⁸ The cottage and public lavatory began to be used exclusively as slang in homosexual subculture in Britain, particularly in the 1960s. Public lavatories took on a different function and happened to be places where homosexuals met to have casual sex and which the police kept under regular surveillance and frequently swooped to make arrests. Many playwrights made use of this double entendre. For instance, Joe Orton’s *The Ruffian on the Stair* opens with the following lines of the unmarried couple “Joyce. Have you got an appointment today? Mike. Yes. I’m to be at King’s Cross station at eleven. I’m meeting a man in the toilet” (1981: 31). Similarly, in Orton’s *What the Butler Saw*, Dr Prentice “calls Gentleman’s Lavatories ‘the last stronghold of male privilege...’ in his letter to a newspaper (1981: 388). Homosexual relationship between consenting adults (over 21) was only decriminalised in 1967.

whispering and smearing campaign” (Jongh 2000b: 109). This highlights the rigid categorisation of specific gender qualities attributed by the majority, which force people to conform to the stereotypical roles proscribed by society.

On 4 June 1957, being aware of the difficulty in implementing the Theatres Act of 1843, for the first time a Lord Chamberlain requested to meet the Queen and the Home Secretary (R. A. Butler) to examine the issue (Johnston 1990: 156-7). Pointing to changing attitudes and the severe criticism directed at the office, the Lord Chamberlain recommended that a modification or amendment should be introduced “to have his hand strengthened” (Johnston 1990: 158). He further proposed that, for the sake of alleviating criticism, some plays should be able to be licensed on condition that they would be staged only for adults: that is, there would be “different degrees of license” (qtd. in Johnston 1990: 158). This flexibility would function as a safety-valve to preserve the licensing system and to keep pace with the changing moods.

However, nothing resulted from these meetings; as no news was forthcoming from the Home Office, the Lord Chamberlain wrote to them eight months later again, explaining how it was becoming “increasingly difficult for him to carry out his parliamentary duty” in the face of newly-opened theatre clubs and already-existing music halls which were at liberty to put a play on the stage without a licence, together with the campaigns against censorship (Johnston 1990: 159). On 26 March, another meeting was held with the Home Secretary, who revealed that the recommendation was welcomed to some extent but discussion of the issue in Parliament suggested the likely abolition of the whole censoring system. In March 1961, the Home Secretary declared the final decision of the Committee:

The acts of a censor are inevitably always a matter of controversy [...] The view of successive Home Secretaries has been that, while the system of censorship by the Lord Chamberlain is anomalous in theory, it works well in practice and achieves a good measure of satisfaction in a field in which difference of opinion cannot be avoided (Johnston 1990: 163).

Finally, it was decided that “it is best to leave things as they are” (Johnston 1990: 163).

Meanwhile, homosexuality was most widely discussed in the media with the arrest of Sir John Gielgud, who along with Lawrence Olivier and Ralph Richardson was one of the leading stage actors, dominant figures in twentieth century British theatre. Gielgud was charged with a homosexual crime in October 1953, which he admitted and was consequently fined (Jongh 2000b: 90). He could only have his already-offered knighthood from King George VI after a one-year deferral. Jongh wrote about this again in his *The Guardian* article (2000) asserting that for this award “Olivier and Richardson had had to lobby the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill” (Jongh 2000a).

Frustrated by the Lord Chamberlain’s interventions on the issue of homosexuality, a new way was to be found to violate the authority. Binkie Beaumont and another producer Donald Albery, together with Stephen Arlen and Ian Hunter, made use of a loophole in the censorship mechanism in relation to club theatres, which were not subject to investigation by the Office. The Comedy Theatre was therefore renamed the New Watergate Club. The plays *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Tea and Sympathy* and *A View from the Bridge*, unlicensed on the grounds of homosexuality, were put on stage at the New Watergate Club, which proved to be a great success. Over the following two years its membership reached 68000 (Johnston 1990: 211). The Lord Chamberlain first seemed relieved to have these private theatres operating as safety-valves for challengers to censorship. However, his policy backfired as he could never have imagined the prospect of it being very successful. With this great success of the leading theatre producers Beaumont and Donald Albery, many other producers tried to mobilise public opinion in favour of the abolition of censorship.

On 4 June 1957, the Lord Chamberlain had another meeting with the Home Secretary, R. A. Butler, to talk about theatrical matters including homosexuality and private theatre clubs. The Lord Chamberlain wrote of the meeting later

I expressed my view that these were very useful adjuncts to the British Theatre in general. They could be regarded as experimental laboratories for the theatre, and I would be very sorry to see them interfered with. The New Watergate Theatre Club, however, had created a position in which the law and the censorship was becoming rather farcical” (Johnston 1990: 212).

He even evaded uttering the word ‘homosexual’. The main concern was not the preservation of morality but of position. The Lord Chamberlain was reminded once more of the fact that, in accordance with The Theatres Act of 1843, private theatres or clubs were beyond his responsibility.

On 4 September 1957, the Wolfenden report (research had begun 3 years ago) recommended that “two consenting adult males over twenty-one should, in a private place, be able to behave in a way henceforth beyond the prosecuting arm of the law” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 91). In accordance with these developments, the Lord Chamberlain wrote a memorandum upon his meeting with the Home Secretary and declared that the struggle to obstruct any display of homosexuality on stage and evading the word homosexuality would be “ostrich-like behaviour” (qtd. in Johnston 1990: 172). The Lord Chamberlain gave information to the theatre industry setting out the criteria for the display of homosexuality on stage:

- (a) Every play will continue to be judged on its merits and only those dealing seriously with the subject will be passed;
- (b) Plays violently homosexual will not be passed;
- (c) Homosexual characters will not be allowed if their inclusion in the piece is unnecessary to the action or theme of the play;
- (d) Embraces between homosexuals will not be allowed (qtd. in Johnston 1990: 172).

The Wolfenden Report appeared to be a watershed in the dramatisation of homosexuality on the stage. However, plays about homosexuality would be permitted on condition that it was treated seriously for didactic ends. In a way, the theatre stage would take on an educational role to discourage people from this practice. Hugging, kissing, and staying in the same bed were not permitted. Absurdly, comic homosexuals were not allowed on the

stage, either. This was a ‘serious’ problem in need of serious treatment. At least, they recognised the existence of homosexuals and there was widespread publicity of the topic.

In 1958, Shelagh Delaney’s *A Taste of Honey*, a play about a young effeminate boy, was submitted to the Office. Surprisingly, the Reader Charles Heriot found the play “concerned with the forbidden subject in a way that no-one, I believe, could take exception to”, while the Comptroller Sir Norman Gwatkin contradicted saying, “it’s revolting, quite apart from the homosexual bits ... To me it has no saving grace whatsoever. ... If we pass muck like this, it does give our critics something to go on” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 117). The Lord Chamberlain decided to license the play.

Being in receipt of the veto of the Lord Chamberlain, Jeremy Kingston’s *No Concern of Mine* was performed at the Westminster Theatre in 1958. The play concerned a young boy who is sexually attracted to his sister’s boyfriend. In his correspondence to Nicholas de Jongh on 3 November 1987, Kingston mentioned how he had been told by his producers Robert Fox and the actor Robert Morley to remove the implications suggestive of homosexuality. Kingston recalls that in 1950s,

there was the increasing call for changes in the law to do with homosexuality, but oddly enough there was a feeling that censorship and self-censorship was actually stricter than before. Before the war, perhaps, so few of the general public thought about it that playwrights could mention it almost more openly than they could when everyone was looking out for signs and references (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 118).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the depiction of sexuality was still controversial on the theatre stage and a taboo subject for censorship. However, sexual matters could no longer be totally kept off the stage. Such issues as abortion and syphilis were forbidden from being discussed at length but their mention on stage was no longer taboo. This comparatively freer attitude signalled that things were changing, albeit gradually. Furthermore, the provisional nature of censorship undermined its claim to assign or disallow certain subjects as appropriate without revision. It was obvious that the

negotiation process between St James's Palace and the director, manager and playwright over the performance of a particular play had become fiercer, becoming a major obstacle to the Lord Chamberlain's assertion of his censorial powers over the theatre stage.

In 1946, the American writer Elsa Shelley's play *Pick-Up Girl* was first performed at the New Lindsey Theatre Club⁷⁹ in London. Deprived of parental care and attention, fifteen-year-old Elizabeth ends up in teenage prostitution, where she catches syphilis following sex with an infected sailor, and has an abortion. Queen Mary went to see the play on her seventy-ninth birthday as did other political figures, and significantly she enjoyed the play as "juvenile delinquency" (Jongh 2000b: 165). Upon this success, the director of the play, Frederick Piffard, submitted the play to the Lord Chamberlain intending it to be performed at the Prince of Wales Theatre (Jongh 2000b: 165). Henry Game, Norman Gwatkin and the Lord Chamberlain Lord Clarendon read the play and all agreed that this was a morally unpleasant and unacceptable play but could be permitted after a few amendments, as it dealt with the issue seriously and underscored the importance of parental care. The Office demanded the removal of a reference to masturbation "He said I should go do something to myself", of sentences leaving nothing to imagination such as "They were both wearing nothing" and the excision of some 'undesirable' words: 'abortion', 'miscarriage', and 'syphilis' (Jongh 2000b: 166). However, the Office had to withdraw all demands for modification and the play was presented without endorsement. The queen having enjoyed the play might also have played a significant role in this soft withdrawal.

Frederick Witney's *The Celibate* aroused controversy in 1946. In the play, a curate obsessed with sexuality invites another clergyman to his room, which is full of erotic pictures and other materials, and tells him that he has an unsatisfactory sexual life because

⁷⁹ The New Lindsey Theatre Club, located next to Notting Hill Underground Station, was a private club theatre operating since the second half of the nineteenth century. The building was closed and destroyed in 1959 to allow an extension of the underground station. In 1881, *The Cenci* was performed in this club theatre.

of his disabled wife and he will resign since he cannot resist temptation. The play ends when his wife undermines his attempt to seduce the daughter of the housekeeper and cries “you shall expiate your wickedness in eternal torment” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 302). Henry Game, the Reader, found it too irritating to be licensed and decided to consult a clergyman who was then a member of the Advisory Board of the Office. Canon Gillingham found the ending of the play problematic and insufficient in revealing a moral lesson and added his reservations:

Is it true that there are such sexberidden beggars among the ranks of the Clergy? That there are moral lapses amongst them I am prepared to admit but in my 46 years’ experience I have never come across a man so obsessed as that man seemed to be yesterday. I think it would give to many people the idea that such a type was common rather than exceedingly rare amongst the Clergy” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 303).

Despite this objection, the Lord Chamberlain (although agreeing with Gillingham) issued a licence for this play. This also showed a recognition of changes taking place in the aftermath of the war.

In 1946, Lajos Biro’s *Patricia’s Seven Houses* was resubmitted to the Lord Chamberlain after it had been refused several times in wartime. The play revolves around an English girl who inherits a number of brothels. The Reader of the Office, Henry Game, opposed licensing this play, in a very vulgar form of nationalism, “English prudery may be absurd when carried too far, but in its essence it is healthy, and I should be sorry to see it further undermined by Continental standards” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 304). The Lord Chamberlain Lord Clarendon surprisingly issued a licence to the play, providing that the brothel became instead “‘a low night club’ and that ‘the production must absolutely ensure that illusion’” (Nicholson 2005: II, 304). However, ironically, although the modifications were carried out, information about the play mostly referred to “‘a chain of foreign brothels’” (Nicholson 2005: II, 304). Apparently, although the Lord Chamberlain tried to ‘domesticate’ the script to suit his own outlook, he seems to have

underestimated the intellectual capacity of the audience and their familiarity with the subject.

In the same year, Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Respectful Prostitute* was licensed after the script had been tamed with appropriate cuts. However, many complaints about the performance arrived at the Office. The Public Morality Council and the Westminster Public Control Department were unanimous that this play was inappropriate for young people to see. Another complaint came from a policeman, warning "that decent men would [not] care to let their womenfolk see it. A further aspect, and one which requires careful consideration, is the possible effect on the coloured population. The theme of the play is the American 'colour bar'; and the action is fairly strong" (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 306). This misogynist expression demonstrates that female audience were treated as more vulnerable to indecency, while men were regarded as filled with the wisdom to easily differentiate between good and bad.

In December 1949, Wilby Morris's *Modernity* was rejected because the play features a woman who is impregnated by the medical technique of artificial insemination, since she abstains from sexual intercourse. However, she wants to learn whether the father of her child is a pervert or an animal. She happens to find out it is her own brother, and that she is thus involved in something like an incestuous relation. In 1950, Eddie Kaplan's *Sex for Sale* and Richard C. Fort's *Woman of the Streets* were refused since they were about prostitution and therefore considered dangerous as they could arouse curiosity about or interest in the act. *Woman of the Streets* was then granted a licence only one year later (1951) when it was rewritten and set in America, under the title *City of Sin*. *Street Girl* was another play rejected on the grounds that it included excessive violence and sadism. Being aware of the changing moral standards of the time, the Office still maintained its mission of protecting citizens against indecent acts, obscenity, and foul

language, all of which they euphemise nostalgically as “relaxation of previous good manners” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 310).

In 1949, the Public Morality Council presented a report attacking the “disastrous toleration of nudity on stage” and added that “many salacious and most harmful productions are now touring the country excusing themselves on grounds of “art” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 311). The Arts Council was also their target for financially supporting these theatres with government resources. The widespread display of nudity on the stage also frustrated the Public Control Department of the London County Council. They demanded that the Lord Chamberlain’s Office follow the policy on nudity on stage which was decided on in 1940: nudity was only permitted if the actress is motionless, under dim light and without any male actor on the stage. Furthermore, “The top half of the body, if bare, should not face full towards the audience, and should only do so if draped with a gauze” (qtd. in Nicholson 2005: II, 78). These organisations complained that these rules were being violated by some plays, particularly in music halls.

The Office recognised the reality that nudity could no longer be restricted on the stage, as licences already granted to a great number of revues could not be withdrawn. The Assistant Comptroller Gwatkin wrote “I think it must be accepted that the Censorship cannot be used for the purpose of raising the moral standards of the Nation: that is a matter for the Church and the Educational authorities” (Nicholson 2005: II, 319). Gwatkin’s words are significant as they intimate a confession of the absurd position of the Lord Chamberlain’s Office.

Surprisingly, from the end of the Second World War until the advent of the 1960s, no significant controversies arose in the Office about the political content of plays. The tradition of the controversial political play during the 1930s and wartime also seems to have ceased at this time. Steve Nicholson, who has written the most comprehensive and graphic study of censorship of British Drama, does not even reference political plays from

the end of the war into the mid-fifties. However, a few examples of plays with contentious political content will be noted here.

In 1946, some lines of a song 'The Left Honourables' in *Between Ourselves* were banned as it suggested that some socialist MPs were illiterate. At that time, 10 Downing Street hosted the Labour Party's leader Clement Attlee. In 1954, another song 'Right Hand Man' in the Lyric Hammersmith revue *Light Fantastic* was banned. In the song, a character who was obviously based on the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, was complaining about his delayed ascension to power after Winston Churchill. The fact of this matter was popularly spoken about in the press but not permitted on the stage (Jongh 2000b: 146, Findlater 1967: 182). Lord Scarbrough might have had personal reasons to prune this song as he was once the parliamentary secretary of Eden in the House of Commons (Findlater 1967: 182).

In accordance with item 5 in the Lord Chamberlain's listed benefits of censorship, living or recently-deceased significant national or foreign figures would not be put on the stage. However, this did not apply when it came to Communists. In 1958, the American playwright Robert Ardrey's semi-documentary play *Shadow of Heroes* was performed on the stage. The play was about the failed Hungarian revolution of 1956 and prominently featured Hungarian politicians. A note on the file in the Lord Chamberlain's archives, revealing the Office's double standards, read the characters "were nearly all communists and they do not qualify for special protection by the Lord Chamberlain" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 146).

In the 1950s, for British theatre, as Kenneth Tynan put it, a "change, slight but unmistakable, has taken place; the English theatre has been dragged, kicking and screaming into the twentieth century" (1984: 84). In the mid-fifties, British drama was beginning to revive due to new trends introduced to stage. Unfamiliar styles, themes, and jargon were being introduced. The first staging of *Look Back in Anger* by the English

Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre on Sloane Square in London on 8 May 1956 and the premiere of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, directed by Peter Hall in 1955, were ground-breaking events. Both were revolutionary, the former in content and the latter both in content and form.

John Osborne was the most provocative dramatist since G.B. Shaw. As a founding member of the Fabian society, Shaw had to deal with censorship through legal proceedings as well as the independent theatres. He wrote pamphlets, organised petitions, and played a significant role in the organisation of the Committee of 1909. In contrast, Osborne as an angry young man, defied censorship through "determination and fury" and he was fully supported by his producers and directors (Jongh 2000b: 181). *Look Back in Anger*, labelled as "brawling stroke" by Jongh (2000b: 170), "a stage revolution" by Susan Rusinko (1989: 1), a "breakthrough" by Raymond Williams (1987: 318) was traditional in its form and structure but epoch-making in its theme and language. The protagonist of the play Jimmy Porter was the very representation of the frustrated post-war generation. This new wave, called 'Angry Young Man', gave way to the politically-motivated plays that would attack the bastions of the established and conventional order.

Modernism, which had developed in the early part of the twentieth century, was now dominant in literary forms, particularly in Europe and the USA. Furthermore, several movements, schools, and styles in the literary domain were flourishing, such as symbolism, impressionism, expressionism, cubism, futurism, dada, surrealism, and post-impressionism. All these new approaches embodied "modernist culture's uncompromising confrontation with and sense of severance from the conventions and tastes of both mass society and the governing elite and its determination to rebuild and renew the arts" and this new epoch was marked by avant-garde ideas and the defiance of unconventional (Birch 2009: 674).

Furthermore, the culture of deference became a much discussed issue and people had started to question this, largely in the 1950s and but also permeated through the 1960s. Class structures became more visible. People began to make fun of class issues, defined within such categories as lower class, middle class, and upper-middle class. “The experience of the Second World War”, Jongh asserts, “had hastened if not precipitated the erosion of the symbolic barriers dividing one class from another. Reverence for figures and symbols of authority dwindled in a society for whom deference was no longer instinctive” (2000b: 169). The fact that people had started talking about it in the 1950s also indicates that it was by then already coming under threat.

In the fifties, in addition to opposing playwrights, producers and managers, the censor mechanism, self-evidently manifesting its old-fashioned existence, had to work hard to stay up to date with the latest linguistic developments. The Lord Chamberlain and his staff could not understand newly produced and contemporary jargon, slang, and sexual innuendos. For instance, in a memorandum Lord Scarbrough recorded that “I do not know what “crumpet” is supposed to mean”, as featured in Osborne’s musical *The World of Paul Slickey* (1957) (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 173). The Comptroller Norman Gwatkin did not know the meaning of the word, either. It showed that they had fallen behind contemporary slang. The reader Charles Heriot came to their aid, reporting that it was “a recognized pseudonym for “the female pudenda”” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 173). They agreed that the word was to be changed. The Office was equally troubled by American slang. While the Reader Charles Heriot was reading Arthur Miller’s *A View From the Bridge* in 1956, he could not grasp the meaning of ‘punk’. He said that “it means diseased whore” in English, “I do not know its exact meaning in American slang ... I think we should have this point clarified and if necessary the word altered throughout” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 173).

As Jongh asserted, “since the Lord Chamberlain and his men were retired soldiers and administrators with little cultural awareness, they were mystified by modernism. The Theatre of the Absurd, as Martin Esslin termed one of the new trends, left them puzzled, and Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty, with its mystic notion of a magical drama which would shake you to core, was beyond them” (2000b: 177). According to the Comptroller John Johnston, Artaud’s ‘Theatre of Cruelty’ consisted of “exercises, improvisation and sketches” (Jongh 2000b: 217). On Johnston’s description, Jongh pointed to his scant knowledge in the field of theatre and asserted that Orton would have been delighted if he had seen that Johnston categorised his plays under the genre of Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty (2000b: 217).

One of the most significant plays of the new wave that signalled the break with traditional Western theatre was Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1955). The director of the play’s first production in Britain, Peter Hall, asserted that the play “shifted people’s expectations of what a play was” (1993: 106). This deviation from familiar and acceptable theatre language troubled the Lord Chamberlain and his staff. *Waiting for Godot* was licensed with some demands for change. The Office demanded some modifications including the removal of ‘arse’, ‘It’d give us an erection’, the stage direction that ‘he resumes his foetal posture’, ‘Gonococcus! Spirochaete!’ (which might have been a reference to gonorrhoea and syphilis), and the substitution of “Who belched?” for “Who farted?” (any reference to farting or simulation of the fart sound was forbidden), and the guarantee for that no sexual organ would protrude when Estragon’s trousers were stripped off (Jongh 2000b: 179). The amendments were written in a letter and sent to the playwright, living in Paris at that time. The Comptroller Norman Gwatkin wrote the letter to the playwright with a comforting and lecturing tone “If you feel very strongly about any of these alterations it is always possible to discuss the matter with the Lord Chamberlain’s department ... I have found that the most effective way is to produce

alternative dialogue, if an omission matters to the play” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 180). It is significant that the letter was directly addressed to the playwright and the Comptroller, assuming the role of a benevolent censor, was suggesting how the playwright could resort to an alternative way to rewrite the unauthorised parts. Unexpectedly, Beckett agreed to compromise. Only a bowdlerised version of the play was put on stage.



CHAPTER II

CENSORSHIP IN THE 1960s

If you can remember anything about the sixties then you weren't really there.
Jefferson Airplanes co-founder, Paul Kantner

The hallmarks of 'the Swinging Sixties' were protest, the youth movement and sexual revolution. As a result of this spirit of rebellion against the authority figures of the British Establishment and the old conventions, the decade witnessed escalating social conflict between old established and revolutionary values, that is to say, the clash between the 'mainstream culture' and the 'counter-culture' (Marwick 1998: 9). However, Marwick contests the idea that the 'mainstream culture' and the 'counter culture' are totally opposed to each other (1998: 19). He rather argues that the latter arises from within the 'mainstream culture' and challenges it in many ways but with "no hope of overthrowing it" as the "'counter-culture' formed no consistent, coherent, opposition or alternative force" (Marwick 1998: 19).

There were mainly two views about the change in the 1960s. On the one hand, it was condemned by some such as Norman Tebbit,⁸⁰ Peter Hitchens,⁸¹ and Christopher Brooker who described it as a breakdown of orderly society, "disillusionment" and "exhaustion" (1969: 292). In a similar vein, while Bernard Levin pointed to the chaotic nature of the decade where Britain "began to stumble, then to stagger, then to fall down" (1970: 9-10), the Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher later condemned it as "permissive clap-trap" as a result of which the established ways of "discipline and self-restraint [were] put in abeyance by the youth generation" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 196). On the other hand, Brian Masters celebrated the Sixties by glorifying "the British character"

⁸⁰ See Brian Masters' *The Swinging Sixties*, pp. 15.

⁸¹ See Peter Hitchens' *The Abolition of Britain: The British Cultural Revolution from Lady Chatterley to Tony Blair*.

(1985: 222), while Shawn Levy described “Swinging London” which was, to him, the symbol of the decade across the world” (2002: 363). Tariq Ali, a symbolic name in student activism in 1968, described the overarching concern as “a passionate belief that we needed a new world” (1987: 268). Arthur Marwick acknowledges that this was a ‘cultural revolution’ which reshaped “material conditions, lifestyles, family relationships, and personal freedoms for the vast majority of ordinary people” (1991: 15).

With these diverse perspectives in mind, whether appreciative or deprecating of the 1960s, there is no doubt that the decade, which inherently resisted any neat description, was overly-politicised and formed the basis of a social and cultural legacy for the upcoming decades. When student activism and the liberation movements reached their peak around 1968, not only in Britain but across the world, they were severely crushed by ‘repressive state apparatuses’, as defined in Althusserian terminology. Thus, 1968 was ironically a paradoxical year and a historical moment in which the established order reasserted itself and the movements for peace were suppressed. So, from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, the existing order reaffirmed its power and authority.

From a different perspective, this turning point was led to and by social and cultural transformation. Party politics gave way to identity politics or civil/personal rights⁸² and issues such as feminism, black rights, racial issues, environmentalism and pacifism. This transformation was seen as a necessity by the Marxist thinker Herbert Marcuse declared that the working class, replaced by student activism, and several minority groups must be the “gravediggers of capitalism” (qtd. in Sim and Loon 2004: 44).

‘The Swinging Sixties’ was a decade marked by paradoxes. While it was characterised by the motto ‘all we need is love’, promoting liberation, there was also an

⁸² Carol Hanisch, who was one of the major figures in the Women’s Liberation Movement, delivered a paper entitled ‘The Personal is Political’ in 1970, and thus the term was associated with her and radical and socialist feminists. Herbert Marcuse also puts emphasis on the personal as a political site, particularly in his *An Essay on Liberation* written in 1969, pp. 22-37.

increase in acts of violence. There were the Beatles, hippies and the flower power culture of the 1960s and the early 1970s that believed in love and peace, an increase in “pornography and sex shops in Soho,”⁸³ “a decline in church attendance, and a decline in the unemployment (Nicholson 2012: 1). There were movements promoting free love and sexual permissiveness, as hilariously revealed in Phillip Larkin’s poem “Sexual intercourse began/In nineteen sixty-three/[...]Between the end of the “Chatterley” ban/And the Beatles’ first LP” (2003: 146). The Sexual Offences Act 1967 decriminalised homosexuality between consenting adults over 21 in England and Wales⁸⁴ and abortion and contraceptive pills⁸⁵ became legal.

In order to eliminate injustice in the field of education, The Open University was established by the Labour government in the 1960s. The Friends of the Earth was founded in 1969 to affect policies on environmental issues. From the early 1960s onwards, CND (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) was making demonstrations. As to women’s liberation, The National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded in America in 1966.⁸⁶ Barbara Castle became the first woman Secretary of the state in the UK, although the majority of the MPs (95 per cent) still consisted of men. In 1968, a strike over equal payment was initiated by 850 women machinists at the Ford factory in Dagenham, which contributed to the Equal Pay Act of 1970. There was an increase in the publication of books and in 1964, BBC2 was launched.⁸⁷

Moreover, the Obscene Publications Act was passed in 1959 and one year later the trial against the publishers of D. H. Lawrence’s novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* was acquitted. This came as a shattering blow to the taboo on sexuality and created a profound

⁸³ Although this issue is now listed under the liberating and permissive aspects of the decade, it should be noted that pornography will be later problematised for its treatment of women’s sexuality by different groups of feminists.

⁸⁴ It was in Scotland in 1980, and in Northern Ireland in 1982.

⁸⁵ In the beginning, contraceptive pills were merely for the married women and only towards the end of the decade did it become “readily available” (Nicholson 2012: 3).

⁸⁶ At that time, there were only three woman prime ministers in the World: in Ceylon, India and Israel.

⁸⁷ Until then, there were only BBC1 and ITV.

social impact. The release of Jack Clayton's film *Room at the Top*⁸⁸ in 1959 was also a significant sign of "the end of English cinema's long and almost untrammelled age of gentility and conservatism" (Jongh 2000b: 121). Furthermore, there was a boom in satire: *Private Eye* and the TV series *That Was the Week That Was* contributed to the satirical mood of time.

The subsidies granted to the theatres by the Arts Council increased in the 1960s. Jennie Lee (1964-1966) was appointed by the Labour Government headed by Harold Wilson to channel state subsidies to theatres. The significant theatres reliant on state subsidies at that time were: the Royal Court under George Devine, the Royal Shakespeare Company under Peter Hall, the newly instituted National Theatre at the Old Vic and Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop at Stratford East. These theatres effectively struggled with censorship. Contrary to commercial theatres running for profit and avoiding any clash with the Lord Chamberlain, the above named theatres preferred to put on new and experimental plays for their artistic merits rather than as a profit-making enterprise.

From the second half of the 1950s onwards, there was a revival in the British theatre. Notable works of the Angry Young Men and the newly-flourishing absurdist works by such playwrights as Pinter, Beckett and Ionesco were ground-breaking. Furthermore, the theatre directors Joan Littlewood and Peter Hall were pioneering figures who hugely contributed to this revival of theatre both in content and style. Joan Littlewood established the Theatre Workshop which focused on the artistic merits of the works, the most successful of which were mostly transferred to the commercialised West End Theatre. With Peter Hall's efforts, the prospect of founding a National Theatre became more promising.

⁸⁸ The film is about an accountant, tired of exhausting working conditions, who plans to remove himself from this slave-like life by getting married to his boss's daughter. Confronted by opposition from his boss, he finds solace with an older married woman, with whom he falls in love. The film ends tragically in the death of the woman and the doom of the accountant. In the film industry of that time, the film was regarded as a counterpart of TV kitchen-sink drama. It's based on a book by John Braine – the story continues in a book/film sequel *Life at the Top* and TV series/film *Man at the Top*.

Especially from the 1960s onwards, alongside innovative techniques, an important question was the function and contribution of theatre to a modern society. As stated earlier, new experimental forms of theatre were being introduced. Antonin Artaud's manifesto on the 'Theatre of Cruelty' was among the ground-breaking new waves in theatre. Jean Genet, Peter Brook, and Antonin Artaud himself were among the playwrights producing in this avant-garde form. There were different critical receptions of the Theatre of Cruelty: some condemned it for its discomfoting characteristic⁸⁹ while some celebrated its arousal of the audience (Nicholson 2012: 35). Martin Esslin wrote of the issue as follows "the most aggressive and the most immoral theatre is the ordinary entertainment theatre of the West End and television [that] covers up and prettifies the human situation [and] pours a chocolate sauce of contentment and complacency over people's lives" (1964: 6-15). Indeed, the world which had passed through the Second World War and saw the brutality of war, particularly that of fascism, was not unfamiliar with stories of violence and terror.

By the 1960s, homosexuality had become a widely discussed issue in the media, radio, press, and television, that is, in much of the public sphere as a result of the Wolfenden Report of 1957. More significantly, homosexuality was legalised between the consenting adults in 1967, one year before the abolition of official censorship. However, its dramatisation on the stage was still subject to certain restrictions. The plays which dealt with the issue 'seriously' and 'didactically', punishing or rehabilitating people who practiced this 'unnatural instinct', were only allowed. Bizarrely, Lord Cobbold, the last Lord Chamberlain, tended to adopt a stricter attitude towards homosexuality when compared to his predecessor, Lord Scarbrough.

⁸⁹ Peter Cadbury, the chairman of Keith Prowse and Company Ltd and Emile Littler, the former member of the governing board of the RSC attacked the new theatre movements, including Theatre of Absurd and Theatre of Cruelty, as they thought that these 'dirty' plays posed a threat to the public morality (Nicholson 2012: 56-7).

In 1960, Joan Henry's *Look on Tempests* was submitted to the Office for a licence. In line with the new rules regarding the 'serious' and 'didactic' treatment of the issue on the stage, the play was licensed since the homosexual character was offstage and there was no homosexual in the cast of the play. The 1960 revue *Beyond the Fringe* was granted a licence on condition that effeminate gestures and behaviour, the word "darling" used between two young men, and the stage direction "Enter two dreadful queens" were omitted (Jongh 2000b: 118). Lionel Bart's *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'Be* was submitted to the Office for a licence in 1959. In this work, the problem was that, as David Roper stated, "The builder's labourer is not to carry the plank of wood in the erotic place and at the erotic angle that he does and the Lord Chamberlain wishes to be informed of the manner in which the plank is in the future to be carried" (1994: 32). This obsessive and irrational treatment of the issue, as Jongh argues, "give[s] the impression of an absurdly old-fashioned censor, hopelessly swimming against the tide, but concerned to maintain polite relations with the theatre" (2000b: 199).

What is significant is that the members of the Office did not share the same notion as to where the limit should be in the dramatisation of homosexuality on the stage. The Lord Chamberlain, the Comptrollers and the Examiners often fell into disagreement, as in the case in Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* (1959) and Joe Orton's *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1964). In Orton's *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, a handsome young man, Sloane, agrees to be the lover alternately of a sister and brother whose father he previously killed. The Assistant Examiner read the play and said "there is no attempt to deal with the subject of homosexuality in a serious manner" and he could only recommend the play on condition that some modifications were carried out (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 120). The Assistant Comptroller Sir John Johnston saw no necessity for any modification and the play was licensed. While these comparatively liberal attitudes were adopted and thereafter reflected on the stage, a number of more conservative people were blaming St

James's Palace for being too lax. For instance, in 1961, the conservative theatre producer Henry Sherek reported in the press and on radio how he was embarrassed by "the filth the Lord Chamberlain allowed to go on in the theatre" (qtd. in Johnston 1990: 164).

In 1964, John Osborne's *A Patriot for Me*, a play about a homosexual Jewish soldier in the Austro-Hungarian Empire before the First World War,⁹⁰ was submitted to the Office by the English Stage Company. Most ironically, Osborne places homosexuality, which the Lord Chamberlain meticulously tried to keep off the English stage for fear of its damaging effect on English family morality, in a military setting - the very embodiment of male identity. The Office rejected the play for its "corrupting influences" (Johnston 1990: 205). Chief Examiner Charles Heriot disapproved of the play, showing his general disgust for Osborne's plays "Mr Osborne's overweening conceit and blatant anti-authoritarianism cause him to write in a deliberately provocative way. He almost never misses a chance to be offensive" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 123). The Comptroller John Johnston demanded the excision of the drag ball scene and the scene where two men share a bed. Similarly, the drag ball scene was to be completely cut, according to Lord Cobbold, as it "constituted an alternative social structure" (Sinfield 1999: 263). Osborne rejected to make any changes and unlicensed by the Lord Chamberlain, the play was performed for club members at the Royal Court. The Censor made a very hapless mistake in exposing the play to a long process of veto. When the play was performed at the Royal Court on 30 June 1965, it became a great success and received wide public interest, perhaps because of the allure of the censored. It was also awarded the Evening Standard Prize as the best play of 1965; however, "with a large cast and small theatre, and with no chance of a transfer without a licence, it lost £16,000 and John Osborne stood half the loss" (Johnston 1990: 206).

⁹⁰ Because of his homosexual tendencies, he is blackmailed to spy for the Russians. The discovery of his homosexuality in the end leads to his tragic demise.

The Lord Chamberlain called for the prosecution of the Royal Court for evading the rules of the censor by subterfuge and making membership too readily available. However, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Home Secretary Frank Soskice (who would be succeeded by Roy Jenkins in the same year) declined to take any action as they believed that there was no violation of the Theatres Act of 1843 (Jongh 2000b: 126). The fear was that if the mainstream theatres functioned as club theatres for the performance of unlicensed plays at particular times, then St James's Office would effectively be reduced to a symbolic institution. The club theatres which up to then had been overlooked by the Lord Chamberlain as a safety-valve, were now becoming alternative platforms to challenge the authority of the censor.

In 1966, Frank Marcus's *The Killing of Sister George* was licensed and staged at the West End without any difficulty although all its characters were obviously lesbians. The play alarmed the Office at first but John Johnston read the play and concluded that it included nothing harmful, no scene of drag ball or lesbian couples embracing in bed. The case of *A Patriot for Me* must have so affected the Office that the reader Charles Heriot believed that the play "may well be a trap for the Lord Chamberlain" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 130). As sexuality was not openly displayed it might have not aroused controversy, but at the same time it signals further the change in the prevailing climate.

The question of politics also turned the Lord Chamberlain's pencil blue in the 1960s. The Royal Shakespeare Company's production *The Representative* by Rolf Hochhuth was submitted to the Office in 1963. The object of this political satire was the recently deceased Pope Pius XII who remained indifferent to the sufferings of Jews at the hands of Nazi fascism. The newly appointed the Lord Chamberlain Lord Cobbold must have faltered because he consulted respectively the papal nuncio in London, the Foreign Secretary Lord Home and the Home Secretary, Henry Brooke of the current Labour government. This event is indicative of the Office's "disproportionate fear of theatre's

power to upset” (Jongh 2000b: 148). The licence was granted on condition that the Royal Shakespeare Society would allow a place in its programme for the papal nuncio, as he had the right to speak for Pius XII who was charged with disregarding Nazi violence in the play (Jongh 2000b: 148). It is ironic that the play was already being performed in Germany and on schedule to be shown in America (Jongh 2000b: 148).

In 1964, Charles Wood’s *Dingo* was submitted but only licensed three years later by the Lord Chamberlain on the grounds that it was “a bitter, pungent attack on war and heroism” (qtd. in Nicholson 2012: 47). In the play, one of three British soldiers is trying to persuade the other two to rescue their friend, who is stuck in a burning tank. Unmoved by his cries for help, they do not help him and the soldier burns to death. They further argue that he cannot be a British soldier as a ‘true’ one would never cry in that way. In addition to including a masturbation scene, the play attacks the war hero Winston Churchill. In a puppet show scene of the play, Eisenhower and Churchill engage in a dialogue where the latter explains how he craves for war to gain glory for his military career.

Another clash took place between St James’s Palace and the RSC with the submission of Peter Brook’s production *US* (1966)⁹¹ written jointly by Adrian Mitchell, Denis Cannan, and Michael Kustow. The play was a satire on American involvement in the Vietnam War. After ten days’ silence, the Lord Chamberlain called the governor of the RSC, Mr George Farmer, about the play which he described as “beastly, anti-American and left-wing” (qtd. in Findlater 1967: 203). The reader Charles Heriot tried to establish the veto of the play on justifiable grounds in his own way: “The attitude [of *US*] to America seems to me to be dangerous and insulting to an ally, and since the war in Vietnam is, so to speak, sub judice (would we have permitted a play about the Suez crisis

⁹¹ Steve Nicholson explains that the title *US* has two meanings. It means both the United States by its initials and Britain itself, more precisely the leftist British young people for the anti-war movement (2012: 64).

during the crisis?) The piece is not recommended for license” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 158). The Office sought the advice of governmental bodies on this issue because, they thought, banning the play outright would make the government “Stalinist in its state censorship” (Jongh 2000b: 149).

Lord Cobbold invited George Farmer, the governor of the RSC, Peter Hall, the artistic director, and Peter Brook, *US*’s director to discuss the play. According to the Lord Chamberlain’s records of the event, he said that the play would be granted a licence on condition that the demanded changes were undertaken. However, Peter Hall’s account differed from the former, asserting that Lord Cobbold asked him “whether I [Peter Hall] thought it right for a major company in receipt of public funds to present something which was critical of a great ally with whom we had a special relationship” (1993: 196). The Lord Chamberlain was hitting below the belt by reminding them of their theatre’s dependence on state subsidy. Peter Hall insisted on theatre’s “right to be as polemical as the press”, not yielding to the bullying tactics of the Lord Chamberlain (1993: 196). The Lord Chamberlain either might have bluffed or had a mistaken faith in his ability to deter, but in the end nothing resulted from this and a version of the play was performed with some slight modifications.

Rolf Hochuth’s *Soldiers* (1967), refused by the Lord Chamberlain, also led to controversies. In the play Winston Churchill was claimed to have been involved in the death of General Sikorsky, the wartime Polish leader, and in the mass bombardment of some German cities. Laurence Olivier intended to put the play on stage at the National Theatre (Findlater 1967: 201). Lord Chandos (Oliver Lyttelton), who was the National Theatre’s chairman, the former Conservative Party Cabinet minister, and the minister of Production in Churchill’s War Cabinet in wartime, felt himself to be offended personally and put pressure on Laurence Olivier not to perform this play (Jongh 2000b: 155-6). Ronald Hill, the Lord Chamberlain’s assistant secretary, was extremely annoyed by the

play as “the whole of this play is imagination and it is imagination projected as fact through the mouths of the living or very recently dead” (Jongh 2000b: 158).⁹²

The Lord Chamberlain was still at war with ‘dirty’ words to keep British stage clean right up until the abolition of censorship, particularly from the late fifties onwards. As Jongh described, the Lord Chamberlain’s staff was reduced to the position of “text-cleansing officers, imposing the rules of dramatic hygiene upon scripts full of the likes of ‘piss’ and ‘piss off’”, ‘turd’, ‘get stuffed’, ‘the blowing of raspberries’, thick with ‘shit’, ‘crap’ and ‘farting’, and mention of naughty bits of the body like ‘tits’, ‘balls’, and ‘arses’, ‘spot of sperm’ and even ‘up your arse’ (Jongh 2000b: 174; Nicholson 2012: 83). Their role was to tame the script and the vocabulary. An American slang that troubled the office was “screw”, which was used for sexual intercourse in *Tomorrow with Picture* by Anthony Creighton and Bernard Miller in 1960. Having deduced that the word in the sentence “I’ll screw you in that chair” had a sexual implication, they decided that it should be replaced by “nail” (Jongh 2000b: 173).

In Orton’s *The Ruffian on the Stair* (1966), ‘piss off’ was demanded to be excised while ‘anally’ and ‘orally’ were cut from Osborne’s *Plays for England* (1962); they also demanded that ‘When you’ve slept with the bride and groom’ was to be replaced by ‘When you’ve been on such intimate terms with the bride and groom’ (Jongh 2000b: 174). The rest is left to the imagination of the audience. The Examiner’s report on Joe Orton’s *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1964) was full of notes like ‘alter’, ‘warn’, ‘leave’, and ‘cut’, and one of the sentences asked to be removed was “Why don’t you shut your mouth and give your arse a chance?” (Jongh 2000b: 175).

⁹² When the post of the Lord Chamberlain was abolished, the play was put on the stage by Michael White in 1968. The only survivor and the pilot of the plane involved brought an action for libel against Michael White, who was ordered to pay £75,000 (Jongh 2000b: 157). Michael White said, recalling those days “When you went to see them it was like being summoned in front of a headmaster. They were all ex-army officers. They weren’t friendly. They weren’t sympathetic. They were just dogmatic and very, very set in their ways” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 158).

Another of Joe Orton's plays, *Loot*, troubled the Office. As a prankster, Orton would use a variety of different names, wrote many letters to the newspapers and to the Lord Chamberlain to inflame controversies about his own plays and to ridicule the Office. For instance, one letter under the pseudonym Howard Godfrey is in the file of *Loot* and reads as "I do not think I have ever witnessed such an unpleasant and wickedly filthy-worded play in my life. We left before the end of the first act, completely disgusted, and I can only say I was thankful that our womenfolk and young people were not present" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 202). It is hilarious that the Lord Chamberlain's Assistant Examiner shared the same thoughts and reported: "The play is unpleasant in many of its details ... blasphemy ... an offensive reference to homosexuality ... filthy dialogue ... a mixture of filth and blasphemy ... a reference to flagellation ... to a voyeur watching homosexuals" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 203). Similarly, upon reading the play John Johnston stated "I have now finished [*Loot*] and I agree with the reader's view that it should be banned" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 203).

In 1960, the Lord Chamberlain's Office was further challenged with the submission of Osborne's play *Luther*, to be performed at the Royal Court. The office demanded many deletions and modifications for the play; eventually, Osborne ran out of patience and gave a stern warning to his two producers George Devine and Oscar Lewenstein:

I cannot agree to any of the cuts demanded under any circumstance. I don't write plays to have them written by someone else. Nor will I agree to any possible substitutes. I intend to make a clear unequivocal stand on this because (a) I think it is high time someone did so, and (b) the suggested cuts and alternatives would result in such damage to the psychological structure, meaning and depth of the play that the result would be a travesty [...] "I will not even contemplate any compromise ... I am quite prepared to withdraw the play from production altogether and wait for the day when Lord Scarbrough is no more (qtd. in Tynan 1984: 262).

By repeatedly attacking and creating controversies, Osborne strongly undermined the Lord Chamberlain's already weakened influence. The Lord Chamberlain began to recant

and give consent to the withdrawal of many of his demands. Yet, he still insisted on blue-pencilling expletives or vulgar words such as ‘piss’, ‘monk’s piss’, ‘piss-scared’, ‘crap’, and ‘balls of the Medici’ (Jongh 2000b: 191). Findlater records that Osborne rejected the suggestion of the Office ‘to change balls into testicles’ by showing that Shakespeare used the word ‘piss’ in his *Tempest* freely, and arguing that it “would be simply absurd” (1967: 187).

As to the question of religion, there was a strict ban on the depiction of God on the stage. In the 1950s and the 1960s, the Lord Chamberlain was supported in his decision by two archbishops, the conservative Fisher and the liberal Ramsey (Findlater 1967: 187). To recap its history: in 1930, the American playwright Marc Connelly’s *The Green Pastures* was rejected as God appeared as a black man clad in shirt and tie. Similarly, the depiction of Christ on the stage was also banned. Even expletives including ‘Jesus’ or ‘Christ’ were rejected.

Beckett’s *Endgame* countered a similar reaction for mentioning God with the following line: “the bastard – he doesn’t exist”, and its excision was demanded. Although the play had been performed in its original French at the Royal Court in 1957, the problem occurred when the play was translated into English. When this information sneaked into the press, *The Evening Standard* wrote “Does this mean that the Lord Chamberlain considers all people who understand French beyond hope – unredeemable atheists or agnostics who need not be protected from blasphemy? Or does he believe that knowledge of the French language bestows immunity from corruption?” (qtd. in Findlater 1967:153). After some weeks of negotiations, the Lord Chamberlain sanctioned ‘arses’; however, ‘balls’, ‘pee’, ‘piddle’ and ‘bastard’ remained disapproved (Jongh 2000b: 194). The ‘bastard’ became ‘swine’ and ‘made a balls of’ became ‘botch’ (Jongh 2000b: 193).

Peter Hall (the director of the Arts Theatre Club since the 1950s) and directors like him believed that the censorial practices of the Office were antiquated and

anachronistic; so, it had to be eliminated. Jongh interviewed Hall in 1994, when Hall argued that the Lord Chamberlain could not survive and their responsibility was to “go on pushing. One of the reasons the Lord Chamberlain caused controversy and embarrassment was that he was part of the royal household” (1993: 195). He continues his words as follows “My main memory of the Lord Chamberlain’s censorship was of a conspiracy to maintain a totally fictional idea of society, with a patriotic, prep-school attitude to life. All the censors were retired military men with the most appalling sense of humour” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 196).

One of the biggest obstructions in the fight with the Lord Chamberlain was that some producers, managers, even some playwrights were content with the practice of censorship. For instance, Binkie Beaumont the producer of H. M. Tennent had no intention of being free of the dictatorship of the Lord Chamberlain, although he often came into conflict with the Office (Jongh 2000b: 196). Similarly, in August 1964, Emile Littler, the President of the Society of West End Producers, became the headline of many newspapers because of his attacks on the plays performed at the Royal Shakespeare Company. The director Peter Hall was accused of putting “dirty plays” and “theatre of cruelty and bestiality” on the stage (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 200). As Kenneth Tynan stated in his letters “There was an enormous fear in certain sections of the theatre about the abolition of the Lord Chamberlain. They were worried about what would happen. They thought the floodgates would open” (qtd. in Tynan 1995: 332). However, in the liberating atmosphere of the 1960s, it did not seem feasible for the Office to continue its existence for much longer.

Joe Orton’s *Loot* in 1964 was one of the most remarkable plays for its open refusal to obey moral and social behaviour considered to be acceptable and proper at that time. In addition to the ‘dirty’ words discussed before, the most alarming scene was the appearance of a dummy who represented a naked dead woman with a false eye on the

stage. While for John Johnston this was unacceptable, Charles Heriot dismissed this objection underscoring that the play was a black comedy but written in “shocking bad taste” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 204). A meeting was held between Michael Codron, the producer, Peter Wood, the director and Johnston and Ronald Hill. In the interview Jongh had with Peter Wood in 1998, Wood recalls a striking part from this meeting: “‘Are you going to direct this play?’ ‘Yes I hope so.’ ‘And the writer, do you know him? Is he a friend?’ ‘I have a working relationship.’ ‘What’s he like?’ The next sentence was ‘only just audible ... Is he a bugger?’” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 204). The corpse could not be performed by an actor, could not be seen on stage and could not be ill-spoken of. Just like his *What the Butler Saw*, Orton’s *Loot* enjoyed a revival at the hands of Lindsay Anderson ten years later.

The German playwright Frank Wedekind’s play *Spring Awakening* was submitted for a licence by the Royal Court in 1963. As the Office demanded plenty of changes, it was performed as a private play for members at the English Stage Society. The play critiques sexual prudishness and the ways in which sexually repressed and inhibited societies somehow foster erotic fantasies more. The content of the play was regarded as pornographic as it included such controversial issues as sexuality, homosexuality, child abuse, and abortion.⁹³

Edward Bond’s *Saved* was one of the biggest blows to the Lord Chamberlain’s Office. Except for Charles Heriot, the Office did not welcome the play. The Assistant Comptroller John Johnston commented that “The death of the baby is very unpleasant and in my opinion you may like to consider modifying the stone throwing”, while Terence

⁹³ In Germany, the play was first banned for these reasons and then, with some excisions, had its premiere produced by Max Reinhardt in Berlin in 1906. Only 6 years later, the play was staged before the German audience in its original form for which *Berlin Post* gave the following explanation “The ban imposed by the Prussian Administrative Court has been revoked on the ground of the general seriousness of the piece as a whole. The offensive passages are not presented in such a way as to arouse or gratify the prurience of the audience. Nor is it possible to see how the onlooker could receive from it any impulse to conduct offensive to the police or public morals” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 206-7). It was also put on the stage in America in 1917 although with some controversy. Indeed, it is ironic that there was any argument in Britain almost three decades later.

Nugent described it as a “revolting play which certainly ought not be shown on any stage (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 215). Reluctant to license the play, Lord Cobbold sent a letter - “four whole pages of disallowances” to the Royal Court’s general manager Doreen Dixon on 29 July (Jongh 2000b: 215). The letter asked for many modifications, as follows: the removal of such words as ‘arse’, ‘bugger’, ‘get stuffed’, ‘crap’, ‘piss off’ and ‘shag’, the excision of any simulation of copulation, and the omission of sentences like ‘Ye’re as tight as a flea’s arsehole’ or ‘You must be the only stiff outside the churchyard she ain’t knocked off’ (Jongh 2000b: 215-6).

At that time, William Gaskill was the artistic director of the Royal Court and was not willing to yield to the dictates of the Lord Chamberlain. Gaskill went to the Office to discuss the play and described the stoning scene as follows:

The killing of a child in a pram when it doesn’t cry – it can make no statement about the pain it feels – has already a kind of abstract symbolic quality about it although one tries to do it as naturalistically as possible. But there is something very strange about it because you know there is only a dummy. You are watching a kind of ritualised action. What you’re really watching is the boys (qtd. in Roberts 1986: 36).

Thus, *Saved* was produced as a members-only play at the Royal Court. At that time, the Lord Chamberlain was aware of the fact that private theatres had found a loophole and were deliberately flouting the law: a theatre could turn into private for one night and, more significantly, grant membership easily at the door. Most of the reviews on *Saved* in the national press condemned the play for its language and violence. In his review in *Sunday Times*, J. W. Lambert put the headline “Past the Limits of Brutality” and he expressed his displeasure at the play: “Cruelty and viciousness on stage are no strangers to the theatre. But was there ever a psychopathic exercise so lovingly dwelt on as this, spun out with such relish and refinement of detail?” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 222). However, some gave the play a warm reception for its artistic value: Penelope Gilliatt in the *Observer* stated that it was not a “brutish play, it is about brutishness” and Phillip

Hope Wallace wrote in the *Guardian* on 4 November 1965 “No more horrible than some episodes in *Titus Andronicus*. [...] The squeamish are duly warned” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 221).⁹⁴

It was an unfortunate choice of the Lord Chamberlain to create that much publicity about *Saved* and involve the government in the issue. The rejection of the play backfired and it was seen by a wide audience at the members-only theatre at the English Society. The discourse regarding the abolition of censorship was further fuelled.

The Lord Chamberlain met Dingle Foot, who was appointed the Solicitor-General in Harold Wilson’s administration in 1964. This meeting was an unexpected blow to the St James’s Palace as Foot revealed the government’s discontent with the practice of censorship and its intention to scrutinise it, and further stated that law officers “had little doubt that the production was illegal and that a prosecution would be successful, but they thought this would bring up the whole question of stage censorship and were not sure whether or not this would be desirable” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 218). The Labour government seemed to be willing to end the Lord Chamberlain’s censorial powers and liberate British theatre from the oppression of the censor. On the other hand, Lord Derwent, appointed as a Home Minister in the Conservative Party, stated in 1964 “The government considers that [the Chamberlain’s censorship] has worked well in practice and that no alternative system is likely to be found which would command general support” (Johnston 1990: 184).

Later in March 1966, when Lord Cobbold declined a licence to Barbara Garson’s *Macbird*, the Theatre Royal Stratford East followed the same strategy as the Royal Court Theatre and presented the play as a private-members performance. Lord Cobbold stated

⁹⁴ Years later, in his preface to *Plays One*, Edward Bond explained the idea behind his widely-critiqued play *Saved*: “The idea that human beings are necessarily violent is a political device, the modern equivalent of the doctrine of original sin ... [violence] occurs in situations of injustice. It is caused not only by physical threats, but even more significantly by threats to human dignity (1994: 12-3).

that this attitude of the government put him “in an impossible position which sooner or later he would have to clarify in public” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 219).

As a result of decolonisation, from the 1960s onwards, racial issues came to the fore. A section of the white population in Britain was anxious about the consequences of immigration. In 1968, the Conservative Party MP Enoch Powell attacked the Labour government for passing the Race Relation Acts of 1965 and 1968 through which discriminatory practices ‘on the grounds of colour, race, or ethnic or national origins’ was illegalised. Powell delivered his notorious ‘rivers of blood’ speech in which he claimed that these practices would lead to a racial war and rivers “foaming with much blood’ unless the government not only cuts immigration but also puts pressure on those already here to return ‘home’” (Nicholson 2012: 27). He was dismissed from his party by the leader Ted Heath, but more alarmingly he found support including the media and the public. There were public demonstrations in Wolverhampton and London; one thousand workers “went on strike to protest at his dismissal, marching to Westminster carrying placards saying “Back Britain, not Black Britain” (Nicholson 2012: 27). During the next 10 days, there were 700 telegrams and 100,000 letters. Only 800 were in disagreement” (Manzoor 2008).

In the 1960s, the Black and White Minstrel Show was a very popular light entertainment running in Britain twice a week (1958-1978). It came under attack in the mid-60s as the show featured white people who blacked their faces. One of the performances was infiltrated by the Vietnam Action Group to oppose it. In May 1967, the Campaign against Racial Discrimination asked the BBC to stop this show as it “causes much distress to coloured people” and “creates serious misunderstanding between the races” (Nicholson 2012: 67). Furthermore, they claimed that the show gave “a wrong impression to impressionable whites” as “all it is intended to do is to caricature coloured people and stereotype them” (Nicholson 2012: 67).

The dramatisation of racial issues, black characters or plays written by black authors was sporadic. In 1962, a scene of a sketch in which a racist governor happens to find out that God is black on the verge of his death was refused by the Lord Chamberlain (Nicholson 2012: 68). In the early 1960s, a few plays by the Jamaican-born playwright Barry Reckord were put on the stage with all white cast as no black actors could be found (Rees 1955: 101). In 1967, the National Theatre was going to stage Peter Nichols's *The National Health*. The cast of the play included four black characters, for which Laurence Olivier's suggestion was to choose "the regular girls in the company" to "black up" (Nichols 2000: 22). Olivier explained his point claiming that "Much as I admire the negro races, I'm no great admirer of their histrionic abilities" (Nichols 2000: 22). The director of the play must not have been persuaded by this as Cleo Sylvestre became the first black actor to star in a major role at the National theatre. It is significant to note that the four black actors who starred in this play were working in this theatre but none of them "was cast – or invited to audition – for other plays in the National's repertoire" (Nicholson 2012: 72).

On 25 July 1967, the Home Secretary Roy Jenkins informed the Lord Chamberlain (Lord Cobbold) that the Joint Committee of the House of Commons and Lords had decided to repeal The Theatres Act of 1843, but until the new Act was officially passed by the government, the Lord Chamberlain was expected to continue his duty "*as before*" (Johnston 1990: 238). However, the enactment of the new law took a long time, almost fifteen months until the final legislation was passed on 26 September of 1968.

When the abolition of censorship was under debate in Parliament, the general conviction was that censorship should be completely abolished and not replaced by another person, board or institution. All theatre performances should be equally treated with other genres within the law of the country. However, surprisingly, Harold Wilson the Prime Minister, particularly concerned with the representation of living and late

public figures on stage, revealed his reservations at the weekly cabinet meeting in July 1967 and was supported by Richard Crossman (Jongh 2000b: 1).⁹⁵ It is clear that Wilson acknowledged the need for reform provided that it did not trouble the privileged position of influential public figures, which meant, according to Jongh, that he favoured “a special, politically motivated censorship that would not have disgraced a totalitarian state” (Jongh 2000b: 3). Agreeing with Jongh, Findlater asserts that “behind the vaunted permissiveness of the new regime, many of the old royal, political and religious prohibitions are still stubbornly defended, in spite of some apparent retreats” (1967: 202).

Both Jongh and Findlater acknowledge that Wilson’s defensive strategy was suggestive of Sir Robert Walpole who introduced the Licencing Act of 1737 to silence the particularly severe political satires of Henry Fielding (2000b: 5, 1967: 202). Among many political satires of Fielding, the final outrage for Walpole was *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*, so fierce in its satire that Walpole convinced the parliament of the necessity of regulating stage plays by means of censorship, which finished Fielding’s dramatic career (Fowell and Palmer 1970: 134). However, there was a great difference between the two historical circumstances. Walpole, who was supported by the majority of Parliament, crushed his opponents in the field of drama; Wilson was floundering in the face of a likely eradication of censorship, as the majority of Parliament and the permissive atmosphere of the time would no longer tolerate this absurd and undemocratic regulation of dramatic pursuit. The reason for Wilson’s desperate effort to prevent the unconditional and absolute abolition of censorship was John Wells and Richard Ingrams’ the play *Mrs Wilson’s Diary* directed by Joan Littlewood.⁹⁶ It was

⁹⁵ The Leader of the House of Commons, Richard Crossman thought that “the abolition of theatre censorship [...] was a further indication of the 1960s’ surge to restrained liberalism and ‘broke with traditional working-class moralism and with Fabian Puritanism’” (Jongh 2000b: 14). It is obvious that, although the Labour Party came with a wind of change, there were still dissident voices clinging to the traditional values and beliefs in the party.

⁹⁶ Joan Littlewood was the director of Theatre Workshop. Another of her productions, *You Weren’t Always on Top*, had brought about controversy ten years ago as one of the actors imitated the voice of Winston Churchill while opening a lavatory in the play. As this detail was not noted in the submitted script, they were fined for this act.

based on a spoof column in the satirical magazine *Private Eye*⁹⁷ that caricatured Mr Wilson and his wife.

The satirical tone of the play was light-hearted and the critical reception of the play was essentially positive (Jongh 2000b: 7, Findlater 1967: 202). For instance, from *The Sunday Times*, Harold Hobson described the play as “immensely enjoyable, keenly satirical both of personal mannerisms and political policy, acted with joyous finesse, extremely funny and it makes one happy to be alive” (qtd. in Riley 2004: 118). Similarly, Irving Wardle from *The Times* called it “a very lively show and it establishes an important precedent in British censorship which has at last allowed the stage to handle our politicians with the same freedom that television and newspapers take for granted” (qtd. in Riley 2004: 118).

The above-quoted reviews signify that the play was not a savage satire and indeed one is critical of its being too light. Wilson, his wife, and the Foreign Secretary George Brown were among the characters in the play. Wilson was depicted

as an aspirant Napoleon both a victim of Walter Mittyish delusions of invincibility and wild fears that his Cabinet colleagues were plotting against him” and the story is told through the eyes of Mrs Wilson, depicted as a suburban woman “who saw politics as an irritating intrusion into her domestic life (Jongh 2000b: 6).

The Foreign Secretary George Brown was depicted as an alcoholic and mocked. Knowing from the press that this play would be submitted, the Lord Chamberlain had a confidential meeting with Wilson, and then recorded that the Prime Minister “agreed that unless there was anything unduly offensive about Mrs Wilson and or the private individuals it would probably be wise not to refuse a licence” (Jongh 2000b: 8). However, the backdrop to how the play only came to be licensed after a six-month delay tells another story.⁹⁸ After the play had arrived at St James’s Palace, Charles Heriot the Chief Examiner

⁹⁷ The Sixties witnessed a satire boom, particularly attacking the notions of power and authority. *Private Eye*, launched in 1961, reflects this spirit of twentieth and twenty-first century British satirical culture. Challenging to the Establishment, it signalled that “deference was out of fashion” (Hewison 1995: 128).

⁹⁸ It was submitted in April 1967 and licensed in September 1967.

recommended that it should be banned as “this is a sniggering unfunny romp about the present PM, his wife and other people in the public view with a touch of the paranoia to be found in the plays of Spike Milligan” (Jongh 2000b: 6-7). Then, the Lord Chamberlain Lord Cobbold initiated communications directly with 10 Downing Street so that the politicians involved could be asked for their recommendation (Jongh 2000b: 6). At the end of this six-month consultation process, some changes were demanded: Mrs Wilson’s spoof poem was cut from the script:

And who should it be
Just in time for tea,
Harold makes a deep low bow
Her face turns green,
It was Her Majesty the Queen
Cos we're in the Big Time now (Travis 2000).

The poem depicting George Brown as a drunkard and womanizer was also deleted:

So off I do my business
With the nation's good at heart
I'm tanked up to the brim,
Bloody, resolute and grim
A bastard, a master of art.
I'm the toast of every lady
When I am out on the town
So brothers you may laugh
But I'm a member and a half.
I'm the redoubtable,
The colourful...
The flamboyant...
The excitable...
Drunken Mr Brown (Travis 2000).

This was replaced by the following lines:

So brothers you may laugh
But I'll just have a half.
I'm the sober,
The statesmanlike,
The responsible,
The reliable,
Sagacious Mr Brown (Travis 2000).

Mrs Wilson's Diary was staged in September 1967 in its bowdlerised version. Although Harold Wilson was invited, he did not attend the play.

On 29 November 1967, the Lord Chamberlain paid a visit to the new secretary of the Home Office, James Callaghan, who asserted that the “farcical” role the Lord Chamberlain would be abolished. He further stated that Wilson’s stance might be related to the Queen, Callaghan said that “one of my principal tasks was to reassure Harold Wilson that he would not be thought to be abandoning the Prime Minister’s duty to the sovereign in these matters” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 15).

On 28 May 1968, a political ceremony was held in the House of Lords to honour the Lord Chamberlain for the culmination of his long years’ service at St James’s Palace and so to send him “to the blazes in a glow of glory” (Jongh 2000b: 138). The last Lord Chamberlain, Lord Cobbold, accepted the gratitude for himself and his predecessors in their efforts to preserve British moral values and British theatre in the face of deleterious influences. Even Lord Norwich, known for his liberal views, offered his thanks to the Lord Chamberlain for “this unenviable function with understanding, sensitivity and perception” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 136). The ceremony, which Jongh described as “a typically English occasion, tinged with hypocrisy and humbuggery”, was counter-intuitive in itself (2000b:137-8). This was a sort of concealed mechanism and kept secret until the Lord Chamberlain’s archives were available to the public in the early 1990s. It is quite obvious that the Office of the Lord Chamberlain was not completely autonomous from the government and the monarch. Behind the curtain, the traffic of correspondence and collaboration endured until the last moment. St James’s Palace was fundamentally political, the representative of the government and the Establishment.

CHAPTER III

CENSORSHIP AFTER 1968

Goodbye, Great Britain. It was nice knowing you.
Wall Street Journal, April 1975

The legendary ‘Swinging Sixties’ faded into the 1970s, in which Britain went through significant diverse changes. Francis Wheen expressed this transformation as follows: “If the Sixties were a wild weekend and the Eighties a hectic day at the office, the Seventies were a long Sunday evening in winter, with cold leftovers for supper and a power cut expected at any moment” (qtd. in Megson 2012: 34). In the political arena, the decade began and ended with Conservative prime ministers, with a five-year Labour administration between them. The ‘consensus politics’ began to be attacked by both left-wingers and right-wingers; while the former saw it as “a compromised notion” that was an obstacle to a fully-developed socialist society, for the latter it proved to be weak and “suspiciously interventionist” (Megson 2012: 36).

The 1970s was characterised by many crises, from Bloody Sunday⁹⁹ to the “revelations of corruption in high places” (Marwick 1996: 184). Furthermore, there was an increase in inflation, unemployment, public-sector strikes, political polarisation, economic regression, as well as an increase in acts of militancy, racism, violence and terrorism. In addition to these issues, the question of devolution for Scotland and Wales, of Britain’s membership of European Union and of the violent attacks of the IRA,¹⁰⁰ all

⁹⁹ 30 January 1972 was marked by the sad event ‘Bloody Sunday’ in which 13 unarmed people were killed by British soldiers in Derry.

¹⁰⁰ In November 1974, two pubs in Birmingham were bombed by the IRA, leading to the deaths of 21 civilians. *In The Name of Father*, a film directed by Jim Sheridan and released in 1993, poignantly dramatises this issue, dwelling on the true story of the bombing of a Guildford pub by the IRA, leading to the death and wounding injury of a number of people. Four friends are falsely arrested and convicted just because coincidentally they happen to be in London at the moment of explosion. Under the police torture and threats, the main character (Daniel Day-Lewis), gives a false confession for the sake of his family’s security. A British lawyer (Emma Thompson) takes it upon herself and is resolved to redress this injustice through organising campaigns. This issue shows that the police force who cannot find the actual terrorists need to find scapegoats to satisfy the public opinion which wants to see that the guilty are punished. The four friends who have newly arrived in Britain from Ireland prove to be perfect scapegoats. This is the story

contributed to the controversial matters of the decade. Moreover, ‘identity politics’ came to the fore through consciousness-raising movements, including the rise of feminism, the Gay Liberation Front, Rock against Racism, and environmentalism.¹⁰¹ Their aim was to form their own political discourse to meet their needs, and as best revealed in Megson’s words, “the identity of post-imperial Britain” was brought into question (2012: 36).

The National Front was established by A. K. Chesterton, a former major figure in the British Union of Fascists in 1967 and had 17,500 members by 1972. In East London, “over one hundred racist incidents, including two murders, in an eighteen-month period from January 1976” were reported by the trades council (Megson 2012: 6).¹⁰² The Anti-Nazi League (ANL) and the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* were launched in 1977. In 1979, Blair Peach, a member of the ANL, was killed by the police in a riot. In January 1978, Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher delivered a provoking speech on ITV’s *World in Action*: “People are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture” (qtd. in Natarajan 2013). This speech, attracting National Front voters, paved the way for victory for Thatcher in the 1979 election. In April 1978, the ‘Rock Against Racism’ demonstration was held in Trafalgar Square to protest fascism with the attendance of almost 100,000 people. Britain was dominated by a polarisation between different groups.

At the turn of the decade into the 1980s, Britain, as well as the world itself, was going through a huge transformation, as echoed in the concluding lines of the Conservative Party Election Manifesto in 1979: “The years of make-believe and false optimism are over. It is time for a new beginning” (qtd. in Hewison 1995: 211).¹⁰³ The

of dirty state politics that feed on whitewashing and the exoneration of their misdeeds for the sake of the interests of the state.

¹⁰¹ Britain’s first environmental magazine *The Ecologist* appeared in 1970.

¹⁰² From “1975-7, racially-motivated crime increases by one-third across Britain and there are thirty-one racist murders of non-whites from 1976-81” (Megson 2012: 6-7).

¹⁰³ This new beginning was to be constructed upon a new consensus relying on “themes of law and order, on the traditional family and patriotism, in contrast to collectivism and the ‘permissive society’” (Hewison 1995: 211).

1980s was marked by Thatcherism;¹⁰⁴ under the eleven-year administration of the Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher¹⁰⁵ things began to change. The Welfare State, or social democratic state principles, which were strengthened in the aftermath of the Second World War but weakened in the previous decade, were now left superseded by the advance of neoliberalism which promoted economic liberalisation and a global free market without government regulation, where businesses and industry are controlled and run for profit by private owners (Harvey 2005: 1-4). Thus, unlike the preceding decade characterised by social state, centralisation and trade unionism, the 1980s was marked by privatisation,¹⁰⁶ monetarism, deregulation, tight austerity and reductions in government public spending. In ten years, as David Harvey states, the UK was transformed “into a country of relatively low wages and a largely compliant labour force [...] strike activity had fallen to one-tenth of its former levels. She had eradicated inflation, curbed union power, tamed the labour force, and built middle-class consent for her policies in the process” (2005: 59).¹⁰⁷

The harsh years of Thatcherism gave way into the 1990s, widely described as ‘Cool Britannia’.¹⁰⁸ In the 1990s, traditional family life was changing; there was an

¹⁰⁴Thatcherism was indeed derisively coined by the cultural theorist Stuart Hall before Margaret Thatcher was elected as the Prime Minister but then quickly adopted by her followers. According to David Marquand, Thatcherism was about “British (or rather English) nationhood, as well as the profit motive; about history, identity, and above all, authority as well as economics. For most Thatcherites, the strong state, English nationhood, and authority come first” (1991: 226).

¹⁰⁵As Britain’s longest serving prime minister of the twentieth century, Margaret Thatcher remains a highly controversial figure. On the one hand, she has been credited with her role in ending cold war together with Ronald Reagan. On the other hand, her political opponents blamed her for her tough and uncompromising policies in public spending cuts and over privatisation. To her delight, she was dubbed ‘the Iron Lady’ by the Soviet press.

¹⁰⁶ Margaret Thatcher “set out to privatise all those sectors of the economy that were in public ownership”, including disposal of “British Aerospace, British Telecom, British Airways, steel, electricity and gas, oil, coal, water, bus services, railways, and a host of smaller state enterprises” (Harvey 2005: 60).

¹⁰⁷“The construction of consent”, David Harvey argues, was achieved by Thatcher through “the cultivation of a middle class that relished the joys of home ownership, private property, individualism, and the liberation of entrepreneurial opportunities. With working-class solidarities waning under pressure and job structures radically changing through deindustrialization, middle-class values spread more widely to encompass many of those who had once had a firm working-class identity” (2005: 61-2).

¹⁰⁸The phrase ‘Cool Britannia’ which was reminiscent of ‘Rule, Britannia!’ became a popular phrase used to describe Britain. With the arrival of British pop groups (Britpop), British film, artists, fashions and new plays by the young playwrights of the late 1990s, Britain’s confidence was reinforced. Accordingly, the phrase was a celebration of this creativity of British culture, “acting as both tourist magnet and cultural boosterism. In 1996, *Newsweek* magazine calls London the ‘coolest city on the planet’” (Sierz 2012a: 14).

increase in cohabitation, unmarried motherhood, and divorce. Gays and lesbians became increasingly more visible. In 1994, the consenting age for homosexual relationships was reduced from 21 to 18 (Sierz 2012a: 2-7). As the internet was becoming more widely available, pornography became more readily available. There was a more widening gap between rich and poor and an increase in acts of crime and violence. In terms of race and religion, the majority of the country was white and secular but there was a significant amount of ethnic minority groups. In 1994, 5.5 per cent of the UK population and 20 per cent of London population consisted of ethnic minority groups; and there were approximately 500,000 Muslims, 270,000 Sikhs, and 140,000 Hindus (Sierz 2012a: 7). There was still a decline in church attendance; in 1992, 6.4 million people attended a Christian church, which was the lowest rate in Europe (Sierz 2012a: 7).

In terms of political developments, in November 1990, the Iron Lady Margaret Thatcher was forced to resign and was replaced by the new Conservative leader, John Major. Britain went through a two-year economic recession. Major promoted a ‘Back to basics’¹⁰⁹ campaign which was undermined by the revelation of sexual and economic scandals in which the Conservative politicians were involved (Sierz 2012a: 24). In 1997, with another landslide victory of the Labour Party, Tony Blair¹¹⁰ became the Prime Minister and “rebranded” the party as ‘New Labour’ (Sierz 2012a: 30). Bizarrely, as Sierz puts it, the first act of ‘New Labour’ was to abandon the party’s policy of nationalisation and thus “Blair moved the party on to the centre ground of British politics and narrowed the ideological gap between it and the Conservatives” (2012a: 30). This was not welcomed by all, as was reflected in Caryl Churchill’s play *This is a Chair* (Royal Court,

¹⁰⁹In 1993, John Major’s government introduced the ‘Back to Basics’ campaign which was based on a return to traditional manners and values of propriety.

¹¹⁰ Although Tony Blair was credited for devolution in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London, low unemployment and increasing prosperity, he seems to have fallen into disfavour with his support of George W. Bush and UK’s involvement in the war in Iraq (Rebellato 2013: 28).

1997). One of the scene titles of the play is entitled ‘The Labour Party’s Slide to the Right’.

The end of the decade was marked by a significant development: the demise of the Berlin Wall as a sign of the end of the Cold War. A new world order rose: the USA became the major world power with the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as communist regimes in Eastern Europe. China retained communism politically but with a capitalist economy. Although the decade began positively with the news of the release of Mandela and the end of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the world was afflicted with many controversies including problems in the Middle East, the Bosnian civil war in Europe, the first Gulf War in Iraq, and the ascension of the Taliban (radical Islam group) in Afghanistan (Sierz 2012a: 28-9). The power struggles in the Soviet Union were dramatised in Howard Brenton and Tariq Ali’s *Moscow Gold* (1990) and the Romanian revolution against the Communist regime was dramatised in Caryl Churchill’s *Mad Forest* (1990). The new world order and a shift from communism to capitalism was explored in David Edgar’s *The Shape of the Table* (National, 1990), based on a fictional Eastern Europe country. His *Pentecost* (RSC, 1994) similarly focused on the theme of negotiation in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. David Greig’s *Europe* (Traverse, 1994) dealt with the question of European identity and “the hopelessness of refugees who can never find a place to rest, the disenfranchisement of the young, a culture where the profit is not in making but buying and selling, and imagined threats from immigrants hang in the air” (Gardner 2007). Society was changing and it was becoming more and more multicultural. In accordance with this transformation in social structure, racial issues were becoming more visible.

In the 2000s, there was a decrease in divorce, unemployment and an increase in cohabitation and single parenting. There was also a decline in acts of crime but they began to be “high-profile murders, particularly of children and old people, and disproportionate

media coverage of race-related criminality” (Rebellato 2013: 4). There was also an increase in global terrorism, including bombings and massacres. For gay and lesbian rights, the decade represented major progress: with the passing of the Civil Partnership Act in 2005, same-sex couples were granted the right to a legal ceremony as a form of marriage. Furthermore, the consenting age for a homosexual relationship was reduced to 16, in line with that for heterosexual relationships and homosexuals were no longer banned from army service after 2000 (Rebellato 2013: 9). Despite these breakthroughs in gay and lesbian rights, homophobia did not simply disappear: a gay club named The Admiral Duncan in London was bombed in 1999 alongside a number of homophobic murders (Rebellato 2013: 10).

Racial issues remained a controversial issue in British culture. The perpetrators of the race murder of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence (1993) were only convicted 19 years later. Dan Rebellato relates the police’s failure to “the intentional racism of the police” and in 2012, “the Institute of Race Relations names 96 racist murders since that of Stephen Lawrence, 61 of them in the 2000s” (2013: 10). The terrorist attack of 9/11 and the London bombings of July 2005 brought Islamic minorities in Britain into a problematic position and subject to hostile attitudes and attacks. There was a growing tension between Black British and Black-Asian groups, which contributed to racial tensions in Britain. In the 2006 local elections, the fascist British National Party drew on this islamophobia as a party strategy and in the 2009 elections to the European Parliament they won two seat but then almost disappeared after the 2012 local elections (Rebellato 2013: 10-1).

In the realm of theatre, as stated before, the 1970s began with a legacy of two significant events: the abolition of official stage censorship and the appointment of Jennie

Lee¹¹¹ as the new Arts Minister who offered generous subsidies to the Arts Council to promote theatres. Thanks to this increase in the financial support, the mainstream theatres, the RSC directed by Peter Hall, the National Theatre directed first by Laurence Olivier and then Peter Hall, and the Royal Court Theatre directed by Lindsay Anderson and Anthony Page, were producing new plays as well as new productions of older plays. The commercialised West End theatre mostly relied on plays transferred from the subsidised theatres (Shellard 1999: 163).

The broad spectrum of alternative theatres¹¹² in the 1970s could be regarded as a reflection of growing 'identity politics'. They were committed to representing a wide scale encompassing Black and Asian rights, the gay and lesbian movement, political issues, class questions, environmentalism, women's movements, and a host of other underrepresented groups. State subsidies granted to these theatres contributed to their development.

There were also socialist theatre groups inspired by the leftist legacy of "a fusion of many past traditions and experiences – like those of Joan Littlewood, the Unity theatres, the Workers' Theatre Movement of the 30s, the political theatre of Brecht, Piscator, O'Casey, Odets and many others" (McGrath 1981: 103-4). At the very beginning of the decade, there were two major socialist theatre groups: Cartoon Archetypical Slogan Theatre (CAST)¹¹³ and Red Ladder, both of which had been

¹¹¹ The Arts Minister was Jennie Lee from 1964 to 1970 and Chairman of the Arts Council was Arnold Goodman from 1965 to 1970. Between the years 1971-78, subsidies given to alternative theatres were raised from £7,000 to £1.5 million (Wandor 1986: 80).

¹¹² There were a number of alternative theatre groups including Portable Theatre, 7:84, Joint Stock (producing new plays), Bradford College of Art Theatre Group and Welfare State (theatre plays by art schools and colleges). The Arts Lab in London's Drury Lane was founded by American Jim Haynes and presented many plays by new groups like Portable, Freehold, Pip Simmons, the People Show and the Brighton Combination, and Steven Berkoff. The Brighton Combination was founded in the late 1960s and its early founders included Howard Brenton. Inter-Action was launched by American Ed Berman in 1968. The Open Space (venue) was established by Thelma Holt and American director and critic Charles Marowitz in 1968. As can be seen in the preceding examples, there was a huge American influence on the development of alternative theatre, both technically and artistically.

¹¹³ CAST was founded by former members of the left-wing Unity Theatre. Red Ladder first appeared as the Agitprop Street Players and then were renamed Red Ladder. As Maria DiCenzo puts it, "what was significant about both these companies and distinguished them from those that remained within the circuit of arts labs was their commitment to the labour movement and finding a role to play within it" (1996: 21).

launched in the late 1960s. In the 1970s, others followed: Bruce Birchall's West London Theatre Workshop (1970), 7:84 (1971), North West Spanner (1971), Foco Novo (1972), and Broadside Mobile Workers' Theatre (1974). David Edgar claims that "at least 18 full-time subsidised socialist groups" existed in Britain in the decade (1979: 25). As the decade was dominated by strikes of workers, the issue found its broad treatment in socialist plays as well. For instance, Red Ladder's play *The Big Con* (1970) was put on the stage for the Institute for Workers' Control and *The Cake Play* (1971) was a protestation of Conservative politics and their Industrial Relations Act (Megson 2012: 45). They also performed many plays for working class people for consciousness-raising in relation to bourgeois culture, social and economic injustices, and unequal living and working conditions. *Strike While the Iron is Hot* (1974) was a significant feminist text dwelling on the Equal Pay Act. The plays of 7:84¹¹⁴ Theatre embodied "a determined rejection of metropolitan-centred, bourgeois and universal concepts of culture" (Holdsworth 2002: xvi). Among the pioneering plays of the theatre were Trevor Griffiths's *Occupations* (1972), and John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy's *The Ballygombeen Bequest* (1972).

In the 1970s, there was a rising feminist movement and conferences were held to discuss women's position in social life. Even towards the end of the decade, "feminism was the most exciting thing going, especially for people interested in politics. It was in the air, the most radical thing that hit anybody since 1968" (Hanna 1990: 44). Accordingly, many feminist theatre groups came into being, including the Bristol-based Sistershow (early 1970s), Clapperclaw (1977) and Sidewalk Theatre Company (1978). The Women's Theatre Group (WTG) was founded and produced plays discussing women's issues. *My Mother Says I Never Should* (1975) was a play about contraceptive

¹¹⁴ "The name '7:84' was culled from a statistic in a 1966 edition of *The Economist*: 7 per cent of the population own 84 per cent of the wealth" (Megson 2012: 46).

pills and *Work to Role* (1976) concerned a strike initiated and led by a woman. Major women playwrights of the period include Caryl Churchill, Olwen Wymark, Michelene Wandor, and Pam Gems. Margaret (Peggy) Ramsey was a significant theatrical agent. Although she came to prominence in the 1970s, she was also the inspiring agent of the playwright Joe Orton in the 1960s. There was unquestionable feminist achievement in the decade.¹¹⁵

In terms of Gay and Lesbian theatres, Gay Sweatshop was founded by Gerald Chapman and Drew Griffiths as a touring group in 1975. In 1976, lesbians were also involved in the group. Unfortunately, the members of the company were subjected to some homophobic reaction. In 1978, during the performance of *Iceberg* in Belfast, Democratic Unionist Party members protested “with an intimidating torch-light parade and hymn-singing at the venue” (Megson 2012: 56). Furthermore, the leader of the party Ian Paisley was leading a campaign called ‘Save Ulster from Sodomy’ to halt the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Northern Ireland. The lesbian theatre group Hormone Imbalance was also producing plays such as Melissa Murray’s *Ophelia*, a subversive rewriting of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in 1979. Another significant play of the company was Martin Sherman’s *Bent* which was finally transferred to the Royal Court in 1979. According to Dominic Shellard, this was “the first step for gay theatre from fringe venues to the mainstream of subsidised theatre” (1999: 155).

There was also an increase in the plays produced by the Black and Asian minority communities in Britain. In 1970, in Inter-Action theatre ‘Black and White Power’ season was organised. Mustafa Matura and Michael Abbensetts became popular and in 1979 Matura founded the Black Theatre Co-Operative (Nitro) to provide opportunities for

¹¹⁵ However, it is significant to note that “the British Alternative Theatre Directory listed 327 playwrights, of whom only thirty-eight were women. In the same year, Methuen’s list of forty modern British playwrights included only one woman (plus one as co-author) while Faber’s list of thirty-five published playwrights included just one woman” (Megson 2012: 54). Furthermore, “no woman has ever directed a major production at the National, and since Jane Howell left the Royal Court ten years ago, no woman has directed a major production there” (Venables 1980: 3).

black theatre artists (Megson 2012: 57). It was followed by other companies such as Acacia and African Dawn, Wall Theatre and the West Indian Drama Group of Bristol. Temba also stood out as being “the first black British theatre company to receive an Arts Council subsidy” (Megson 2012: 58). One of the major Asian companies was Tara Arts, which was founded in 1977 in the wake of “the racist murder of the Sikh schoolboy Gurdip Singh Chaggar” (Megson 2012: 58). Although there was an increase in Black and Asian theatre plays and artists on the stage, in this decade women of ethnic minorities were not visible yet.

There were a number of playwrights who were producing political plays, including David Edgar, David Hare, Howard Brenton, Trevor Griffiths, Caryl Churchill, Howard Barker, David Ruskin, John Arden, Peter Whelan, Simon Gray, Barrie Keeffe, and Mike Leigh. There was in fact a boom in political plays; however, as John Calder puts it, as a break from the idealism of the 1960s, “the strength” of 1970s political theatre “lies in its negative attitude. It does not posit any ideal or even reasonable society, but criticises the societies we have, exposing their weaknesses, dangers and inhumanities” (1977: 11).

Subsidies of the Arts Council played a significant role in this proliferation, particularly that of alternative theatres. Under the Arts Council, there were Regional Arts Associations to distribute subsidies through local authorities which created a potential of local intervention. For instance, in 1977, the North West Arts Association limited subsidies granted to North West Spanner because of its Marxist leanings. The instigator of this censorial intervention was a Conservative councillor (Megson 2012: 67). Similarly, in 1972, 7:84’s production *The Ballygombeen Bequest* by John Arden and Margaretta D’Arcy had to be withdrawn “after legal advice in the final week of its run at the Bush Theatre” (Megson 2012: 67). The play focuses on the brutalities of British policy in Northern Ireland. The military also became involved in the process because of the

‘alarming’ content of the play. No prosecution was brought but as a punishment its subsidy was removed and the company was therefore forced into project funding, which necessitated a separate application for a subsidy for each new production. Similarly, in 1976, Foco Novo was similarly sanctioned for its production of *The Nine Days and Saltley Gates* which was supportive of industrial discontent. Its subsidy was not totally cut but substantially diminished for the next year. As is evident in the given examples, state censorship persisted under thinly disguised forms and was still compelling artists to self-censor. According to Megson, there was “a greater degree of self-censorship on the part of companies seeking or trying to maintain funding” (2012: 67).

All in all, alternative theatres were the hallmark of the 1970s. Maintaining the legacy of the 1960s, they significantly contributed to British theatre and proved to be supportive grounds for the identity politics of feminist, socialist, gay and lesbian, Asian and Black, political, environmentalist, and experimental plays, drawing on the notion ‘Personal is Political’. Throughout the decade, the influence of American visiting theatre tours and American directors and critics such as Jim Haynes, Ed Berman and Charles Marowitz was unquestionable.

In the 1980s, Britain underwent a huge transformation in its politics, culture and way of life and thought. In an era in which everything came to be judged on its financial value, unsurprisingly theatre was not exempt and theatrical issues came to be regarded and treated as industry. As in all other spheres, the Conservative government promoted private sector involvement and sponsorship in the realm of theatre. Thus, theatre companies tended to reconsider their mode of production, which was now heavily reliant on profitable productions and cultural exportation.

Theatrical activity “was increasingly rebranded as ‘investment’, which Michael Billington believed “debased the arts” (qtd. in Bull 1994: 16). Even the Arts Council itself came to grips with the notion of the cultural marketplace. With the publication of *The*

Economic Importance of the Arts by John Myerscough and his team, the notion of ‘the culture industry’¹¹⁶ was cemented (Milling 2012: 39). Although Myerscough might have been persuading the Treasury to provide subsidy to the arts, his attempts were only justified by showing the financial value of the arts.

In addition to the commercialisation of theatre, party politics began to be involved in the process in a much more visible way. With the ascension of the Conservative Party to power, many things in the Arts Council were changed, from “the appointment of key personnel” to “the rhetoric employed in policy and strategy documents” (Milling 2012: 38). Significantly, Richard Hoggart, who was a leftist scholar and among the founders of Cultural Studies at Birmingham University,¹¹⁷ was dismissed from his position as Vice Chairman of the Arts Council Board in 1981, as “Number 10 doesn’t like him” (Hewison 1995: 248). Hoggart had asserted his intention to transfer £1 million of the Arts Council’s budget to 41 theatre companies from which the state subsidy had been withdrawn, which, according to Peter Smith, might have played a key role in his dismissal (1982: 31-2). Hoggart was replaced by pro-conservative William Rees-Mogg as the Chairman and Luke Rittner as Secretary-General of the Arts Council. Hoggart later stated; “It confirmed that governmental intervention in such bodies started very early in the eighties. Fiats from Number 10 and compliance from some of her ministers” (1994: 232).

¹¹⁶ ‘The culture industry’ is a term coined by the Marxist theorists Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their joint work *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). They argue that “Culture today is infecting everything with sameness” and “all mass culture under a monopoly is identical” (2002: 94-5). Thus, they believe that this totalising attitude which imposes one truth for all not only manipulates masses into passive consumers but also poses a threatening danger to the arts by reducing them into commodified goods and services in a marketplace (2002: 94-5).

¹¹⁷ Cultural studies is an anti-discipline because it questions the modes of thinking that have become fixed and dogmatic. The first centre for contemporary cultural studies was founded in 1964 at Birmingham University in the UK. The main reason was that some scholars found that certain habits had begun to change in English culture, particularly in the lives of working class people with the introduction of new goods such as television. This changing habit of consumption attracted the attention of some scholars such as Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, and Raymond Williams, who were essentially the first scholars in that centre. These changing habits of consumption attracted their critical interest because working class people started to adopt similar habits to the middle class.

While the 1970s were marked by small-scale alternative theatre, the 1980s were primarily dominated by large-scale theatre. The two mainstream theatres who took the greatest slice of Arts Council funding in the 1980s were the RSC and the National Theatre. However, both had different divisions of their organisations to financially support (the RSC had 7, the NT had 3). To protest static funding, Peter Hall, the director of the National Theatre, closed the Cottesloe which was only reopened with the help (£375.000) of the Greater London Council 6 months later (Peacock 1999: 48). Both theatres produced new plays, adaptations and worldwide classic works. However, the most profitable productions were clearly musicals, “with long runs and the possibility of franchised worldwide reproduction” (Milling 2012: 41). The best example for this mode of production in the arts for this period was the West End theatre. Its programme heavily relied on profitable long-running musicals¹¹⁸ and adaptations of Shakespeare, which best fit the government’s policy of “literary heritage that generated a draw for tourists to the UK in the 1980s” (Milling 2012: 43). Thus, these productions were promoted because it allowed exportation of cultural heritage. Moreover, they only performed plays whose stage success was assured: successful productions transferred from the subsidised theatres and new plays written by promising playwrights such as Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard and Alan Ayckbourn.

In addition to financial troubles due to limited funding, the government’s intervention was overt. Upon the introduction of ‘a system of rate-capping’, it transpired that only Labour-led local authorities were subject to this practice (Milling 2012: 46). Furthermore, in 1985 the Local Government Act “brought about the abolition in 1986 of six large metropolitan, Labour-controlled councils and the Greater London Council (GLC), again an expressly party political manoeuvre” (Milling 2012: 46-7).

¹¹⁸For instance, the musical *Cats* which was based on T. S. Eliot’s *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats* ran for 21 years with 8,949 performances and Willy Russell’s *Blood Brothers* ran for almost three decades (Milling 2012: 42-3).

As to regional theatres,¹¹⁹ they were going through difficult times. The impact of economic pressure on regional theatres was reflected in two ways: while some tended to focus on musicals, adaptations, and profit-assured plays, others were committed to promoting new playwriting, a circumstance hilariously depicted in Annie Castledine's words, as the Director of the Derby Playhouse "I hadn't realised regional rep was about money. I thought it was about encouraging the young and being radical" (qtd. in Milling 2012: 63).

Despite all the political and economic pressures, regional identities resisted in many ways. Some of the successful productions of these regional theatres were transferred to London-based large-scale theatres. Community theatres or some small-scale theatres welcomed regional plays, so providing them with an opportunity to gain a larger audience. Working in collaboration with London-based theatres to set up a tour programme was another way to retain their position. Furthermore, playwriting competitions were organised to encourage young playwrights in the regions. Although some yielded to the prevailing policies, some resisted determinedly; hence, regional theatres became the symbol of alternative theatre.

There were a number of small-scale London venues that promoted new writing, including the Bush (1972) and Solo Poly (1969). They particularly dedicated their programmes to performances of new plays or translated versions of contemporary plays. For instance, Peter Wilson, literary manager of the Bush in the 1980s, recounted that the texts of the plays "often had the rejection notes still inside them from the Royal Court Theatre [...] or the National, or the RSC or Hampstead or the Riverside" (Bradwell 2010: 50). Furthermore, there were mid-scale theatre companies in London which had been established in the 1970s with left-leaning politics, such as The Half Moon (1972). Its

¹¹⁹ The following regional theatres were notable for their supportive attitude towards new writing: Birmingham Rep and Drum Arts Centre, Birmingham, Contact Manchester, Nottingham Playhouse, Leicester Haymarket, Bolton Octagon, Sheffield Crucible Studio and the Liverpool Playhouse Studio (Milling 2012: 63).

performances included Steven Berkoff's anti-Thatcher play *Sink the Belgrano* (1986). Some of their plays were transferred to West End Theatre. The Albany Theatre, another such venue, set up the Second Wave Young Women Playwrights project which was supportive of black women playwrights. In 1984, the Drill Hall set up a programme which was supportive of gay and lesbian playwrights. Among the new productions of Paines Plough (1974), one of the leading theatre companies throughout the 1980s, were Terry Johnson's *Days Here So Dark* (1981) and Tony Marchant's *Welcome Home* (1983), dwelling on homecoming soldiers after the Falklands War, Louise Page's satirical play about nuclear activities *Goat* (1985), and Kate Adshead's *Thatcher's Women* (1987), dwelling on female factory workers who have to resort to prostitution to financially support their families (Milling 2012: 64). Joint Stock (1973) and Foco Novo (1971) were other new writing companies. In 1980, Joint Stock and the Royal Court Theatre co-produced Hanif Kureishi's *Borderline* (1981), Howard Barker's *Victory* (1983) and Sue Townsend's *The Great Celestial Cow* (1984).

In terms of the political plays of the 1980s, there were still controversial ideas. In the 1970s, theatre critic Michael Billington had coined the phrase 'state-of-the-nation' in referring to Howard Brenton's *The Churchill Play* (1974) (Milling 2012: 69). Catherine Itzin, John Bull, Michael Billington and Dan Rebellato were unanimous that oppositional or 'state-of-the-nation' theatre was in decline in the 1980s.¹²⁰ However, political plays increasingly tended to deal with identity politics. All in all, Howard Brenton and Tony Howard's *A Short Sharp Shock* (1980) which was staged at the Theatre Royal Stratford East, Royal Court, was a satirical treatment of Thatcher's Conservative government. Brenton and Hare's *Pravda* staged at the National Theatre in 1985 targeted media tycoon Rupert Murdoch and the representation of truth. G. F. Newman's *Operation Bad Apple*

¹²⁰ Their works are given respectively: *Stages in the Revolution* (1980), *New Political Dramatists* (1984), *State of the Nation: British Theatre Since 1945* (2007), and "From the State of the Nation to Globalization: Shifting Political Agendas in Contemporary British Playwriting" (2008).

attacked degeneration in the Metropolitan Police Force (1981). Another political play was Caryl Churchill's *Softcops* which was written in 1978 and staged at the RSC in 1984. The play dwells on state oppression and its internalisation by citizens alongside police brutality, torture, oppression, and totalitarianism. Harold Pinter's *Mountain Language* staged at the National Theatre in 1988 focuses on the military oppression of people who cannot speak their national language. Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982) showed that female unemployment was linked to class inequality. Kay Adshead's *Thatcher's Women* (1987) told the story of working class women who became prostitutes to support their families.

Disproportionate police force and strikes were also themes of plays. The Section 14 of the Public Order Act 1986 (under the code of picketing) "provides the police with the power to impose conditions (for example, as to numbers, location and duration) on public assemblies of 20 or more people where the assembly is likely to result in serious public disorder; or serious damage to property" (2017: 16). John Burrow's *One Big Blow* (1980) and Peter Cox's *Jimmy Riddle* (1983) focused on these issues and the miners' strike. There were many woman theatre groups, small scale companies including Black Mime Theatre Women's Troupe, Red Ladder, Women's Theatre Group, and Mrs Worthington's Daughters. Caryl Churchill and Sarah Daniels were the leading feminist playwrights to emerge from small-scale theatres. A company for black women playwrights was established: Women Writers Workshop.

As to racial issues, Black British and Asian British people were suffering from such issues as identity, belonging and hybridity. The problem of the first generation of British-born children is best expressed in the very opening of Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990): "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost" (1990: 3). Increasing racism led to the formation of racist groups including

skinheads,¹²¹ attacked in Trevor Griffith's play *Oi For England*. It was staged at the Royal Court Theatre in 1981. Hanif Kureishi's *Borderline* which was staged at the Royal Court explored issues of citizenship, identity and belonging.

Altogether, the 1980s has been widely viewed as a time of crisis for theatrical activities due to economic and political pressure on theatres. The conservative government promoted the partnership between sponsorship and state-subsidy for theatres which led them to undertake more profitable theatrical productions. Thus, musical theatre in mainstream London theatres were the trademark of the decade as a cultural exportation. Although London-based mainstream theatres mattered in the production of new plays, the significant contribution of small-scale theatres cannot be underestimated. Regionally-based plays were also significant as they succeeded in producing new and experimental plays, some of which were transferred to the mainstream theatres. One of the biggest characteristics of the decade lay in the themes of political theatre increasingly focusing on identity politics, addressing gay and lesbian issues, woman rights, unemployment, totalitarianism, Black British and British Asian issues, economic pressure, the actions of the armed forces of Britain in Northern Ireland, and nuclear armament.

In the 1990s, the Department of National Heritage and the National Lottery were created by John Major's government. The DNH, which was replaced by Department for Culture, Media & Sport in 1997, was responsible for promoting the arts, sport, film, broadcasting, art galleries, museums, tourism, architecture and royal parks. The National Lottery's profit was allocated to charities and the arts for the benefit of society.

There was, however, some inconsistency in the Conservative Government's attitude to the Arts Council. They first considered closing it outright in 1991, but paradoxically increased its funding to 14 per cent, which was then cut in the mid-1990s

¹²¹ A 2006 British film *This is England* is set in 1983 Britain and revolves around a young skinhead group involved in violent racist acts. Skinheads believed that they were betrayed by their country and that the white English had supremacy and anything outside this was a potential object of racial discrimination.

(Sierz 2012a: 32). In 1994, the organisation was restructured: ten Regional Arts Boards were formed. Funding outside London was reduced to ten theatres. Finally, it was divided into three: Scotland, Wales and England. A mixed economy strategy was still dominant in funding of the arts, leading to increasing sponsorship and marketization. The newly-founded National Lottery was a huge source of funding for theatres. By the end of the 1990s, theatre had become “thoroughly commercialised, so that even subsidised companies were under pressure to be successful businesses” (Sierz 2012a: 34). And more significantly, where theatre outside London was concerned, “the mixed economy of funding – part state subsidy, part business sponsorship, part box office – was in crisis” (Sierz 2012a: 34).

As to the mainstream theatres of Britain, the leading ones were the commercialised West End and the subsidised National Theatre and the RSC. Theatres were benefitting from ‘Cool Britannia’: theatre plays were attracting tourists, as Benedict Nightingale notes “roughly twenty-five million visits were annually made to English theatres in the mid-1990s, four million of them by foreign visitors” (1998: 3).

The commercialised West End was “run by commercial giants such as Stoll Moss, Apollo Entertainments and Associated Capital Theatres, and individuals such as Stephen Waley-Cohen” (Sierz 2012a: 35). The West End’s productions were mostly long-running profitable musicals. Many musicals were on run spontaneously and in January 1996, *Cats* (1981) became the longest-running musical in history (Sierz 2012a: 36). Alongside numerous musicals, some new plays which proved to be successful at the subsidised theatres were transferred to the West End. However, Peter Hall, the director of another commercialised theatre, the Old Vic, did not follow the trend of the West End and included new plays and new adaptations of classics as well as popular musicals. Similarly, the New Ambassadors Theatre gave room to the work of new playwrights such as Mark Ravenhill, Gary Owen and Ayub Khan-Din.

At the conclusion of a tough decade, the 1990s was hailed as “the renaissance of new writing” (Sierz 2012a: 56). Most significantly, a new angry young generation developed a new way of writing which relied on shocking tactics and was characterised as provocative, taboo-breaking, dark and oppositional. In-yer-face theatre, coined by Alex Sierz, was the most ground-breaking innovation in the decade. The pioneering figures of the movement were Phillip Ridley, Anthony Neilson, Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill, although they each have their own distinctive qualities. Moreover, the plays of Irish and Scottish playwrights, as well as gay and lesbian plays, flourished. Kevin Elyot’s *My Night with Reg* (Royal Court, 1994) and Jonathan Harvey’s *Beautiful Thing* (Bush, 1994) were successful gay plays, with the former being the first screened on BBC2 and the latter made into a film in 1996. However, at that time gay theatre was still controversial, as reflected in condemnation of such plays being incorporated into the mainstream (Sierz 2012a: 62-3).

The 2000s has been characterised as a “golden age” of British theatre “both artistically and economically” (Rebellato 2013: 40). There was a considerable increase in state subsidies to the arts, particularly as compensation for the underfunded years of regional theatres. Michael Billington gave two reasons for the flourishing of theatres during Blair’s administration: “one intentional, one not. The injection of new money has rescued regional theatres from near-bankruptcy. At the same time, the disastrous Iraq invasion has galvanised political theatre. This is the ultimate irony of the Blair years: that extra cash has enabled British theatre to resume its traditional oppositional role” (2007). For this reason, Billington calls Blair the accidental hero of British theatre; the real hero was Peter Boyden whose report in 2000 underscored the impending doom of regional theatre, which had been suffering from underfunding. In addition to increases in funding, the major significance of the decade was that “theatre has regained its old political bite” (Billington 2007).

Verbatim plays emerged as a significant political production. In the 2000s, Robin Soans' *A State Affair* was the first example of a verbatim play. David Hare produced many verbatim plays, including *The Permanent Way* (2003), which was about the privatisation of Britain's railways. In 2005, Hare wrote another play *Stuff Happens* about America and Britain's invasion of Iraq in 2003. In this play, Hare mixed tape recorder interviews, press interviews, and his imagination about what might have taken place behind closed doors (Rebellato 2013: 43). For this boom in political plays, the invasion of Iraq by America and Britain played a significant role. "[T]he disillusionment that historically follows the election of a Labour government – think back to Harold Wilson and the late 1960s – has given theatre a sense of mission" (Billington 2007). Through these plays, the playwrights intended to reveal dishonest political aims and deeds.

In the previous decade, due to rationalisation in funding, some black theatre companies were forced to close; however, "these losses coincided the Arts Council's ideological shift towards fostering cultural diversity, exemplified by greater acknowledgement of black British theatre as a professional practice that warranted inclusion at key mainstream venues" (Reynolds 2014: 126). The action might have been taken with good intentions but the Arts Council's strategy of "micro-management incompatible of the business of making theatre" brought about problems (Rebellato 2013: 70). This idea was intended to treat theatre as a pragmatic tool. Mike Bradwell complained as follows: "Since the departure of Sue Timothy, I felt there was no one at the Arts Council who understood what the Bush was for, or valued our contribution to the theatrical wealth of the nation. What they did want from us, however, was a Cultural Diversity Action Plan" (2010: 261). This imposition was a further representation of, as described by Dan Rebellato, "The era of 'box-ticking'" (2013: 70).

From this point onwards, to illustrate the ways the censorial intervention persisted in the aftermath of 1968, some instances will be provided here. More detailed discussions

will be made in the next chapters. To begin with, despite the decriminalisation of homosexuality and the repeal of the Theatre Acts of 1968 in the UK, the representation of homosexuality on the stage continued to be a controversial issue for a long time. Accordingly, for three more decades, the explicit display of the matter on the stage was confronted with reactionary attitudes. The deeply established conviction that homosexuality had disruptive potential to the prevailing order and that its practitioners must be either reformed or avoided, prevented it from getting equal treatment with heterosexuality.

Mary Whitehouse, known for her social conservatism, often brought prosecutions against the cases she deemed as unacceptable and corruptive, allegedly for the good of the nation's morality. In 1982, she brought a lawsuit against Michael Bogdanov, the director of Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain* on the grounds of violation of the Sexual Offences Act of 1956. He was charged with 'gross indecency' for allowing a scene of male rape on the stage at the National Theatre. Acknowledging that she had not seen the play herself, Whitehouse stated that "the scene of simulated and unsuccessful male homosexual rape would [...] be an incitement to some men" (Jongh 2015). The trial at the Old Bailey was dismissed following the intervention of the Attorney-General. In the end, the trial matter was dismissed but it further impeded the explicit display of homosexuality from the British stage.

Only ten years later, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* was produced at the National Theatre in 1992. The scene simulating sodomy in the performance brought the play into disrepute and ignited dissatisfaction in the audience, even if the act was not explicitly performed (Jongh 2000b: 247). In 1994, Brad Fraser's *Alas Poor Superman* was performed at the Hampstead Theatre, with a scene in which homosexual buggery was openly depicted in detail. The play was condemned by the theatre critic of *the Daily*

Telegraph, Charles Spencer, who described it as “the present triumphal progress of gay theatre” (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 248).

In 1977, Mary Whitehouse brought proceedings against the newspaper *Gay News* for their publication of James Kirkup’s poem “The Love that dares to speak its name”. The poem, which was about a Roman army officer’s homosexual and near-necrophiliac fantasy about Jesus Christ after crucifixion, was banned for its blasphemous content (Hughes 2015: 33). The editor of the newspaper Denis Lemon was fined £1,000 instead of a jail sentence; this decision was also supported by the House of Lords (Hyland and Sammells 1992: 19).

‘Gay’s the Word’ Bookstore, which was founded by a gay socialist group in 1979, was and still is a gay and lesbian book shop in Bloomsbury. It was charged with purveying offending materials, including “medical books on HIV as well as works by Kate Millett and Oscar Wilde” (Hyland and Sammells 1992: 20). It was prosecuted under Customs and Excise legislation. Furthermore, in 1988, An Amended Local Authorities Bill was passed by the House of Commons and according to Clause 28 of that Bill, material encouraging homosexuality was banned (Hyland and Sammells 1992: 20).

Mark Ravenhill’s *Shopping and Fucking* was produced at the New Ambassadors in 1998. The play openly examines the issues related to sex and violence, based on the real sexual experiences of rent boys (Jongh 2000b: 248-9). Another frank simulation of buggery takes place in this play: a young rent boy not only prostitutes his body but also pursue sexual adventures including violent and masochistic practices such as bloody anal sex with a knife and a disconcerting scene of anulingus. Despite its controversial content for its time, the title of the play was widely assumed to be even more provocative, ultimately leading to the intervention of censorship. When the play was staged again at the Gielgud Theatre in 1998, some letters were replaced with asterisks, a typographical symbol widely employed in censorship to tone down expletives: ‘Shopping and F*****g’

(Jongh 2000b: 249). This prudish attitude in word filtering pointedly signals that the moral well-being of Victorian values, in Raymond Williams's term, is residually present.

In 1999, Carol Ann Duffy was widely regarded as the chief candidate for Poet Laureate. Many newspaper articles were written about her so she became a public figure. However, "she was reportedly ruled out of the laureateship because Tony Blair was concerned about how a gay poet laureate might play in middle England" (Higgins 2009). Thus, the poet and author Andrew Motion was chosen instead. Although she was passed over by Tony Blair in 1999, Duffy was appointed as Poet Laureate on May 1st 2009 when Motion's ten year term expired. Carol Ann Duffy was not only the first Poet-Laureate of the twenty-first century, but also the first ever female poet laureate in the 348-year history of the post, after John Dryden was named the first by King Charles II.

Obscenity was another unwelcome issue. In 1970, Richard Branson, then the director of the Student Advisory Centre, was prosecuted for offering advice on sexual matters under the 1918 Venereal Diseases Act (Hyland and Sammells 1992: 19). In 1971, three editors of the hippy magazine *OZ* were charged with obscenity for their special issue "School Kids". Lord Chief Justice Lord Widgery was a reactionary and within the framework of the 1959 and 1964 Acts, Widgery ruled that a magazine could be judged obscene if it included an item that would have a corrupting impact on readers of the magazine. However, the Theatres Act ruled that this production would not "infringe the law by reason only of one salacious scene, unless it is sufficiently dominant or memorable to colour the entire presentation" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 251). This ambiguity in the law was removed and became the precedent for other cases. In the same year, along with *OZ*, other counter-cultural magazines such as *IT*, *Little Red Schoolbook*, and *The Mouth* went on trial for their obscene content (Hyland and Sammells 1992: 19).

In 1976, another obscenity prosecution was brought against the directors of the book *Inside Linda Lovelace*. Focusing on the life story of a porn star, the book was

considered to be obscene. Its trial created wide publicity and Judge Rigg stated that “[i]f this book is not obscene within the definition of the 1959 Act it might well be difficult to imagine anything that would fall into that category” (qtd. in Sutherland 1982: 135). Similarly, David Britton’s graphic novel series *Lord Horror* was prosecuted for its violent and obscene content. He was “the last person successfully prosecuted in Britain for publishing obscene literature” under the Obscene Publications Act; and “[h]is publisher, Manchester-based Savoy Books, was raided by the police with vindictive regularity between 1976 and 1997” (Paraskos 2013). Even a judge “ordered the entire remaining print run be destroyed, but the ban was eventually overturned by the Court of Appeal in 1992” (King 2009).

In 1986, the broadcast of the film *Sebastian* written and directed by Derek Jarman was in Latin and most significantly an erect penis was passed by the British Board of Film Censors for the first time. The film dwelled on male eroticism which targeted the gay audience. In 2004, in his interview with *the Guardian* journalist Alex Cox, Derek Jarman told retrospectively how he had succeeded in foiling the censor and passing the penis without any intervention: “We hid it! [...] We shot the film in Academy [the 4x3 screen ratio of older films], but showed it to the censors with a widescreen mask on the projector. Sebastian's hard-on was hidden below the frame-line, and they passed the film uncut. When we projected it in 4x3, the hard-on was still there!” (qtd. in Cox 2004). When the film censor James Ferman was asked about Jarman’s claim, he refused to accept the story, asserting “We always screen our prints without a mask, so as to prevent such surprises” (qtd. in Cox 2004). Alex Cox states that Jarman’s remarks were persuasive as “[t]here was no way the BBFC was going to let a hard-on slip out in 1976. Jarman had played a trick on the censors - and won quite an important battle for artistic freedom at the same time” (2004).

Another play that aroused controversy was Sarah Kane's *Blasted* in 1995, performed at the Royal Court and produced by James Macdonald. The day after the play was performed, on 19 January 1995, Jack Tinker from *the Daily Mail* remarked disgustedly on the play: "For utterly and entirely disgusted I was by a play which appears to know no bounds of decency yet has no message to convey by way of excuse" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 250). In a similar vein, Charles Spencer from *the Daily Telegraph* described the play as a "nauseating dog's breakfast of a play" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 250). A media correspondent was sent to see the play by the *Sunday Times* to provide a detailed description of the play. His observation was that "judging by the warm applause, the audience were pleased with all these", and continues with a "but" which undermines this positive statement "But then many of them were carrying copies of *the Guardian* and were presumably intellectuals for whom this masterwork was replete with significance" (qtd. in Jongh 2000b: 251).

In July 2001, the comedy programme *Brass Eye* which satirised the way media reported current social affairs created controversies. In the programme, a spoof item which told the story of "a little boy being interfered with by a penis-shaped sound wave generated by an online pedophile" and "concluded with a fictional crowd capturing a pedophile and burning him on a 25-foot phallus" was denounced (Freedman 2009: 83-4). Such issues as rape, child abuse, and paedophilia were generally considered improper subjects for humorous material. Accordingly, the programme was not only the subject of public protest but also decried by government ministers (Freedman 2009: 83-4).

Secrets of the state are withheld from the public on the grounds of national interest. In 1984, Clive Pointing, a senior civil servant at the Ministry of Defence, was prosecuted for leaking information about the sinking of the *Belgrano* to a Labour MP during the Falklands War, in violation of the Official Secrets Act. Although he defended this as in the public interest, "the public interest is what the government of the day says

it is” said the judge (Preston 2014). The prosecution was withdrawn later. Another example was the veto of the broadcast of a Real Lives documentary about Ulster by the BBC Board of Governors due to the government pressure in 1985 (Hyland and Sammells 1992: 19). Furthermore, in 1988, the Home Secretary Douglas Hurd declared “a ban on the broadcasting of direct statements by representatives of Sinn Fein and the Ulster Defence Association” (Hyland and Sammells 1992: 20).

Politicians as public figures were sometimes protected from public humiliation. In 2005, the BBC excised the word “lying” from a radio satire named *Absolute Power*. The satire called for a spin doctor to confess that there was nothing that he could “teach this prime minister [Tony Blair] about deception, manipulation, and lying. Except how to do it properly” (qtd. in Freedman 2009: 74). The programme manager claimed he was told that the word ‘lying’ was cut on the grounds “you can’t call Tony Blair a liar in the current climate” (qtd. in Freedman 2009: 74). Surprisingly, the ridiculing remarks were acceptable but ‘liar’.

As stated before, after the Second World War, with the arrival of immigrants, Britain was transforming into a multicultural/multiracial society, integrating people of diverse ethnic and religious communities, customs and languages. As a reaction to this, racist and anti-racist movements were being formed simultaneously, which indicates the controversial nature of the issue. In particular, following the terrorist attacks in London and 9/11, the Muslim population was concerned and this led to other controversial enactments regarding religion (Freedman 2009: 86). In 2004, Tony Blair’s New Labour government passed antiterrorist laws; he asserted that this action was not taken particularly against Muslims but against the “incitement to racial or religious hatred” (qtd. in Freedman 2009: 86). Some civil organisations protested the government’s involvement but these complaints were repudiated by the government, claiming that the new legislation would prevent any offensive remarks about religious issues: “Here’s the punch

line. ... Nothing I've suggested is an attack on people's rights to legitimately criticise religion or make jokes about it" (Blunkett 2004). Setting the boundaries for civil liberties was becoming highly difficult and controversial in a growing multicultural society.

In 1989, Jim Allen's *Perdition*, directed by Ken Loach proved controversial. The play was about the alleged collaboration between Zionist leaders in Hungary and the Nazis who endeavoured to save a few selected Jews' lives at the expense of the lives of others. Even before the premiere of the play at the Royal Court Theatre, the rehearsals provoked anger among some influential Jews. The artistic director of the play, Max Stafford-Clark, decided to withdraw production so as not to cause offense. It was not until six years later, in 1995 at the Gate Theatre, that the play could be put on the stage without controversy.

In 1988, Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* was published by Viking/Penguin following which, in 1989, the ruler of Iran the Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa which included a call for the death of the author for blasphemy. This brought about worldwide condemnation and a series of violent episodes: Rushdie cancelled his plan for a paperback edition of the novel in 1990, the Japanese scholar who translated the novel was violently stabbed to death by an unknown attacker in 1991, further violent attacks were carried out against whoever was involved in translation, many bookshops were vandalised just for selling the novel and Rushdie himself was under police protection. Upon the pronouncement of the fatwa, Howard Brenton and Tariq Ali wrote *Iranian Nights* in collaboration within five days. As a defence of freedom of speech and condemnation of censorship, the play had a brief run at the Royal Court in April 1989. Jane Milling points to another aspect of the issue: despite its intention to "parody fanaticism", through reflections in the media, it led to the "stereotyping of Islam" (2012: 72).

Helen Freshwater dates the last months of 2004 as the time when censorship of the arts became a considerable focus of debate, as civil liberties in a multicultural society were becoming more and more complicated (2009: 1). The world witnessed a number of acts of violence, which put the question of the frontiers of freedom on the world agenda. On 2 November 2004, the Dutch film director Theo van Gogh was shot and stabbed to death by a Muslim extremist. His short film *Submission*¹²² had attacked “the suppression of women in an Islamic society dominated by men,” involving incest, arranged marriages and punishment for adultery (Jörg 2004). In the film, four different fictional woman characters were portrayed by one actress, telling their stories of abuse, during the course of which some verses from the Quran were projected on the naked bodies of women.

In December 2004, another violent protest took place in Madame Tussaud Museum in London. The wax models of Victoria and David Beckham, who were posed as Mary and Joseph in a nativity scene, were attacked. Similarly, in 2005, when the musical *Jerry Springer: The Opera* written Richard Thomas and Stewart Lee was broadcast on BBC2, it generated numerous complaints. Some Christian organisations wanted to bring private prosecutions for blasphemy, but nothing came of this (Freshwater 2009: 2). In view of this ongoing atmosphere of violence, in 2005, the director of Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamberlaine* staged at the Bristol Old Vic cut derogatory remarks about Muhammad and changed a scene including the burning of the Quran (Shuttleworth 2005: 1479-80). A London exhibition by the Indian painter MF Husain was closed because of death threats and complaints from Hindu Human Rights group. A scene dramatising the beheaded heads of Jesus, Muhammad and Buddha was cut in Mozart’s *Idomeneo* produced by Berlin’s Deutsche Oper (Freshwater 2009: 2).

¹²² The short film *Submission* was written by Somali-born Ayaan Hirsi Ali and directed by Theo van Gogh; it was broadcast on TV on 29 August 2004.

Further controversy arose in 2005 with the publication of Danish cartoons representing Mohammed. The British media was adamant that these cartoons should not be printed, with exception of the extreme-right British National Party and *Wikipedia*.¹²³ For instance, the BBC showed the cartoons “only in one telecast in the context of its coverage of the storm erupting when they appeared in a French humor journal” (Freedman 2009: 86). Even the Conservative newspaper *The Spectator* showed them once and then withdrew them from its official web site, “though repeatedly arguing that the pressures against honest discussion of racial and ethnic issues, especially by Muslims, had become intolerable” (Freedman 2009: 86). The liberal media did not want to be supportive of a right-wing Danish newspaper and condone an attitude came to be supported by racists and anti-immigrants. *The Guardian* explained that they believe “uncompromisingly in freedom of expression, but not in any duty gratuitously to offend. It would be senselessly provocative to reproduce a set of images, of no intrinsic value, which pander to the worst prejudices about Muslims... even if the intention was satirical rather than blasphemous” (qtd. in Freedman 2009: 87).¹²⁴ All these events suggest that rising communal violence fostered by “a new culture of intimidation” led to self-censorship (Freshwater 2009: 2).

This tension was heightened by the newly-introduced laws which were aimed at strict regulations such as the 2005 Serious Organised Crime and Police Act, preventing any unlicensed protest within one kilometre of parliament, the 2006 Terrorism Act which was intended to silence any protest against the invasion of Iraq and the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Bill which intensified debates over freedom of speech (Freshwater 2009: 3). On 28 September 2005, the Foreign Secretary Jack Straw was speaking in the Labour Party Conference in Brighton. When he spoke about the war in Iraq: “We are in

¹²³ *Wikipedia* clarified that “for copyright reasons, its reproduction of the cartoons was blurred and unclear” (qtd. in Freedman 2009: 177).

¹²⁴ However, the online edition of *the Guardian* advised its readers that “they could find the gratuitously offending cartoons by going to Wikipedia” (Freedman 2009: 87).

Iraq for one reason only – to help the legitimate, elected government to build a secure, democratic and stable nation”, a protest was heard among the crowd: “That’s a lie – and you know it!” (qtd. in Thomas 2007: 1). The protestor, eighty-two year old delegate Walter Wolfgang, was asked to leave the premises, to which he reacted: “you can’t make me leave the premises. You know, I’ve got a right to my views as Jack has a right to his and what has happened is ...” (qtd. in Thomas 2007: 22). His words remained incomplete as he was dragged away by stewards as “a security threat” (Thomas 2007: 2). Walter Wolfgang was not the only case. Two people were convicted and fined under the Public Order Act for wearing an “anti-Blair T-shirt” thereby “causing harassment/alarm/distress” (Thomas 2007: 2). In October 2005, Maya Evans was arrested and fined under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 as she was reading the names of ninety-seven British people who were killed in the Iraq war to commemorate them; similarly, in 2006, two mothers whose sons were killed in Iraq were planning to protest outside the Labour Party conference in Manchester but were prevented on the grounds that doing so would violate the one kilometre rule (Thomas 2007: 3).

All in all, as above-given censorial cases illustrate, from the late 1990s onwards, the core debate has mostly moved to ethnic and religious sensitivities, a move away from objections to sex and violence, which were noticeable until the late 1990s. Furthermore, it is evident that the liberation of the theatre, which relies half on government-subsidy and half on private sponsorship, is restricted to the limits of propriety and acceptability. Thus, the noughties marked another remarkable socio-historical twist and discursive transformation in the understanding of censorship. The new face of censorship in its more complicated and diverse operations has been discussed in detail in Part One: Theories of Censorship in this dissertation.

PART THREE
RESPONSES AND REPRESENTATIONS

CHAPTER I

JOE ORTON'S *WHAT THE BUTLER SAW* (1967)

i. Context and Staging of *What the Butler Saw*

As Sigmund Freud's well-known statement playfully puts it, "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar".¹²⁵ However, in *What the Butler Saw*, Joe Orton's farce set in a psychiatric hospital, Winston Churchill's cigar, inserted into the play by Sir Ralph Richardson after Orton's death, comically over-signifies. The opening part of the play is marked by an account of a significant event, the recently erected statue of Sir Winston Churchill has been damaged in a gas explosion and a shrapnel-like fragment has killed a woman (WTBS 365). The nature of the statue's missing part, of country-wide concern, relies on sexual innuendo for its humour and is euphemistically kept unidentified until the last moment of the play. In fact, the play has two different endings: the version written by Orton, which survives in a holograph manuscript, and the version first performed on stage. In the former, Orton strips off euphemism and the larger-than-life-size penis of Churchill's statue is triumphantly held aloft, while in the latter, the cigar replaces the gigantic penis of Churchill's statue, which is restored to its proper place at the end of the play.

This intervention of the cigar, which marks a significant alteration to the script, is often regarded as diminishing the anarchic impact of the play (Lahr 1981: 27). However, this chapter will argue that this modification paradoxically opens up the text to alternative readings. The Richardson version ends ambiguously, pushing the audience to rely on the conflicting interpretations of the characters with regard to the restored piece. In this sense, rather than the explicit depiction, the ambiguous nature of the missing part fosters polyvalent interpretations. The struggle to devise a description for this intervention

¹²⁵ The statement is described as "attributed" in Bartlett's Familiar Quotations (2002: 608). Furthermore, Alan C. Elms elaborates on this issue in his article entitled "Apocryphal Freud: Sigmund Freud's Most Famous "Quotations" and Their Actual Sources" asserting that Freud may have never said this and compiles a number of potential origins for the remark (2005: 82-108).

initiates an exploration of some complex questions in relation to representations of and responses to censorship, which will be broadly explored throughout the dissertation.

What the Butler Saw is a significant bridging text for this study. The play, written before the abolition of official censorship yet performed afterwards, straddles pre and post 1968, and so offers a peculiar case study for the exploration of both transforming social and cultural values as well as shifting understanding of censorship. To put it more precisely, the play might be, as Chun-Yi Shih argues, regarded as set in a liminal space¹²⁶ – a threshold in which behavioural codes and social conventions are suspended, enabling new structures to emerge. As an alternative to Shih’s argument, the play might also be considered in terms of a liminal relationship to censorship. Liminality as a site of ‘threshold’ exactly corresponds to the historical positioning of the play because it is neither fully within nor fully out of the domain of state censorship. It is exactly in this liminal position: between the end of state censorship and the beginning of a new era of freedom from which new discourses might flourish. Its liminality is not only between presence and absence of state censorship, pre-1968 and post-1968, but also between two different cultures as well, the Establishment (mainstream culture) and the alternative cultures of the new era. This makes the play a peculiarly fascinating case-study in how censorship evolves into different forms and how the dominant and new cultures come into conflict. This chapter explores this social and cultural shift as reflected in the chaotic world of the play. In the second case, it deploys some of the insights of psychoanalytic theory, in particular that of Lacan, to offer a rereading of the apparent act of censorship

¹²⁶ Chun-Yi Shih reads *What the Butler Saw* as a site of liminality. In that particular case, the liminal world of *What the Butler Saw* is located in an asylum where “social conventions and sexual paradigms are trespassed, and libidos released” (2016: 12). This threshold of change brings about transgression, enabling the suspension of the accepted norms to transform into generative energies, from insanity and anarchy new forms of social structure will flourish. Shih further states that the play “attempts to liberate the audiences from their normalised states, or to stimulate them to reflection on and questioning of their customary lives, or, to the full extent, to effect changes in the society or culture. Angry at the attempt, the audiences may remain in the old domain. Laughing at and happy with the liminal presentation, they may join the farcical world, entering into a new possibility – into the blazing light” (2016: 12).

by Sir Ralph Richardson of the amputation of the penis from a statue of Winston Churchill in Orton's original text.

The office of the Lord Chamberlain in the United Kingdom was officially abolished by an Act of Parliament in 1968, ending the 231-year history of the office. The Act liberated theatre plays from the dictates of the "blue pencil"¹²⁷ of the Lord Chamberlain regarding what could be shown on stage and how. *What the Butler Saw*, however, which was submitted before the abolition of the Lord Chamberlain's Office, as Orton recorded in his diary the comments of his theatre agent Margaret (Peggy) Ramsey and theatre director Oscar Lewenstein about the likely reception of the play, clearly conveyed the weakened but still significant power of the Lord Chamberlain in 1967. In a diary entry dated 23 July 1967, Orton wrote that Ramsey considered it to be his best work while expressing her reservation that "The Lord Chamberlain [...] isn't going to allow you to show Churchill's prick on the stage" (Orton 1987: 250). Orton suggests a playful alternative: to change it to John Kennedy's, a suggestion to which Ramsey reacts severely, believing that it might bring about a much worse reaction.¹²⁸

The play was in fact sent to the Lord Chamberlain's Office by Lewenstein, to whom Ramsey had given the script. When Lewenstein stated his concerns about the representation of Churchill's penis, Orton teased him, saying "That isn't libellous, surely? [...] I wouldn't sue anybody for saying I had a big prick. No man would. In fact I might pay them to do that" (Orton 1987: 256). Orton definitively rejected the idea of changing Churchill into "a local worthy", saying "I couldn't change that [the possessor of the penis], [...] and even changing Churchill would be a blow" (Orton 1987: 256). Moreover,

¹²⁷ This phrase comes from the colour of the pencil used by the censor. For a more detailed account of the Lord Chamberlain's blue pencil see John Johnston's *The Lord Chamberlain's Blue Pencil*.

¹²⁸ Most probably, the reason Peggy Ramsey rejected the use of Kennedy's penis was related to financial concerns; after the first performance and its run on the British stage, plays were generally put on the American stage. The fear may have been that American audiences would have been offended if they saw their assassinated prime minister symbolically castrated.

Lewenstein's suggestion¹²⁹ to put the play on stage at the Haymarket delighted Orton, who said "That'd be wonderful, [...] it'd be a sort of joke even putting *What the Butler Saw* on at the Haymarket – Theatre of Perfection" (Orton 1987: 256). Orton ironically uses this title 'Theatre of Perfection' since The Haymarket was "the very bastion of bourgeois 'enchantment' that Orton was satirizing" (Lahr 1981: 27). Being aware of the provocative potential of his work, Orton relished the prospect of infuriating people of that social circle. However, the days of both Orton the playwright, and the Lord Chamberlain's role as censor, were numbered. On 9 August 1967, a month after the completion of the play, Orton at the age of 34 was brutally murdered by his lover Kenneth Halliwell in their apartment.¹³⁰

Although the play was submitted to the Lord Chamberlain before the abolition of censorship, it was staged at the Queen's Theatre on 5 March 1969. In this respect, the text attests to a transitional period. In the event, it was not to be the Lord Chamberlain who would interfere with the play, but one of the play's leading actors. The unexpected death of Orton left the text in the hands of Sir Ralph Richardson, who made alterations to Orton's script (Miller 1996: xiii). *What the Butler Saw*, has two different endings: one Joe Orton's original manuscript and one revised after his death by Sir Ralph Richardson,

¹²⁹ "If we get away with it [with the Lord Chamberlain], I have a mad idea of doing it with somebody like Binkie and trying to get the Haymarket" says Lewenstein (Orton 1987: 256). Binkie Beaumont was the co-producer when the play was staged at Queen's Theatre in 1969.

¹³⁰ This study is much indebted to John Lahr's Orton biography *Prick Up Your Ears* for an account of this event. For an extended account elaborating on their conflicting relationship, particularly in their last days and on the murder, see the first chapter of that biography entitled "Jokers are Wild" (1987: 1-41). This biography remains the primary source in its detailed study of Orton's life and works but has come under attack, particularly in the way the book presents the homosexual relationship between Orton and Halliwell. For instance, Simon Shepherd, in his *Because We're Queers*, criticises Lahr for his unfavourable depiction of Kenneth Halliwell who is turned into a sick "villain" and "conforms to the tragic queer stereotype" (1989: 9, 23). Shepherd describes his own writing as a "reappraisal of Orton from a radical gay position" (1989: 9). He further claims that Lahr's biography and the screen play of the popular film based on this book by Alan Bennett use the scandalous death as a marketing strategy and promote the idea that heterodox sexual practices lead to disorder, which reflects the hostility towards homosexuality in the 1950s and the 1960s. Finally he notes, "to look afresh, and to look as gays, at Orton and Halliwell, we have to read against Lahr" (1989: 24). Besides *Prick Up Your Ears*, Shepherd argues that there are two other plays which profit from the "Orton industry" (1989: 7): *Cock-ups* written by Simon Moss in 1984 and *Black and Blue* written by Peter Fieldson in the 1990s. Yet, here it should be noted that both the biography and the film received a generally positive critical reaction.

which is commonly referred to as the ‘bowdlerised version’. In this study, ‘the holograph manuscript’ has been employed for the former rather than bowdlerisation due to its connotations.

The first performance of the play – in which Richardson starred as Dr Rance – was eventful. The audience’s reaction was critical and “went far beyond mere boos” (Miller 1996: 219). Maintaining that even Richardson’s fans were infuriated, Stanley Baxter, who starred as Dr Prentice, states that “there were old ladies in the audience not merely tearing up their programmes, but jumping up and down on them out of sheer hatred” (Miller 1996: 218). He continues to describe the disastrous evening as follows:

After the first ten minutes of the second act, the barracking started, which meant that very few lines were heard completely. “Take it off”, “Rubbish”, “Filth”, “Shame”. [...] They really wanted to jump on the stage and kill us all. There was the exhilaration of a fight. The auditorium was divided. The “gods” hating us and the rest of the auditorium on our side. The “gods” making enough noise to destroy (Miller 1996: 218).

Baxter’s account suggests that the play divided the audience on class lines: the ‘Gods’ are the cheaper seats, the auditorium the expensive ones.

“Dead Playwright Booed by Gallery” was the headline of *the Sun*. The play is “a wholly unacceptable exploitation of sexual perversion” wrote Harold Hobson in *The Sunday Times*, dubbing Orton “the Devil’s theatrical henchman” (qtd. in Lahr 1987: 333-4). Hobson further attacked both Orton and his play in the *Christian Science Monitor*, giving a puritanical ‘moral lesson’: “Orton’s terrible obsession with perversion, which is regarded as having brought his life to an end and choked his very high talent, poisons the atmosphere of the play. And what should have been a piece of gaily irresponsible nonsense becomes impregnated with evil” (Lahr 1987: 334). Sir Ralph Richardson’s stage performance was found unsatisfactory by many, including Orton’s agent Peggy Ramsey and the journalist Hilary Spurling (qtd. in Lahr 1987: 334, Spurling 1969: 20).

After this eventful premiere, Richardson received many complaint letters, and answered each one personally. Stanley Baxter's remarks on Richardson's reflections on this disastrous performance tell us of Richardson's intentions in changing the play's ending and bring us closer to regarding them as a form of censorship: "Ralph got terribly, terribly depressed. He'd turned down the play a few times before finally accepting it, and he thought he'd made a terrible mistake taking part in what he came to regard as a dirty play" (Lahr 1987: 332). The reputation of the play was only recognised six years later with the successful production directed by Lindsay Anderson. Of contemporary reviewers, only Frank Marcus's remarks published under the headline of "A CLASSIC IS BORN", stand the test of time: "*What the Butler Saw* will live to be accepted as a comedy classic of English literature" (qtd. in Lahr 1987: 334).¹³¹

The play was not staged for 6 six years, being kept away from the British stage until its brilliant revival in the hands of Lindsay Anderson. This production of the play was put on stage with the penis restored as it is in the 'original' version "as part of the 'Joe Orton Festival'" at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 16 July 1975 (Orton 1981: 362). It was later transferred to the Whitehall Theatre. An adaptation of the play was broadcast on BBC2 (Theatre Nights) on 24 May 1987, produced by Shaun Sutton, and directed by Barry Davis. It was put on stage again in 1994 at the Royal Exchange Theatre by the director Robert Delamere and ran from 7 April to 7 May.¹³² Today, although the

¹³¹ One year later, the New York production of the play was performed at the McAlpin Rooftop Theater on 4 May 1970. The play was made viewable for the American audience only at the cost of enormous cuttings and modifications. These huge changes imposed upon the text included the omission of the two boxes: the one Geraldine carries and the one Nick brings, many stage directions, particularly the ones about the consumption of whisky, the blood scenes, "metal grilles" that trap the characters in the consulting room, the penis/cigar, and the rope ladder (Orton 1969: 442). The play was further Americanized with the choice of words: "closet" (Orton 1969: 67) instead of "cupboard" (WTBS 446), "attack" (Orton 1969: 67) instead of "assault" (WTBS 446). Moreover, on the last page of the Americanized version of the play, the expressions are softened: Mrs Prentice's lines in the British version "My son has a collection of indecent photographs which prove beyond doubt that he made free with me in the same hotel [...]" (WTBS 446) are replaced with the following ones "My son has a collection of photographs which prove beyond doubt that he attempted to seduce me in the same hotel [...]" (Orton 1969: 67).

¹³² The play was translated into Turkish by Tomris Uyar and was also performed, though for a short run, in the Dormen Theatre in Istanbul (Uyar 1992: 5).

play is put on stage in the original version, it appears in print with the two different endings, the 'bowdlerised' and 'unbowdlerised' versions, as it is in the Eyre Methuen collection *Complete Plays*, edited by his biographer John Lahr.

As stated earlier, when *What the Butler Saw* was first put on stage, the office of Lord Chamberlain was newly abolished, allowing any play to be put on stage without receiving a licence prior to its performance. However, Sir Ralph Richardson took it upon himself to substitute the cigar for the penis and, more significantly, this modification found its way into the script. In this context, consideration of a new form of intervention, by the artists involved in staging a production, provides a remarkable framework through which one might rethink the question of censorship.

In "Towards A Redefinition of Censorship", Helen Freshwater proposes that any exploration of the concept of censorship will be faced with its complexity and diversity (2003b: 225). She continues, "the contention that conventional approaches to censorship have concentrated on institutional acts of prohibition to the detriment of a more sophisticated or subtle understanding of censorship has become commonplace" (2003b: 226). As discussed in Part One of this dissertation, contemporary debates on censorship tend to dwell on the multifaceted, nuanced nature of the concept. In a similar vein, Annette Kuhn asserts that "to assume that censorship only prohibits or represses is to forget that censorship might equally well be productive in its effects": failure to recognise the complexity of censorship leads to diminishing the censored object into an "inert, passive" position, subordinated to the censorial body (1988: 4). The interrelationships between the text and censorial dynamics bear a complexity that transcends the limiting forces of a 'conventional understanding of censorship'. More notably, one might argue that the censored text still tends to have the potential to speak for itself through transgression by benefiting from the flexibility of language.

With the Act's abolition in 1968, plays were not no longer required to obtain a licence. Theoretically, "matters were at last left to the good judgment, intelligence and artistic integrity of all those who were involved in putting on a play" (Cuddon 1998: 121). However, censorship did not simply go away. This point is one of the central arguments of this dissertation, which will be reiterated throughout: in 1968, pre-publication censorship was officially abolished at the institutional level with the removal of the Lord Chamberlain's post, but paradoxically it did not disappear; rather, it persisted after its formal abolition, evolving into different forms which were not necessarily state impositions. In other words, from the abolition of the Lord Chamberlain's role as the censor, censorship has maintained its existence, only in different forms. In this particular case, there was no state agent to interfere with the play, just the principal actor, Sir Ralph Richardson; his intervention in the play – strikingly he was not asked to do so – made a huge alteration. This time the play was filtered not through the gaze of the Lord Chamberlain but through Sir Ralph Richardson. By this act of intervention the actor, a prominent figure in the established theatre at that time, assumed a role analogous to that of the Lord Chamberlain and made a significant change in the play, which also found its way into the first published script.

This peculiar censorial practice raises a number of questions as to the nature of Richardson's intervention. Is this institutionalised censorship implemented by the state? Clearly not, because official censorship granted by the institutional authority had been abolished at that time and so there was no censor to scrutinise the play or ask for modifications. Is this self-censorship? Again, clearly not, because this is not the playwright himself censoring his own work, but the actor starring in the play carrying out a direct intervention in the work of the deceased playwright. On what grounds does Richardson assume a role analogous to that of both the censor and the author? It is analogous to the censor's role because ultimately this is a major change in the holograph

manuscript of the dead author, carried out by an outsider without the author's consent. But it is also seemingly done in anticipation of criticism and possible censorship. However, Sir Ralph Richardson is also taking the author's role upon himself; as an actor he can be considered 'internal' to the play's performance, not wholly an outsider. The role of Richardson is analogous to the author and so akin to self-censorship in terms of the fear that the reviewers might reject the play. To put it more precisely, the absence of official censorship granted a legal right to put anything on stage without licence prior to performance; however, the newly-changed legal situation was creating tension with the prevalent atmosphere both at public and private levels.

To put it in Raymond Williams' words, "The complexity of a culture is to be found not only in its variable processes and their social definitions – traditions, institutions, and formations – but also in the dynamic interrelations, at every point in the process, of historically varied and variable elements" (1977: 121). To Williams, culture is not static, but rather is in continuous conflict; in accordance with this contention, he offers a conceptual framework to explore the tension between what he refers to as the 'dominant', the 'residual' and the 'emergent'. The 'dominant' in a given culture represents the ideas embraced by the majority. The 'dominant' might benefit from the 'residual' which has been replaced yet still exists, or might marginalise and push the 'residual' to the periphery if it is oppositional. As societies are in a constant process of transformation, 'emergent' or alternative forms and practices might emerge. The new 'emergent' forms might eventually become the new 'dominant' or go unrecognised or maintain their existence as an alternative to the 'dominant'.

In the light of Williams' terminology, one might argue that the emergent forms of culture in the late 1960s were not immediately incorporated into the dominant. In other words, socially and culturally stigmatised or internalised matters are not expected to change overnight; it is not easy to suddenly do away with social and cultural conditioning.

In this respect, Sir Ralph Richardson might still have tended to behave in accordance with the way people generally responded to the expectation of censorship. Therefore, although it is not exactly self-censorship, since the intervention in the dead author's work is carried out by an outsider, the process comes to resemble that of self-censorship, which involves anticipation of the audience's reactions and questions. Censorship is no longer going to be carried out by a Lord Chamberlain with his blue pencil; it is going to be something much more subtle. This puts us in a peculiar situation and compels us to ask complex questions with regard to the different types of censorship that emerged after formal state censorship had been abolished.

As stated earlier, *What the Butler Saw* functions as a bridging text, having been written prior to 1968 and performed in the immediate aftermath of the Act's abolition, but more significantly in the middle of above-mentioned social and cultural changes and turmoil. The 1960s were marked with the spirit of rebellion, welcoming emergent discourses and practices challenging the dominant. The clash between 'counter culture' and 'mainstream culture' manifests that, Arthur Marwick argues, "paternalistic Victorian controls were lifted from British society" (1996: 9). In the shaken presence of this fatherly and protective umbrella, ideological resistance had the best chance to grow. The revolutionary spirit of the decade called into question many infallible institutions and figures, including the Establishment, its very representative Sir Winston Churchill and the psychiatric landscape which functioned as potentially a mechanism of censorship, as is the case in the play. In order to see how this farcical play comically satirises these established values, a contextual background will be provided with reference to the play.

The symbolic world order of *What the Butler Saw* is that of the world of the British Establishment. The whole political order is associated with a culture of deference. The term points to a whole society in which one is expected to respect one's elders and betters. A deep-rooted phenomenon and traditional and cultural practice in British culture, the

‘culture of deference’¹³³ dates back hundreds of years; yet, it became a much-discussed issue people started to question in the 1950s and the 1960s as class structures became more visible. People began to mock and parody the prevailing class system, which was defined within such categories as lower class, middle class, and upper-middle class. The fact that people had started talking about it in the 1950s also indicates that the class system was already coming under threat.

As the very epitome of the British Establishment, and the pivotal figure in the play, Winston Churchill now takes centre-stage. The significance of Churchill in British culture and history now becomes the concern of this chapter, both to show what meaning his symbolic castration has in the play and so consequently to argue that the Richardson version does not trivialise the play but rather has value in itself, contrary to John Lahr’s claim.

Winston Churchill has been described as “the greatest Briton of all time” (*BBC* 2015), while A. J. P. Taylor dubbed him “the saviour of his country” (qtd. in Addison 2005a: 5). To many, he is a symbol of British unity and strength. Whether his policies are celebrated or contested, Churchill secured his place in history as a national as well as an international figure. As best stated in Roy Jenkins’ concluding remarks to his comprehensive biographical study, Churchill is considered “with all his idiosyncrasies, his indulgences, his occasional childishness, but also his genius, his tenacity and his

¹³³ The British political commentator Owen Jones argues that today in Britain the Establishment is still very much present. In his book entitled *The Establishment: And How They Get Away With It*, Jones talks about the invisible yet dominating network of relations. For him, the Establishment includes the monarchy, bankers, the financial system, the military, and senior figures in media. It simply includes different groups of powerful people who have the same social views, share common backgrounds such as going to the same school, socialise with each other in the same places so they naturally work together, look after their own interests and encourage the culture of deference. “It was not”, Owen Jones argues, “based on official, legal or formal arrangements, but rather on ‘subtle social relationships’” (2014: 8). These are prevalent social and cultural codes like secret and confidential contracts. The maintenance of this order of the British Establishment serves their interests well. They form a network that can effectively control society. It is not an organised conspiracy, it is simply that these people have so much in common. They adopt politically and culturally conservative ideas, believing that this serves their common interests and the good of the public.

persistent ability, right or wrong, successful or unsuccessful, to be larger than life, as the greatest human being ever to occupy 10 Downing Street” (2001: 912).

As a result of his wartime success,¹³⁴ “conventional wisdom had firmly predicted a victory for Churchill, ‘the man who won the war’” in the 1945 election (Marwick 1996: 98). However, contrary to expectations, “the war-leader Churchill was swept from power by the Labour Party, which gained an enormous majority of 394 seats to the Tories’ 210. A new era began” (Brodey 2002: 251). This rejection of Churchill, the symbol of the established conservative order and of Britishness, of British pride and honour, as well as the leader who had guaranteed the salvation of the British nation, demonstrated that a yearning for change was very much in the air. In other words, this unexpected event points to the fact that people wanted change in the old order of things. This ultimately paved the way for the 1960s – a decade marked by the spirit of rebellion.¹³⁵

With the Labour Party government’s fall from power, Winston Churchill was again British prime minister from 1951 to 1955. This period was marked by Churchill’s resistance to the dismemberment of the Empire. He became a, even the, symbol of the Establishment. However, British atrocities against the Mau Mau rebels in Kenya, events in Egypt and Malaya, and a coup against Mosaddegh in Iran cast a shadow over Churchill’s heroic legacy. In 2017, in a panel, an Indian politician “drew robust applause

¹³⁴ The prime minister as well as the war leader of the United Kingdom between the years 1939 and 1945, Winston Churchill is a prominent figure in British culture. When Nazi Germany invaded Poland in 1939, the UK and France opposed this invasion together. France’s subsequent surrender left the UK alone in her struggle. Churchill was determined that the British nation would not yield to the Nazis, and, as military and governmental leader of the country, he led the UK to final victory. During such politically delicate times, affected by the Blitz on London, he raised the morale of his citizens by means of his rhetorical use of language in his radio speeches and reports to the nation.

¹³⁵ Winston Churchill was not popular with everybody during his lifetime and is still a contested figure today; he is looked on with suspicion by many on the left as a result of his domestic and colonial policies, especially in the 1920s and the 1930s. It has been suggested he was responsible for many deaths in India in the Second World War when he refused to send food. On several occasions during protests, his statue has been vandalised in an expression of anti-establishment feeling. Of these protests, that on May Day in 2000 received broad coverage in the press. Anti-capitalist demonstrators gathered in Parliament Square to protest the neo-liberal policies of the government. During the demonstration, Churchill’s cenotaph and statue overlooking parliament were attacked by the protestors. His mouth was sprayed with red paint to simulate blood dripping from it, and a piece of grass was put on the head of the statue to imitate a Mohican hairstyle, turning this archetypal establishment figure into a punk (BBC 2000).

from the Q&A audience when he compared Winston Churchill to “some of the worst genocidal dictators” of the twentieth century because of his role in a catastrophic famine in Bengal” (Robertson). His complexity provides a fitting lens through which to look at British culture and history more generally: both a hero and a villain; a great writer and historian but also guilty of terrible misrepresentations. Upon his death on 24 January 1965, Winston Churchill was given a state funeral, “an honour saved only for kings and queens, and sometimes other people of the highest national importance. Churchill's funeral was the last state funeral held in Britain” (BBC 2015).¹³⁶ Significantly, Orton was writing his outrageous play only a couple of years after the recent state funeral of Winston Churchill, which meant he was even more in people's consciousness. Orton was therefore daring to make fun of the recently-deceased national hero. He ridiculed Churchill's eminence and power by symbolically castrating him in his script.

The substitution of the cigar for the penis did not alleviate the satirical impact of the play as the fatherly picture of Churchill was completed by his charismatic trademarks including “*giant cigar*” among others (Addison 2005a: 3[emphasis added]). In accordance with his paternal role, “his most famous theatrical prop [,] a large Havana cigar, which he would light and flourish with much ceremony, but seldom smoke”, played a crucial part in the play (Addison 2005a: 171-2). The cigar represents power and masculinity due to its phallic shape. Thus, the removal of the cigar, due to its association with the leader himself and the playful idea it evokes, prompts different interpretations. As a farce, the play pushes the limits to the extreme and employs exaggerated situations which render the subversive potential of this substitution more playful. So, the humorously-inflated value of the part severed from the statue signals that Winston Churchill is castrated and left impotent. With the loss of that part, the social order is no

¹³⁶ On 15 January 1965, the Prime Minister Winston Churchill suffered a severe stroke that left him gravely ill. He died in London nine days later, at the age of 90.

longer sustainable and within the play it is suspended. As stated above, one could argue that the replacement of the penis with the cigar, ironically and paradoxically opens up new meanings in a counter-productive way.

The British Establishment and its very symbol Churchill operate in the centre of the play, and Orton further complicates his farce by setting it in a separate but related kind of microcosm of the Establishment, that of psychiatry. The 1960s was a period of turmoil in psychiatry in which different 'emergent' responses and challenges appeared, laying established or mainstream psychiatry open to debate. Coined as "anti-psychiatry" by South African psychoanalyst David Cooper, this international social movement included many others such as Jacques Lacan, R. D. Laing, and Michel Foucault (Kotowicz 2005: 4). They challenged the validity of the practices of the psychiatric establishment. The movement criticised the unequal legal power imposed on the patient by the doctor and the ways it became an instrument of repression and control of dissenting or nonconformist voices by adjudging them 'insane' or 'abnormal'.

Although Freudian theories when first publicised were rejected and marginalised, in time the 'emergent' Freudian psychoanalysis became the 'dominant' form and the basis of mainstream application. Lacan was one of the international examples who contested the 'dominant' form. Specifically speaking, although Lacan was influenced by Freud, he differs from him radically in their different understanding of the ego and their attitudes to therapy. While Freud on the whole mostly favours strengthening the ego through analysis, Lacan suggests the analysand is made to confront his ego (In his later career, Lacan becomes more anti-positivistic). In Freudian psychoanalysis, there is the *telos* of the cure: the ego is to be strengthened and made powerful during the therapeutic process. Lacan finds this attitude ideological, since this means that the psychiatrist is imposing his ego unity on the analysand. In analysis, Lacan's purpose is to lead the analysand to a kind of contact or encounter with his or her desire. For Lacan, the ego is the enemy, and

throughout his sessions he tries to shatter the ego, or the illusion of the ego. In Slavoj Žižek's words:

For Lacan, psychoanalysis at its most fundamental is not a theory and technique of treating psychic disturbances, but a theory and practice that confronts individuals with the most radical dimension of human existence. It does not show an individual the way to accommodate him- or herself to the demands of social reality; instead it explains how something like 'reality' constitutes itself in the first place. It does not merely enable a human being to accept the repressed truth about him- or herself; it explains how the dimension of truth emerges in human reality. In Lacan's view, pathological formations like neuroses, psychoses and perversions have the dignity of fundamental philosophical attitudes towards reality (2006: 3-4).

Lacan's dissenting ideas bring into the picture another key figure in the field: R. D. Laing, the Scottish author of *The Divided Self* (1960), who is often described as an anti-psychiatrist. In 1965, Laing was running a project at a place called Kingsley Hall where psychiatrists (although he would not call them psychiatrists or patients) and patients were living together in a community. By means of this project, his goal was to challenge and revolutionise the methods employed in the treatment of mental disorders. Laing argued against the whole concept of madness, or the ways people are diagnosed as mad, neurotic or psychotic. He describes the schizoid as an individual "who is not able to experience himself 'together with' others or 'at home in' the world, but, on the contrary, he experiences himself in despairing aloneness and isolation" (Laing 1960: 17). To be precise, this person, who is alienated from himself and the world around him, develops a false identity to face up to the external world and his own conflicts; this is maintained until she or he is unable to cope with this situation, and eventually ending in breakdown and disintegration of the self.

Laing saw the whole medicalised language of psychiatry as a way of controlling people who were simply adapting in different ways to a psychotic society. Joe Orton might be linked to his ideas and might have been interested in him since there is a strong possibility that Joe Orton would have known about him. Even if not, his diary entries and

interviews demonstrate that psychiatry was a popular contemporary subject. In one of his diary entries, Orton mentions the release of the film *Marat/Sade*, and writes of a conversation with his lover Halliwell, who was going through some psychological problems:

Kenneth Halliwell had been to a new doctor. The doctor examined him and said he hadn't got appendicitis. He said it was nervousness and has given tranquillizers. 'It's because your mother died when you were eleven and it was a traumatic experience. You are imagining this appendicitis out of guilt,' he said. 'Whatever are you guilty about?' I said. 'I don't know,' Kenneth said (Orton 1987: 136).

It is clear that, to Orton, psychiatry was a field for manipulation so he “aimed his most devastating and hilarious wit at the new religion – psychiatry – in *What the Butler Saw*” (Rusinko 1995: 98). He creates the character of the power-crazed psychiatrist Dr Rance, who is trying to mould everyone into an image befitting his fantasy of writing an academic bestseller, and of Dr Prentice, who “never quite succeeds, and is always forced to disguise his actions in preposterous contortions when somebody catches him at it. Farce becomes a paradigm of neurotic defensiveness” (Lahr 1987: 319). Both doctors are responsible for the disorder prevailing in the play, contrary to the claim of Rance “I am the representative order while you are of chaos” (*WTBS* 417). Orton lampoons these figures of authority, placing them in ridiculous positions, and underscoring their impotency by setting the play in their very own bastion – an asylum where they are trapped and make fool of themselves. Within this framework, Orton's epigraph to *What the Butler Saw* is very apt: ““Surely we're all mad people, and they/Whom we think are, are not” (from Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*) (*WTBS* 361). Orton plays with the audience's perception of the natural and unnatural, the normal and abnormal. Orton leads the audience to question these dichotomies by setting the play in a psychiatric clinic where the line between sanity and insanity is very loosely defined.

Firstly, it is important to recognise that this play is a farce. In addition to being “an act of literary aggression”, as John Lahr states, farce is also a hilarious send-up of the

established order (1987: 148). Orton, who has been dubbed “the high priest of farce in the mid-sixties,” embraced a distinct version of farce, which may be unique, but he still wrote within recognizable generic rules, in the tradition of farce (Bigsby 1982: 17).¹³⁷ However, this absurd and farcical play subverts the generic features and pushes everything to the absolute extreme. The play sends up the whole practice of psychoanalysis, mental health care and therapy; the play therefore is in some sense already ahead of any psychoanalytic reading, pre-emptively undermining it. In an interview he gave to the *Evening News* on 9 June 1967, the playwright himself stated that he “saw psychiatry as a mad system of pseudo-meanings, a way of suffocating experience in language that has no relation to any perceivable reality” (Lahr 1987: 315-6). He further stated, ““Everybody is a little like psychiatrists today. They’ve got this enormous wish to explain everything. Religion – especially Christianity – tries to show things following a logical progression. And for all we know the whole thing may turn out to be some vast joke”” (Lahr 1987: 315-6). By means of farce, Orton ridicules the science of psychiatry.

Thus, in this context of opposing mainstream psychiatry, we have the British figure R. D. Laing, the international figure Jacques Lacan and within this tradition Joe Orton, the playwright. Orton is clearly the most radical and confrontational in his rejection of psychiatry; whereas Laing and Lacan are psychiatrists and speaking within that domain, Orton is not and seems to be rejecting it much more completely than they do.

All in all, although obviously not identical, Lacanian epistemology and Orton’s treatment of the science of psychiatry in his farce *What the Butler Saw* share important

¹³⁷ Although Orton was writing under the tradition of farce, he challenged and parodied many components of the genre. Here, Rusinko gives a list of them: “twins separated at birth who must eventually reunite with each other and their families. The single most necessary convention in this process is the disguise – one that Orton carries to dizzyingly confusing heights. The multiplicity of Orton’s disguises results in the expected confusions of names and identities, teeter-totter plot complications caused by a fast-paced series of exits and entrances, the big scene, and the deus ex machina ending. The sheer multiplication of each of the plot conventions is unprecedented and gives Orton opportunity to demonstrate his subversive and witty anarchy as in no other of his farces” (1995: 99).

parallels. The ways Lacan is challenging the psychiatric establishment, particularly the kind of therapeutic model that dominated the mainstream psychiatry, is also employed in *What the Butler Saw*. Joe Orton evidently self-consciously references Freudian theories and his audience is in on the joke. Orton's parody of psychiatry in his play and Lacan's deviation from the Freudian mainstream of psychiatry also suggest a playful appropriacy between Orton's play and Lacanian reading. Both are writing within a mainstream tradition (psychiatry and farce) while simultaneously subverting it. One of the primary concerns of the play is clearly with how the discourse and practice of mental health often serve established power and reinforce established norms. Moreover, the whole play revolves around the absence of this phallic item. Similarly, Lacan puts emphasis on the function of the phallus as the guarantor of meaning as well as the indicator of sexual difference and of the integrity of the individual.

This study does not set out primarily to reassess Joe Orton's *What the Butler Saw* from a Lacanian standpoint; rather, it aims to make use of the theory as a tool box for the analysis of the significance of the penis/cigar in the play. As Slavoj Žižek puts forward for Lacan "psychoanalysis itself is a method of reading texts" (2006: 5). Accordingly, Lacan offers useful conceptual tools for pondering over this play.

Within this framework, this section aims to underscore the significance of the cigar/phallus in order to explore how this is related to censorship and the social and cultural revolutions of the 1960s. To this end, to fully understand the pivotal role of the penis/cigar in *What the Butler Saw*, it is necessary to investigate it in light of the Lacanian theoretical framework. Before going into an analysis of the play, the significance of the phallus in Lacanian theory will be discussed thoroughly in order to elucidate how a Lacanian reading is relevant to this work.

It should be noted that for Lacan the 'penis' and the 'phallus' differ from one another: while in Freudian psychoanalysis a great emphasis is put upon the operation of

the penis as a bodily organ, in Lacanian discourse, the anatomical identity of the penis is superseded by the phallus, the marker/guarantor of symbolic power. In Freudian theory, libidinal forces are important while in Lacanian theory they are replaced by linguistic dynamics. Lacan metaphorizes many of the literal expressions in Freud. As Madan Sarup notes, “While Freud’s work is haunted by biology, Lacan’s work, on the other hand, has a strong anti-biological tendency. Lacan wants to focus on what is distinctively human in the human mind, on the cultural rather than the ‘natural’ determining forces, and on anthropology and sociology rather than on biology” (1992: 11). In his attempt to “extricate psychoanalysis from the essentialism of biological/anatomical types of explanation”, Lacan prefers to write of the phallus instead of the penis as he does not necessarily relate it to the male sexual organ (Hook 2006: 60). The phallus refers to whatever functions as the system-imposer, the guarantor of meaning and the indicator of sexual difference.

Calling himself a Freudian, as well as drawing heavily on Freudian theories (he calls this the ‘return to Freud’), Lacan’s stress shifts to the role of language and the symbolic function of the ‘phallus’ in psychoanalysis. In particular, the influence of such theoreticians as Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roman Jakobson on Lacan paves the way for his reformulation of Freudian theory by means of linguistics and anthropology. When compared to Freud, Lacan places greater significance on the linguistic dimension and the socialisation or acculturation process which is initiated with the child’s integration into the social laws through acquiring language. Thus, what Lacan does is a rereading, challenging and revolutionising of Freudian ideas in linguistic terms. He borrows widely from linguistics: even his words and his algorithms testify to the fact that he owes a great deal to Jakobson, Levi-Strauss, and Saussure.

Lacan reversed the hierarchy between the signifier and the signified offered by Ferdinand de Saussure.¹³⁸ For Lacan, the signifier is over the signified: $\frac{S}{s}$. He further maintains that this bar is a functioning bar which separates the two symbols and stresses the division between them. The signified is buried in the subconscious and one can never have direct access to this lower case *s* except for full speech. One can achieve this unproblematic relationship between the signifier and the signified, says Lacan, only if there is full speech, which takes place so rarely in one's life. The bar refers to the ego because it represses the unconscious psychic material or language. This is another way of saying the signified resists any signification process so it is a bar which represents this resistance to signification or verbalisation of the unconscious psychic material.

Not only the conscious but also the unconscious are described in linguistic terms by Lacan. He says that the “unconscious is structured like a language” and he tries to explain psychic material through linguistic terminology (Lacan 1998: 149). Lacan establishes an analogous relationship between the unconscious and language. The structures of both operate within a chain of signifiers relying on a network of relations. A signifier gains meaning through its relation to other signifiers, which leads to an endless signification process. Thus, the signifier has a supremacy over the signified. Just like words, individuals establish their “selves” by means of their relations to other individuals, the preceding system of language, and social norms.

Lacan introduces terms like the ‘Imaginary register’, the ‘Symbolic register’, and the ‘Real’ into critical discourse.¹³⁹ The real is something extralinguistic, pre-symbolic

¹³⁸ For Saussure, the sign was akin to two sides of the same sheet of paper: one side is the signifier, one side is the signified. They are symmetrical because there is a sort of fixity between the signified and the signifier. They are interdependent because the phonetic signifier has to correspond to the concept in order to achieve the meaning-making process or signification. He also said their relationship is arbitrary and contractual. After this relationship has been established, it becomes stabilised, and the signifier and the signified depend on each other. The relationship between them is an arbitrary relationship.

¹³⁹ In the early phases of his career, Lacan used the term ‘stage’ which he later dropped in favour of the term ‘phase’. Later still, Lacan used ‘register’ rather than ‘phase’. Accordingly, the terms will be referred to as registers in this work throughout. Significantly, the registers co-exist in Lacanian epistemology.

and in some ways akin to a black hole. Since it represents what is behind language, it can never be directly articulated. Language always misses the real. It may revolve around it but can never access it. As Terry Eagleton states, the real is the “inaccessible realm which is always beyond the reach of signification, always outside the symbolic order” (1996: 145). The real also involves something that threatens our egotistical unity. It is something that falls outside language.

The infant lives in a perfect state of bliss in the mother’s womb with no sense of lack. Then this blissful dyad between the infant and the mother is broken by its displacement – birth. In the first six months, the infant needs close attention. From roughly six months onwards until eighteen months, which corresponds to the imaginary, the infant becomes aware of the images around it and perceives the external world through images which are tactile, visual, and auditory. The important thing is the capturing of its own image in the mirror. When it looks at its body, it sees fragments as motor coordination has not yet been achieved. But this sense of fragmentation is overcome when the infant looks at its image in the mirror, because the image in the mirror offers a unified image of self. Although there is a yearning to go back to the previous sense of unity with the mother, this is a kind of replacement for the lost sense of wholeness and experience with her. Therefore this is very important, enabling the infant to constitute its ego. So the earliest traces of ego are dependent on this image in the mirror, which is the first, ‘ideal ego’ or ‘imago’ for the infant.

Until the eighteenth month, the infant enjoys this narcissistic fulfilment with the imago. This is the narcissistic phase or identificatory process. This name is based on the mythological story of Narcissus. In the legend, Narcissus cannot differentiate between himself and the imago (his reflection in the pond). The same kind of symbiotic link is established between the child and the mother. This is a narcissistic kind of identification which brings with itself a sense of wholeness. Human subjects continue throughout life

to look for such an identification which gives them an imaginary wholeness and unity. This identificatory process never ends throughout one's life, shifting from one signifier to another. This is the endless meaning-making or signification process.

After the intrusion of the patriarchal metaphor, the infant is located within the culture. This is also called the humanization or acculturation process by Lacan. The infant is initiated into the symbolic register at the moment when the father, as the very embodiment of the symbolic authority of the phallus and the mouthpiece of society, appears to dictate social norms. So, "[t]he phallus represents the moment when the father's prohibition of the desire for the mother must function. It signals to the child that having a viable identity can only be achieved at the price of loss (of the mother) and that being human can only come about as the direct consequence of a division" (Minsky 1998: 68). With the *No* of the father, the child is precipitated into the domain of the language which preceded its existence. Significantly, entrance into the socialisation process through language plays a decisive role in the formation of identity and personal reality. Once the child becomes a part of language, she or he is precipitated into a set of social rules.

For Lacan, "to ignore this Symbolic Order is to condemn the discovery to oblivion, and the experience to ruin" (Lacan 1977: 64). Since the individual looks for unity, and an anchoring point to grasp, without the acknowledgement of the big Other,¹⁴⁰ perception relies on misrecognitions. In order to secure a stable place in the Symbolic field of language, the individual has to admit the commands of language. Similarly, as Anika Lemaire asserts, the infant has "to pass through it [the Imaginary order] if he is to become a social being, a member of society" and in accordance with the commands of the social and cultural laws, she or he "will be fashioned by this order and will be indelibly

¹⁴⁰ The lower case 'other' is usually a reference to the ideal ego but the capitalised Other in early Lacan refers to the unconscious. The capitalised 'Other' refers to the unconscious and also to the symbolic register in later Lacan, while the lower case 'other' refers to the ideal ego that corresponds to the narcissistic identification in the imaginary register.

marked by it without being aware of it” (1986: 54). Accordingly, in Lacanian discourse, one can be a speaking member of the society only through the entrance into the Symbolic through which subjectivity is constructed.

For Lacan, language also appears as the castrator. Rather than a biological castration, it is actually a metaphorical castration. The castrating element is language, not the biological father, the representative of the paternal metaphor. In the absence of the biological father, there will be other candidates or representatives for this position: the teacher at school, the police at the police station, religious authorities at the church. Language acculturates and humanizes the child. In the Lacanian context, this is also called the humanizing castration or humanization process or subjectivity process. Lacan puts a lot of emphasis on the linguistic codification of the infant; the infant becomes a human being when it is positioned symbolically in the society through language.

With the entrance into the symbolic register, the individual embraces the position of a speaking subject by constructing an identity for himself or herself according to the expectations of society. What is significant about the speaking subject of the Symbolic register is that identity still does not become a coherent whole following entrance into the social order. “In language, we can find our subjectivity but will never be able to find an ultimate meaning from which all meanings flow because in language we are permanently cut off from the object of our Desire” (Minsky 1998: 66). Being cut off from our desire, we are subjected to the discourse of the big Other. A clash between what one desires and the desire of the other is then inevitable, which will lead to “a life-long search for a perfect fit between language and our phantasy of plenitude” (Minsky 1998: 67). Lacan elucidates the human subject’s entrapment by the already-existing system as follows:

It is the discourse of the circuit in which I am integrated. I am one of its links. It is the discourse of my father, for instance, in so far as my father made mistakes which I am condemned to reproduce. . . . I am condemned to reproduce them because I am obliged to pick up again the discourse he bequeathed to me, not simply because I am his son, but because one can’t

stop the chain of discourse, and it is precisely my duty to transmit it in its aberrant form to someone else (Lacan 1988: 89).

As stated above, the individual is born into a network of relations from which there is no escape. Although the unconscious is governed by these forces, it is impossible to fully grasp this order.

One is situated in sexual roles through one's relation to the phallus. Lacan provides "a theoretical account which emphasizes the precarious and unfinished nature of sexual identity in each human subject, but which is appreciative nonetheless of how sexual identity is legislated in each speaking being, imposed like a law of desire and prohibition, which requires us to take up a 'sexed' position within the Symbolic" (Hook 2006: 82). Gender is constructed through "superficial and substanceless signifiers such as clothes, makeup, hair style, and even occupation" (Hardin 2014: 79). At the end of this enculturation process, the individual is expected to behave in accordance with socially sanctioned roles.

The Lacanian reversal of the hierarchy between the signifier and the signified has already been noted above. Lacan "argues that the meaning of each linguistic unit can be established only by reference to another. In short, there will be no final guarantee or securing of language" (Sarup 1992: 53). This means that, contrary to Saussure, for Lacan there is no guarantee of an unproblematic relationship between the signifier and the signified, "But if each signification refers to another signification, and that signification refers to another one, in an endless chain, how do we decide what words mean?" (Sarup 1992: 53). Or, how can we be sure that we mean something? Lacan describes the term 'point de capiton' or the anchoring point. The master signifier - the phallus - introduces the individual into the realm of language and sustains the whole system by holding the ground:

The Lacanian term *point de capiton* (literally, an upholstery stud) refers to a point of convergence. Just as an upholstery stud or button is the centre for the

convergence lines or creases on the surface of a taut fabric, so the linguistic *point de capiton* provides a vantage point from which everything that happens in a given discourse can be situated both retroactively and prospectively. The subject attaches significance to certain signifiers; these signifiers, like upholstery buttons, pin down the floating mass of signification” (Sarup 1992: 53-4).

It is a kind of anchoring point which stabilises the floating signifiers. Thus, in Lacanian theory, the phallus stands for something that promises to restore order and guarantee meaning.

Significantly, as “the first, ‘pilot boat’, the signifier which leads the way to our understanding of all other cultural meanings”, the phallus functions as the law-giver and system-imposer (Minsky 1998: 69). The phallus is anything that promises to re-establish the sense of wholeness in the infant. Through the castration of the phallus, the child is introduced to the all-encompassing and continuous field of “the big Other” to which the transcendental father also submits. “Symbolic castration by the father, represented by the symbolic constraints in the world of language, sets limits to our phantasies and desires created in the Imaginary by coercing us into culturally acceptable behaviour and conventional meanings” (Minsky 1998: 66). Within the domain of language, the individual begins by being defined in relation to others. As Lacan puts it, “*the unconscious is the discourse of the Other*”, meaning our desires operate in accordance with how we are positioned in the social and cultural sphere (1998: 131). Most significantly, the position of the phallus or ‘the big Other’ can be assumed by any medium of the state apparatus such as the teacher, doctor, politician, police officer, and so on. This enables the system to maintain itself in an organised and encompassing way, which echoes Žižek’s favourite formulation – one “is always already subjectivized” (2012: 259).

As we have already seen, in Lacanian theory, the phallus does not refer to the actual male sex organ, the penis. Rather, the phallus substitutes what the individual loses through entrance into the domain of language, which is associated with laws, control, and knowledge. Similarly, the Name-of-the-father does not refer to the actual father; it stands

for the ultimate social structures that organise and regulate people through law, religion, medicine, and education. In this respect, the subject is exposed to the discourse of the big Other, to which the father also defers. What is more important here is “what the *father* signifies, the first imposition of law, the law, in short against incest, the prohibition that the mother is off bounds to the child as an object of desire” (Hook 2006: 63). This is the *no* of the father. In that sense, the father stands as the first representative of this pre-existing world of ideological structures, social networks, social strictures, and regulations.

Having given an account of the principal function of the phallus within the Lacanian theoretical framework, this section will now explore how Orton’s playful send-up of psychiatry, where the established order is suspended, corresponds to the Lacanian theoretical framework. At the same time, the eruption of the Imaginary into the Symbolic due to the lack of the phallus will be examined, mainly focusing on a number of complications leading to chaos, including the missing/damaged father figures on private and public levels, the choice of asylum with numerous doors as a setting, excessive use of alcohol, and confusions of sexual identity. Having already asserted that the Richardson version should not be dismissed, and that it is interesting and has value in itself, the section will conclude the analysis with a discussion of the two different endings, particularly expanding on the effect of the revised version.

ii. “Prick on Stage”: Analysis of *What the Butler Saw*

Joe Orton, famously called ““the Oscar Wilde of Welfare State Gentility””, is perhaps the most marginalised and transgressive playwright of the mid-twentieth century, due to his fearless questioning of taboo subjects through his witty use of language and humour (Cornish and Ketels 1985: 525). In doing so, and being aware of the power of language and the anarchy of laughter, Orton knows that the best way to pour out his contempt for

authority and hypocritical morality is to shock and “[startle]” the audience “into unsettled laughter” (Goodman 1988). His major plays including *The Ruffian on the Stair* (1964), *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1964), *Loot* (1966), *The Good and Faithful Servant* (1967), *The Erpingham Camp* (1967), and *What the Butler Saw* (1967) reflect his very unique and distinctive worldview and successful utilization of farcical black humour in his provocative plays.

Joe Orton’s farce *What the Butler Saw* takes place in the consulting room of a private psychiatric clinic in London in the 1960s. The beginning of the play is marked by two significant events: firstly, the gigantic statue of the heroic leader Sir Winston Churchill has been damaged in a gas explosion and a shrapnel-like fragment has killed a woman. Secondly, Dr Prentice’s attempt to seduce his would-be secretary Geraldine has failed due to the unexpected arrival of his wife. Thus, countrywide unrest is projected onto the personal level. The audience is suddenly thrust into a world of chaos which will permeate the play from beginning to end. The plot mechanism relies on a succession of complications, confusions of sexual identity, mistaken identities, sexual innuendos, and speed of action, all of which are accompanied by witty dialogue and a playful tone. The national and personal concerns in the play are only to be resolved, and consequently the social order to be restored, by the return of the lost piece of the statue, which in the Richardson version of the play is revealed to be the cigar of the great leader. In the holograph manuscript, however, this piece was not Winston Churchill’s cigar, but his penis.

To begin with, *What the Butler Saw* is constructed upon two main problematical concerns which set the plot in motion: the question of how Dr Prentice will hide his failed attempt to seduce the girl who has come to apply for the post of secretary, and the question of the missing part of the respected leader Winston Churchill’s statue, which has become

a national concern. Thus, a private affair is associated with a public affair, and the two are systematically brought together and intermingled.¹⁴¹

During the job interview, Dr Prentice asks Geraldine a number of irrelevant personal questions about her family matters such as who her father is, why he left his family, whether her mother was a nun, and how her step-mother died (*WTBS* 363-4-5). Yet, when Dr Prentice asks Geraldine about her typing skills, which is truly relevant in the circumstances, he introduces the topic like “Now, I have to ask a question which may cause you embarrassment. Please remember that I’m a doctor. (Pause.) What is your shorthand speed?” (*WTBS* 365). Making use of his official position as a psychiatrist, Dr Prentice persuades her to “lie on that couch” for a medical examination with a truly stupid excuse: “I wish to see what effect your step-mother’s death had upon your legs” (*WTBS* 366). It is obvious that Dr Prentice is abusing his public position of authority for his private interest in seducing a young woman who has come to apply for the post of secretary.

In the culture of deference, Dr Prentice is Geraldine’s better in relation to his social position and so the young woman yields to his commands, willingly or unwillingly. While he is examining her legs, he comes to a conclusion while still being manipulative “As I thought. You’ve a febrile condition of the calves. You’re quite wise to have a check-up. (He straightens and takes off his spectacles.) Undress” (*WTBS* 366). Now, the pathological and scientific grounds are ready to enable him to seduce the woman. However, his attempt to seduce the girl is interrupted by the appearance of three unexpected intruders: his wife Mrs Prentice, a hotel page called Nick accompanying her, and Dr Rance, who is in overall charge of psychiatry in the hospital. From this point onwards, all Dr Prentice’s efforts to conceal the naked Geraldine, hiding behind the

¹⁴¹ The emphasis upon this blending of two stories is reiterated in Susan Rusinko’s words: “Orton’s devilish trick is the coinciding of Geraldine’s personal heritage with that of the nation. Orton’s final attack on audience sensibilities occurs in Rance’s declaration that blends Churchillian cigar and Ortonian phallus” (Rusinko 1995: 107).

curtains, initiate a wild chain of events and a series of complications that essentially form the plot.

With the arrival of Dr Rance, whose authority has been conferred upon him by “Her Majesty’s government” (*WTBS* 376), seniority shifts from Dr Prentice to Dr Rance who introduces himself as “your immediate superiors in madness” in accordance with the culture of deference: “Rance. [...] Are you Dr Prentice? Prentice. Yes. Have you an appointment? Rance. No. I never make appointments” (*WTBS* 376). This time, Dr Rance takes charge of the situation and manipulates the events for his private benefit – “for a fascinating thesis” (*WTBS* 378-9). Since this is a farce, Orton is comically ridiculing the hypocrisy of the people in authority while displaying how public positions and private profit are intertwined.

From a broader context, the play reflects the spirit of the 1960s when private issues became public concerns, including such controversial issues as sexuality, abortion, contraceptive pills, and homosexuality as well as the private lives of political figures as in the case of the Profumo affair (1963) where private life had potentially huge public consequences. In short, private was no longer kept away from the public.

More significantly, in the play, the private affair of the seduction is intertwined with the issue of Churchill’s missing part, which is of utmost significance to the country on a national level. The overwhelming shadow of Winston Churchill over the British nation on a public level is farcically displayed in the story of the George Medal at the beginning of the play. Geraldine mentions the news that an important part from the statue of Churchill was lost in a recent gas explosion in which her step-mother died. It continues quite in the tradition of farce. She tells that the statue of the leader “was so badly injured that the George medal¹⁴² has been talked of” (*WTBS* 365).

¹⁴² The George medal is awarded for acts of great bravery in the United Kingdom.

What is significant here is that they are talking about a statue and so the choice of word is odd: it is described as ‘injured’, not ‘damaged’ (WTBS 365). One has the sense of its power by the fact that the word used here is that to describe something alive. It seems this statue is animated through language. The statue of the recently deceased Churchill is so respected that it is mooted whether a medal should be presented to it for the sufferings that it has endured following the gas explosion.

In addition to the treatment of the statue of Churchill as though it were a flesh and blood human being, the absurdity of the idea of a naked statue of Churchill heightens the comic effect of the image. Normally, statues are constructed clothed; they do not have penises if not ancient Greek gods. This is a joke about the British, who would make a statue of Churchill anatomically correct. The idea of a naked statue of Churchill, who was hardly an Adonis, is hilariously presupposed by the prankster Orton’s version. It is very funny to mythicize a statue in this way and to award a medal for its injury, but it is indicative of the inflated significance of Winston Churchill in the public consciousness.

The missing father of Geraldine and ‘injured’ father of the British nation, who cannot make sure that laws are obeyed, signal that an authority gap is prevailing in the play. Accordingly, on both private and public levels, the established order is unsettled from the very beginning of the play. The authority disintegrated through castration is echoed at the level of personal relations. In the absence of focal father figures or parental figures to be emulated, the characters (they will form a family with the emergence of the father) as well as the British nation (the national crisis of the country will be resolved with the restoration of the missing piece) are bereft of the sanctions of the system.

On the private level of the play, the initial question posed to Geraldine by Dr Prentice is about her father’s whereabouts:

Prentice: [...] Who was your father? Put that at the head of the page
[...]

Geraldine: I’ve no idea who was my father (WTBS 363).

This preoccupation with the father figure is reiterated in Dr Rance's question to Geraldine: "What of the father?" (*WTBS* 380). Geraldine has no idea about her father since he left her and her mother a long time ago. Her response alarms both doctors, underscoring the significance of the father figure. Dr Prentice, "perturbed by her reply"¹⁴³ says "I'd better be frank, Miss Barclay. I can't employ you if you're in any way miraculous. It would be contrary to established practice. You did have a father?" (*WTBS* 363). Similarly, Dr Rance builds and develops all his theory on the hypothetical relationship between Geraldine and her father. His theory, which is to him "obvious to the meanest amateur," is as follows: Geraldine was "unnaturally assaulted by her own father" at an exceptionally young age (*WTBS* 383). Dr Rance further continues with his assumption, Dr Prentice "resemble[s] the patient's father. That is why she undressed herself" and her aim is to "re-enact the initial experience with her parent" in her father's absence, which is sufficient enough for Dr Rance to certify her mad (*WTBS* 383). Dr Rance dismisses any refutation Geraldine makes, denying that she was not sexually abused by her father and she "lived in a normal family" (*WTBS* 382). Resolved upon the fact that the whole story relates to the issue of her father, he claims "I shall base my future actions upon that assumption" (*WTBS* 383).

Similarly, on the public level, Churchill the leader, who proved to have the power to change his nation's fate through his military and governmental prowess, stands as a father figure to the British nation. His missing part rendering the statue incomplete and impotent undermines the social order. Towards the end of Act I, the police officer Sergeant Match comes to search for Geraldine to enquire whether she has any information about the lost piece. His speech suggests that this piece has to be immediately returned to its proper place in order to put an end to the country-wide unrest:

Under expert guidance he was to be reintegrated into society. The task accomplished it became clear that the great man was incomplete. When the

¹⁴³ "Geraldine. I've no idea who my father was" (*WTBS* 363).

true facts got out the die-hards were in uproar. The press took up the story and it snowballed out of all proportion. At last – with the full support of the Conservative and Unionist Party – the council decided to sue the heirs of Mrs Barclay for those parts of Sir Winston which an army-type medical had proved to be missing. The council's lawyers obtained an exhumation order. This morning the coffin was opened in the presence of the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of this borough. Fainting women were held back as the official in charge searched high and low for council property. His efforts were not crowned with success. Mrs Barclay had taken nothing with her to the grave except those things which she ought to have done (WTBS 402).

Orton playfully displays the inflated significance of Winston Churchill who is regarded as the symbol of Britishness and British unity. His damaged larger than life-sized statue causes a country-wide panic air.

The setting of the play in an asylum with numerous doors proves very functional and playfully appropriate in revealing how the disintegrated order is reflected in the play. Orton situates his characters in a mental house, forming the necessary foundation to create a microcosm of the world of psychiatry. Effectively, this suggests that there is a strong parallel between the setting of the play and the Lacanian Imaginary register because what is dramatised in the asylum is how the individual is haunted after failing to integrate into the external world or the Symbolic. Additionally, nonconformists are rehabilitated by such means of state mechanisms as psychiatric clinic or prisons. In other words, mental health clinics are places where those people who fail to conform to existing social expectations and norms are 'rehabilitated' so that they can be reproduced as socially acceptable citizens.¹⁴⁴ In that sense, it operates as a passage to socialisation; the characters undergo a transition to enculturation. The architecture of the psychiatric clinic with its many doors, without any function except for the acceleration of entrances and exits at an unprecedented pace, adds to the complications of the play:

¹⁴⁴ The microcosm of psychiatry represented in the play is reminiscent of another – *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* written by Ken Kesey in 1962. The novel, set in an asylum in Oregon in the late 1950s, has a brilliant film adaptation directed by Milos Forman. While their tones obviously differ from one another, because *What the Butler Saw* is farcically funny, both shed light upon how the people in authority manipulate their institutional power. In both works, mental hospitals and psychiatry bear similarities as regards functioning as the bastions of dictatorial authority under the guise of 'rehabilitation'.

Rance: Why are there so many doors [sic] Was the house designed by a lunatic?

Prentice: Yes. (*He pours another whisky.*) We have him here as a patient from time to time (WTBS 377).

Typically, a door is something signalling the entrance into a new world or exit from an old one. In that sense, it is a threshold which marks transition, from external to internal or from internal to external. However, a door might take a completely different meaning: it may turn out to be a trap or blocked passage. In the play, doors do not function as a means of liberation, but rather of entrapment.¹⁴⁵ There are many doors but none of them promise the characters a chance to escape from the prison of the asylum. Strikingly, when the situation in the play gets worse, at that moment iron bars enclose the room; the characters will get out of the predicament, not through the doors again but through climbing the rope ladder, which seems to pave the way to integration to the external/Symbolic/social world.

Dr Prentice is irritated by the other intrusion - his wife's presence "Why have you returned? You know I can't endure the torment of being in your company" and in order to avoid trouble with her, he decides to remove Geraldine so that everything can be solved (WTBS 369). However, Mrs Prentice, who is naked under her fur coat, unknowingly puts on Geraldine's dress (WTBS 369). In the course of the play, it also becomes apparent that Mrs Prentice and the hotel page Nick shared a certain intimacy in a hotel the previous night: "You didn't behave like a married woman last night" (WTBS 370). Nick blackmails Mrs Prentice into persuading her husband to give him a job, otherwise he will publicise certain improper photographs that were secretly taken that night without her knowledge.

Meanwhile, certifying Geraldine mad, Dr Rance gives her a sedative and puts her into straitjacket. Now Geraldine is one of the patients of the hospital and Geraldine the secretary candidate who has disappeared. Mrs Prentice is looking for her in the hospital

¹⁴⁵ Susan Rusinko states that the door is a significant component of Feydeau's farces, which Orton might have seen in London and which clearly influenced him. Rusinko further argues that what Orton does is a "technical parody" through subverting the genre to the extreme from within the genre (1995: 102).

to tell her that the post of secretary has already been occupied. In order to explain the absence of the secretary, Dr Prentice makes up another lie: “She’s making white golliwogs for sale in colour-prejudice trouble-spots” in order to “promote racial harmony” (*WTBS* 387). The golliwog story, Dr Prentice’s weird behaviour in being discovered hiding Geraldine’s underwear and Mrs Prentice’s subsequent exposition of Dr Prentice’s letters to the newspapers, in one of which “he calls Gentleman’s Lavatories ‘the last stronghold of male privilege...’”, confirm to Dr Rance’s satisfaction that Dr Prentice is insane and homosexual (*WTBS* 388). Dr Rance, who has come to interrogate the hospital, is very glad to hear of these intriguing events “for a fascinating thesis”, from which he will make a big profit (*WTBS* 379). Altogether, each character is acting entirely in his or her own interests: Dr Prentice wants to hide his attempt at seduction, Nick is looking for a job and then escaping from the police, Geraldine wants to find a job and then to flee the hospital, Mrs Prentice wants to eliminate Nick’s blackmailing, and Dr Rance, based on these events, wants to collate all this material for his prospective bestseller. Their interests constantly clash and so their collective communication and actions only bring about further complications. It is apparent that the characters fail to meet the socially-assigned roles to appropriately position themselves in the domain of language. This causes all their failures in their construction of subjectivity.

Sergeant Match, a policeman, arrives looking for Nick for mistreating schoolgirls the night before and for Geraldine for the missing parts of the Churchill statue. Afraid of being arrested for his misconduct, Nick comes to a mutual agreement with Dr Prentice to help each other resolve their own personal problems. Dr Prentice orders Nick to undress and “impersonate my [his] secretary” (*WTBS* 398). The goal is to disguise Nick as his lost secretary and so together they can both solve their own predicaments. From now on, disguises and mistaken identities make the situation more and more complicated. Act I closes with the following complications: Nick and Geraldine have exchanged their

clothes (Nick has already brought Mrs Prentice's dress from the hotel), the patient (who is actually Geraldine) is lost, and Dr Prentice is suspected of insanity and homosexuality.

In Lacanian theory, sexual roles are determined through one's relation to the phallus. According to Derek Hook, Lacan

offers a theoretical account which emphasizes the precarious and unfinished nature of sexual identity in each human subject, but which is appreciative nonetheless of how sexual identity is legislated in each speaking being, imposed like a law of desire and prohibition, which requires us to take up a 'sexed' position within the Symbolic (2006: 82).

In the absence of the missing part of the statue, the characters' sexual identities are unstable or sexual preferences convey contradictory positions in this in-between position between the Imaginary and the Symbolic.

At the beginning of the play, Mrs Prentice comes from "the club [which] is primarily for lesbians" and she asserts, that she is "exempt from the rule because you [Mr Prentice] count[s] as a woman" (*WTBS* 369). The perception Mrs Prentice creates of her husband's sexual identity establishes a discrepancy with that in the opening scene of the play, where the doctor attempts to seduce the young woman Geraldine. While Mrs Prentice claims that their sex life is unsatisfactory, her husband questions her membership of a lesbian society by declaring her a voracious sex addict: "You were born with your legs apart. They'll send you to the grave in a Y-shaped coffin" (*WTBS* 371). She retorts that "my trouble stems from your inadequacy as a lover!" (*WTBS* 371). For her, even "rejuvenation pills have no effect on" Dr Prentice (*WTBS* 371). Thus, Dr Prentice is portrayed as a seducer in the beginning, yet sexually impotent by his wife. Subsequently, his letters to newspapers proclaiming "Gentlemen's Lavatories 'the last stronghold of male privilege...'" seem to suggest that, although he rejects the claims, he has homosexual tendencies (*WTBS* 388). These variable viewpoints blur the reader's perception of Dr Prentice's sexual identity.

The complications in the play resulting from cross-dressing and mistaken identities, together with the false perception of the characters, make the events more complicated. For instance, Dr Prentice is cognizant with transvestism since he seemingly craves women's clothes and shoes: "Mrs. Prentice: Have you taken up transvestism? I'd no idea our marriage teetered on the edge of fashion" (*WTBS* 373). Angry at the potential harm his wife's affair with Nick would cause to his career and reputation, Dr Prentice complains: "Oh, the damnable frivolity of the woman! I shall have to turn pederast to get her out of this mess" (*WTBS* 394). At the same time, when Dr Rance questions Dr Prentice, charging him with committing homosexuality, Dr Prentice defiantly claims "I'm a heterosexual" (*WTBS* 411).

Similarly, Mrs Prentice is a member of a lesbian club; however, having left a meeting held at the club, in which they had expelled a woman since she "declared herself to be in love with a man", Mrs Prentice paradoxically ends up in a hotel where she is intimately involved with a hotel page (*WTBS* 369). Moreover, there are implications about her intimacy with young men and she is called a nymphomaniac by her husband and by Dr Rance, respectively (*WTBS* 424). The reader is also confused about the sexual identity of Nick. When he relates what happened between him and Mrs Prentice, he says: "I'm sorry if my behaviour last night caused your wife anxiety, but I've a burning desire to sleep with every woman I meet" (*WTBS* 395). Furthermore, the policeman is pursuing him since he sexually attacked some high school girls the previous night. But at the same time there is reference to Nick's homosexuality:

Rance: [...] When Dr Prentice asked you to pose as a woman did he give a reason?

Nick: No.

Mrs Prentice: Didn't you consider his request strange?

Nick: No.

Rance: Have you aided other men in their perverted follies?

Nick: During my last term at school I was the slave of a corporal in the Welsh Fusiliers.

Rance: Were you never warned of the dangers inherent in such relationships?

Nick: When he was posted abroad he gave me a copy of 'The Way to Healthy Manhood' (WTBS 433).

What is more striking, Nick and Geraldine, who turn out to be siblings in the end, are engaged in incestuous relationships with their parents. An incestuous relationship is a violation and transgression of the first *No of the Father* in Lacanian discourse. The rule that is forbidding incest is broken in the play.

The primordial Law is therefore that which in regulating marriage ties superimposes the kingdom of culture on that of a nature abandoned to the law of mating. The prohibition of incest is merely its subjective pivot, [...] This law, then, is revealed clearly enough as identical with an order of language. For without kinship nominations, no power is capable of instituting the order of preferences and taboos that bind and weave the yarn of lineage through succeeding generations (Lacan 1977: 66).

As Lacan states above, in order to move into the Symbolic, the first remark of socialisation is to recognise the incest taboo. After the intrusion of the patriarchal metaphor, the infant is located within the culture, called the humanization or acculturation process by Lacan. There is a lot of resistance on the side of the infant not to disconnect from the Imaginary, until the infant becomes aware that the patriarchal metaphor is too strong to resist. In the play, since the phallus – the guarantor of meaning – is dislocated, and the task of restoring the order is left in the hands of the clumsy and selfish primordial father and the representative of order Dr Rance, controversies and complications prevail. Subsequently, this study will revisit the issue of Dr Rance as the primordial father and the representative of order in order to discuss their implications in detail.

All these confusions serve to disrupt the rigidly-categorised sexuality and sexual identities. "The characters try vainly to establish their maleness and femaleness, only to discover that it hardly matters," which proves "a comic release from the burdens of sexual identity" (Charney 1984: 100). Furthermore, Orton's discontentment with his contemporary environment is reflected in his anarchic treatment of the issues. Orton

energises the stage with hectic activity flavoured with “paradox, contradiction and illogicality” to eliminate rigid sexual categorisations (Charney 1984: 3).

According to Lacanian theory, gender is constructed through “superficial and substanceless signifiers such as clothes, makeup, hair style, and even occupation” (Hardin 2014: 79). Accordingly, at the end of this enculturation process, the individual is expected to behave in accordance with socially-sanctioned roles. The piece of clothing one is clad in displays one’s identity and signals socially assigned roles. People use clothes to assert their selves as socially and culturally adapted and acceptable individuals of the society. In the chaotic world of the play, the rigid categorisation of the clothing is also challenged. The sexual identities of the characters are recognised only by looking at the clothes they are wearing and clothing contributes to the complications as regards sexual identity in the play. Throughout the play, the exchanging of clothes and the multiplicity of disguises are dominant drives of the plot and the ensuing complications.

The whole process leading to a quandary is initiated by a change of clothes: when Mrs Prentice puts on Geraldine’s dress, Dr Prentice’s struggle to make everybody wear his or her own clothes in order to put things right. The idea is echoed in Nick’s words: “If we changed clothes, sir, we could get things back to normal” (*WTBS* 418). Similarly, when sexual identity confusions get further complicated, it becomes so absurd and fun that Dr Rance orders everyone to take off their clothes so that he will be able to determine their sex: “Take your trousers down. I’ll tell you which sex you belong to” (*WTBS* 413). While normally functioning as a categoriser of sexual identity, clothing fails to fulfil this function in the play. Contrarily, it complicates the plot and misleads the perception of the characters. Clothes no longer seem to have quite the same semantic significance. Correspondingly, every meaning seems to be falling apart, which resonates until the very end.

In addition to being a marker of sexual identity, clothing becomes a medium of authority and power. In clothing symbolism, the white apron and the white straitjacket are two essential representations of meaning with respect to power relations: the oppressor and the oppressed. Both of these items of clothing are made of a piece of white fabric but convey oppositional meanings. A white apron operates as a tool in exercising one's authority upon others when putting them into straitjacket. Putting someone into a straitjacket involves taking control of them by restricting and constricting any movement. As a result of the rigidity of categorisation, the meaning associated with particular cloth rests in the connotations placed upon it. In the play, the straitjacket method implies a sense of the old-fashioned and morbid. It has historically negative connotations as a means of torture. Imposing a straitjacket on someone is an indicator of power. The discourse of authority, adopted first by Dr Prentice and then mainly by Dr Rance in the rest of the play, is a form of verbal violence, imposing power upon other people. Dr Prentice first dictates to Geraldine that a secretary does not ask many questions, she can only be questioned: "Never ask questions. That is the first lesson a secretary must learn" (WTBS 366).

Even at the finale of the play, the last words (which are said by Dr Rance in the Richardson version) are "Let us put our clothes on and face the world" (WTBS 448). John Lahr draws attention to the role of clothes as 'social disguise' and argues:

Soon, the clothes will impose on each of them a style and sexual role which farce, as a celebration of formlessness, momentarily breaks down. Clothes are part of the magical invulnerability they all seek, extensions of the psychic armour they will adopt to keep their cravings and confusions hidden from the public and themselves. This yearning to transcend the body and its demands is as brutalizing as it is profound. And the final stage picture makes this contradiction brilliantly clear: 'They pick up their clothes and weary, bleeding, drugged and drunk, climb the rope ladder into the blazing light' (1987: 330).

In this liminal space of psychiatry, the characters that were empowered to transgress the social boundaries and rules, now have to revert to the proper appearances of society again.

Due to this loss of meaning, everything is confused and the social order is seriously disturbed, which brings about an endless chain of complications throughout the play. As Charney claims “all literal meanings and truths disappear and everything means something else” (1984: 104). From beginning to end, the play is governed by a breakdown of established meanings and identities, mistaken identities, sexual innuendos, rush of action, failures of communication, misleading cross-dressing scenes, and sexual identity confusions, all of which lead to complete anarchy, with a plot that is hard to trace. In this celebration of “formlessness”, “the sustaining myths of human rationality, dignity and integrity are seen as illusory” (Biggsby 1982: 33, 45) As a result of the prevalent disorder in the course of the play, values are being destabilised and the integrity of the social rules, as well as the personal veracity of the characters, steadily dissolves.

In Act II, the events get even more complicated. Act II begins with the arrest of Geraldine who is disguised as Nick and she begins to recount what has happened from the very beginning. However, since she is disguised as Nick, there appears to be a homosexual relationship between her and Dr Prentice. In order to undermine this claim, Dr Prentice refers to her as ‘she’, resulting in another complication: “What this young woman claims is a tissue of lies” while Match dismisses his claim “This is a boy, sir. Not a girl” (WTBS 408). To solve this identity crisis, Dr Rance comes up with a solution: they should take off their pants so that he can tell what their sexes are. Upon that, Geraldine cries that she is a girl. This confirms Dr Rance’s diagnosis: “He wishes to believe he’s a girl in order to minimize the feelings of guilt after homosexual intercourse” (WTBS 414). In order to solve the problems, another exchange of clothes takes place. The Sergeant is given an overdose of antidepressants and faints. Nick puts on his uniform and they dress

up the unconscious Sergeant in a leopard-skin dress. In that way, Nick disguised as the policeman will arrest Nick (himself), who is now Geraldine.

As events develop, on being persuaded that Dr Prentice is mad, Nick and Mrs Prentice also help Dr Rance catch and put Dr Prentice in a strait-jacket. When Dr Prentice asks Geraldine for another exchange of clothes to put everything into order, Geraldine goes crazy and hurls herself from the window of the room. The Sergeant meanwhile is stumbling around under the effect of the tranquillizer. Mrs Prentice, for Dr Rance, is stark crazy; she believes that she is seeing naked men everywhere. In that turmoil, guns are fired and Nick is shot in the arm and the Sergeant in the leg. People are running around with guns or in strait-jackets, with continuous entrances and exits, and a lot of whisky being consumed, sanity and insanity blended to contribute to the chaos.

Towards the end of the play, the identity confusions get more complicated with reality and fiction merging (WTBS 439-440). Although Dr Rance himself sees Nick, he denies Nick's existence, asserting that he is just a figment of Mrs Prentice's imagination – one of the naked men she hallucinates. Dr Rance makes his diagnosis: Nick is a hallucination, Mrs Prentice is mad, Dr Prentice is mad, Geraldine, who is was in fact committed, is also mad. Similar to the description August Strindberg wrote in the prefatory note to his *Dream Play* (1901), the characters in *What the Butler Saw*, “are split, double and multiply; they evaporate, crystallise, scatter and converge” (1955: 193).

As already stated, as a result of this disintegration the Symbolic falls apart and it becomes un-quilted. With the absence of the ‘anchoring point’ or the phallus, *What the Butler Saw* mainly operates between the Imaginary and the Symbolic registers and epitomises the failure to adapt to the domain of language. To be precise, the Imaginary partially erupts back into the Symbolic. Detached from the external world, and with the leadership of Dr Rance, the characters attempt to communicate and solve their problems in this increasingly chaotic world.

This in-between space of the play, governed by chaos and the hectic tempo of the action, might be regarded as a threshold where the struggle will proceed to reject the established standards of norms and gender to generate new alternative discourses to the established one. In Orton's celebration of sexuality, "polymorphous perversity liberates a tremendous charge of sexual energy" (Charney 1984: 24). Due to explosions of erotic desire through mistaken sexual identities and sexual preferences, sexual energies are released; many sexual concepts are opened to debate: transvestism, nymphomania, lesbianism, incest, pederasty, necrophilia, hermaphroditism, and homosexuality. Both as "an agent of liberation" and an agent of "aggression [...] [and] subversion", sexuality is a strategy for Orton to attack the hypocrisy of middle class morality and prudishness (Smith 1989: 130). His anarchic assault on the order aims to defy the prescribed norms of behaviour and to challenge authority as, in his own words: "Sex [...] is the only way to infuriate them. Much more fucking and they'll be screaming hysterics in next to no time" (qtd. in Lahr 1981: 8).

The established order and all its quilting points are unravelling and becoming un-quilted. The loss of Churchill's phallus seems to embody, even cause, that loss. All this confusion is designed for producing a new alternative discourse, but there is no new meaning to replace the old. The characters yearn to become speaking subjects of society, but then they have to recognise the existing established values to secure a stable position if they have nothing to replace them. The biggest question is posed here: a new discourse is possible but exactly how will this new discourse be produced? It could be argued that the play raises questions regarding the energies that are released by this collapse: Orton clearly celebrates their ability to bring about collapse to some extent but questions whether they could enable a new discourse, a new symbolic order, to be generated.

In the play, the discourse of the big Other is assumed by the others within the system and they attempt to construct it through their imitation of authority. Among them,

Dr Rance – the representation of the big Other – is the most favoured and privileged since his power derives from the authority given by “Her Majesty’s Government” (WTBS 376). Dr Rance is the representative of the Symbolic and the big Other, both in the world of the Establishment and that of psychiatry. He is aware of his position as the superior of the others and manipulates this power. Dr Rance’s completely power-crazed behaviour is both the cause and effect of this disintegration. He no longer feels any need to keep the Symbolic quilted and abuses his power in all kinds of arbitrary ways. Claiming that “my brief is infinite”, he takes on the role of law-giver, rule-maker, and regime-founder (WTBS 376). But his behaviour reveals the illogical, irrational underside of the field of psychiatry, or rather the side that follows the logic of power, even perhaps of the id. His diagnoses determine the truth, and he draws the line between what is normal and what is abnormal. He certifies people mad and puts them into straitjackets, makes up completely nonsensical stories to fit into a thesis he is writing for financial profit and even on one occasion denies the existence of a flesh and blood character (Nick). The phallus or power that he assumes guarantees this authority. However, significantly Dr Rance himself fails to recognise the Law of the Father; being already aware of his power, he actually manipulates it for his own personal interests, building his assumptions on misrecognitions. Ironically, he is the governmental man who has come to investigate the running of the asylum, but he is the real troublemaker who mainly contributes to the dissolution of order.

In this sense, another interpretation may also be relevant. It could be argued that Dr Rance acts like the primordial father, who assumes power but fails to recognise his inferior position in power relations. Lacan does not place a lot of emphasis on the primordial father, but borrows the term from Freud. The mythical story of ‘the primordial

father' or 'the primal father' is explained in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*.¹⁴⁶ In the myth, the father has sons who disobey him, his authority is, thus, not acknowledged by the sons. So, it is the father who is not located in the Symbolic register. The primordial father feels that he is entitled to enjoy all liberties and to do whatever he wants. He symbolises the Law of the Father but he actually resists order. His authority becomes acknowledged only after he is murdered by one of the sons. That is, only after he becomes an absent figure is his authority acknowledged.

As the very embodiment of the government, Dr Rance assumes the role of authority and attempts to integrate the other characters into the commands of the symbolic register and language. Yet ironically, he also fails to recognise that he is also trapped in that world and functions as the primordial father. Dr Rance himself does not accept the *Name of the Father* and does not play the role of the socialising agent for the others in accordance with the social Law.

It is an interesting question to ask whether Doctor Rance is a primordial father figure who is himself stuck in the Imaginary or a hypocritical figure of the Establishment who is deliberately abusing his power for his own interest. The latter claim in fact seems to better reflect the position of Dr Rance. Although Dr Rance is the embodiment of the established order of Churchill's England, his words happen to be contradictory and paradoxical in many ways. Dr Rance, who best represents the old Establishment, is also the man who undermines it most. It is actually the representative of the Establishment,

¹⁴⁶ "If we call the celebration of the totem meal to our help, we shall be able to find an answer. One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. United, they had the courage to do and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them individually. (Some cultural advance, perhaps, command over some new weapon, had given them a sense of superior strength). Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him. The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind's earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things—of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion" (Freud 2001: 163-4).

the internal 'logic' (or illogic) of the symbolic order, that causes its collapse, not (or not only) revolutionary forces from outside. This is best reflected in the characterisation of Dr Rance as the most irrational and chaotic in the play, who undermines the order that he represents. Coming for a governmental inspection, Dr Rance takes advantage of the situation and embarks on a narrative of the events, relying on a number of misrecognitions. He is not inspecting the hospital to review its administration but is searching for seemingly scandalous material that will form the basis of his thesis and consequent prospective financial gain.

Rance: (to Dr Prentice). I shall take charge of this case. It appears to have the bizarre quality that makes for a fascinating thesis (WTBS 378-9).

From then on, he bases his theory on his hypothetical evaluation of the events, even forcing them to fit into his scandalous framework.

As already stated above, Dr Rance, who has come from the external world in the name of Her Majesty and is given infinite authority, occupies the superior position in the power relations. As a critique of the established order, Dr Rance is revealed to be completely hypocritical. The representative of the big Other no longer believes in his role of maintaining order. It is all too clearly a pretence, from which he benefits. It is also a case of over-identification because he thinks that he is upholding the order, because he thinks he is the order, rather than only its representative.

At the beginning of the play, Dr Prentice is in the position of the authority. He is in a sense a representative of the big Other. With the arrival of Dr Rance, who occupies the superior position in power relations, there is a hegemonic struggle between the two representatives of the Establishment and of psychiatry. In many ways, it seems to be equivalent to a primordial struggle between son and father. This seems so obviously Freudian and yet inverted. The conflict between the two authority figures of psychiatry is more apparent when Dr Rance certifies his colleague Dr Prentice insane, charging him

with many things, including homosexuality, a fondness for women's clothes, and necrophilia. One conversation between Dr Rance and Dr Prentice signals a significant point in the play. The scene occurs when Dr Prentice's is charged with homosexuality:

Prentice: Unnatural vice can ruin a man.

Rance: Ruin follows the accusation not the vice. Had you committed the act you wouldn't now be facing the charge.

Prentice: I couldn't commit the act. I'm a heterosexual.

Rance: I wish you wouldn't use these Chaucerian words. It's most confusing (WTBS 411).

Dr Rance defines the patriarchy and the norms it brings as "Chaucerian", that is to say, obsolete. The irony lies in the fact that Dr Rance acknowledges that society has changed in the country, but at the same time he clumsily tries to protect the old values. Remarkably, he undermines his position in relation to the old order of values. Although they struggle to adhere to the old values, social and cultural changes are making inroads into minds. In Maurice Charney's words, "The sexual anarchy of *What the Butler Saw* frees the characters from both dogmatism and literalising" (1984: 25). As previously mentioned, generally accepted values and the rigid categorisation of gender and sexuality are called into question here. Moreover, "Orton's satire on heterosexuality is also an attack on English gentility and the complacent celebration of middle-class respectability" (Charney 1984: 26). Destabilising this pseudo compliance, he celebrates the release of sexual energies. Very ironically, as the very embodiment of authority who labels the characters with stereotypical clichés through theory-ridden lunacy, Dr Rance seems to attack this sexual categorisation as a kind of bigotry. This contradiction is ironic: it is Dr Rance who calls into question all the socially-stigmatised dichotomies and binary oppositions (normal/abnormal, right/wrong), even though it is for a scandalous best-seller. So, something more complex than just an Establishment figure wielding power is happening.

In contrast with Dr Rance, Geraldine appears as almost a farcical embodiment of powerlessness. She is portrayed as the character in the weakest position since she does

not have a powerful place within state mechanisms, being a woman, an orphan, unemployed, young, and inexperienced in life. In the course of the play, she is seduced, put in a straitjacket, given sedatives, shaved, certified mad, undressed, cross-dressed, and wounded. While Dr Rance is questioning her as to whether she was molested by her own father in the past, she rejects the claim, screaming “No, no, no!” (*WTBS* 382). However, to Dr Rance, “the vehemence of her denials is proof positive of guilt” (*WTBS* 382). No matter how insistent Geraldine is on being recognised in the gaze of others, her voice and words go unrecognised because they only have meaning in accordance with their relation to authority. Whatever she says counts for nothing in the face of Dr Rance’s constructed story about her. According to Dr Rance, her cries just reinforce how righteous his claims are. Unavoidably, she yields to Dr Rance’s truth, constituted by power. Yet, as Rusinko argues, Geraldine’s “off-setting innocent acquiescence is Orton’s comic means of devictimising her, thus detaching the audience emotionally” (1995: 102). In other words, her naivety blocks any identification with her on behalf of audience. Dr Rance goes even further and attempts to define the whole of feminine psychology in a comically reductionist way: “Dr Rance (to Dr Prentice). She may mean ‘Yes’ when she says ‘No’. It’s elementary feminine psychology” (*WTBS* 382). From a patriarchal discourse, he analyses feminine psychology and rushes to shallow and superficial conclusions. Whatever the powerful says, while speaking or writing or showing, it is acceptable. Reality is established through the discourse of the powerful.

Towards the finale of the play, Dr Rance pushes the alarm button and suddenly they are all entrapped, since all the doors are now secured with iron bars. Since they are trapped, and with a gun directed at him, Dr Prentice begins to reveal what has happened from the very beginning, resulting in a very interesting discovery. By means of the technique -recognition by token - the holders of two halves of a brooch happen to be brother and sister: Nick and Geraldine. It is also revealed that they are the twins to whom

Mrs Prentice gave birth as a result of a sexual assault when she was a chambermaid at the Station Hotel. It was during a power-cut so she could not identify the man who gave this brooch to her as a gift. Surprisingly, the man is none other than Dr Prentice. So, it is a kind of family union. This makes Dr Rance the happiest since this incidence of double incest (Dr Prentice's seduction of Geraldine, Nick's sexual assault on Mrs Prentice) heralds his book a bestseller.

When all the characters are trapped on stage, the window at the top is opened and Match, clad in a leopard-skin dress, descends a rope ladder, bleeding. He is looking for the missing parts of the Churchill statue, which is "a matter of vital importance to this country" (WTBS 447). He questions Geraldine, whom he describes as "the only living descendant of a woman violated by the hero of 1940", suggesting that Winston Churchill is a rapist (WTBS 447). Geraldine says that the last person who saw the deceased Mrs Barclay is the undertaker who handed the box to Geraldine at the beginning of the play. Match opens the box and "gives a sigh": "The Great Man can once more take up his place in the High Street as an example to us all of the spirit that won the Battle of Britain" (WTBS 447). The implication is that the missing part of utmost importance for Britain is there in the box. The holograph version continues as follows:

Sergeant Match takes from the box and holds up a section from a larger than life-sized bronze statue. Deep intakes of breath from everyone.

Rance (*with admiration*). How much more inspiring if, in those dark days, we'd seen what we see now. Instead we had to be content with a cigar – the symbol falling far short, as we all realize, of the object itself (WTBS 447-8).

In Richardson's revised version, the ending runs as follows:

Rance looks inside the box.

Rance (*with admiration*): How much more inspiring if, in those dark days, we'd seen what we see now. Instead we had to be content with a cigar – the symbol falling far short, as we all realize, of the object itself.

Geraldine looks inside the box.

Geraldine: But it is a cigar!

Rance: Ah, the illusions of youth!

Sergeant Match loudly shuts the lid of the box and tucks it under his arm (WTBS 448).

The two different endings of the play clearly take two different approaches to the question of the symbol “falling far short” (*WTBS* 447). In one – the holograph version – the piece is clearly Churchill’s penis ritualistically held aloft; in the other – Richardson version – the expectation shaped throughout the play is that they are talking about the penis, but Geraldine (and it is interesting, as we shall see, that it is Geraldine) looks into the box and says “it is a cigar” rather than a penis.

In relation to Richardson’s substitution of the cigar for the penis, the question of whether he censored the play is complex: it could be that Richardson intended to alleviate the critical reception of the play, or perhaps keep its scandalous content in a comparatively safe zone, or maybe he did not want to reduce or diminish the play’s satirical effect, but just ensure it was performed; in any event, this change opens the text to new interpretations. For John Lahr, the apparent substitution of the cigar for the penis is an intervention which reduces the anarchic effect of the play, since he believes that the penis in the holograph version appears from the box as a “symbol of fertility” (1987: 329).

Within Lacanian theoretical framework, the symbolically castrated penis in the play, as Michael Beehler has noted, “acts much more like Lacan’s symbolic phallus”, which is the anchoring point that stabilises the floating signifiers and so represents promises to restore order (1982: 96). The phallus takes on a symbolic role as the guarantor of meaning, bearing such connotations in itself as “power, fascination, instituting authority, terror, power to castrate” (Silverstein 1993: 89). In the second case, the penis in Winston Churchill’s statue has been replaced by another phallic object – a cigar. The phallic symbol is an image particularly in the shape of an erect penis which is suggestive of male potency, masculinity, and power.¹⁴⁷ Among many other common phallic

¹⁴⁷ As “a fecundating force, which swells to bursting with its promise of pleasure and fertility”, the penis is mostly associated with positive connotations and the significance of the phallus as a symbol goes back to mythological sources (Charney 1990: 29). For instance, Priapus, (usually supposed to be the son of Dionysus and Aphrodite), – the ancient Greek god of fertility, sexuality, virility – is marked by his huge and permanently erect penis and is generally depicted as a small man with this disproportionately huge sexual organ. This enormous phallus symbolises fertility and generation (March 2001: 662). He is also

symbols, such as sticks, knives, umbrellas, aeroplanes, and guns, one also finds the cigar (Rycroft 1995: 180).

Accordingly, Winston Churchill's [cigar/penis]¹⁴⁸ is analogous to the phallus and stands out as the master signifier in a symbolic way which guarantees the meaning of every other signifier. As Rosalind Minsky maintains, "[t]he phallus becomes the first, 'pilot-boat', signifier which leads the way to our understanding of all other cultural meanings" (1998: 69). For a better understanding of the function and centrality the master signifier bears, it would be useful to revert to Lacan's '*point de capiton*' or 'quilting' metaphor/analogy. The phallus, as the first signifier that precipitates the individual into the domain of language – the symbolic register – holds the ground, sustaining the whole system. That is to say, by means of its "quilting" function, it offers an anchoring point. Just like the buttons on a quilt or upholstery which hold it in its proper place, the privileged master signifier guarantees the rest of the system by enabling other signifiers to remain where they are positioned. In this regard, by the removal of the cigar, Winston Churchill the symbolic father, is castrated and the power, strength, and potency he embodies is destabilised. Deprived of this figure which holds the ground, order is progressively disintegrating, as is reflected in the play. In doing so, the purpose is to direct attention to the fact that there is value in this revised version, it is also interesting and should not be dismissed.

Lahr also points to another intrusion in the play. In the holograph version, the last order in the play is given by Dr Prentice: 'Let us put our clothes on and face the world' (WTBS 448). In the Richardson version, these lines are spoken by Dr Rance. Lahr argues that the symmetry of Orton's play necessitates "the play's last command" being "given

known as the protector deity of grains and vegetables, since his "essential attribute was the ability to ward off the 'evil eye' and to render harmless the evil spells of people attempting to damage the harvest" (Grimal 1990: 373).

¹⁴⁸ I am intentionally using this expression 'cigar/penis' as I will mainly focus on the revised version to argue that the cigar is analogous to the Lacanian phallus and to underscore that the ambiguous ending of the revised version opens the text to various interpretations.

by Prentice, the man who is responsible for getting the characters undressed” (Lahr 1987:330). But the change imposed on the play

spoils the symmetry of Orton’s farce. Having brought one cover-up to a close, Prentice initiates another by getting Sergeant Match to agree to keep the ‘remarkable peccadilloes’ out of the paper. ‘I’m glad you don’t despise tradition’, Prentice tells Match. Prentice has learned no moral lesson. Life is returned to ‘normal’, and the cycle of social hypocrisy begins again” (Lahr 1987:330).

In the holograph version, where the penis is explicitly displayed on stage, it is significant to note that there is no stage direction confirming this. The word penis does not feature anywhere, either in the performance or in the text of the play. Thus, a director might still claim the freedom to interpret the scene differently. Even just before the penis is held aloft, the stage directions tend to euphemise: “*Sergeant Match takes from the box and holds up a section from a larger than life-sized bronze statue*” (WTBS 447). The identity of the object even then is euphemistically unidentified in the text until Match openly holds it. One should keep in mind that the play is put on stage as a live performance, in direct interaction with the audience; so the effect of the play on the audience goes beyond the written text. For instance, the penis is held aloft and manifestly shown on stage from 09.04 onwards for a few seconds in the *BBC FOUR* broadcast of *What the Butler Saw* (6/6) directed by Barry Davis on 24 May 1987. Although the word penis does not come from the players’ mouths, it is displayed, and it is obviously the penis.

Its ritualistic appearance from the box is accompanied by “*deep intakes of breath from everyone*” (WTBS 447). Both the characters within the play and the audience openly see what the lost part is, without ambiguity. Even after this explicit representation, Dr Rance says “Instead we had to be content with a cigar – the symbol falling far short, as we all realize, of the object” (WTBS 447). It is still “the object”, it is not openly articulated. Then the characters make an agreement that nothing that has happened on that day will be publicised. Orton puts his bitter satirical tone into the finishing sentences

of the play: upon that agreement between Dr Prentice and Match, Dr Rance ironically says “I’m glad you don’t despise tradition. Let us put our clothes on and face the world” (WTBS 448). The figures of the established order are unanimous on behalf of their benefits.

In the revised version, after Match delivers his complimentary words of admiration about Sir Winston Churchill, underscoring the fact that he is the man who “won the Battle of Britain” (WTBS 448), he does not take the piece out of the box or openly show it. Instead, the audience get two different accounts of what is there in the box. Firstly, Dr Rance looks inside the box and he seems to be satisfied with what he has seen, suggesting that it is a penis. However, Geraldine’s claim “But it is a cigar!” seemingly contradicts Dr Rance (WTBS 448). Dr Rance immediately dismisses Geraldine’s interpretation saying “Ah, the illusions of youth!” (WTBS 448). This is a crucial point as the piece, which is kept unidentified during the course of the play, is never revealed to the audience. Through this ambiguity the audience is also incorporated into the conversation. They do not see for themselves what is in the box, but have to rely on the different accounts of the characters. They have to choose whom to believe.

Surprisingly, the character who is the embodiment of order seems to mistake the cigar for the penis, while the character in the weakest position, Geraldine, claims that it is a cigar. Dr Rance, saying “the illusions of youth”, immediately tries to dismiss her claim (WTBS 448). These two different claims in relation to the “*section from a larger than life-sized bronze statue*” (WTBS 447) put us in a peculiar situation. Throughout the play, Dr Rance uses language as a means to dominate other characters from a privileged position of authority. As the authority figure, appointed by the monarch, Dr Rance is “the inquiring and fault-finding eye to whom everyone looks for confirmation” and each character “is reduced by his engulfing presence to the terrible status of nonentity” (Lahr 1987: 317). Thus, the character who has supported his hypotheses by manipulating almost

every single piece of information, now seems to be challenged. Geraldine, who has been subordinated to and silenced by Dr Rance's authoritarian discourse throughout the course of the play, having given a true account of events but been continually dismissed, seems to correct Dr Rance's statement at the end.

One might assume and argue that Dr Rance is lying, while Geraldine seems to be telling the truth. It gives the impression that Dr Rance, who has abused his superior social position to manipulate the characters and events to gain private profit, is once more looking for the restoration of the penis to its place which will guarantee the old established order. His false decisions and diagnoses are not based on dramatic irony but on his intentional manipulation, since he dismisses the things that do not serve his aim and embellishes those for his made-up story. Significantly, in doing so, Dr Rance, the very embodiment of the established order, himself undermines the accepted social norms of the society. Thus, he does not give the impression of a reliable narrator. Yet, the audience, who have to rely on their interpretations, cannot be sure who is right. The piece is not taken out of the box, which heightens the sense of curiosity and desire to learn or know more about what is there. In the holograph version, the object is held up and displayed, leaving no room for ambiguity. While the ending remains unsatisfactory in the Richardson version, there is ambiguity which leads to more questions. The audience have both Dr Rance's interpretation and Geraldine's declaration, which Dr Rance attempts to dismiss, so are confused by the different messages. So it is and is not a penis and a cigar.

Then, Sergeant Match, another authority figure as the embodiment of the police force, shuts the lid of the box, shutting off interpretation; yet this act in itself becomes subject to interpretation. Ultimately, unlike John Lahr's claim that the substitution of the cigar for the penis diminishes the anarchic effect of the play, it paradoxically opens up the play to polyvalent interpretations. The play with its substitution and two different endings offers a narrative that renders meaning more playful, humorous, and potent on

multiple readings, propounding a playful relationship between the holograph version and the Richardson version. Remarkably, this substitution proves to be counter-productive in its exposition of the matter: the unshakable image of the idolised national hero Winston Churchill is contested and ridiculed. As Hannah Arendt writes of the power of laughter in the face of authority: “The greatest enemy of authority, therefore, is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter” (1969: 45). Through his farcical comedy, Orton ridicules the authority of the national hero Winston Churchill, mocks the authority of the psychiatrists, challenges the Establishment, and criticises all standards of the moral behaviour of the middle class bourgeois.

James C. Scott asserts, “Subordinate groups must find ways of getting their message across, while staying somehow within the law. This requires an experimental spirit and a capacity to test and exploit all the loopholes, ambiguities, silences, and lapses available to them” (1990: 138). Accordingly, Sir Ralph Richardson, a very distinguished and experienced actor who knew his audience very well, might have wanted to be in this play but also wanted to either avoid or keep the scandalous reaction, so left the ending of the play ambiguous. The audience is left with a question ‘What is in the box?’ It forces the audiences to make up their own minds and the ending therefore depends on the choice they make. Because the audience is tasked to decide on the ending, so they have a bigger part in the construction of meaning. In this regard, Sir Ralph Richardson is both teasing the audience and staying within the law.

A reading of the euphemistic undertone of the play may be relevant here in discussing the two different endings. The intervention at the end of the play does not undermine the euphemistically-woven implications throughout the play. A great deal of British humour, especially dramatic humour, particularly in the 1960s, is based on euphemism. In the play, the apparent substitution of the cigar for the penis shows a playful appropriacy of euphemistic expression. Euphemism is, in its basic definition, the

substitution of a softened, mild, pleasant, agreeable expression or form for one that might seem offensive, vulgar, objectionable, or disagreeable. As a phenomenon, it has found itself widely used in the language of the twentieth century writings, including that of sociologists, educationists and bureaucrats, in radio and television and the media in general. “So widespread is it and so insidious its influence that it frequently becomes a form of Newspeak” (Cuddon 1998: 292).

In the play, the reader obviously assumes that the missing part is the penis of the statue of the great leader and it is confirmed that it is the penis when it is held aloft on stage at the end of the Orton’s manuscript. All sexual implications concerning the piece in the course of the action serve to reinforce that impression. At the start of the play, Geraldine explains how her step-mother was killed in “an explosion, due to a faulty gas-main” (*WTBS* 365). Ironically, the cause of her death is not the gas explosion directly but a severed piece of “a recently erected statue of Sir Winston Churchill”, which was also badly damaged, or “injured”, in the accident (*WTBS* 365). The sexual innuendo of “recently erected” is playfully strengthened by the euphemism in Geraldine’s following lines: “Parts of the great man were actually found embedded in my step-mother” (*WTBS* 365). Churchill’s penis-like fragment kills Mrs Barclay by entering her body. Symbolically, the patriarchal/parental figure rapes and murders her. Such a huge national significance is attributed to this lost piece that the grave of Mrs Barclay is opened to see whether the corpse was buried with the piece stuck in it:

This morning the coffin was opened in the presence of the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of this borough. Fainting women were held back as the official in charge searched high and low for council property. His efforts were no crowned with success. Mrs Barclay had taken nothing with her to the grave except those things which she ought to have done. At noon today the matter came to the attention of the police (*WTBS* 402).

Instead of explicit reference to the part lost, there are ambiguous allusions to it which are euphemistically suggestive of the penis.¹⁴⁹ Orton employs euphemistic language throughout the play, implying that it is the penis through sexual innuendo but never naming it.

After the family reunion, towards the very end of the play, Match asks about the missing part which is of “vital importance to this country”: “Will someone produce or cause to be produced the missing parts of Sir Winston Churchill?” (WTBS 447). In the holograph version, the larger than life-size penis of Churchill is held aloft, to be restored to its proper place. It might be argued that at the end of Orton’s manuscript, he wants to strip away euphemism and in an anarchic climax reveal the penis as it is, while the Richardson version retains the euphemism until the end, leaving it still ambiguous. What is striking about this intervention in the play is that, by drawing upon the absence, the not-said, the not-displayed, the emphasis shifts instead to multiple interpretations. It could be argued that the ambiguous ending makes the play a “writerly text”.¹⁵⁰ The audience have to draw their own conclusions.

Having asserted that the revised version opens the text to new interpretations, it is appropriate now to explain why I avoid using the expression ‘the bowdlerised version’. ‘Bowdlerisation’ is a disapproving and pejorative term for the practice of expurgating or censoring the parts of a text considered to be offensive, vulgar or lewd (Baldick 2001: 29). The term ‘bowdlerisation’ derives from Thomas Bowdler (1754-1825), known for his ‘cleansing’ of Shakespeare’s plays for family use. He published the first edition of *The Family Shakespeare* in 1818 “in which nothing is added to the original text, but those

¹⁴⁹ Besides euphemistic implications of penis, there are other examples of euphemism. Among many examples of wordplay, sexual innuendo, pun, self-consciously mischievous double entendre, “sexual euphemisms of British popular speech like ‘service’ (p.390,445), ‘disturb’ (p.396), ‘interfere’ (p.408), [...] ‘misbehave’ (p.443) [...] [and] Mrs Prentice is said to be ‘harder to get into than the reading room at British Museum’ (p.396)” are observed in the play (Charney 1984: 103).

¹⁵⁰ The term is borrowed from Roland Barthes’s work *S/Z*, in which he prioritises ‘writerly text’ over ‘readerly text’ in the sense that the reader is no longer a passive receiver of information but an active participant in the meaning-making process, which then becomes interactive.

words or expressions are omitted which cannot with propriety be read aloud in a family” (Bowdler 2009: front page). He cleansed the plays and removed any part “unfit to be read by a gentleman in the company of ladies” (Abrams 1999: 26).¹⁵¹ One could therefore argue that ‘bowdlerised’ might be appropriate for the first performed version of *What the Butler Saw*, precisely because Richardson is taking out the penis and making the play more family-friendly. This euphemistic substitution could be read as a purgation of unfit material so as not to offend the middle-class bourgeoisie. In that sense, it is a bowdlerisation. However, as this chapter argues, if there is some value in the Richardson’s version, the holograph manuscript and the Richardson version would fit better.

The substantial problem regarding the position of the missing and damaged fathers is only resolved with the restoration of the phallus to its proper place on a public level: firstly, the family is reunited and, thus, the recurring question of the father is resolved on a personal level but, farcically, in a manner impossible to take seriously. It is problematic and disturbing since the family is reunited after incestuous liaisons. Similarly, with the return of the missing part, the statue of Winston Churchill is completed and public order is arguably restored.

In Lacanian terminology, the anchoring point is back in its proper place although the serious challenge the established order has been confronted with suggests its instability. Significantly, the established order is called into question by the revolutionary approaches, and more importantly its own internal dynamics and logic (or illogicality) have also brought about the collapse of the order. As Maurice Charney puts it, “The

¹⁵¹Furthermore, “Many oaths and sexually suggestive speeches were cut, and even entire characters like Doll Tearsheet in *Henry IV, Part One*” (Baldick 2001: 30). He similarly edited Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* which was posthumously published. Other editors, for example A. W. Verity, when producing school editions of Shakespeare, cut out passages which they regarded as indecent (Cuddon 1998: 95).

ending is wonderfully satisfying, but ironic. Can the power of Winston Churchill's phallus, waved triumphantly over the celebrants, bring eternal happiness?" (1984: 106). Metaphorically, the authority of the national hero is called into question, being deprived of authority, power, and competence, as a reflection of the 1960s – a decade marked by the rejection of authority. No matter how the missing part of the statue is put into its proper place, authority has been strongly confronted and subverted. 'The national heritage' is returned at the expense of serious turmoil in social and cultural life and a number of questions that arise in relation to the unsatisfactory reconciliation among the representatives of the state power. In the end, only through the farcical intervention of "the big Other", which seemingly completes the scattered pieces of the statue as well as meaning, reconciliation is arguably established and the pervading chaos comes to an end.

CHAPTER II

ANTHONY NEILSON'S *THE CENSOR* (1997)

i. Context and Staging of *The Censor*

As the female director Miss Fontaine mischievously puts it, “A penis is not just a penis” (*The Censor* 260). Anthony Neilson’s provocative play *The Censor*, focalised through the Censor who seems to be trapped in a vicious circle, both in his failed marriage and in his basement office, signifies “a metaphor for looking closer” (Sierz 2001: 84). Castrated in his marriage as well as in his profession, the Censor sets out on an emotional and psychic quest for a ‘frank’ understanding of his repressed desires and sexuality through his encounters with Miss Fontaine, as his belatedly-given name implicates. In their meetings, the director Fontaine delves into his insecurities, weaknesses and past memories, which opens up multi-layered narrative levels in the play. In so doing, Anthony Neilson coyly plays upon the sensitive and contentious issues, by bringing the private and public together.

Just as with the penis from the controversial penultimate scene of *What the Butler Saw*, in which the gigantic penis of Winston Churchill’s statue is held aloft, similarly *The Censor* has come to be associated with the scandalous scene of defecation. The script includes masturbation, finger-fucking, public copulation as well as the use of the word “penis” fifteen times. In the case of *What the Butler Saw*, the scene involving the penis of Winston Churchill’s statue could only be openly staged six years after its eventful premiere at the Queen’s Theatre on 5 March 1969. For a play revolving around a missing body part, in Orton’s original manuscript, humorously, the word *penis* is not mentioned but just understood through implications and euphemistic expressions. In the case of *The Censor*, it is all there in the script and simulated on stage, although these acts are performed either behind the table or in the bathroom or under the protection of a wide

skirt. Thus, the play's affiliation with censorship takes on a new significance as it is challenging and testing the limits of theatrical representation.

The play opens with the voice over of the unnamed Censor contemplating the reasons for his rejection of Miss Fontaine's film, submitted to the Office for a licence. The Censor is a low-level governmental official of the Office, responsible for viewing and assessing submitted films to judge whether they should get a recommendation letter to be presented to his superiors. Upon Miss Fontaine's request for a recommendation on her film, a number of meetings (8 scenes) between the Censor and her take place in the Censor's basement office to discuss the film. Interspersed among these are scenes between the Censor and his wife, which take place in their kitchen and reveal their sexless, loveless and distant marital life and his wife's infidelity (6 scenes). The Censor and Miss Fontaine set out to discuss the film: the Censor's aim is to help her to transform the film, which he condemns as "hard-core and unpassable" porn, into an acceptable form, while Miss Fontaine struggles to persuade the Censor that this is not porn, but a love story: "this film is important" not only to her but "to the world" (*The Censor* 245, 255). As the plot unravels, it is understood that the film is about the Censor himself. The audience is invited to be alert to the different narrative levels unravelling simultaneously. Thus, through the scenes of Miss Fontaine's film and their dialogue over them, Miss Fontaine delves into the Censor's fears, insecurities and low self-esteem resulting from his childhood and parental background, resulting in his sexual paralysis.

Through actualising his sexual fantasy with Miss Fontaine (he achieves sexual arousal when he watches her defecating and they then have sexual intercourse), the Censor undergoes a significant transformation and he comes to understand the idea that love is an emotion and sex is one expression of it; more significantly, he appreciates the film as art and writes a recommendation report for the film to his superiors. Besides this, a kind of emotional bond is established between the Censor and his wife in the end.

Importantly, his name Frank is given for the first time at the end of the play when his fragmented speech and timid personality also partially disappear. Bizarrely, as if she was a figment of his imagination, he learns in the news that Fontaine has been beaten to death in a hotel room and thus she abruptly disappears, having fulfilled her function. The play closes with Frank smiling when he watches Fontaine's film in his Office alone. The ending of the play heralds a possibility that he has become more aware of his own internal conflicts and capable of addressing his own personal matters; yet the mysterious and abrupt murder and disappearance of Miss Fontaine overshadows this promising development, leaving it ambivalent and open-ended.

The play offers rich material to explore the relationship between public and private, between external censorship and inward self-censorship and repression. The Censor is an image of self-censorship but there is obviously a relationship between the external, regarding his profession, and the inward, his own psyche and drives. Moreover, the play reads as a political statement when the contextual framework in which it was produced is taken into consideration. The strength of this play resides in the fact that it connects the socio-political background and issues with the private level in the play.

Scottish playwright Anthony Neilson was born in Edinburgh the year Joe Orton was brutally murdered and one year before the institutionalised censorship of British theatre was officially abolished. The drama of the Swinging Sixties was giving way to the diverse alternative theatres of the 1970s Britain. The 1970s was a vigorous decade in Scottish theatre, particularly with the rise of alternative theatres and the domination of socialist playwrights (Broich 2001: 207). Considering the socio-political context, by Neilson's own account, "it was an exciting time: my parents were involved in Scottish theatre in the seventies, when 7:84 and Wildcat were taking off, and I've always wanted

to recapture the energy and urgency of that time” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 83).¹⁵² This tradition of alternative theatre was the very embodiment of the flourishing counter-culture movements and rising identity politics of the 1970s.

Significantly, at that time, Neilson, as the son of a theatre director and actor father Sandy Neilson¹⁵³ and an actress mother Beth Robens, was in his own words “a rehearsal-room baby” and had breathed the theatrical air since his childhood (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 65). This backstage experience in his childhood had two major influences on the young Neilson: firstly, “it fostered in him a pragmatic attitude to life in theatre” as he had first-hand knowledge of “the effect of bad reviews or flop shows or ‘dry periods’” and learnt that “theatre was a precarious and often unforgiving business”; and secondly, at a very early age, the playwright was introduced to a number of experimental works (Reid 2017: 3). Not surprisingly, when he came to the age of 19, the young Neilson attended the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff. Only one year later, he left this school as he “quickly found himself temperamentally unsuited to institutional life” (Reid 2017: 4). The playwright went back to Edinburgh and after a short while he came up with his first radio play *The Colours of the King’s Rose* (1988), which made an outstanding beginning for him. Finally, in 1991, his reputation as a playwright was established with his *Normal*, which was transferred to London theatres after a successful run at the Edinburgh Fringe.

¹⁵² The radical left-wing theatre company 7:84 was founded by John McGrath in 1973. Its name 7:84 refers to “a statistic in a 1966 edition of *The Economist*: 7 per cent of the population own 84 per cent of the wealth” (Megson 2012: 46). The plays of the 7:84 Theatre embodied “a determined rejection of metropolitan-centred, bourgeois and universal concepts of culture” (Holdsworth 2002: xvi). Kate Dorney and Frances Gray also underscore the same point, the child Neilson was brought up at a time “when theatre group 7.84 was making a major impact on Scottish theatre and the intimate spaces of fringe theatre are the natural home of his work” (2014: 170). In particular, 7:84’s production of *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* in 1973 came to be a milestone in the Scottish as well as British alternative theatre and “exemplify a particular brand of political theatre that combined serious intent with an accessible, populist and eclectic theatrical style” (Reid 2017: 3). Thus, it is clear that the Scottish fringe and experimental theatre greatly contributed to the development of the playwright’s individual style as well as to the new writing of the 1970s.

¹⁵³ Sandy Neilson later directed his son’s play *The Censor* at the Dundee Rep in 2002 and starred in another of his plays *Realism* at National Theatre of Scotland in 2006 (Bull 2011: 343).

In an interview with Dominic Cavendish on his understanding of theatrical representation, Neilson expressed his frustration at the contention that theatre appeals to cerebral rather than emotional and visceral feelings (2004). Having been profoundly affected, at the age of eleven, by the performance of Donald Campbell's *The Widows of Clyth* (1979), the playwright himself believes that theatregoing should be an emotional as well as a shocking, provocative and kicking experience (Sierz 2001: 65-6). In *The Guardian* in 1996, Neilson retrospectively wrote on this performance:

At the end of the first half, the character played by my mother was told her husband had died. She let out a scream of pain that left me chilled. Obviously it was doubly relevant to me because she was my mum. In my work, I think I'm always trying to re-create the emotional shadow of that moment. I've always thought to put personal connections into my stuff, my life and the lives of the actors involved – and not shy away from difficult emotional subjects. It was in the Traverse that night, in the pitch of my mother's scream, that I suddenly realized what theatre was about (qtd. in Reid 2017: 4).

In that sense, to him, confrontational theatre is, in effect, “equivalent to punk rock” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 66). The play should be seeking to break the conventional codes of theatregoing and to hit the sensitive nerves, to challenge normative moral and social values and those audience expectations taken for granted. For him, the visceral response of the audience has priority over the intellectual response, which is part of the habitualised theatregoing experience. He further maintains that “too many times you go to the theatre and you're thinking about the play as you're watching it – then when you leave you've got nothing to say about it. With this, I want people to experience something first and then talk about it afterwards” (Cavendish 2004). This is what, to him, “scrambles up the intellectual response” (Cavendish 2004).

The contention that theatre should be shocking, provocative, taboo-breaking, sexually explicit, intense, experimental as well as emotional placed Neilson alongside Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill under the In-Yer-Face theatre movement as “the most provocative new writers of the 1990s” (Sierz 2001: xii). This new brand of writing was

also differently described as ‘The Theatre of Blood and Sperm’ by the German theatre critic Ulrich Broich and as ‘New Brutalism’ by the Croatian theatre critic Sanja Nikčević (Reid 2017: 5). In-Yer-Face theatre, as Aleks Sierz defines it, is

any drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message [...] Unlike the type of the theatre that allows us to sit back and contemplate what we see in detachment, an emotional journey, getting under our skin. In other words, it is experiential, not speculative (2001: 4).

These playwrights are not seeking a conventional audience response but rather aiming to provoke, transgress, trouble, alarm, shock, and disturb them. They do not let the audience sit comfortably in their seat. To this end, these playwrights employ taboo-breaking subjects, violence, swear words and obscene language, and sexuality on the stage: it is meant to shock and unsettle the audience’s habitualised position and expectations in an auditorium. According to Trish Reid, Anthony Neilson’s “reputation as a provocateur was cemented with *The Censor*” (1997) alongside *Normal* (1991), *Penetrator* (1993) and *Stitching* (2002) in the tradition of In-Yer-Face theatre (2017: 5).

In-Yer-Face playwrights were mostly referred to as “Thatcher’s children” and the “brat pack” (Gilleman 2010: 77). Marked by Thatcherism – under the eleven-year administration of the Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher – the 1980s has been widely called as a crisis and a period of decline for theatrical activities due to the economic and political pressure on theatres at that time. As Ulrich Broich argues, Margaret Thatcher appreciated theatres “as a representative of English traditions but not as a critical institution” (2001: 207). Politically and economically, this attitude put pressure on left-wing alternative theatres of the 1970s. For instance, 7:84 England was closed down after suffering a £ 92,500 cutback in its state subsidy. Similarly, in the early 1980s, the Royal Shakespeare Company was forced to produce less new plays each year and the Royal National Theatre “had to close down the Cottesloe for a considerable time” (Broich 2001: 208). The Iron Lady also applied her (in)famous privatisation policies to

the theatre stage: apart from the new cultural policy of the Conservative government to resort to considerable cutbacks in state subsidies granted to theatres, or not to increase the subsidy enough to match the rate of inflation, it also promoted private sponsorship (Broich 2001: 208). During the 1980s, the tough policies of Thatcher toward theatres widely led theatre practitioners to opt for less contentious productions like well-made plays or musicals. While the 1970s were dominated by small-scale alternative theatre, the 1980s were dominated by large-scale theatre. It is significant to note that the smaller theatres were more negatively affected by this change in cultural policy, many being forced to close down.

Due to tough measures of Thatcherism, “British theatre limped into the 1990s bedevilled by cuts and outshone by blockbuster musicals” (Dorney and Gray 2014: 144). In the late 1990s, with the coming to power of the Labour Party under the leadership of Tony Blair, the image of London was rebranded as ‘Cool Britannia’, thanks particularly to the new work of established writers, as well as the work of the new writers. Theatres received considerable increases in the amount of state subsidy. In the late 1990s, the aggressive and provocative theatrical presentations of In-Yer-Face playwrights seemed to be a reaction against the social pressure of the 1980s and promotion of mainstream theatre and music halls as part of a cultural exportation at the expense of fringe, regional and counter-cultural theatres. As its subversive nature suggests, In-Yer-Face was a rebirth of the 1960s and a second Angry Young generation of the 1990s, ‘Cool Britannia’.¹⁵⁴ The cultural legacy of the 1960s was so readily available and recognizable in the works of these playwrights.

Anthony Neilson himself humorously put in his 2007 article to *the Guardian*, “As far as I can tell, In-Yer-Face was all about being horrid and writing about shit and

¹⁵⁴ For a contrasting interpretation, see Ken Urban’s “Cruel Britannia” where he refers to the “youth-based counter politics to the cynicism and opportunism of Cool Britannia”; and he further argues that the playwrights of the 1990s employed cruelty in their work “as a means of both reflecting and challenging the despair of contemporary urban life, shaped by global capitalism and cultural uniformity” (Urban 2008: 39).

buggery. I thought I was writing love stories”. In another interview, Caroline Smith asked the self-described “purveyor of filth” Neilson how he considers being labelled as a pioneering figure of In-Yer-Face, together with Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill, despite the formal and stylistic distinctions of their works (qtd. in Johnson 2010). In his answer, the playwright highlighted his commitment to experimental theatre and states: “It was a journalistic conceit to call it ‘In Yer Face’ [...] I don’t object to it because it was great marketing for me” (qtd. in Smith 2008). For him, the similarity between Sarah Kane and himself was their being “sentimental” and frustrated at “boring, navel-gazing shows”; however, he claims they recognizably differ: “I’ve tended to notice the extremities of life: the extreme brutality and the sweetness of it. Because of her condition she didn’t see much of the sweetness” (qtd. in Smith 2008).

Anthony Neilson’s plays “are all devised and written up on the hoof”, “like a tailor making a suit” (qtd. in Marmion 2002). Particularly in his later plays, he has resorted to a more workshopping technique and improvisation which constitutes a remarkable part of rehearsals. To Neilson, “When you work in this way, you find different ways of expressing them”, but he puts a caveat here and states, “So the actors’ influence is huge but not in a definable way. It’s not a democracy. I want to have a strong sense of authorship” (qtd. in Smith 2008). In his interview with Matt Trueman, he also states this way of workshopping enables him “to circumvent that inbuilt censorship” and “to think outside of my own box” (2013). At this point, Neilson hints at the censorship, authorship and authority triangle. This idea will be revisited in relation to the ambiguous ending of *The Censor* towards the end of this chapter.

When Neilson was a child, the post of the Lord Chamberlain had already been abolished with its authority passing to the British Board of Film Censors.¹⁵⁵ Later, in

¹⁵⁵ Interestingly, when the Board of Film Censors was established in 1912, G. A. Redford, who was formerly one of the Lord Chamberlain’s Readers, became its first president until his death in November 1916. As Ross McKibbin states, “It has sometimes been argued that stage censorship was more liberal than film censorship because the authorities thought that their wives, daughters, servants and the proletariat were

1984, this institution adopted the euphemistic title of British Board of Film Classification.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, in 1988, 21 years after the abolition of the Lord Chamberlain's Office, The Broadcasting Standards Council was established under Lord Rees-Mogg by the Thatcherite administration. Obviously, despite the disavowal of the word censorship for its pejorative associations,¹⁵⁷ it, as Jolyon Jenkins aptly asserts, "never really goes away: it just changes its form" (qtd. in Sammells 1992: 1). What is more, Aleks Sierz claims, "British culture was one of the most highly censored in Europa" in the 1990s (2001: 80). Agreeing with Aleks Sierz, Nicholas de Jongh claimed that "Relatively speaking, the twentieth-century English stage was subject to more censorship than in the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I. Stultified and repressed, Britain's theatre became a reactionary, unintellectual outpost of Europe, scarcely involved with the modern theatre movement" (2000b: xv). In a similar vein, Sheridan Morley humorously puts it in the *Spectator*, "We are one of the last nations on earth still to employ film censors as government-funded guardians of our increasingly shaky public morality" (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 80).

It is also worth noting that *The Censor* is a play about a film. Seemingly, cinema has become a field which has been arguably subject to more censorship. According to Luc Gilleman, the United Kingdom had the toughest censorship regulations for renting films on video in the Western Europe and he gives a list of "movies such as *The Exorcist*, *Tango in Paris*, *A Clockwork Orange*, Sam Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs*, Quentin Tarantino's

more likely to be corrupted in the cinema than in the theatre" (2006: 342). Where comprehensive comparison of theatre censorship with other forms of British censorship does not fall into the scope of this dissertation, this seems to be an interesting subject for further study.

¹⁵⁶ The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), as pointed out in its official website, is allegedly "an independent, non-governmental body" which has engaged in the classification of cinema films since its foundation in 1912, and its scope has extended to include videos and DVDs since the Video Recordings Act was passed in 1984 (<http://www.bbfc.co.uk/about-bbfc>). 2.5.2017. From June 2011 onwards, the responsibility of control over film and video classification has transferred from the Home Office to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Although it is claimed to run autonomously, Sean Clarke argues that "in practice, it is very susceptible to influence from government departments, partly through its fear of being made redundant by the creation of an official body" (2002). To this end, they tend to choose candidates for the presidency of the BBFC who are favourable to such governmental bodies (Clarke 2002).

¹⁵⁷ For a detailed discussion of this idea, see Part One: Theories of Censorship in this dissertation.

Reservoir Dogs, Abel Ferrara's *Bad Lieutenant*, and most recently *Intimacy* (based on three Hanif Kureishi stories)¹⁵⁸ that for a long time were either not available in UK rental stores or only in expurgated versions" (2010: 96).¹⁵⁹

The existence of a magazine called "Is It Uncut?" is expressive of this pressure on cinema films. Launched in the UK in 1995, the fundamental concern of the magazine was to provide striking pictures from censored films of which they have uncut versions. It appealed to subculture rather than to the mainstream. It is worth noting that at the time the magazine was being published in the mid-1990s, the internet did not materialise in its full capacity, there was not the slightest trace of DVD and Blue Ray technologies (Yakın 2016: 194). This magazine stood as a protest against official control and censorship over videos, television and cinema films exercised by the BBFC (Yakın 2016: 194).

Returning to the stage, Patrick Marmion has humorously remarked that one "can always count on Anthony Neilson to pull the pin out of a theatrical grenade and roll it on stage" (qtd. in Reid 2017: 14). Despite his well-founded reputation as a provocateur and the controversies his plays have raised, his works have not been exposed to any direct intervention to stop their runs in Britain, if one does not count walk-outs during performances or pickets in their aftermath, particularly of *The Censor* and *Stitching*. However, the playwright is not unfamiliar with direct state intervention, not in Britain but in Malta. Among his all contentious plays, *Stitching* (2002), in which a woman stitches up her vagina, has aroused the most controversy. The play made its first public appearance at the Edinburgh Festival. There were walk-outs in the auditorium and some religious groups protested and picketed the play. However, in 2009 it was exposed to

¹⁵⁸ For further reading, see "Banned movies: The films that vexed the censor". *BBCNews*. 29 Sep., 2011. The article provides a list of 'offensive' films including *Women in Love* for male nudity, *Rambo III* for violence, and *The Wild One* for social unrest.

¹⁵⁹ He further argues that "Most X-rated entertainment, widely available on the continent, such as live sex shows, for instance, is prohibited by law in Britain" (Gilleman 2010: 96).

censorship and banned outright in Malta.¹⁶⁰ Upon this eventful reception of his work, Neilson went to Malta to prevent this intervention in his play, what would be an abortive effort. He said “I had to go and testify in court [...] They ban things left, right and centre over there. Really, the play is about terrible grief, but it also had a lot to do with abortion” (qtd. in Johnson 2010).

Anthony Neilson’s interest in censorship goes back to his childhood years. Even when the playwright was a ten-year old child, he was curious about the operations of censorship. He retrospectively tells in his memories: “I would write to the British Board of Censors and ask them why a film had been given a certain certificate – and they would write back” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 83). Furthermore, they sent him a folder concerning the working mechanisms of the Board to explore. The overriding interest of the playwright was with the self-censorship that people exercise in their daily lives rather than the institutionalised form of the concept; he writes of his fascination with this idea: “ultimately, the subject interested me not on a political level but on a personal one” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 83). *The Censor* powerfully deals with the treatment of sexual inhibitions, self-imposed censorship and taboos on sexuality.

The Censor was originally produced by the Red Room¹⁶¹ as a fringe play¹⁶² and first performed at the Finborough Theatre, London on 1 April 1997. This original production of the play, in which Jan Pearson starred as Miss Fontaine, Alastair Galbraith

¹⁶⁰ “The reasons given for banning *Stitching* are as follows: 1. Blasphemy against the state religion – pages 10 and 17; 2. Obscene contempt for the victims of Auschwitz – page 29; 3. An encyclopaedic review of dangerous sexual perversions leading to sexual servitude – e.g. pages 33, 34 and several others; 4. Abby’s eulogy to the child murderers, Fred and Rosemary West – page 35; and 5. Reference to the abduction, sexual assault and murder of children – page 36” (Haydon 2009).

¹⁶¹ Founded in 1995, the Red Room Theatre seeks to perform daring, provocative, and transgressive plays, particularly those of new writers who want to challenge the status quo. As they define in their official website, their mission is “to give voice to those under-represented in society”, <http://www.theredroom.org.uk/>

¹⁶² Neilson stated that “Even after doing television, in my heart, I remain on the fringe. My plays work best in a small space” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 81). He is also critical of the situation: “Agents and TV producers hover over the fringe like vultures. They pick up writers, reshape them, put them through the mill, kick the shit out of them, drag them backwards through the hedge and then drop them – that’s how the system works” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 87).

as the Censor and Alison Newman as the Censor's wife, was directed by the playwright himself. After its premiere at the Finborough, it was transferred to the Royal Court Theatre Downstairs at the Duke of York's, in London's West End, on 4 June 1997. The director Stephen Daldry organised a short season called 'Behind the Safety Curtain' and transformed the 600-seat theatre auditorium into 60 seats by placing the audience on stage. The opening of the eighty minute performance with "orgasmic moans on the soundtrack" in the intimacy of a closely-arranged platform intensified the impact of the play (Sierz 2001: 82). Furthermore, the audience was already familiar with the explicit and shocking style of the playwright from his preceding plays like *Normal* and *Penetrator*. Later in the September, the play was transferred to another base in the West End, the Ambassadors theatre. In 1998, the play was also put on as part of the Dublin Fringe Festival, directed by Peter Hussey. It was produced by other theatres as well, the Bolton Octagon Studio Theatre London 1999 and 29 Street Repertory Theatre New York 1999, amongst others. The play was later revived on the London fringe in 2004, at the Other Theatre Company. It was also performed by Last Planet Theatre in San Francisco in 2006, by DOT in Istanbul in 2006, and by the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff in 2009, to name a few.

Although *The Censor* was a great success in Neilson's career and won both the Writers' Guild Award for Best Fringe Play and a Time Out Live Award for Best New Play, critical reception of the play was diverse. Literary critics Dorney and Gray defined the play as a "touching and humane" production (2014: 170) while Neil Smith described it as "a tautly written and consistently engrossing psychological drama" in *What's On* on 11 June 1997 (qtd. in Reid 2007: 489). As Dorney and Gray point out, "even conservative newspapers continued to admire it"; for instance, *the Daily Mail* described the play "as 'a healing and finally tragic love story'" on 13 June 1997 (2014: 170). More significantly, as evidence of the disintegration of political alignments over censorship, *The Times's*

theatre critic Benedict Nightingale pointed out that *the Telegraph*, which had denounced Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* years ago as a "wretched, deplorable, loathsome history", now defined *The Censor* as "poignant, funny, brilliantly controlled and profound" (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 83). Nightingale further claimed that the play had "a little too much of the sexual soapbox in its dramatic make-up" (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 83). There were other critics who approached the play with caution. For instance, "the Ambassadors' reviews were mixed and there were some audience walkouts" (Dorney and Gray 2014: 170). In a similar vein, the theatre critic for *the Telegraph* Dominic Cavendish dubbed Anthony Neilson with such titles as "hard core extremist", "natural-born maverick" and "serial offender" for the controversial content of his plays (2004).

However, there were also some severe attacks on the play. For instance, in February 1998, the *Daily Mail* reported Peter Wolff's hateful words on Anthony Neilson's *The Censor*: "It was vulgar. How many penises do you need to see in a play?" (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 65). Embodying the stereotypical reaction of "the hysterical backlash provoked by confrontational theatre", he further claims that "so many people I know are becoming reluctant to go to the theatre" due to the 'dirty language', "filth and violence" (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 83). It was not only in Britain, with some derisive remarks in the reception of the play also occurring among American critics. Upon the performance of the play at the 29th Street Rep in New York, David A. Rosenberg (*Back Stage*, 1999) described the play as a "70-minute, intermission-less annoyance" while Peter Marks (*the New York Times*, 1999) called it a "primitively constructed play" whose playwright "can't keep his mind out of the toilet" (qtd. in Gilleman 2010: 78). For Peter Marks, the controversial scene of defecation was "degrading" and caused a "shocking repugnance" (qtd. in Gilleman 2010: 78).

At first glance, the play does not seem to be really about censorship at all. The reading of this play, as Trish Reid puts it, mainly "falls into two camps, although there is

typically an overlap”: the play as “a treatise on censorship and its role in society, particularly in relation to pornography” and the play as “a love story”, which is also privileged by the playwright himself (2012: 155).¹⁶³ Trish Reid argues that the play is neither a love story nor an attempt at change in the social structure; rather, it “is best understood as a narrative of repression and liberation” and its fundamental concern is to explore “the complete transformation in the psychological condition of one man” and “various implications of selfhood” and “subjectivity” (2012: 156). As stated above on its receptions, while some take it as a love story, others react to the play as a political response. Rejecting both, Trish Reid reads the play as a scrutiny of the transformation of the Censor on personal level.¹⁶⁴ However, the strength of the play resides in the fact that these two parts of the play are connected, that is, personal and public are brought together and intertwined. For a better understanding of the play as a political statement, the socio-political events preceding its performance and its engagement in ongoing discussions over censorship will be explored.

If some consider the play as a tragic love story, “it can also – and these readings are by no means mutually exclusive – be read as a play about censorship, and consequently one with a more explicitly social and political agenda” (Reid 2017: 3). Its performance at the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff in 2009 is one of the examples for the latter reading. Chris Durnall’s 2009 revival of the play for the Faction Collective was a direct response to a controversial case of censorship which resulted in the cancellation of a contentious book launch and debates surrounding this issue. Durnall’s version of *The*

¹⁶³ Anthony Neilson defines his play as “a kind of *Brief Encounter* with the sordid bits unedited” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 8). *Brief Encounter*, a 1945 film directed by David Lean, is regarded as one of the greatest romantic movies. An adaptation of Noel Coward’s play *Still Life*, the film tells the love story of a suburban housewife (Celia Johnson) and a doctor (Trevor Howard) in their mid-thirties who are married to others with children. They happen to meet at a railway station by chance and fall in love with each other. They regularly meet at a café on Thursdays and share stories about their lives. Heartbreakingly, realising the impossibility of their love, they separate and turn back to their families. In a similar vein, Alastair Galbraith who starred as the Censor in the play’s original performance said that Neilson “consistently talked about it being a love story” during the rehearsals (qtd. in Reid 2012: 155).

¹⁶⁴ In her very recently-published book *Theatre of Anthony Neilson* in 2017, Trish Reid, has come to appreciate the play for its political resonances. For further reading, see p. 33.

Censor prioritised the reading of the play as a “provocative, socially exciting drama” rather than only a love story (Thomas 2009). Chris Durnall stated that the production of *The Censor* was a conscious choice as it is “about the boundaries of what should and shouldn’t be shown, what is and isn’t art and who has the right to define those sort of things” (qtd. in Reid 2017: 33). To intensify the impact, Durnall inserted some excerpts from a pornographic film to screen at relevant moments throughout the play. In this way, Allison Vale argues, “what this production forces us to confront is that one man’s porn is another woman’s art; just as one man’s raw and provocative poetry is another man’s blasphemy” (2010).

These controversies date back to one year before. On 11 December 2008, the Welsh poet Patrick Jones was reading poems from his *Darkness is Where the Stars Are* (collection of poems) at the Senedd or Welsh Assembly in Cardiff while around 250 protestors of the Christian activist group the Christian Voice were protesting his poems outside the building (Williamson 2013). These protesters condemned his poetry as “blasphemous”, particularly for the poem called “Hymn”, which includes a contentious reference to Jesus Christ having sex with Mary Magdalene (Williamson 2013). Furthermore, a Cardiff Bookstore cancelled the book-signing due to fear. This eventful poetry reading and consequent protestations sparked heated debates concerning censorship and freedom of expression. As a response to these events, one year later, the South Wales theatre company Faction Collective chose to stage a contentious play, Anthony Neilson’s *The Censor*, with the additional screening of extracts from a pornographic film (Vale 2010).

One year before *The Censor* was originally put on stage, the Canadian director David Cronenberg’s film *Crash* (1996)¹⁶⁵ caused a furore in the UK over censorship on

¹⁶⁵ One of the most controversial films of the 1990s, *Crash* had previously been shown at the 1996 Cannes Film Festival.

the grounds of its corrupting impact on British people's moral and social values. Based on J. G. Ballard's 1973 contentious novel, the film dwells on an underground subculture whose members equate car crashing with erotic stimulation and they enjoy sexual energy which is released through transgression of social norms and inhibitions. In the film, a married couple (James Spader and Deborah Unger) are involved in this thrilling practice of car-crashing to keep sex in their marital life exciting.

The inclusion of Cronenberg's *Crash* by Westminster Council as part of the London Film Festival, prior to the BBFC's licence and the BBFC's subsequent intention to grant the film a licence, fuelled debates over censorship. The campaign against the public availability of the film in the UK was initiated by Alexander Walker in his review in *the Evening Standard* on 3 June 1996. Walker defined the film as "immoral by any reasonable standard [...] some of the most perverted acts and theories of sexual deviance I have ever seen propagated in mainline cinema" (qtd. in Sandler 2001: 601). *The Daily Mail* and *the Daily Telegraph* sided with *the Evening Standard* in condemnation of the release of the film in Britain (Nicholas and Price 1998: 37).

This protest against the film was supported by the Heritage Secretary, Virginia Bottomley, Conservative MPs Julian Brazier and Nigel Evans, the veteran conservative Mary Whitehouse, the Liberal Democrat David Alton, and some groups of young Christians and Christian evangelists (Nicholas and Price 1998: 37). Some even overstepped the mark: targeting people who were for its release, provoking readers, as *the Daily Mail's* film critic Christopher Tookey did, "to attack the film's distributors", and called for the boycott of Sony goods (as it had subsidised the film), a ban on the film and even a state clampdown on the BBFC (as suggested by Mary Whitehouse) (Nicholas and Price 1998: 37). The pro-censorship camp's argument was that this film had the potentiality to result in copycat behaviour: spectators, "after watching the film, might leave the theatre and crash their own cars for sexual pleasure" (Sandler 2001: 601). To

these critical attacks, Cronenberg humorously responded: the film “has been seen by 700,000 people in France and traffic statics have remained constant” (qtd. in Sandler 2001: 601).¹⁶⁶ People who opposed the censorship of the film maintained: “that censors are like fascists who want to tidy up the world and that they use any controversial production as an opportunity to clean up the media” (Nicholas and Price 1998: 37).

In such a controversial situation, the director of the BBFC, James Ferman, had a hard task to decide on the fate of the film. They resorted to consulting a number of professionals to investigate the potential influences of the film on viewers and whether it fell under the remit of the Obscene Publications Act of 1959. After 5 months of inquiry, it was licensed uncut as 18 Restricted.

Bearing in mind the preceding censorial events, the timing of *The Censor* is of crucial significance. Just like Joe Orton’s *What the Butler Saw*, this play connects private and public, that is, personal and political issues are brought together and intermingled. Its representation in the play will be graphically explored; however, the pre-existing socio-political context should be taken into consideration for a better understanding of the play’s connection with the public as well as the private level. When the play was released, several other significant issues were ongoing: the demise of the political dichotomies and its huge impact on the understanding of the concept of censorship, increasingly heated discussions on the reconceptualisation of censorship among academics, the public availability of the Lord Chamberlain’s archives, and dissension over pornography within feminism. Furthermore, the focus of censorship had arguably shifted from the theatre stage to the cinema screen and in that the BBFC was effectively playing the role of the Lord Chamberlain’s Office.

¹⁶⁶ At that time, the film had already been released in France and Canada.

One might argue that Anthony Neilson's successful play *The Censor* (1997)¹⁶⁷ deals with the question of censorship on both personal and political levels: the character of the Censor in the play functions both as the representation of authority and as a metaphor for "all the things we hold down and cut out of our minds" (Sierz 2001: 83). Through a sequence of confrontations between a female director Miss Fontaine and the Censor, the play explores the responses to and representations of attitudes towards censorship (mainly self-censorship in private and daily lives), sexuality and pornography. At the same time, as Aleks Sierz points, the play seems to be engaging with the censorship debate which had been stirred particularly by the controversies surrounding *Crash*. Moreover, *The Censor* is a kind of self-examination or self-exploration play as it "privileges the imperative of responding to one's own desires over the normative demands of social life" (Reid 2017: 15).

The staging history of the play is very significant as the play itself involves nudity, obscenity, sexuality and defecation on the stage. As Gilleman asserts, "Far from offering a neutral space for scientific inquiry where the audience is offered the means of empirical verification, theatre draws attention to the complexity of representation" (2010: 75). In its performance by Last Planet Theatre in San Francisco, "offending parts remain coyly concealed behind furniture and clothing, only limply echoed through the grainy footage of humping bodies projecting intermittently on a floating scrim" (Veltman 2006). The acts explicitly described in the script are not shown in the performance, being hidden behind furniture and clothing, but while those scenes are happening, there are (grainy and probably fairly inoffensive) scenes from porn films, or at least people having sex, being

¹⁶⁷ Anthony Neilson: A Chronology: 1988 *The Colours of the King's Rose* (radio play), 1990 *Welfare My Lovely*, 1990 *A Fluttering of Wings* (radio play), 1991 *Normal: The Düsseldorf Ripper*, 1992 *Deeper Still*, 1993 *Penetrator*, 1994 *The Year of the Family*, 1995 *Heredity*, 1995 *Jeffrey Dahmer Is Unwell* (co-written with Alan Francis and Mike Hayley), 1995 *The Night Before Christmas*, 1996 *Hooverbag*, 1997 *Twisted* (radio play), 1997 *The Censor*, 2002 *Edward Gant's Amazing Feats of Loneliness!*, 2002 *The Lying Kind*, 2002 *Stitching*, 2004 *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*, 2006 *Realism*, 2007 *God in Ruins*, 2008 *Relocated*, 2009 *The Séance*, 2010 *Get Santa!*, 2013 *Narrative* and 2016 *Unreachable*.

projected onto thin, transparent fabric, probably hanging in front of, around, or behind the stage space. Similarly, in Rocket Theatre's production of *The Censor*, the masturbation scene is covered behind the Censor's desk.

Considering the difficulty or impracticality, if not impossibility, of staging the scenes of defecation, masturbation and sexual intercourse, the play's relationship with censorship takes on a new significance. Obviously, one of the points of this play is that it is challenging to the director. It is about censorship on another level. It is really controversial to have an actress defecate on stage. It is not performed as it is written in the script: "*She raises her skirt and squats. The Censor watches, touching himself more vigorously. It takes her a while, but eventually she defecates. She cleans herself, then moves away. The Censor is in a state of extreme arousal. She beckons him to come forward and make love to her. He does*" (*The Censor* 276-7). Due to the difficulty of explicitly performing the scene on stage, directors might be inclined to come up with practical solutions like putting it offstage or in the toilet or bathroom or covering under the skirt of the actress. This is evidenced by Peter Marks's words on the act of defecation – "a bodily function that is, ahem, rarely viewed outside a bathroom" (2001: 104). Thus, the play is itself testing the limits of censorship as well as dramatic representation. It challenges the director to view himself or herself as a censor. There is a parallel between the inhibitions of the character the Censor and the inhibitions of the director in staging this play with these controversial scenes.

ii. "Purveyor of Filth": Analysis of *The Censor*

Censor (V/O). It started with a pornographic film. And I swear to God, it was a porn film like any of the hundreds I'd seen.

No: There *were* differences – strange edits and inflections – but at the time I put it down to poor technique.

No: I'll be honest with you – I put it down to the fact it was made by a woman. The film was hard-core and unpassable as it stood but she requested a meeting with me to challenge the ruling.

I could've refused. To this day, I still don't know if things would've turned out better if I had. But I didn't and she came to try to change my mind, the only way she knew how (*The Censor* 245).

The beginning of *The Censor* is preceded by a voice over telling the narrative. Just like a prologue, it matter-of-factly introduces the story and the characters. Then, the voice seeking to find justifiable reasons for rejecting the 'porn film', submitted by the female director Miss Fontaine, materialises on stage in the person of the government official, the Censor. According to Trish Reid, this use of voice over has several functions: firstly, it indicates that the story is unravelling in the past which renders *The Censor* a "memory play" (2017: 26). Secondly, from a narratological perspective, it provides the Censor's focalization through which the narrative is presented, enabling the audience to establish identification and sympathy with the focalizer as "The Censor himself leads the conversation and his subjectivity is consequently privileged" (Reid 2017: 28). Lastly, this introductory note to the storyworld also points to how his narrative "troubles gender-bound expectations by casting a woman in the role of pornographer" (Reid 2017: 28).

The play opens with a striking scene in the dark, bleak and claustrophobic atmosphere of the Censor's basement Office. A half-naked woman in only her bra welcomes him there. Appalled by what he has seen, the Censor "*is at a loss for words*" and just stammeringly repeats how inappropriate this situation is and implores that "you'd better go" (*The Censor* 246-7). While the Censor clumsily tries to persuade her to put "her shirt back on", Miss Fontaine teases him "Are you married?" (*The Censor* 245). When he responds "No", she flirtatiously questions "Are you gay?" (*The Censor* 245). Frustrated at her insistence, the Censor states "You're embarrassing me, Miss Fontaine. And you're making a fool of yourself" (*The Censor* 245). In contrast to the discomfited behaviour of the Censor in the presence of a semi-clad woman in his office, Miss Fontaine very confidently and assertively challenges him: "Come on, don't act so shocked: you spend all *day* staring at women's breasts" (*The Censor* 246 [Neilson's emphasis]). Before

leaving, she further insists on the Censor reconsidering his decision and writing a recommendation for her censored film. In this the first of the 8 scenes between Miss Fontaine and the Censor, Miss Fontaine's frank and outspoken manners and words contrast with the Censor's timidity and discomfort in her presence.

This setting of the basement has significant implications which will be explored explicitly as the discussion in this chapter unfolds. Much has also been said on the function of this basement office by the critics. Reid describes the Censor's work place – the basement – as “deep in the bowels of a large, faceless government building” (2012: 157). In the play's original production, designed by Julian McGowan, this dimly-lit, small, low and dark basement has no windows and “large industrial fans hummed overhead” (Reid 2012: 157). Taylor refers to the bleak and claustrophobic setting as “down in the noir-ish nether world of his basement office” (1997). Charles Spencer asserts that the Censor is stuck in “some dark limbo of his imagination” (qtd. in Reid 2012: 157). Similarly, this office, according to Christopher Innes, “ceases to be a physical representation of the world and becomes a projection” of the Censor's “inner self” (1993: 37). Taking into consideration the literary critics' description of the setting and the implications it raises, the basement seems to be a concretized representation of unconscious and repressed secrets.

This unusual opening of the play, where the Censor appears as a governmental official and representative of Board of Classification at public level, is followed by a scene set in the kitchen of the Censor as husband's home at private level. Contrary to the cosy and friendly implications of a kitchen table, the scene tells the story of a couple stuck in a detached and dull marriage existing on an economy of words:

Censor: What time did you come in?

Wife: Don't know. Four-ish.

Long pause.

Censor: Where did you sleep?

Wife: In the spare room. I didn't want to wake you.

Long pause.

Censor: Where were you?
Wife: Catherine had a few people over dinner.
Long pause.
Censor: Was David there?
Pause.
Wife: He was there for a while (*The Censor* 247).

The Censor only asks questions, the last perhaps what he really wants to learn. However, obviously he cannot dare to question the issue more than this. Their constipated dialogue, governed by an overwhelmingly tense silence with long pauses and the Wife's abbreviated answers, indicates their lack of communication. Gilleman argues that "Absence communicates as effectively as presence – by way of silence, hesitations, denials, lies, or remonstrations. The play's dialogue is heavily punctuated by pauses, instances of characters' self-censorship when the audience is meant to sense the weight of the unspoken" (2010: 88). It is clear that there are things left unsaid which the self-controlled Censor cannot articulate, perhaps even to himself. In the course of the play, Scene 4, Scene 6, Scene 8 and Scene 11 further highlight this increasingly widening gap between the aloof couple; what is more, the Wife's bizarre insistence on her husband meeting her lover, further silences and isolates him in their failed and fragmented communication.

By creating two different spaces and treating them differently, Neilson splits *The Censor* into two spheres of spatial action. Throughout the play, the passionate and heated dialogue between the Censor and the director Miss Fontaine in the Office scenes conspicuously contrasts with the spiritless and dull conversation between the wife and husband. However, Anthony Neilson places great emphasis on the functional role of these silences and long pauses in the kitchen setting of the play and states that

The fundamental thing that happens when *The Censor* is revived is that people skip over silences. The scenes between him and his wife, in particular, are long. They're a lot longer than they read. The silences should be so big you could drive a massive bus through them. Those scenes are important. In a lot of productions, I've seen them used rather functionally as a kind of cut-away, cut-back device. But in the original production those scenes had almost as much weight as the others (qtd. in Reid 2012: 157-8).

As the playwright maintained, long and tense silences¹⁶⁸ in the dialogue between the married couple when combined with the stillness of the scenes become more profoundly effective in the performance. Pervading “Pinteresque silences” and gaps signify a break in an otherwise flowing dialogue (Reid 2017: 29). Their dysfunctional communication has no fruitful result. This structural frame plays a complementary role in contributing to the content. Essentially, it serves in two ways: on the surface, the audience can gain knowledge of the nature of their marital life. They have a sexless and aloof relationship in their marriage, they sleep in separate rooms, the woman has a fling with a man called David to the knowledge of her husband who is reluctant to talk about this issue, and she insists on the Censor meeting with her lover. On a deeper understanding of these scenes, one might argue that the Censor’s existence is denied by his wife and he is exposed to a kind of “domestic humiliation” (Reid 2017: 28). Being denied recognition by his wife, he does not have a gratifying image of himself. To overcome loneliness and isolation, the human ego needs recognition from other people. Furthermore, while the name of the woman’s lover is given, the Censor is not even named. A name is something very much associated with selfhood and identity; however, here the Censor does not receive such recognition.

Another significant point that needs to be explored in the couple’s dialogue is that in each scene between the Censor and the Wife, David is part of their conversation. The wife oddly insists on their meeting, which forces the Censor to confront his impotency and lack of masculinity. Sexual power is indispensable among the qualities that a man is conventionally expected to have in order to reinforce his masculinity. Susan Bordo claims

¹⁶⁸ For a further reading of the significance of silence in dramaturgy, see John Russell Taylor’s *The Penguin Dictionary of Theatre*, in which he talks about the Theatre of Silence or more conveniently phrased as the Theatre of the Unspoken, developed by Jean-Jacques Bernard in the 1920s. He maintains that what is spoken on stage is not expressive at times; “more important often was what the people on stage did not and could not express in words” (1970: 259). Then, he further argues that the dramatist has “to arrange his dramas in such a way that this residue of the unexpressed could yet emerge and be understood by the audience” (Taylor 1970: 259).

that impotence fundamentally “rings with disgrace [and] humiliation” since “unlike other disorders, impotence implicates the whole man, not merely the body part” (qtd. in Reid 2017: 34). The erect male organ becomes “at once the means of pleasure and culture’s sign of power”; thus, erectile dysfunction probably provokes lack of self-confidence, embarrassment and fear of stigmatisation for a man within these socially and culturally established expectations (Winnett 1990: 505).

In the case of the Censor, it signifies that he falls short of reproducing the heteronormative forms of behaviour favoured by society (Reid 2017: 34). Here, this kind of normative behaviour encouraged by social and cultural values insidiously dictates to people how they should define themselves in accordance with these social codifications. By this implication, this situation seems to be a kind of *hortatory* censorship or “positively phrased guidelines” which has been extensively covered in Part One of this dissertation (Steen 2015: 116). Censorship operates not always as prohibition but also as construction. This form of censorship, according to Michael Holquist, constructs “government-dictated norms” and has highly “insidious consequences” because it “blurs the boundaries between censorship by state and by self” (1994: 15). The Censor himself, admitting this stereotypical perception of men, states “I know men are supposed to be obsessed with it, and ready to do it whenever, wherever, with *whoever*. But I think that’s a bit of a myth” (*The Censor* 269). In this sense, his profession seems to have a playful appropriateness. While scissoring and censoring films as unfit or inappropriate, his repressed motives seem to be relieved through this coping mechanism.

Viewed from a different angle, the wife’s insistence on a meeting between the Censor and her lover, paradoxically, tells another story: it reveals the wife’s desire for the husband. If she has a lover and is no longer interested in her husband physically and emotionally, then she will not care about him anymore either, because she does not need to. She appears to be seeking a kind of emotional reaction; everything seems to be about

eliciting a response. The last scene (Scene 13) between the married couple is, if not a complete resolution, at least an emotional interaction between them, as echoed in the words of the Wife “We’ll work it out. We always do” (*The Censor* 285).

Thus, the Censor is symbolically castrated at home. As a man, he is emasculated and cannot fulfil his function as a husband. He even lacks confidence and courage to confront his wife and avoids any daring discussion by keeping his silence. Instead, he tries to cover this uncomfortable situation with a palliative explanation: “My wife and I have a very specific policy regarding infidelities in our marriage” (*The Censor* 254). So, not only do his contradictory attitudes towards this fragile and sensitive issue suggest the complexities of his inner world and his repressed feelings, but also the significance of the basement as a shelter for the Censor comes to the fore, where he is assumed to be comparatively more potent. In the beginning, he seems to be an authoritative figure who exerts his power by scissoring the scenes from hard-core porn films. As a censor and licensor of the Board of Classification, an extension of state authority and power, he is the very representative of the Symbolic and the Law in Lacanian terminology.

Scene 3 set in the Censor’s basement office is preceded by a voice over which overlaps the former in content. The technical and medical language he employs in describing sexual intercourse in his censorship report overlaps the lack of intimacy in the preceding scene between wife and husband. In the same distant manner, the Censor deals with the time-coding of the action in Fontaine’s film:

Censor (V/O): Fifteen forty-seven: outer labia
Sixteen-o-two: inner labia. Penetration by inorganic device.
Sixteen twenty-three: anal penetration by same. Digital insertion to vagina.
Additional oral stimulation of vagina – sixteen forty-two.
Seventeen ten: masturbation of erect penis.
Seventeen twenty-six: oral stimulation of erect penis.
Seventeen fifty-one: repetition of anal insertion sequence.
Eighteen-o-three: repetition of oral sequence (*The Censor* 247-8).

The Censor's medical and technical language in defining sexual intimacy establishes the oppositional position of the Censor and Miss Fontaine in their understanding of the relation between love and sexuality. More broadly speaking, the system does, as Sila Şenlen notes quoting Foucauldian ideas, “subjugate it [sex] at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present” in order to gain “mastery” over it” (2009: 161).

As the play unravels, as Dorney and Gray assert, “instead of interminable sex scenes with lame dialogue, the audience is confronted with passionate discussion about the nature of art and sex” (2014: 170). The Censor chooses to call her back, then he and Miss Fontaine embark on editing her film together. They engage in harsh dialogues which position them into two camps: pro and anti-censorship. The Censor says that he could only write a recommendation letter to his superiors for the release of the film on condition that some parts are omitted. Despite all omissions and modifications, it will merely be available “as a Restricted 18” to be sold in “licensed video stores” or “sex shops” (*The Censor* 249). The rationale behind his argument is that, “your film is just one sex scene after another. There’s no plot, there’s no character, there’s no nothing” (*The Censor* 249). This evokes the recommendation letters and blue-pencilled scripts sent to the directors of plays intended to be performed on stage by the Lord Chamberlain’s Office. As the embodiment of authority – the Board of Classification – the Censor puts a strongly asserts that it is not about likes or dislikes: “there are things you just *cannot legally show* here, and that isn’t a matter of opinion, it’s a matter of *law*” (*The Censor* 249 [Neilson’s emphasis]). With his mechanical manners, the Censor underscores the hierarchical position of the law and clearly establishes an identification between the law and himself.

Their conversation is reminiscent of stichomythic dialogue which is marked by alternating exchanges between two characters. Influential “in the creation of tension and

conflict”, it does demonstrate emotional intensity and strong disputation (Cuddon 1998: 864).¹⁶⁹ Just like the Censor, the spectator is precipitated into reading the subtext of the play, with particular attention to questions of sexuality, art, censorship and pornography. Scene 3 depicts another confrontation between the Censor and Miss Fontaine. In this scene, it is revealed that the Censor is a low government official whose job has been to watch and assess “the sickest, most extreme material” “down here” in this “shithole” for six years (*The Censor* 250). He further states that “Ninety per cent of what we see is never legally released. Seven per cent of it results in criminal prosecution. About three per cent makes it back into the stream” (*The Censor* 250). Moreover, this low-level official is passed over for deserved promotion and stuck in this basement. Just as in the case of his wife’s philandering, the Censor pathetically attempts to find justifiable grounds for the delay in his due promotion rather than any defiant or protesting words: “Not just anyone can do this job. It requires a strong constitution. It’s a compliment really. And it means when I do move on, it’ll be to a much better position” (*The Censor* 250). However, it does not last long, he drops his guard. Self-described “repressed, anally retentive apparatchik”, the Censor gives away his own insecurities and weaknesses (*The Censor* 251). It seems that he has low self-esteem: for him, for instance, the goal of Miss Fontaine in seducing him in the very first scene was to “humiliate” and make him “feel like a fool” (*The Censor* 252). Actually, the words he uses to describe himself are pathetic and shows his very low opinion of himself.

This is a low-level censor in a basement, an impotent husband trapped in the kitchen. The Censor himself is clearly castrated symbolically in that his wife has a lover called David and he lacks authority at home. His position is shattered with regards to his problematic affiliation to another institution of social order: marriage. As an impotent

¹⁶⁹ Stichomythia was originally used in Greek classical drama to emphasise strong disputation and argumentation (Birch 2009: 954). It might best be exemplified in Shakespearean plays such as the dialogue between Richard III and Elizabeth in *Richard III* or the dialogue between Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*.

husband, he fails to actualise his marital function and passively yields to his wife's infidelities. Similarly, he is also symbolically castrated at work. While as the censor he is supposed to be the ultimate figure of authority, he lacks power in this role as well. At first glance, the audience might assume that the Censor will transfer his libidinal drives and energies to his job because he is the wielder of the scissors and the representative of the Board of Classification. He is not an ordinary man but the Censor with his professional position. This is a censor who seems to have no power or authority despite his official role. As the story unfolds, he is actively castrated and made impotent in his professional and public world.

It is worth noting here that the audience might tend to instinctively interpret the Censor as the father figure – an embodiment of law or in Lacanian terms the big Other to dictate what is forbidden. However, what he reveals in relation to his position there betrays that he is already a minor figure in this “noir-ish nether world” of the basement (Taylor 1997). Ironically, the big boss censor, or the upstairs in this building, is never visible to the audience, the Name of the Father is never there, only a clumsy caricature, a low-rank Censor. This might be a reference to the arbitrary working principles of the Lord Chamberlain's Office and the BBFC and to the ways censorship and self-censorship work.

Although the Censor has very low self-esteem with no courage to confront the unacceptable situations at home and at work, it is noticeable that he is willing to open himself and his inner landscape to Miss Fontaine. He is willing to tell his story. He is the initiator of this meeting as Miss Fontaine's words imply “So that's why you called me back? To tell me I couldn't make a fool of you?” (*The Censor* 252). Just the opposite, he might be seeking a reconciliation between his inner desires and conflicts and social demands as implied in his words “I'm giving you this chance to prove your point” (*The Censor* 257). Although the Censor is not initially persuaded by her defence of the film:

“It’s unusual. I’ll admit. Using the same two actors throughout – not always ending in ejaculation, the order of the episodes ... You might be subverting conventions – but at the end of the day it’s still just hard-pornography” (*The Censor* 251), his interest in listening to Miss Fontaine’s explanation for this “hard-core pornography” reveals that he is eager to get emotionally involved in this (*The Censor* 251). Similarly, when Miss Fontaine grabs his genitals, he makes a feeble attempt to stop her and she masturbates him, “to no avail”; when she asks him to put his fingers into her vagina, he comes up with a weird excuse “I won’t be able to hold my pen” yet then he does (*The Censor* 258). Thus, despite his curious objections, consciously or unconsciously he seems to be willing to resolve them.

Scene 5, where the Censor and Miss Fontaine start editing the movie, is a crucial scene. Miss Fontaine is putting an argument that her film is “the story of the lovers” and one can actually read diverse nuances of interpersonal relationships through the medium of a porn film, as sex has a narrative structure (*The Censor* 256). If pornography is a certain type of text, it might be read in different ways. For instance, what the Censor sees in the first scene of Miss Fontaine’s film is only a man being masturbated by a woman. However, Miss Fontaine argues that the fact that “the man’s penis hardens and softens repeatedly throughout the scene” tells a story about their relationship, that they are “in the early part of relationship, they are still learning about each other” (*The Censor* 259). With the Censor’s fingers in Miss Fontaine’s vagina, they look for the reasons why the man in the film cannot stay erect. This question is also seeking an answer for the Censor’s unsuccessful masturbation by Miss Fontaine in their previous meeting in Scene 3.

The Censor curiously asks further questions to learn the background story of the porn film. It is revealed that although the man is visual rather than tactile and only becomes erect on seeing the woman stroking his penis, he still avoids casting his eyes on his lover so as not to make her feel like a whore. Furthermore, “engagement scares him

[...] He's wary of people, solitary. Parents were cerebral rather than physical and he's the same. When he lived at home, his bedroom was next door to theirs. One parent was very ill" (*The Censor* 260). At that point, the Censor recoils as the story is telling his own childhood. At that point, the Censor recognises how the story of the porn film is related to his own past memories.

In parallel to the unravelling narration of the love story of the couple in Fontaine's movie, the audience witnesses a transformation of the Censor as well as the disintegration of his personal history. At one point in Scene 5, he begins to dissociate himself from the law.

Fontaine: Because I want you to *see*! You time code every single detail of genital interplay, but you don't see the *looks* that pass between them, the *breathing*, the *rhythms* –!

Censor: Because those are not my *concerns*, Miss Fontaine! The looks, the breathing, the rhythms aren't the reason your film can't be passed!! You have to be *practical* about this! It doesn't matter *how* sincere you are, we can't change the *law*! (*The Censor* 265).

Although he is still not fully emotionally involved in the story of the film and is not capable of seeing the subtext of explicit sexual images, it is significant that he has slightly changed. Instead of "it is a matter of law", he says "we can't change the law" (*The Censor* 265). While he describes Miss Fontaine as "one of the most *bizarre* people I've ever met" in the beginning, now he acknowledges that "I wouldn't say *bizarre* exactly: you just take a bit of getting used to" (*The Censor* 255/263). Similarly, in the beginning of Scene 7, the Censor even brings a bottle of wine with two glasses to welcome Miss Fontaine. As Şenlen points out, while placing the glasses and wine on his desk, he clumsily tries to legitimise the situation: "Seeing as it's after hours..."; seemingly, he is more and more eager for an emotional involvement (2011: 15, *The Censor* 262). Very strikingly, he even makes fun of the absurdities of the institution of censorship:

Fontaine: So when are you going to hang up your scissors, Mr Censor? When people just give up having sex altogether?

Will that be the job done?

Censor: No, no, not at all. We'll move on to humour next. Eventually we'll have eradicated all pleasure from the world. It's called Scottish expansionism (*The Censor* 263).

Scene 7 depicts another meeting between the Censor and Miss Fontaine to continue editing the film. In the second scene of the porn film, what the Censor sees is limited to sexual images and is again articulated in a medical way: "Eight-o-six: erect penis – Eight eighteen: inner labia – Eight thirty-one: vaginal penetration" (*The Censor* 264). Miss Fontaine forces him to see the story of this sexual scene: the couple makes love missionary which is "the most *traditional* position", meaning "now – they know each other better" (*The Censor* 264). The lovers have stripped away their embarrassment and have become more acquainted with each other. Just like the lovers in Miss Fontaine's film, who gradually get accustomed to each other by means of knowing each other's bodies better, the Censor and Miss Fontaine go through a similar process.

In the beginning of Scene 9, the Censor has prepared a recommendation letter to present to his superiors so that Miss Fontaine's film might get a licence, signifying a substantial shift in the Censor's attitude. It is also evident in his report that he has given up describing sexuality in medical terms. He seems to have pondered over the implications of the sexual activities of the couple and has begun to read the subtext beneath the surface:

[M]asturbation and oral sex denote courtship, and intercourse in the missionary position symbolizes a *traditional* vow of commencement. During this stage of infatuation, with the future uncertain, the sexual activities are essentially conservative. But as trust deepens, and a sense of ownership develops, the activities become more various and individualised, the bodies more objectified [...] An aggressive note is introduced as the couple pass through their first betrayal. This disillusionment opens a phase of experimentation now more animalistic, more overtly passionate and more stereotypically divided along crude gender lines. Whilst this new element of distrust invigorates the sexuality, the spiritual basis of the relationship erodes until copulation becomes their only cement. As a result, we enter the realms of depersonalisation: the sexuality intensifies, becoming more abusive, more fetishistic, a rehearsal for separation [...] we see each partner participate in

solitary acts of masturbation, their memories of each other now just the fuel of their fantasies (*The Censor* 271-2).

Surprisingly, Miss Fontaine is not satisfied with the Censor's report given above as she believes that it has been written mechanically without internalisation. They engage in a passionate discussion, resulting in the revelation of the Censor's long-suppressed secret fetish in Scene 10.

At one point in Scene 9, the Censor summarises this blue movie as follows: "It's two people, on a bed – wanking and shagging and sucking each other off!! That's all it is! There isn't even any dialogue!" (*The Censor* 272-3 [Neilson's emphasis]). However, Miss Fontaine embarks upon an unrelenting discussion to make the Censor capable of reading this blue movie, seemingly consisting of entire sexual images, as a love story through deciphering the subtext beneath the surface (*The Censor* 256). For Fontaine, love is an emotion and sex is "a completely universal non-verbal language" for its expression (*The Censor* 273). Miss Fontaine tries to make him understand that this film has "some purpose other than titillation" (*The Censor* 251). After this heated argumentation, the play reaches the climactic Scene 10. As Miss Fontaine digs into his conflict zone and repressed memories, it is revealed that the Censor has a repressed sexual fantasy which he is extremely ashamed of. His fantasy is to see a woman defecating to get sexually aroused. The scene of defecation actualises in a ritualised manner:

Miss Fontaine lays newspaper down on the floor.
The Censor watches.
Fontaine encourages him to touch himself.
She raises her skirt and squats. The Censor watches, touching himself more vigorously.
It takes her a while, but eventually she defecates.
She cleans herself, then moves away.
The Censor is in a state of extreme arousal.
She beckons him to come forward and make love to her.
He does (The Censor 276-7).

Against his traumatic past memory, fantasy is introduced as an antidote. The Censor, symbolically castrated and impotent at home and work, has achieved his egotistical unity

and gained phallic significance in this scene. Through this narcissistic gratification, he achieves the sense of omnipotence. At that particular moment, he becomes the subject of the sexual imagery which he would otherwise censor. This climactic scene of the play might be conveniently called a moment of counter-castration. The rule-abiding bureaucrat or “repressed, anally retentive apparatchik” unleashes his deepest desires and acts out his secret fantasy through Miss Fontaine (*The Censor* 251).

The Scottish actor Alastair Galbraith, who starred as the Censor in the play, remembers this ritualised defecation scene engendering “quite a riveted silence, or the odd nervous giggle” yet not once any “expression of disgust” (qtd. in Reid 2017: 30). According to Gilleman, “long, ponderous silences in the preceding scenes have ... prepared the audience to sit in silent awe while Miss Fontaine squats over the newspaper” (2010: 89). Although Anthony Neilson states that “I wanted people to come out of theatre not talking about the fact that they’d seen a woman take a shit onstage”, this scene of defecation has now been recorded as a memorable scene in the history of British theatre (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 83). As stated earlier, its representation on stage has become a test for the director, too.

At that point, the basement setting takes on a new metaphorical significance. The embodiment of the Censor’s unconscious repressions now becomes the place where he can act out his inner urges in his struggle to pass from unmapped to mapped. As stated earlier, the basement typically corresponds to the depths and secrets of the unconscious and repressed desires. As a concretisation of the low-level officer Censor’s dilemma, the basement appears to be a very useful tool in exploring his inner landscape. On the one hand, he represses his desire and transfers it to another aggressive act: wielding scissors over a porn film which is not about likes or dislikes but “a matter of law” (*The Censor* 249). In this way, he is positioned into a socially acceptable place. On the other hand, he organises and formulates his deepest inner drives and transgresses the Law in this place.

Reid even claims that “The Censor’s internal struggle is staged as a battle between two aspects of the same man and these two aspects are so deeply in conflict that victory for one inevitably means defeat for the other” (2012: 156).

In addition to being the representation of the Censor’s unconscious, the basement functions as a bottom level bastion of authority. In doing so, the Censor defies the hierarchy between himself and the law and transgresses the impositions of the social order (law) in the very institution of authority, where he is allegedly acting for the good of the public. All in all, the basement is the place where in the end he can organise his inner fantasies or act out his deep sexual drives, while he fails to assert his personal integrity or autonomy in the kitchen setting.

“The play is a metaphor for looking closer” states aptly Aleks Sierz (2001: 84). This idea of looking beneath the surface of images is certainly at the heart of *The Censor*. In doing so, the play establishes strong parallelisms between simultaneously unravelling narrations on different levels, which evolve, resulting in and from one another. For instance, in parallel to the story of the lovers in Miss Fontaine’s film, an intimate relationship between the Censor and Miss Fontaine begins to develop and the personal history of the Censor is graphically brought to light: from his marital life, status in the work place, sexual life, childhood traumas, and his emotional and intellectual development in understanding love and sexuality, to his secret fetish fantasy. In his interaction with Miss Fontaine, he gradually opens himself to her. He is evidently willing to be complicit in this process. The Censor himself offers the hints which Miss Fontaine attempts to decipher. She digs into his conflict zone and repressed past memories and thus works to reverse the negative conceptualisation of sexuality as taboo, fear and shame in the Censor’s mind.

There is a recognizable and significant transformation, and even reversal, in the case of the Censor. Giving up his robotic and mechanical understanding of things, he has

become more sensitive to other human beings, more aware of and able to address his own personal matters and more capable of acknowledging his own internal conflicting feelings and thoughts on certain topics. It has become possible to see/imagine a scenario in which he and his wife begin to talk about their issues; genuine communication has become possible.

It is also worth noting that the name of the Censor is given in the penultimate scene of the play: Frank. Frank has connotations beyond just honesty, it is about explicitness and willingness to share everything. Fontaine might be associated with the French poet La Fontaine, who is famous for his fables. Miss Fontaine might be regarded as a storyteller who enables both the Censor and the spectator to recognise the narrative quality not only of her film but the whole play on different levels. According to Trish Reid, the exposure of the Censor's name as Frank in the last moment of the play works "as a kind of joke" and further quotes Alaister Galbraith's interpretation of its function: "I'm sure there's a nod to someone who's bottled up and repressed being called Frank, but anyway ... Frank would always get a titter" (qtd. in 2017: 34).

Drawing upon Alaister Galbraith's playful note on Frank, whether the Censor's remarkable transformation will endure or whether it will remain a temporary moment of counter-castration is something left deliberately obscure by the author. Viewed from a different angle, Miss Fontaine's presence is suggestive of the return of the repressed, as a disruptive or transgressive challenge to the prevailing order. Trish Reid also argues that "Like the revelation of the proto-sexual childhood encounter in *Penetrator*, the narrative has a decidedly Freudian overtone because Neilson again appears to be arguing that repressed sexual feelings will *always* return and cannot be effectively buried" (2017: 30).

Trish Reid argues that "Behind Neilson's demand for a new beginning for his protagonist, we sense the desire to fashion a new world in which personal liberation becomes the ultimate value" (2012: 157). Stephan Daldry once stated in a similar way

that the play “is about trying to find a new morality” which is considered by Neilson as an “overstatement” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 85). Neilson further stated that “but it’s a real question. It’s very dysfunctional to make people feel criminal about wanting to have sex” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 85-6).

Similarly, Miss Fontaine’s abrupt death and mysterious disappearance has led many critics and academics to an investigation of her function in the play. Aleks Sierz described her as “Mary Poppins” or “sexual Joan of Arc” who stands there to fulfil her mission (2001: 84). In a way, a sort of magical and heroic trait is conferred upon her. Sila Şenlen argues that Miss Fontaine, “a misfit [...] resisting, questioning and working against the dominant order has been eliminated” (2009: 174). For Taylor, her role is similar to “a philosophical crusade ..., adopting the missionary position in more ways than one” as she, like a therapist, makes the Censor confront his failed marriage, insecurities, childhood traumas, and “the coprophiliac voyeurism ... [as] the Censor’s sexually paralyzing shame” (1997). For Gilleman, she “becomes the priestess of perverted love, healer of the wound that gapes between language and reality. As she defecates, the censorship office literally becomes the “shithole” it figuratively already was, happily restoring the “anally retentive apparatchik” to genital potency” (2010: 90). Fontaine being a figment of his imagination is also hinted at by the playwright who claims “I wouldn’t close off that interpretation” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 84). Miss Fontaine, Gilleman contends, is “too obviously symbolic of Frank’s longing for a joyful and uncomplicated release” (2010: 93). This idea can be reinforced with the text. The Censor calls Miss Fontaine to talk about the film to give her a chance to express herself. The play is focalised through the Censor who the audience sees at home and at office. Through technical use of focalisation, the viewer might tend to identify with Censor. They do not necessarily need to experience the same thing but everybody has his or her own repressed desires or secret issues. Fontaine is a kind of vehicle exploring the Censor or by extension whatever

is sexually repressed in the human psyche. The playwright himself also draws attention to her functional position in relation to the pivotal character of the Censor: “Miss Fontaine is the least important character. By deliberately not explaining her, the play fixes the audience’s attention on the Censor” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 85).

The play closes with the Censor smiling, an act which he probably has not performed for a long time, while he is re-watching Miss Fontaine’s movie in his Office (Scene 14). This might be interpreted in different ways. It is arguably a smile because he has understood or recognised something; thus, there is a kind of self-realisation or self-recognition in which the audience might have been involved personally. To Trish Reid, this closing “suggests that the Censor’s rehabilitation has not been derailed by the murder of his lover. He has come to a greater understanding, not of the film but of himself” (2012: 161). Sıla Şenlen argues that, in the case of Miss Fontaine, the play “illustrates that verbal violence, generally used to dominate and manipulate others into accepting ‘standardization’, can also work to deconstruct, reveal and resist authority” (2009: 189). She further continues, Miss Fontaine “uses language to transform the Censor, from a standardized subject into an individual who is able to ‘see’ through the workings of the dominant order” (Şenlen 2009: 189). Neilson himself comments on the ending of the play as follows: “The Censor smiles at the end because he’s now watching her film and it finally has meaning for him. Something terribly extreme has become assimilated into his life” (qtd. in Smith 2008).

The playwright finishes the play with an unanswered question concerning whether he smiles “at a memory or the prospect of the possibility of a new kind of relationship with his wife” (Bull 2011: 354). Obviously, there is a degree of transformation but the ending opens up the play to different interpretations. The ending of the play does not lend itself for full analysis. Has he achieved a complete psychic recovery? In the case of the Censor, who is conveniently named as Frank in the end, the conflict zone seems to be

neutralised and there is a passing from unmapped to mapped territory. There is a noticeable and significant transformation in the Censor, however it is too simple to read this ending as a redemption. There is this moment in the basement office where his darkest sexual fantasy is realised but how much that redeems him or to what extent it resolves his on-going issues and conflicts is left very ambiguous and open ended. To argue that the play offers a definitive answer or solution runs the risk of interpretive closure; rather it presents the problem and offers some kind of resolution. The problematic and ambivalent ending of the play illustrates the central issue of Anthony Neilson's philosophy: he places a great emphasis on storytelling and narration. The ending of the play presents the reader with a considerable interpretive challenge. This ambiguity is actually what Neilson relishes in his plays. He likes loopholes in the narration so that viewers will not be passive receivers but will be actively involved in the process of making sense of the play. Anthony Neilson plays upon the sensitive and with eliciting issues.

In his article titled "The Story teller", Walter Benjamin states, "The storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale" (2006: 364). Neilson believes that "the playwright is the natural descendant of the village storyteller" because "it's only in theatre that we find a form that truly captures the impression of our fragile and transient lives" (1998b: x). In a very similar vein, Neilson says "I would be very happy if you could make them experiences and memories of your own [...] make them live and breathe" (1998b: x). Clearly, Neilson is a playwright who wants other people to interpret and manipulate his text as they want. Coming up with a definitive argumentation for this play is contrary to what the playwright himself privileges. In his 2006 play *Realism*, he takes this point further in Act One, Scene Two. During a dialogue between the two characters, Neilson leaves room for alternatives:

Mother: It's full of bombers.
Stuart: Where from?

Mother: Israel? [At the time of writing, in 2006, Israel had invaded Lebanon. Substitute a more topical/timeless reference if necessary] (2008: 297).

Anthony Neilson is, however, being mischievous in promoting or encouraging a free reading of his texts and then guiding his viewers or critics not to read at some points. His tactics are deliberately provocative. On the one hand, he seems committed to the idea that the author has no particular authority over the play (script) once it is out there. On the other hand, he places emphasis on a visceral reception of the play and shakes a finger at academics and critics as well: “There are a lot of people who are unwittingly observing and defining what makes good theatre – usually critics or academics – and it’s actually the most suffocating form of social censorship. Either ideas are crushed or adventurous work is segregated” (qtd. in Smith 2008). In his writing for *the Guardian*, the playwright is critical of the fact that “people see theatre-going not as entertainment but as self-improvement, and the critical/academic establishment have to take some blame for that” (2007). The playwright humorously challenges critics and academics for their dominantly intellectual consideration of plays, which is, to him, a kind of social censorship or critical censure. There is always this war between writers and critics. While the playwright places significance on how people respond affectively or emotionally to works, for critics and academics there is not much room for emotion in reading. A critic adopts a more critical distance in the reception of a work of art. Both these manoeuvres are perfectly valid and valuable. However, the point about censure is a question of nuance. In this sense, one might also argue that Neilson is affectively censoring the academic approach to his text so ensuring it on his own terms.

The Censor obviously engages with dissensions over pornography, particularly ongoing heated discussions within divided feminist groups that surfaced in the late 1990s. The play challenges, Gillemann also argues, many respected notions of the anti-pornography debate such as porn is harmful to women as it turns women into objects of

men's erotic desire and men into sex fanatics (2010: 85). Contrarily, in this play, the pornographer is a woman who argues for the significance of her film to the world and the Censor is a man who wields scissors over porn films as camouflage for his sexual impotency (Gilleman 2010: 85). In stark contrast to what anti-pornography feminists advocate, Miss Fontaine argues that

the people we dare to call perverts and deviants – the victims of this war – the good humane people we've criminalised and traumatised, they'll be recognised for what they truly are: Visionaries! [...] This film is the first artefact of a truly liberated future. And the day it can be shown in every multiplex in the land to every man, woman and child is the day we'll know the human race has come of an age (*The Censor* 274).

Miss Fontaine holds bold opinions concerning pornography which is in complete contradiction to anti-pornography feminism. The ideas which Miss Fontaine advocates in the play, including absolute freedom of speech, are essentially in line with the mantra of pro-pornography feminists and the liberal side of the dissension in feminism. Luc Gilleman argues that the play “appropriates the language and gesture of pornography to promote a philosophy of sexual healing” (2010: 76).¹⁷⁰ Clearly, sex has a healing nature in this play. “Sexuality is the base rock of humanity” claims Anthony Neilson, for whom it is an indispensable part of his plays and needs to be explored in graphic detail (qtd in Sierz 2001: 87). He further argues, “If you don't look at the sexuality of your characters, they tend to be bloodless ... because sex is still the single most unguarded aspect of our lives. Which is why such material appears in virtually everything I've done” (qtd in Sierz 2001: 87-8). In the case of the Censor, nobody is born with a sexual repression but learns it through socialisation in her or his particular environment. The Censor abstains from

¹⁷⁰ Luc Gilleman considers two plays, Sarah Daniels' *Masterpieces* and Anthony Neilson's *The Censor*, and tackles the question of how they “present opposite sides of an argument about the impact of pornography” (2010: 76). Sarah Daniels' *Masterpieces* (1983) is the very concretisation of the heated anti-pornography discussions within feminism in the 1980s, particularly the ideas put by Andrea Dworkin in her works *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (1981) and “Women Against Violence Against Women” (Gilleman 2010: 79). This decade was marked by issue-based theatre plays. Daniels' play engaged with the controversies over pornography by pointing to its harmfulness. By doing so, the play “not only advocates but also incorporates censorship as a radical feminist strategy” (Gilleman 2010: 76).

sex and resorts to frigidity rather than a free expression of his sexual fantasy. His repression acts out in an aggressive way in scissoring porn films.

Taking Miss Fontaine as the mouthpiece of the playwright, Michael Billington (*the Guardian*) was critical of the idea that “anything can be shown anywhere ... You need only apply her arguments to violence – snuff movies for all? – to see how absurd they are” (qtd. in Sierz 2001: 82). According to Aleks Sierz, “by killing her off, Neilson distances himself from the extremism of her philosophy” (2001: 84). Sıla Şenlen argues that Miss Fontaine “deconstruct[s] the dominant order of the state, and change[s] the ‘standardized’ and ‘censored’ Censor to an ‘individual’ coming to terms with his own non-standardized characteristics” (2009: 178). However, her death at the end, according to Şenlen, means that she is eliminated and thus censored by the system that she is challenging and resisting (2011: 19).

Despite Miss Fontaine’s emphasis on sexuality as a form of language, it is still not easy to categorise or describe Neilson’s play as the mouthpiece of a particular side of feminist division. Miss Fontaine is abruptly and mysteriously killed which reduces her presence to being only functional in the transformation and exploration of the Censor’s inner landscape. By Neilson’s own account, “Miss Fontaine is the least important character. By deliberately not explaining her, the play fixes the audience’s attention on the Censor” and focalised through the eyes of the Censor who puts forward some rational and logical arguments for the benefits of censorship, stating that without it, “there’d be no allegory, no metaphor, no restraint” (*The Censor* 261). These preceding remarks echo the playwright’s reflection on this issue in his interview with Aleks Sierz:

If you remove censorship, if you completely free people, you have to be prepared for uncontrollable consequences. There are good reasons for things being suppressed ... Certain things need to be repressed in society, certain urges and instincts need to be repressed in ourselves. [But] in repressing them, a lot of healthy things can be repressed as well” (qtd. in 2001: 85).

Neilson also asserts that “Certain critics always think that I am having an argument so that Miss Fontaine was representing my argument but I’m much closer to the Censor in that I’m repressed. It was a way of showing somebody breaking open the British reserve and ideas around censorship (qtd. in Smith 2008). Neilson is not transparently declaring his side and so his attitude is ambivalent.

According to Chloe Veltman, “Neilson’s text offers an equally critical view of a world in which pornography and violence reign unfettered” (2006). She does not provide an example to back up her argument; however, the evidence might be found in the play, where the Censor offers some reasonable and sharp argument on censorship:

I’m just saying that ... censorship isn’t necessarily such ... a bad thing. Without censorship, there’d be no allegory, no metaphor, no restraint – I mean – *Brief Encounter* is a story about two lovers, but you don’t have to see Trevor Howard’s penis thrusting in and out of Celia Johnson, do you? (*The Censor* 261).

The play also seems to be engaging with the absurdities and different nuances of censorship. It explicitly depicts the replacement of the Lord Chamberlain’s Office by the Board of Film Classification. The Censor’s words “there are things you just *cannot legally show* here, and that isn’t a matter of opinion, it’s a matter of *law*” obviously manifest the tough control and regulations of the BBFC over cinema films and videos and serve to remind viewers of the considerable critical controversy aroused over Cronenberg’s film *Crash* one year before and the ongoing argumentations and divisions over pornography (*The Censor* 248). He speaks as the very embodiment of Law. As Gilleman asserts, “the UK, with the exception of Ireland, has some of the toughest anti-pornography censorship laws in Western Europe. In the eighties, under Margaret Thatcher, [...] there were even concerted attempts to prevent displays of “girlie magazines” (*Playboy, Penthouse, Hustler*)” (2010: 85). In this sense, as Chloe Veltman puts it, the play “amounts to a topical sendup of the surface-centric prejudices that go hand in hand with most forms of censorship” (2006).

In conclusion, the strength of the play resides in the fact that it connects public and private, that is, personal and political issues are intermingled. Thus, Neilson's work reads as a political statement about the controversies of its immediate socio-political environment, as well as an exploration of self-imposed inhibitions on a personal level. One might argue that Anthony Neilson's successful play *The Censor* deals with the question of censorship on both personal and political levels: the Censor in the play functions both as the representation of authority and as a metaphor for "all the things we hold down and cut out of our minds" (Sierz 2001: 83). Through the Censor's emotional and sexual encounters with Miss Fontaine, different narrative levels embedded in the play intertwiningly unfold and the play explores responses to and representations of attitudes towards censorship, mainly self-censorship in private, sexual and daily lives. At the same time, the play seems to be engaging in a dialogue with the censorship debate which had become heated particularly over the controversies surrounding *Crash*, the disintegration of political dichotomies, and the dissensions over pornography within feminism.

CHAPTER III

GURPREET KAUR BHATTI'S *BEHZTI* (2004) AND *BEHUD* (2010)

i. Context and Staging of *Behzti* and *Behud*

On 9 December 2004, British-born Sikh playwright Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti's second play *Behzti* was premiered at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Outraged by the play's content, particularly the rape scene in the Sikh temple, many local Sikhs who had not seen the performance took to streets for protest. Over the course of a week, the protest turned violent which culminated in the withdrawal of the play. The playwright went into hiding and was assigned police protection.

The effective censorship of the play by this violent intervention ignited controversies that created a society deeply divided on such issues as freedom of speech, artistic licence, religious and ethnic sensitivities and multiculturalism. More significantly, these debates have overshadowed the content of the play and the hypocrisy of the power-holders in institutional religions, the major targets of Bhatti's social satire (Ray 2016: 90, Crow 2007: 215).¹⁷¹ Bhatti retrospectively evaluated the events which led to the withdrawal of the play from its run: "I'm from a Sikh background. I knew it would be controversial, but I don't think there's anything wrong with provoking people ... I didn't anticipate the level of protest – the demonstrations, the riot. I never thought it would get to the point where it would be pulled" (qtd. in Cavendish 2010a).

Behzti opens with an exchange of foul language between Balbir, a middle-aged mother in her late fifties who is "*naked perched on a small stool in a bath*" and her thirty-year-old daughter Min (*Behzti* 89). Bhatti's characters are revealed to be in desperate need of each other both physically and psychologically. The incapacitated mother, who

¹⁷¹ Such issues as female identity, family dynamics and post-immigration problems and complications were the chief concerns of Bhatti's plays *Behsharam* (Shameless, 2001), *Fourteen* (2014) and her last play *Khandan* (Family, 2014), just like her controversial play *Behzti* (Verma 2014: 7).

is confined to a wheelchair, is physically reliant on Min, who is altruistically devoted to her mother's care at the expense of her own social life. Stuck in this vicious circle of interdependency, both mother and daughter employ verbal violence against each other. While the mother makes insulting remarks to her daughter, calling her an old "fat virgin", "bloody shitter", "lump of lard", "thicko" and "rubbish", Min says "I'll wash your mouth out, you mucky cow" and punishes her mother by putting plastic tape over her mouth (*Behzti* 108/103/94). Barbara H. Sheldon argues that in feminist literature, the mother-daughter bond "is not merely a celebration of sisterhood or female togetherness" but also includes potential conflicts and tensions which extend to the other female characters in the play (1997: 20).

After many years, the mother and daughter set out to visit the gurdwara, or temple, as Balbir wants Mr Sandhu, the gurdwara elder, to find a match for Min. However, Min is raped there. The most poignant scene of the play is when Min, whose voice is overwhelmed by the sound of religious hymns and heard by no one, comes out of Mr Sandhu's room, raped and bleeding. Assuming that Min is menstruating, the women helpers of the gurdwara, Teetee and Polly, ruthlessly beat Min as she has brought dishonour to the temple. In the course of events, it is revealed that Mr Sandhu, who is morally corrupt, takes advantage of his influential position in the community and apparently has sexually abused many other women beforehand, and was also involved in a homosexual relationship with Min's deceased father. He is also revealed to be the source of Balbir and Min's economic frustration, as he manoeuvred their properties into his own possession upon Min's father's death. Initially happy with Mr Sandhu's offer of a shotgun wedding to her daughter following the rape, Balbir later kills him with the sacred kirpan upon the revelation that he has also sexually abused many other women.

After six years of silence, Bhatti returned with another play, mischievously revisiting the issue with her newly-written play *Behud*. "Is it like walking back into the

fire? Yes, but I think I have to do that. There's no way round it. I don't want to be foolhardy but my play was pulled. I've got a right to look at that, talk about that" said Bhatti in advance of the premiere of *Behud* (qtd. in Cavendish 2010a). *Behud* is a fictionalised version of the events surrounding the *Behzti* controversy, as well as an artistic treatment of the writing and staging of a play.

Both *Behzti* and *Behud* offer rich material for an exploration of censorship across a whole spectrum, including its soft and hard forms, as well as old and new methods. Content-wise, *Behzti* is not about censorship. However, the events surrounding its production in the United Kingdom showed that more than three decades after the official abolition of the Lord Chamberlain's censorial power over plays, censorship was still alive and kicking, as a violent public protest closed Bhatti's *Behzti*. But this was not state censorship (even if the state was culpable in some ways), rather it demonstrated that censorship had evolved into new forms: here community pressure became the censor. This chapter will firstly focus on the pre-staging processes of *Behzti* and *Behud* to illustrate different forms of intervention in a play. Secondly, after providing a brief discussion on the relationship between authorship, authority and censorship, it will analyse *Behud* which raises many complex questions in relation to the complicated nature and variable operations of censorship.

Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti was born in Watford one year after the official abolition of British theatre censorship by the state. Just like her contemporary Anthony Neilson, she was born into a time of dramatic social and cultural transformation in the United Kingdom. With the advent of the 1970s, identity politics flourished. Diverse consciousness-raising groups appeared, including feminist, anti-racist, black British and Asian British, pacifist, environmentalist, gay and lesbian movements. Decolonisation changed Britain into a multicultural and multiracial state.

In the 1980s, racist movements were triggered by politicians' remarks, most notoriously, Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech. In 1978, before the general election of 1979, Thatcher declared: "People are really afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture" (qtd. in Megson 2012: 7). Black British and Asian British people were confronting issues of identity, belonging and hybridity. The ambiguous status of second-generation immigrants in Britain is well expressed in the opening of Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990): "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost" (1990: 3).

Under the administration of New Labour, there was promotion of diversity in theatre plays produced by minorities. Some theatre companies, including The Theatre Royal Stratford East, Talawa, and Tara Arts, were also dealing with new plays in different ways or promoting the visibility of black and Asian British on the stage. For example, The Theatre Royal Stratford East formed a platform to voice the experiences of black and Asian communities.

New Labour's promotion of diversity and increase in state subsidies to theatres was intended to utilise theatre as a pragmatic tool. Mike Bradwell complained as follows: "Since the departure of Sue Timothy, I felt there was no one at the Arts Council who understood what the Bush was for, or valued our contribution to the theatrical wealth of the nation. What they did want from us, however, was a Cultural Diversity Action Plan" (2010: 261). This imposition was described by Dan Rebellato as "The era of 'box-ticking'" (2013: 70).

From the start of the 2000s onwards, there has been a considerable increase in literary productions undertaken by minority Black and Asian communities in Britain.¹⁷² Sumana Ray identifies the young generation of immigrants as situated in a "liminal"

¹⁷² One of the major Asian companies was Tara Arts which was founded in 1977 upon "the racist murder of the Sikh schoolboy Gurdip Singh Chaggar" (Megson 2012: 58). Although there was an increase in Black and Asian theatre plays and artists on the stage, in the 1980s, women of ethnic minorities were not yet visible.

position (2016: 90). They undergo some conflicts with the host culture as well as conflicts within their own community. In such circumstances, Suhail Khan argues, the “individual is challenged to produce artwork relating to the current environment and circumstances he or she has been brought up within or been placed in as a result of parental migrancy” (2006: 162).

Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti’s second play *Behzti*¹⁷³, which means “Dishonour” in Punjabi, was first performed at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre on 9 December 2004 (*Behzti* 2014: 87). On its premiere night, while the play was being performed inside the theatre building, a group of local Sikhs offended by reports of the play’s content, protested the play outside the theatre. After a week’s run, on 18 December, the peaceful protest turned violent, with the participation of almost 400 demonstrators. The protestors smashed the glass doors and windows of the theatre building and some of them managed to enter inside to damage some equipment. Around 800 theatre goers, including many children, were evacuated from the building. The playwright found death threats in her mail box: “Seasons Greetings. This will be your last Christmas. You are a disgrace to the race. Sending you lots of hate” (qtd. in Hickling 2010). She was forced to go into hiding and was assigned police protection. After the police force and the community elders reported that the riot might become uncontrollable, with undesirable consequences, and Sikh community leaders “warned that protestors were now calling for an outright ban rather than changes to the script”, the Birmingham Rep was forced to withdraw the play from its run and further performances were cancelled (Branigan 2004a). Even the idea of a public statement by Bhatti after these events and the proposal to organise readings of the play at different theatres were suspended. Because of its similarities to the

¹⁷³ The play was directed by Janet Steel and designed by Matthew Wright.

controversies over Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*, known as the Rushdie Affair, this instance of censorship has come to be known as the *Behzti* Affair.¹⁷⁴

Prior to the premiere of the play, the Birmingham Rep theatre board had initiated some meetings with the Sikh Community elders, informing them about the controversial content of the play. These Sikh elders had made three main objections to the play: "Use of hymns as background music", "Abuse of sacred symbols" and most significantly the use of the gurdwara as a setting for rape and murder (Grillo 2007: 11).¹⁷⁵ One of these leaders stated as follows: 'We are not bothered about rape scenes or paedophiles – we know that there are good and bad people from every background and religion. The problem is having these things take place in a temple' (qtd. in Grillo 2007: 11). They demanded that the setting should be changed from a gurdwara into a community centre. The meeting between theatre and community was thought to be a "negotiation" by the Sikh party, while it was merely considered a "consultation" by the theatre establishment (Grillo 2007: 7). Bhatti did not want to change the setting of the play as she later stated: "I wanted to write a play about religious hypocrisy ... for which the setting in a gurdwara was non-negotiable. The attempt to establish a dialogue with the Sikh community was well intentioned, but ultimately misinterpreted as an invitation to rewrite my play" (qtd. in Hickling 2010). Bhatti further expressed her frustration:

Some people ask: if it hasn't happened or if it doesn't happen, why would you write it? But where do you stop with that argument? Are we only allowed to write verbatim news reports? *Behzti* was an allegory for hypocrisy. And I wanted it to be an extreme allegory, so I set it in a gurdwara (qtd. in Cavendish 2010a).

¹⁷⁴ Among these, to name a few, Gurharpal Singh, who is professor of inter-religious studies at Birmingham University, points to the negative impact of this event on his community, arguing "This is the Sikhs' Rushdie affair; it will have tragic consequences" (qtd. in Dodd 2004).

¹⁷⁵ The objections made by the Sikh community elders were supported by other religious leaders as well as the right-wing British tabloid newspaper, *the Daily Mail*, which expressed disapproval of the violence but appreciated "the willingness of Sikhs to protest at what they regard as a gross insult to their faith. At least here are a people who believe their religion is a vital force in sustaining honest, decent family life and are prepared to fight for it (qtd. in Grillo 2007: 12).

The setting remained the temple, the very embodiment of Mr Sandhu's power, the key figure in its construction.

Yasmin Wilde, who starred as Min in *Behzti*, later suggested that "It may be a mistake to consult because it makes people think that they have a voice in the creative process" (qtd. in Swain 2004). She also remembered rehearsal experiences while they were playing before older Sikhs, whose interventions led to the omission of some swear words and jokes. For Wilde, it is not "part of the creative process to play it to your possible critics" (qtd. in Swain 2004).

If you had to write a theatrical pitch for what Birmingham has just witnessed over the play *Behzti*, you could do it in seven words: Play offends community, community protests, play cancelled. But that simple three act performance conceals a far more complex drama about how we all share the same space in a pluralistic society (Casciani 2004).

As Casciani puts, this successful instance of censorship, which the Sikh community elders described as "a victory for common sense", sparked heated debates over such contentious issues as the boundaries between freedom of artistic expression and offensive expression, censorship, and multiculturalism in the United Kingdom (Branigan and Dodd 2004). Although *Behzti* has nothing to do with censorship in its content, in terms of the controversies it raised, it was widely regarded as a test case.

The reception of the events shows how public opinion was divided into two principal camps on this issue: for censorship and against censorship. While the former argued that freedom of expression was being manipulated "as a licence for gratuitous offence", the latter held the idea that "'mob rule' would intimidate artists into self-censorship" (Dodd, Branigan, and Higgins 2004). However, the right to free speech was claimed by the former as well: Fiona Mactaggart, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Home Office, controversially stated that "When people are moved by theatre to protest ... it is a great thing ... that is a sign of the free speech, which is so much a part

of the British tradition” (qtd. in Ray 2016: 92). The Labour MP for Birmingham Perry Barr, Khalid Mahmood, accused the Rep of a ‘lack of sensitivity’ (qtd. in Ray 2016: 92), while Gurdial Singh Atwal, a Labour councillor and representative of the Council of Sikh Gurdwaras, stated that the production of *Behzti* “caused a great hurt and shows a lack of respect. The Sikh community had a small demand: rather than setting it in a gurdwara, set it in a community centre” (qtd. in Grillo 2007: 219). Jasdev Rai, the director of the Sikh Human Rights Group, claimed that “We hope the arts and media establishment will become a little more civilized. You can be contentious and critical without being offensive” (Dodd, Branigan, and Higgins 2004). The critic Ibrahim Thompson even argued that censorship is sometimes not bad: “Censoring is really a form of editing and a measure of maturity in a culturally diverse world. If you hassle a community, it’s only a matter of time before it reacts” (2005).

Even the Sikh community itself was divided: while some rejected the play, some Sikhs, particularly young people, opposed the protests. One of the campaigners for censorship of the play, Councillor Gurdial Singh Atwal, was angry with the Sikhs who were against protesting the play: “If people hold that view, then they are not aware of their religion, they are ignorant – they have to learn more about their culture and the values of the community” (qtd. in Casciani 2004). Gurharpal Singh touched on the subject, stating that the protests did not reflect the whole community’s reaction to the play: “In response to my article ‘Sikhs are real losers from *Behzti*’ in *the Guardian*, 21 December 2004, I had 109 emails, of which 78 (mostly from Sikhs) were supportive of Bhatti’s right to stage the play” (2005: 172).

Many others were also supportive of the play and of Bhatti’s right to artistic licence. In particular, many theatre practitioners identified this act of violent intervention in an artistic work as a form of “mob rule” (qtd. in Casciani 2004) or “mob censorship” (Hickling 2010). Over 700 people, including actors, directors, writers such Tariq Ali,

Andrew Motion (then poet laureate), Jude Kelly, Richard Eyre, Ayub Khan Din and Prunella Scales, as well as the cast of the play, signed an open letter in solidarity with Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, published in *the Guardian* on 23 December 2004 (Branigan 2004b). In their letter, they support the idea that this kind of censorial intervention in a work of art is intolerable because:

It is a legitimate function of art to provoke debate and sometimes to express controversial ideas [...] Those who use violent means to silence it must be vigorously opposed and challenged [...] We all have the right to protest peacefully if a work of art offends us. We do not have the right to use violence and intimidation to prevent that work of art from being seen by others [...] Doubtless, some will see the fact that the play's production has been brought to an end by this campaign of intimidation as some kind of victory. The reality is we all lose by it" (qtd. in Branigan 2004b).

Despite being almost unanimous that Birmingham Rep was right to withdraw the play in these circumstances for public safety, many significant names from the theatre establishment were seriously worried over the successful censorship of the play through violent demonstrations: Nicholas Hytner, the director of the National Theatre, found it very alarming (2004), and Nirjay Mahindru, artistic director of the Asian Theatre Company, identified this event "as a Christmas present to the conservative elements in British theatre" and further argued that "What have been created are artistic no-go areas. What's next? We can't write about anything problematic in a Hindu temple or mosque or church. Then do we stop there, or is the next thing that we can't say anything problematic about an imam or priest, and then the religion itself?" (2004).

In a similar vein, while the playwright Mark Ravenhill stated that "to disrupt a performance like this is a way of censoring a play. It is the right of a playwright to write about what they want and set it where they want to see it" (2004), the critic Michael Billington noted a further point: "The real danger is that the protestors' short-term success may induce a mood of self-censorship in both dramatists and theatres" (2004). David Edgar pointed to the essential concern of the play, which had been overlooked and gone unaddressed due to the cacophonous controversies over the rape in the temple: the play

as a reflection of “the conflict between faith and institutional religion in culturally isolated communities. Its importance can be judged by the large number of young Asian women who have packed in to see it” (2004).

Describing this conflict as the long-running collision between art and religion, Bhatti stated that “I certainly did not write *Behzti* to offend. It is a sincere piece of work in which I wanted to talk about what is beneath the surface of triumph – all that is anonymous, despairing, human, inhumane and absurd – and to explore how human frailties can lead people into a prison of hypocrisy” (2005). She further claimed that her primary goal was to promote “a sense of humility and empathy”, thus encouraging “dialogue and discussion” (Crow 2007: 212).

The successful censorship of the play and, by extension, its playwright, introduces another level of censorship. Upon the play’s withdrawal, discussions that occupied the public agenda principally focused on secularist versus fundamentalist binarism, as well as the politics of multiculturalism. Within the framework of the latter, if the self-appointed community leaders are taken as the representative spokesmen or mouthpieces of a community, the whole community is reduced to a monolithic voice at the expense of dissenting voices in it.¹⁷⁶ For the Asian playwright Ash Kotak, this play “offended a vocal conservative group within the community” (2004). He also draws attention to a clash between older and younger generations within the Sikh community; for him, “the revolt among the young should be encouraged because they are not simply rebelling but rather trying to find a voice. Most importantly, they are attempting to end the silence that exists around abuses and injustices that take place within their communities” (Kotak 2004). When community leaders are regarded as the only representatives of a community, it ignores and silences pluralities within this community.

¹⁷⁶ “The British Sikh Consultative Forum, Sikh Human Rights Group, British Sikh Federation, and Sikh Agenda for the UK Government claim to represent Sikh views nationally” (Grillo 2007: 9).

Jo Glanville argues that “Censorship is not just about the play that is cancelled or the book that is banned, it is about the wrongdoings that are buried in a society and which can destroy the lives of individuals” (2012: 9). In the case of *Behzti*, the issues of religious hypocrisy and corrupt religious leaders prone to manipulate their powerful status in institutionalised religions went unaddressed and were concealed from public view.

Meredith Tax states that “Every society has some degree of censorship which it carries out by its normal means of social organization and control” and ‘gender-based censorship’¹⁷⁷ “is embedded in a range of social mechanisms that mute women’s voices, deny validity to their experience, and exclude them from the political discourse” (1995: 20-1). Unsurprisingly, in this particular case, the majority of the protestors consisted of men. Sumana Ray quoted an actor’s remarks on the riots outside the building: “On that night it felt like a lot of testosterone [was] thrown at this little female play. The great powerful mass of men who had been roused to crush it because it, the tiny thing, threatened them somehow” (2016: 94). In the media coverage of *Behzti*, the setting of the rape scene in a gurdwara overwhelmed the satirical voice of the play. Just like the fictional character, Min, whose cries go unheard by others in the gurdwara due to the sound of hymns, the playwright’s satirical challenge seems to have been silenced as well. It is clear that one voice for a community creates other hierarchies in itself. To what extent the community elders can represent the whole community at the expense of individuals is problematic. This can easily become a form of “intra-communal censorship” (Griffin and Iball 2007: 517). In this sense, “By challenging traditional notions of femininity, and Sikh ideals in particular, *Behzti* seeks to dispel a sense of monolithic unity and sameness generated by such terms” (Ray 2016: 92).

¹⁷⁷ In 1993, a Filipina feminist Ninotchka Rosca originally coined “gender-based censorship” which “is likely to descend on any woman who blows the whistle on sexual harassment and discrimination” (Tax 1995: 47, 21). For Meredith Tax, the only way to challenge this kind of censorship is “to persevere in taking up taboo subject matter, presenting critical points of view, and putting them published” (1995: 43).

Yasmin Wilde, who starred as Min in *Behzti*, states that the play is “very religious”, very “pro-God”, and written by “a good Sikh”, and she further draws attention to one of the significant themes of the play, which is “about silencing dissenting voices from within to protect a community as a whole [...] In small communities you often get self-policing [...] That’s one of the problems of being in a minority community. There are no whistle-blowers. It’s interesting that that theme has crossed over into real life” (qtd. in Swain 2004). This issue is also pointed out by Bhatti herself: “One of the themes of the play was how women are robbed of their voice. I saw an interview on TV with Salman Rushdie, and he was talking about what had happened to me. He said it was ironic that the woman who wrote a play about women losing their voice also lost hers” (qtd. in Jackson 2013).

Despite being exposed to an extreme form of censorship, *Behzti* was judged by many a remarkable achievement. Bhatti was awarded the 2005 US-based Susan Smith Blackburn Prize which is awarded annually for the outstanding new English-language play by a woman writer. The play was translated into French in 2006 and more strikingly, while heated debates were going on in Britain, further productions of *Behzti* were peacefully performed in Belgium and France, in addition to readings in London and Canada.¹⁷⁸ *Behzti* was translated into Italian in 2012 and staged at Bari, Italy. Furthermore, *Behzti* has been included in the syllabus of many colleges and universities in the UK and, to Bhatti’s joy, the play “has also become a set text in university drama departments across the UK” (Bhatti 2011). Despite this success, the occasion of the first revival of the play in the UK remains undetermined. To Bhatti, “Doubtless it would be a tough challenge. But I hope one day someone will want to take on that challenge with me” (Bhatti 2011).

¹⁷⁸ Sumana Ray draws attention to a point: “It is worth noting that both Britain in general, and Birmingham in particular, have a large Sikh community, with 30 per cent of Sikhs in Britain residing in the West Midlands. In contrast, the number of Sikhs in Belgium and France is clearly not as substantial. Undoubtedly, the lower profile of Sikh culture in these nations may have helped to bring the universal question of the play into focus. If, on the other hand, a play like *Behzti* were to be set in a Muslim context, it would be very problematic in these nations, especially in France” (Ray 2016: 99).

After six years of silence, Bhatti directly and explicitly tackled the controversies she experienced during the *Behzti* Affair in a new play, *Behud*. In an interview in *The Guardian* in 2011, Bhatti suggested that “the only way to turn was back to drama – to confront censorship head-on”. As she went on to explain:

I knew immediately I had to write about what was going on. Looking back now, I realise that I was in shock, but part of me was soaking up all the arguments, the issues, various players and agendas. And I knew it had to be a piece of theatre: any other form would be too simple and straightforward (Bhatti 2011).

For Bhatti, the new play that resulted, *Behud*, contained everything she felt about that time, “from my own self-doubt and self-loathing to institutional racism and the friction between artist and state – and ultimately the triumph of the imagination” (Bhatti 2011).

Behud is a fictionalised representation of and an imaginative response to the reception of Bhatti’s *Behzti* and what she experienced in its aftermath. The play explores the feelings of a playwright who is losing control over her own play and characters. It is not only an attack on censorship, but also a self-representation and a self-questioning play. The play adopts a playful tone, focusing on the hilarious aspects of the controversy as well as the distressing predicament of the playwright, and sets off on an exploration of the complications, circumstances, attitudes, absurdities, experiences and emotions surrounding the *Behzti* Affair. In her interview with Lorne Jackson in 2013, Bhatti remembers that the policemen assigned to protect her at that time “were quite funny [...] For instance, they were tremendously excited because they had never been involved in a faith-rage scenario before. I was their first one” (2013). In the play, Bhatti brings together comic and dark sides of the issue, as stated in her own words: “My way of coping with dark things is to examine them humorously, so it wasn’t all bleak for me” (qtd. in Jackson 2013).

Behud, which means in Punjabi “Beyond Belief” or “Without Limits”, was first put on stage at the Belgrade Theatre Coventry, in a co-production with the Soho Theatre,

on 27 March 2010 (*Behud* 177). It was directed by Lisa Goldman and designed by Hannah Clark. Originally intended to be premiered in London, the opening of *Behud* was moved to Coventry in accordance with the programme of Chetna Pandya, who stars as Tarlochan in the play. After a three-week run at the Belgrade theatre, the play was transferred to the Soho Theatre, London, for another three-week run.

The media coverage of the premiere of *Behud* first highlighted that the play was “performed without incident in Coventry last night” (Coveney 2010b) and made its way onto “the public stage without a problem” or any riots outside the theatre building (Fisher 2010). However, in view of the *Behzti* Affair, the Belgrade Theatre spent some considerable time providing for any potential controversies and taking the necessary measures in co-operation with police and the city Council, in advance of the production. In addition to the play being a response to the previous controversies, Coventry, like Birmingham, is another culturally and ethnically diverse city in the West Midlands with a considerable Sikh population, and only thirty minutes away from Birmingham. In the event of any controversies, people would easily be able to mobilise. A case study was conducted by the *Index on Censorship* to expose the kind of difficulties the Belgrade Theatre board experienced in the process preceding the opening of the play.

For Joanne Reid, the executive director of the Belgrade theatre, this process was “like preparing for a siege” (qtd. in Farrington 2012: 16). Considering the lessons learnt from the *Behzti* experience, the Belgrade theatre administration meticulously mapped out a route. Their first move was to contact the local police force in Coventry. The artistic director of the Belgrade theatre, Hamish Glen, informed the police about the play and asked for protection on the grounds of health and security. Bizarrely, the response of the police was to inform them that the cost of a nightly police presence “appropriate to the

risk of violence was £10,000” (Farrington 2012: 13).¹⁷⁹ In the face of this response, Glen knew very well that “any board, just to carry out their own fiscal duties, would be obliged to inform me that the play would not be going ahead” (qtd. in Farrington 2012: 13). Hamish Glen resorted to writing to the Chief Constable of the West Midlands to explain that their theatre is not “a commercial organization” but “a registered charity and theatre” relying on subsidies, which meant that if they were not granted police protection, they would have to withdraw the play (qtd. in Farrington 2012: 13). At first, the police offered a discount on the charge to £5,000 a day, but after correspondence including the following letter from the Belgrade management, they agreed to serve free of charge (Farrington 2012: 13):

The public outcry that followed the closing down of the Birmingham production expressed disgust at this attack on the country’s hard-won freedoms by a group of violent protesters. The Belgrade, indeed the entire theatre industry, argues that the same attack on these freedoms cannot be allowed again and the writer who subsequently was forced to go into hiding in the face of death threats must be allowed to practise her craft in freedom and her work to meet a public free of violence or intimidation. The public must be allowed to exercise their own freedom of choice to attend the play or not (qtd. in Farrington 2012: 13).

This relationship with the police force requires comment as it raises some complicated questions. If the police had insisted on the charge, it might have culminated in the withdrawal of the production, as it would have been difficult for a non-profit theatre to pay this amount of money for policing. When this potential pressure on smaller theatres is taken into consideration, it proves to be a highly problematic issue. It is arguably a new form of censorship, indirect and invisible but influential.

Having negotiated with the police, the Belgrade Theatre’s next step was to contact their chief grant provider, Coventry City Council. Any possibility of a withdrawal of subsidy, as Hamish Glen states, brings about “a significant amount of pressure” (qtd. in

¹⁷⁹ Interestingly, the cost for a nightly police presence to protect the theatre was equated with the charge for policing a football stadium, while the former is a subsidised non-profit organisation, the latter is a profitable business (Farrington 2012: 14).

Farrington 2012: 15). To their frustration, the theatre board initially received no response to their letters sent to “all local councillors, MPs, and MEPs, informing them of their decision to stage the play and their reasons for doing so” (Farrington 2012: 15). For politicians, the issue seemed to be doubled-edged: community sensitivities versus freedom of artistic expression. To be on the safe side, they seemed to opt to avoid dealing with such delicate matters, which required careful handling. But upon the theatre company’s insistence on a response from the Council, they questioned the intentions of the playwright and the insistence of the Belgrade theatre on this production, in the face of its likely perception as a deliberate provocation and consequent public outcry (Farrington 2012: 15). On the one hand, politicians avoided supporting any event that might cause offense to ethnic communities; on the other hand, any rejection meant complicity in silencing freedom of speech and artistic expression. In accordance with these reservations, “there was some dissent among councillors as to whether the play should be staged at all, as well as concern about community relations” (Farrington 2012: 15).

The city council demanded to read the script in advance. The theatre management refused to provide the script as it might potentially circulate out of its control. Only when the premiere of the play drew near did the script become available to a limited number of people, including “the deputy chief executive of the council and, from the police force, the civil contingencies officer, as well as the community liaison officer responsible for the relationship with the Sikh community, who was himself a Sikh” (Farrington 2012: 16).

Moreover, serious security measures were necessary to protect the playwright herself. Dialogue with the community was conducted by the police and the theatre did not in any way take it upon themselves to interfere, in contrast to the path the Birmingham Rep had chosen. Shortly before the play opened, the Network of Sikh Organisations

(NSO) informed the Belgrade and Soho theatres of rumours of a likely reoccurrence of a Sikh riot. Similarly, some people from the Birmingham Sikh community informed the Birmingham police about a potential protest at the opening of *Behud*. Some correspondence took place between this Sikh organization and the theatre. In solidarity with the playwright and theatres, *Index on Censorship* and English PEN, upon this warning of violence, called for politicians to act in favour of the right to freedom of expression in the face of potentially violent protestation, with the following briefing:

The forthcoming performance of *Behud* has caused consternation among Sikh groups, and may become the subject of protests. Should this occur, it is essential that political leaders make a strong and early stand in favour of free speech. They must guarantee the safety of the actors and audience, and argue that the causing of 'offence' is not a legitimate reason to censor (qtd. in Farrington 2012: 18).

Coming to see the preview of the play, the Sikh visitors agreed that there was nothing offensive in the play. Its six-week run at the Belgrade and Soho theatres passed without any incidents and without any death threats to the dramatist. While the play was running at the Soho, the rehearsed play readings of *Behzti* were also taking place at the Soho. The readings were put on because, as Nina Steiger explains, "when people really knew *Behzti*, *Behud* took on a different order of magnitude in terms of bravery, scale, a kind of courage and creativity, and the humour of it was much, much richer" (qtd. in Farrington 2012: 21).

However, the marketing strategy adopted for the advertisement of the play by the Belgrade and Soho theatres embittered both the play's director Lisa Goldman and Bhatti herself. It was later revealed that their strategy was to target established theatre-goers rather than introducing the play to the wider community. Nina Steiger said that they "were quite strongly advised by the police not to use *Behzti* to try to sell this play" (qtd. in Farrington 2012: 21). Under these restrained circumstances, there was neither extensive media coverage of the play nor a large audience. Although Bhatti was willing to write for

the national press, she was not officially asked to write or speak by the mainstream media. Frustrated at this restrained marketing, Bhatti, despite acknowledging the delicacy of the situation, disappointedly stated that “it kind of defeats the object of putting on the play” (qtd. in Farrington 2012: 19). This over-controlled strategy was criticised by PEN campaigns manager Robert Sharp, who argued that it inherently strengthened the “excuses for its [*Behzti*’s] continued censorship” (2010). He further stated that

this was no great stride for freedom, more an anxious shuffle. The performance was a rehearsed reading, not a full production, and received no publicity whatsoever. It was completely absent from the theatre's website, and was only advertised to those who had been to see *Behud*, Bhatti's most recent play. Buying a ticket felt a little like purchasing bootleg liquor from under the counter, and the atmosphere in the auditorium was, I imagine, how dissidents must have felt in the 1640s, when religious puritans closed the theatres and drama was performed illegally. Proper free speech has to be more open than this (2010).

Just before the premiere of *Behud*, a number of letters of protest were sent to the theatre and some news appeared in the press about Sikh anger as the opening of the play coincided with the night of the Baisakhi festival, a significant event in their community. In writing for *Index on Censorship*, Bhatti wrote about this tense atmosphere preceding the opening of the play and the moment when Hamish Glen informed the director Lisa Goldman and Bhatti herself “that he had been asked by the police to pull the play. My heart sank and it felt like real life was horribly, weirdly mirroring art [...] To his enormous credit, Hamish stood firm, but the implicit threat and police presence created an incredibly difficult atmosphere for the artistic team and actors to work within” (2012). Despite all difficulties preceding the production and limitations on its wider publicity, *Behud* was put on the stage.

Critical reception of *Behud* by different reviewers has been rather ambivalent. In her review in *Index on Censorship*, Jo Glanville appreciated the play as “a satire about censorship” and “a metaphor for the constraints on artistic freedom”, intended to tackle the politics and complications of free speech (2012: 8). In a similar vein, Philip Fisher

described the play as “a satirised version of the horrors that faced Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti” (2010). Michael Coveney extended the scope of the satirical target of the play to “community objections to the piece, and the flim-flammery of the multiculturally-comatose Arts Council and the theatre’s artistic director” (2010b). However, Coveney critically added that “Bhatti’s case against these guys would be a whole lot stronger if her own play was” (2010b). Philip Fisher asserted that although Bhatti “did not have the courage to express her opinions in a straight drama”, she compensated for it with the use of experimental formal techniques, enabling a kind of “catharsis” (2010). Similarly, Jason Best argued that although Bhatti “allows different voices to air competing views, *Behud* ultimately comes across as personal catharsis rather than genuine debate” (2010). Kate Kellaway of *the Guardian* appreciated *Behud* as a clever response to her past memories surrounding the scandal of *Behzti* and praised the vigorous production by Lisa Goldman and plain design by Hannah Clark; she, however, identified a weak point of the play, “its potential inauthenticity” (2010). She further argued that the play would be more powerful if the debate on free speech was organised in a documentary or verbatim theatre “rather than rely on the ventriloquy of this play in which, at all times, Bhatti holds the whip hand” (Kellaway 2010). Agreeing with Kellaway, Michael Billington was also critical that Bhatti got “too involved in Pirandellian games about art and reality and too little in genuine debate”, and he further argued that he:

longed to see her fictional deputy engage with the Sikh elder who argues that the sacred temple is a long-cherished challenge to racist abuse. I also yearn for her to really take on the young militant who says she will be used by whites to make them feel multicultural. There are big issues lurking within the play but the tricky structure never gives them sufficient room to breathe (2010).

Michael Coveney and Dominic Cavendish both expressed a strong dissatisfaction with the ending of *Behud*: it was not “proper” for Coveney, who suggested that “there’s a chance it might be improved before arriving at the Soho Theatre in London in mid-

April” (2010b); similarly, Dominic Cavendish stated that he was “left overly baffled by the abrupt, ambiguous denouement, something Bhatti and director Lisa Goldman would do well to strengthen” (2010b).

As this is a response to past memories of censorship, written by a dramatist who was exposed to an extreme form of that censorship, critics seemed to have held some preconceived expectations of this play. However, the play is not simply an anti-censorship play or a satire on censorship in simple terms, as Glanville, Fisher and Coveney have argued. “[I]n a climate scripted by the literalism of verbatim”, the critics are seeking to see a direct treatment of the issue or a harsh satirical counter-attack on censorship or the protestors (Iball 2007: 526). Considering the popularity of documentary drama and verbatim plays, one imagines that what the critics wanted to see was something akin to David Hare’s *Stuff Happens* (2004). The play does present a mode for criticism of this censorial intervention, but does not principally function as a satirical attack based on past memories. Actually, in what follows this chapter shall argue that the play is not a satire or an argument against censorship in simple terms, a point critics seem to have missed. They are unsatisfied and think that the play does not live up to the expectations. But whose expectations are they? Does the dramatist have any responsibility to actualise any expectations? As Bhatti puts it, “It seemed everyone had their own ideas about what I ought to be saying about the *Behzti* affair. Individuals had their own passionate opinions about that time” (2011).

What Kellaway, Best and Billington mean by ‘genuine debate’, which, according to them *Behud* lacks, seems to be a committed performance directly fighting and attacking censorship and its philistine and sardonic practitioners. Furthermore, Kellaway argues that such serious debates might be more effective in a verbatim or documentary play.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ In the 2000s, verbatim was a very popular theatrical form. “They convinced through the sheer heaviness of their subject matter, and the fact that every word you were hearing had really been spoken by a real person in the real world. Audiences were not asked to perceive a metaphor, but to bear witness to a second-hand reality” (Rebellato 2013: 42). They were generally political plays.

In a similar vein, Michael Billington argues that “big issues lurking within the play” go unaddressed because of the play’s “tricksy structure”, involving too much “Pirandellian games” (2010). Clearly, for these critics, the big issue that she should be directly addressing is community censorship. But the big issues that Bhatti is concerned about are more to do with the authority of the author and the relationship of the author to the characters; most importantly, this seems to be what the experience of censorship has triggered in her, as well as its relation to censorship in a more direct sense. The critics seem to want a direct attack, a political statement or agitprop drama.¹⁸¹ *Behud*, however, is an artistic response to the experience of censorship. The playwright transforms what she experienced into art rather than making a documentary or expressing through verbatim or agitprop. Obviously, they undervalue the play and miss the point that dealing with censorship in a very explicit and direct way would be, for Bhatti, like shooting fish in a barrel.

The critics clearly laboured under a misjudgement, as they wanted something that condemns censorship. In what follows, I shall argue that *Behud* is a much more interesting play and a much more subtle response to the experience of censorship that turns inward to explore the authority of the author and the internal processes of self-censorship.

The play concerns how the writer’s experiences with *Behzti* led to this play *Behud*, which inevitably puts them into a dialogue. It leads to an interiorized exploration of questions about the authority of the author, the relationship of the author to the characters and a meditation on the internal processes of censorship. What kind of control or authority does a writer exercise over her characters? Bhatti turns inward and ponders the author’s role and the ways in which the writer or the dramatist acts as a kind of censor. It is an

¹⁸¹ The term ‘agitprop’, abbreviated form of agitation propaganda, originates from “the Soviet Union’s Department of Agitation and Propaganda, which was set up in 1920 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party” (Law 2011: 9). Having flourished in Russia, it later spread across Europa. Agitprop drama utilizes theatre stage as a political instrument to indoctrinate and mobilise the public opinion and to bring about political change. It has negative connotations due to its overt use of arts for the purpose of promoting some cause (especially the cause of communism).

internalisation of all these complicated processes of censorship. It is a much more interesting, sophisticated and indirect response to the whole *Behzti* experience than simply an attack on it. This kind of response to the experience of censorship is something that the writer feels she needs to explore in *Behud*. Before moving on to a close reading of the play, a brief section on the theoretical issues and problems of authorship and authority will be helpful for a better understanding of the issues raised by Bhatti. This section will provide a remarkable framework through which we might rethink the question of censorship in its various kinds and complexities.

Bhatti's *Behud* engages with the complicated questions raised by discussions on authorship and authority. The fictional playwright Tarlochan, who initially has complete authority over her characters, loses her "authorial authority", and in parallel to this, her magical/authorial power of invisibility goes away, rendering her a character in her own play (Chandler 2008: 47). A process of dialogue is thereby initiated between the characters and the author-character. In the tradition of Pirandellian and Beckettian metadrama, the work actually very consciously plays on the distinction between reality and fiction, staging its own 'theatricality'. This thin line between fiction and fact raises a number of questions. Does an author have authority on what she or he has written? If so, is it ultimate authority over the work or is it limited by other parties involved in the process? What is the scope or degree of authority and control an author has over the work? What kind of control or authority does an author exercise over the characters? While writing, the real author might have goals but can they be conveyed to the spectator just as she or he actually intended? Can we be sure how much of our speaking does really reflect what we mean or is it really understood as we intended? Does it not change in multiple ways in accordance with the person's way of experiencing? If something is non-fiction, the limits are clear, people might accuse one of fabrication, it has to be true to what actually happened. But in fiction, by definition one can lie freely, events might be

distorted. Is it not absurd and questionable to hold an author responsible for everything in a storyworld? Yes, it is, but does it mean that an author has no responsibility over the work at all? The interesting question is where this responsibility begins and ends. What is the limit? Or, suppose that a fictional work includes some references to the real world/real events, as it is in the case of *Behud*, then what are the limits of fictionalisation? Does the author remain faithful to the 'real events'? Is this possible? Is it possible to say what really happened? An author or an artist can recognise some shortcomings of or corruption in their society and can attack this, this is social satire. Does she or he have to be politically correct? Does she or he bear responsibility for whatever she or he has said or has written? As in the case of *Behud*, does she or he have to avoid offending these sensitivities? Then, these political and religious sensitivities create other hierarchies; if the self-appointed community elders are taken as the representatives and spokesmen or mouthpieces of a community, is the whole community not reduced into a monolithic voice? Does it not mean to silence and ignore the pluralities within this community? In this way, is the problem just ignored or concealed from public gaze? In the case of *Behud*, the woman issue has never been properly addressed.

With the announcement of the death of the author, Barthes pronounces "We know now that the text is not a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (1977: 146). This situation gets further complicated in the practice of theatre performance where authority is much more fragmented. As the playwright Tom Stoppard states, "In an optimum situation, with the most sensitive director, the best actors and the most brilliant designers, you get about 65 to 70 % of what you mean – and that's the top. The other 30% consists of secrets between you and the play. You can't ever get a play on paper like a music score" (qtd. in Gussow

1995: 9). As an author, Stoppard is willing to share his authority over the work while Beckett insists on his instructions being followed:

Any production of *Endgame* which ignores my stage directions is completely unacceptable to me. My play requires an empty room and two small windows. The American Repertory Theater production which dismisses my directions is a complete parody of the play as conceived by me. Anybody who cares for the work couldn't fail to be disgusted by this (qtd. in Badham 2015).

So wrote Beckett for the American Repertory's 1984 production of his *Endgame*, in which the setting is shifted from an empty room to a subway tunnel, to Beckett's frustration. This is a very clear example where the author exerts his authority over his work and this statement will endure as a warning to any director who is willing to stage *Endgame*, even after the death of the author.

Given these examples, the contentious issues concerning the author's role, relationship to characters, scope and degree of authority and the extent to which the author should be seen as the source of meaning of the work, gets more complicated and raises further questions about authorship when it comes to the theatre. In particular, with the increasing significance of the director figure in modern theatre, authority in the realm of drama has become more fragmented. The multiple sources of authority entails a kind of interdependency among the playwright, the director, the actors, and the audience. Although the creative process is generally begun in isolation by the playwright, the production and direction aspects of the play involve many other parties. While the director is the person who has "responsibility for the artistic aspects", the producer is in charge of the "financial and managerial tasks" of the production (Brockett 2004: 315). The director conceives the interpretation of the script and its adaptation to the stage, and oversees the actors in rehearsals. Furthermore, there is close collaboration between the director and the performers and designers "to transform the playwright's script into concrete stage reality using the resources (money, space, and personnel) the producer makes available" (Brockett 2004: 315). However, "It is the living presence of the actor

that is most essential to the audience's theatrical experience" (Brockett 2004: 343). So theatre, in particular, is a site of contested authority.

Theatre is, in the Aristotelian view of drama, "something simultaneously real and unreal, real at the level of possibility, unreal at the level of actuality" (Murray 2004: 32). A theatre performance is something that plays on the distinction between reality and what is happening onstage. To what extent can we distinguish them from one another? Are they intertwined? Who has the authority in theatre? Is it the dramatist? The director? Is it or the actor? Who has authority over the characters? *Behud* especially offers a more complicated case as it both includes metatheatrical qualities and references to past events. As it is written as a response to the previous play, it is inevitably in a dialogue with *Behzti*. However, it does not simply offer a criticism of this censorship experience but an interiorized exploration of the questions of authority brought to light by this experience.

As emphasised in Tarlochan's opening notes to the play, "Any resemblance to real events is entirely intentional. Names have been changed to protect the fictional characters", there is a kind of respect for the autonomy or integrity of fiction and fictional characters. Tarlochan, and by extension Bhatti, seems to be concerned with this. It seems that fiction has an autonomy independent of the real world. But, in the case of this particular play, it may be fictional but as the events on stage relate to real events, the latter is inevitably brought in. But the difficult and problematic aspect of this is how to bring those real events into the fictional world. How much will they be interfered with or distorted through fictionalisation?

During the course of events of in this particular play, *Behud*, the dramatist first partially then fully loses her control over her characters, and then she enters the play as a character, and the character-author engages in discussions with other characters in the play, and finally the author is arguably killed by one of her characters when she attempts to regain her authority. Does the murder of the fictional author Tarlochan by a character

mean the dissolution of the author's authority, or in Barthes's terms, the death of the author? In *Behud*, these two ideas seem to be merged and a kind of implied author emerges who is fictional but has traces of the real author, in accordance with Wayne Booth's understanding of the term. On the one hand, the play seems to imply that the author cannot solely be responsible for the work and once it is produced it becomes a piece of text independent of its author. On the other hand, the real author might be seen as a reference point precisely because it was written as a response to past experience.

ii. "Shame on Sikh Playwright": Analysis of *Behud*

Tarlochan's Notes:

*Any resemblance to real events is entirely intentional.
Names have been changed to protect the fictional characters.*

The fictional author Tarlochan's preceding notes to the play hilariously overaccentuate its own theatricality. Through this textual strategy, the events are displaced from the realm of the empirical world and located instead in a storyworld, allegedly for the security of the fictional characters. Conventionally and rationally, names are changed to protect real people, contrary to what Tarlochan puts here. Obviously, there is reference to the previous experience of *Behzti* where fictional representation and dramatic symbols were all taken to be literal by protestors of Bhatti's play. More significantly, there is respect for the autonomy or integrity of fiction, independent of real world. These remarks here play on the distinction between real and fictional and intentionally set the tone of this play as an artistic response, dealing with the very act of writing and the process of staging a fictional work. However, the question remains whether that would only be perceptible to those reading the play or whether that would be heard by the audience through a voice-over or a character in the play - so already there is an indication that *Behud* exists on two levels, as text and as performed play.

The play is set in a huge white space with an economy of stage props, consisting of just one table and four chairs. Surrounded by numerous doors,¹⁸² this plain white set represents an externalised version of the imagination or the mind of the fictional playwright Tarlochan. As stated in Kellaway's review of the play's first performance, the "ten doors leading into the room through which her characters come and go" suggest her flow of mind which, over the course of the play, gets more and more complicated and chaotic (2010). *Behud* is peopled with two farcically clumsy policemen, three infuriated Sikh protestors, a cynical local politician, an unpersuasive director with a shallow intellectual capacity, an aggressive journalist, and a man and a girl who are the characters in the play-within-the-play.

The play opens with the playwright Tarlochan lying on the stage as if she is "dead" (*Behud* 181). She slowly begins to move looking drawn and exasperated. This "Asian woman", with an unimpressive and dull outward appearance, is highlighted in the stage directions: she is "*a frumpy, dumpy specimen wearing an oversized hoodie and baggy tracksuit bottoms*" (*Behud* 181). In the course of the play, other characters also make rude remarks about her physical appearance: while Amrik says "You look like a shit", Sidhu scornfully describes her as "shabbier than I expected" (*Behud* 211). Jo Glanville offers an interpretation of this shabbiness: "the comic revulsion for the playwright is clearly a metaphor for the response to the offensive nature of her work" (2012: 8). However, the characters' comic repulsive remarks on Tarlochan's physical appearance suggest their own prejudiced view of the author rather than being a metaphor. Glanville's statement further carries some troublesome implications as it would be problematic to identify a work as intrinsically or naturally offensive precisely because of its partial dependency on audience response.

¹⁸² The doors are said to be 11 by Coveney, 10 by Kellaway (2010b; 2010). They might have seen different performances.

As Tarlochan embarks on writing, two clumsy and caricatured policemen, by implication conceived by her imagination, appear on stage: mentally ill Vince, the Head of the Community Safety Unit, and “an all too decent” police detective, Gary (*Behud* 179). Both are assigned to protect the Sikh playwright Tarlochan Kaur Grewal on their first ‘faith-hate’ duty (*Behud* 179). The two policemen discuss the details of their duty on the night of the premiere of the playwright’s controversial play at the Writers’ Theatre, which is, to Vince, “a venue famous for championing the dissenting voice in society” and “puts on plays that nobody wants to see” (*Behud* 183). Significantly, “*The characters do not notice/acknowledge TARL*”, and she is invisible to them “*like she doesn’t exist*” (*Behud* 181). To her dismay, she involuntarily becomes visible towards the middle of Scene Six, in the middle of meetings between Sikh community representatives and the theatre board. Until that moment of revelation, she has full mastery over her characters, exercising complete power and authority over them. She appears to control their actions, telling them what to do and putting the words into their mouths.

Reading the script of *Gund*, the police officers begin to comment on Tarlochan and her work:

Gary: It’s making me feel sick.

Vince: Pull yourself together you skinny homosexual.

Tarl: Language!

Vince: Pull yourself together you bloody blouse.

Smartly dressed in a sharp suit, VINCE opens his briefcase and examines some notes.

Gary: In this scene he takes the kid and... .. oh God it’s making me feel sick! What’s the point of it?

Vince: They call it drama Gary.

Gary: I reckon her head’s contaminated (*Behud* 181).

Tarlochan intervenes and corrects when they employ foul language which might be deemed ‘politically incorrect’. As she is dictating the characters’ words in this play in progress, it represents a form of self-censorship that this fictional author exercises on her own language. This might also involve an anticipation of potential public or media censure. Another contentious issue relates to intercommunity relations; a very comical

handling of stereotypical attitudes is seen in these farcical policemen's dialogue, leading nowhere:

Vince: ... Forgot to ask if she's [Tarlochan] a vegetarian.
Gary: Ring her back.
Vince: Probably best not to harass her. Do you think she is one?
Gary shrugs.
Vince: You're not one.
Gary: Doesn't mean she isn't.
Vince: Better make it cheese and salad.
Gary: Cheese never offended anybody (*Behud* 182).

Vince jumps to the hasty conclusion that all Sikhs might tend to be vegetarian. Tarlochan is not amused by their discussion of her play and she wants them to entertain her:

Tarl: More entertainment!
Suddenly GARY and VINCE, while remaining in character and in the same positions, do a splendid thirty-second tap dance to showtime music.
Tarl: Stop!
They immediately stop (Behud 183-4).

At her bidding, the characters suddenly begin to dance, which is at odds with the uniform or profession they represent. These scenes on stage contribute to the comic tone of the play.

In the course of events, small details reveal that the Home Secretary is visiting the city that day to meet community elders in advance of impending council elections. Vince says, "This afternoon he'll be licking brown bottoms at the usual ethnic churches" (*Behud* 183). As the overriding concern of the police force will be the security of this politician, Vince believes that it is to their advantage: "that's you and me Gary, in the fortunate position of taking charge of this station's first official faith hate scenario" (*Behud* 183). In a very vulgar form of nationalism,

Vince: [...] Our objective is to keep her safe and ensure tonight's performance goes smoothly [...] A Great British Institution like the Writer's Theatre won't give in to mob rule [...] What I don't understand is, why are they so angry?
Gary: Must have their reasons.
[...]
Vince: We can't have angry ethnic minorities telling the rest of us what to do [...] that's the whole point of living in England isn't it?"
Tarl: This is shit (*Behud* 184-5).

Gary asserts that the protestors must have reasons and proposes the preposterous reptilian theory of David Icke: “what if this whole situation ... is about reptiles manipulating the masses” (*Behud* 184). Infuriated by this conversation, Tarlochan screws up a piece of her own script and throws it at the two police officers: “Fucking boring crap shit” (*Behud* 185). She is commenting on her own writing there. Both policemen, caricatured figures, are not intellectually or consciously involved in the issue. Both are proud to be a part of the faith hate operation. Vince is white British who advocates that the play should be staged precisely because of his vulgar nationalist feelings. Gary, a Sikh himself, first acknowledges that protestors must have reasons for their protests but his verbosity on absurd David Icke’s theories is inconclusive. Vince further continues with overinflated patriotic words: “Humble officers of the law we might be, but we’re doing something that actually means something. For our nation” (*Behud* 187). Abruptly, Gary’s phone rings to inform that Vince is out of operation faith hate, or is, in another sense, disqualified from the play. Tarlochan wants to get rid of this character. Saying, “I’m the one in charge”, she reinforces her authorial authority over the characters and the play at that point, as well as directorial control in arranging the transfer from page to stage (*Behud* 188).

Bored with the farcical police characters, Tarlochan says “I need to scare myself” and a young Asian woman journalist Satinder enters the stage (*Behud* 185). Sat lands a heavier blow on the playwright, whom she describes as “filth” and begins to talk bitterly about the trouble Tarlochan and her play have caused in their community:

Sat: [...] My colleagues don’t realise how much harm she’s caused because they’ve never even noticed the people she’s hurt. I’m there ticking the diversity boxes to improve my chances. I’m pretending we’re all the same and that there’s no racism. I’m doing my job, well. Better than the rest of them put together. And then Tarlochan comes along and spoils it, drawing attention to things that are best left unsaid and no-one knows how to place me anymore. It’s as if I don’t belong because she’s made our community look like intolerant fools. Because of her, the new editors are starting to doubt me, which isn’t fair.

Tarl: What else?

Sat: There've been no recorded incidents of anything resembling what she's written. And to set it in our place of worship is obscene. Tarlochan knows exactly what she's doing. She's abused a part of us that goes so deep. [...] She's brought shame on her culture. She is shame. And the public has a right to challenge her.

[...]

Tarl: That's enough.

Sat: I'd like to fuck her up.

Tarl: You're not what I thought.

Sat: If she made it up, she's one sick bitch.

Tarl: You're a big mistake.

Sat: She's a piece of filth.

Tarl: No... no I'm not.

[...]

Tarl: Go away. Please.

Sat saunters off the stage. TARL turns her attention back to Gary and Vince. Gary hurriedly flicks through a file (Behud 185-7).

With little or no understanding or sympathy for Tarlochan's work, Sat is bitterly critical of the play, which, to her, undermines the interests of the community as well as her own prospects. Sat believes that Tarlochan might be a liar and perverted, having made up this obscene story set in their temple; otherwise, Sat's remarks on pretension suggest that some contentious issues should remain unaddressed for the sake of personal or social interests. However, this is at odds with her profession. She claims that "Once I've got the true facts, I can use my imagination to write the story just like she does. And I want to know why. Did it really happen? Did it happen to her?" (*Behud* 186). Bizarrely, Sat claims that they are doing the same things: first procuring "the true facts" and then to using "imagination to write the story" (*Behud* 186). She blurs these two very opposite professions: journalism and playwriting, the former a provider of truth with the latter a purveyor of fiction. However, it is worth noting that Tarlochan does not interrupt or correct this infuriated character. These sentences are not independent of her, she is putting these words into the mouths of the characters.

Scene One introduces three Sikh protestors: the elderly Mr Sidhu in his turban, a very successful businessman, Amrik, "a serious-looking dropout to whom life has not

been kind” and Kush, an energetic adolescent (*Behud* 188). A huge banner forms the backdrop: “SHAME ON SIKH PLAYWRIGHT FOR HER CORRUPT IMAGINATION” (*Behud* 188). These Sikh characters are in the midst of preparing banners and leaflets to protest the Sikh playwright Tarlochan’s *Gund*,¹⁸³ which they have not even read and, for Amrik, they “Don’t need to. They told us the story. Anyway the title says it all. What kind of dickhead writes a play called *Gund*?” Interestingly, their main concern seems to be competing with another community in the degree and effectiveness of their protest. They worry over the Muslim view of their protest: “They’re laughing at us, chatting shit like we got one per cent of this disrespect we’d bomb the heart out of those muthafuckers. We’d bomb the heart out of that whiteman theatre” (*Behud* 189). It is like a fierce contest of militancy among communities to assert their existence in a global world.

The elder Mr Sidhu remarks on the difficulties the Sikh community experienced during the process of cultural integration in the host culture, the play thereby offering a kind of imaginative empathy with the subject:

Sidhu: You know our first Gurdwara was a room above a laundry? But we worked hard and gathered our money till we built a palace and put our mark on this city. All the name-calling and beating up and laughing at your accent becomes meaningless when you have that mark. Me and your fathers and mothers have been through so much pain. And now this girl, one of our own, hurts us more than we can bear. Doesn’t matter whether the Goreh call you Paki or Bin Laden. Their words are nothing compared to the suffering her words are causing” (*Behud* 192).

Other than Tarlochan, who is, to them, “behsharam”, a “polluted mind” and a disgrace to their community, these religious fanatics are critical of other members of their own community who, Amrik believes, are “our own worst enemies” (*Behud* 194-5). In this scene, the tensions between their community and the host culture, among different

¹⁸³ *Gund* means “dirt, filth” in Punjabi (*Behud* 198).

communities and, most importantly, within the community are revealed. They discuss over the details of the demonstration plan:

Amrik: As a leader, your followers will need you to go further than they might themselves. Are you willing to go to any lengths?

Khush: I am willing.

Tarl produces a gun from her pocket. She points it around the stage.

Amrik: Today's your chance.

Tarl puts the gun in Amrik's hand.

Tarl: This is for later, you'll know when.

[...]

Amrik: You think you can do this? Tell me honestly brother. If not, there are others.

[...]

Khush: I'll burn her precious play in front of her treacherous eyes!

Khush and Amrik exit. Tarl puts the notebook back in her pocket.

(Behud 194).

What is worth noting here is that, contrary to her constant intervention in the dialogues of Gary and Vince to appropriate their sentences, Tarlochan lets the community members speak their mind, as she did with the journalist Sat, with limited ineffective intrusions. As their language turns vulgar and abrasive, she just provokes their fury: "Raise the stakes!" or "Say what you want" and she even offers "sulleh" as an alternative pejorative word for "musulmaan" to describe the Muslim (*Behud* 190/194/189).

As comic effect, in the midst of their discussion over the details of the protest plan, Vince, who is obviously intent on being in this play, suddenly appears with a meal in his hand, looking for the playwright, much to Tarlochan's shock: "What are you doing?" (*Behud* 192). In this instance, Vince seems to appear on stage out-of-text, if this is a play in progress in the playwright's mind. But the playwright regains her authorial authority by dismissing him again.

In Scene Three, set in the theatre office, the audience is introduced to Andrew Fleming, the Artistic Director of the Writers' Theatre, and Joanne Stevenson, Deputy Leader of the Council, who "*cannot see TARL who sits at the side*" (*Behud* 197). At first glance, Joanne is there to offer her support for the playwright, while revealing that "The

other Councillors wanted me to ask to postpone the production until after the elections” (*Behud* 199). They do not want to deal with any delicate issues before the elections as it amounts to gambling with their votes and political careers. After having articulated those platitudes expected from politicians such as “I might not agree with what you say, but I’ll defend your right to say it to the death” –so clichéd that they do not mean anything – Joanne reveals the true motives for her presence there (*Behud* 198). Her ulterior motive is political manoeuvring to gain an edge in advance of the forthcoming elections. Actually, she appreciates neither Tarlochan’s artistic talents nor her moral intentions in writing this play:

Joanne: I think she wanted to provoke them. She wanted to slap them round the face and for them to take the licks.

[...]

Andrew: Her play has far more integrity than you’re giving it credit for.

Tarl: (*Fast.*) Stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down.

Andrew and Joanne stand up and sit down obediently.

Joanne: We’re fighting for her right to shamelessly incite decent citizens.

Andrew: Thought you were on our side (*Behud* 199).

In control of her characters, Tarlochan punishes them both. Joanne is very reminiscent of Fiona Mactaggart, who refused to condemn the violent protests which forced the theatre to withdraw *Behzti* and Bhatti to go into hiding. Furthermore, she is there not because she believes in free speech or democracy, but because of the prospective political benefits to be gained: “You know in my game, it’s important to take a stand. People remember you then” (*Behud* 199). While Andrew and Joanne discuss the quality of Tarlochan’s play, she makes her point in a very rude way. The Director undertakes a really weak and insignificant advocacy of Tarlochan. His words are no more than repetitions of some theatrical clichés: “Her work is quite stylised”, “It’s heightened”, “Her play has far more integrity than you’re giving it credit for” (*Behud* 198/199). He does not strongly stand up for the cause of the playwright and what the play actually targets. He even reveals that he has some practical reasons for insisting on the play being staged: “tonight is going to be

a landmark event in the history of British theatre. People in the industry will realise I'm not afraid of courting controversy. I mean can you imagine if the play causes a riot?" (*Behud* 199). Both the politician and the Director are metaphorically rubbing their hands in anticipation of political gain and of prestige in theatre establishment.

In an impudent and impertinent manner, Joanne even labels all theatre practitioners as "Rich unemployed liberals and depressed homosexuals" (*Behud* 200):

Andrew: You've just expressed a dangerous prejudice.

Joanne: Freedom of speech! What I mean is you Oxbridge types are hardly representative of the country" (*Behud* 200).

She articulates very vulgar ideas which are deemed to be 'politically incorrect', and then justifies herself as promoting free speech. So it seems that the highly valued notion of 'free speech' has in reality become dysfunctional or impractical, as in the case of Joanne who, without sincerely believing in it, randomly uses free speech as justification for her rudeness.

While Joanne is waiting to see Tarlochan, who is already present but invisible to them, she and the Director dispute a point reflecting intellectual shallowness:

Joanne: If she's not going to show, there's no point in me hanging around.

Andrew: Sorry. But you must understand this is a very difficult time for her.

Joanne: Does she actually exist?

Tarl: What?

Joanne: I mean she's not just a figment of your imagination?

Andrew: Don't be ridiculous, you've read the play.

Joanne: Oh yes *Gunddd*! A dyslexic mute could have come up with that twaddle.

Tarl: You're getting too big for your boots.

Joanne: Insubstantial doggerel....

Tarl: Right!

Suddenly Joanne falls over clumsily and bangs her head.

Andrew: Are you okay?

Joanne: I think so.

He helps her up.

Andrew: You know I don't think Tarlochan finds it easy to trust. Perhaps she was let down in the past.

Joanne: Judging by her self-indulgent play, she obviously relies on her ego.

She falls over again (Behud 201).

Here, the author punishes her character. The character is behaving badly and being very rude about the play. This can be done comically on the stage. Tarlochan is at the back, listening and getting increasingly angry at what her character is saying about her. Then she just makes Joanne, who has a very high opinion of herself, fall over, to punish her. If the author is in charge of the play, here, paradoxically, the character is presumably speaking Tarlochan's words – or else, has already taken on a life of her own. So Tarlochan still retains some, but not total, control. The writer has to give characters a degree of freedom.

At one point at the beginning of Scene Four, Tarlochan slightly loses control over Vince when he reappears:

Gary: Miss Grewal?

Loud knocking at the door.

Tarl: What's going on?

Gary opens the door to reveal Vince holding the lunch.

Tarl: Oh fucking hell!

Vince steps into the flat. Again the characters do not notice Tarl.

Tarl: He's not meant to be here.

Gary: You're not meant to be here.

Vince: I've got nowhere else to go.

Tarl: Should have put you in a uniform Gary, then you could have clubbed him to death with your truncheon.

Vince: All I know is I'm supposed to deliver this lunch. Feels like I'm in limbo, like I haven't been given a chance.

Tarl: Okay stay for a minute while I consider Gary's destiny.

Suddenly there's loud knocking at the door again.

Tarl: Fuck.

Gary opens the door and Sat enters. Suited and booted she seems rather demure, exuding a sweet though anxious air.

Tarl: Fuck!

Sat: Is she here?

Tarl: Get her out! (*Behud* 202-3).

Something very clever is happening here: Tarlochan is not in control of her play at this point. What she says is still forming the script and the character's dialogue. However, Vince and Sat take the stage irrespective of her command. Then, she dismisses Sat by dragging her offstage. Shortly thereafter, and upon Vince's pejorative use of "brown rabble" in relation to the Sikh community, she punishes him too:

Vince: I don't feel too good Gary... Gary...
Vince kneels over and reaches out to Gary.
Tarl: Leave him.
Gary: Are you alright Sir?
Gary takes his hand.
Tarl: I said leave him!
Vince: I don't want to die.
Tarl: Then do what I say.
Gary leads Vince offstage (Behud 205).

Another indication that she has partially lost control of her characters occurs when characters begin to mention things she has already dismissed:

Vince: So where is she [Tarlochan]?
Gary: I think maybe... er... the reptiles have taken her.
Tarl: I told you to forget all that! (*Behud 203*).

These are early signs that she has started to lose control over her own characters and her own play.

Scene Five focuses on a play-within-the-play in which two characters, a man (23) and a girl (10), are acting. Significantly, the girl is portrayed by the actor playing Sat and the man by the actor playing Amrik. The play has already been established on the pretence that the action onstage is a rehearsal and thus there is no audience in the auditorium. This play-within-the-play scene and role-doubling generates multiple layers of illusion. Interestingly, Tarlochan then becomes visible to these characters. While they are acting, Tarlochan watches them:

Tarl: This music isn't right.
The music stops. The Girl and the Man stop laughing. They come out of character and speak like the actors they are.
Girl: (*To Tarl.*) Is it okay?
Tarl recoils, shocked (Behud 206).

The use of the play-within-the-play allows a further metadramatic exploration of the nature of theatre. Richard Hornby identifies two types of play-within-the-play: "insert", which is set separate from the main story, and "framed" including an inner play and an

outer play (1986: 33).¹⁸⁴ In the case of *Behud*, this inserted play-within-the-play enhances the metadramatic quality of the play and dislocates the distinction between real and fictional. Here, the characters are in rehearsal and aware of their fictionality. Tarlochan is confused, particularly when the characters ask which ending she will decide on as this is “only the first preview” of the play in her imagination (*Behud* 208). The characters take on a life of their own. The girl demands that Tarlochan choose the softer ending in order not to offend people:

Tarl: I don't care about that. It's my play.

Girl: She's my character, I've shaped her. I created her.

Tarl: You didn't.

Girl: She's mine now.

Tarl: Wait, this is stupid... you're nobody. You're just someone I'm making up...

Girl: I guess we can always go on stage and do whichever ending we like.

Tarl: Andrew wouldn't allow it. You'd be sacked.

Girl: I'm only joking. Don't take everything so seriously. You should learn to let go (*Behud* 208).

It seems there is a distinction between the characters and the flesh and blood players, even if both are, in a sense, fictional, if it is accepted that the ongoing circumstances are all the invention of the playwright's imagination. This only serves to further complicate the oscillation between real and fictional. The theatre calls attention to itself and its own artificiality. More significantly, here authorial authority in the realm of the theatre is further questioned and fragmented, and the centrality of the playwright as originator or decoder of work and meaning is unsettled. The theatrical process from page to stage involves a number of parties, among which authority over the play is shared. In this collaborative art, the authorial voice becomes one of the parties in the creative process. The script is the initial source but it is transferred to the stage through the director's interpretation, as well as through the filter of the actor's lens. The play draws attention to role playing, presentation and illusion.

¹⁸⁴ Richard Hornby gives the example of the ‘Mouse trap’ in *Hamlet* for “insert” and the Sly episode in *The Taming of the Shrew* for “framed” (1986: 33).

In the middle of Scene Six, the community representatives demand the setting be moved from the gurdwara to the community centre, which both the councillor and the theatre director reject. At most, Joanne suggests, they might “write a statement outlining your grievances” (*Behud* 215). Just at this chaotic moment, Tarlochan becomes visible to her characters, who “*stand up and look at Tarl, she recoils in shock*” (*Behud* 211). She tries to regain control again:

Frozen to the spot, Tarl stares at the characters.
Tarl: (Urgent.) Stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down...
Nothing happens.
Tarl: Stand up, sit down...
Andrew: What are you saying Tarlochan?
Tarl: Stop this now! (*Behud* 211).

Disorientated by the abrupt loss of control over her characters, Tarlochan is locked in her own play. As the tension between the two groups grows, Tarlochan makes an abortive attempt to stop it:

Tarl: Please... this is going wrong...
Joanne: Will you stop butting in?
Andrew: I really think you should wait outside.
Tarl: Yes, okay. Maybe I'll go and come back... and then things'll be back to normal.
Andrew: Whatever makes you feel comfortable.
Perplexed Tarl half nods. The characters watch her exit (*Behud* 213).

This time, Tarlochan is reprimanded by the characters who want her and direct her to go outside. Stunned, she obeys their commands. It is emphasised that this is a theatre stage which naturally has a performative nature. More intriguingly, a fictional character in the play tries to persuade another fictional character about the fictionality of the play: Andrew to the community leaders: “This play is a piece of fiction. It's not real, do you at least accept that?” (*Behud* 209).

After a while, Tarlochan, infuriated, reenters the stage and tries to regain her authorial power: “Why aren't you saying what I'm writing?” (*Behud* 216). Comically, Tarlochan gets the gun from Amrik's pocket to shoot the characters, who

“leap to their feet and shout and scream in fear. Andrew’s arms fly up in surrender. Mr Sidhu immediately lies on the floor face down. Tarl fires the gun at the characters but only a few sorry clicks sound. Tarl drops the gun. Amrik quickly retrieves it. The characters breathe a collective sigh of relief” (Behud 216).

Although Tarl knows that the gun is merely a dramatic prop, she wants to verify whether they are in the storyworld or whether everything is in fact real. What should only be in her imagination instead stands in front of her as real. Whether her mind is externalised on the stage or she is imprisoned in her own fictional play has merged to such an extent that she desperately asks “Am I still me? ... or am I writing me?” (*Behud* 219).

Scene 7 returns to the play-within-the-play again, where the girl and the man rehearse in the presence of both the playwright Tarl and the Director Andrew. It seems that this rehearsal is under the Director’s control. As part of the creative process, the director and the female actor together try to interpret her character in the script to transfer it to the stage: the girl asserts that “She’s a strong character, she has to be forceful (*Behud* 223). When Tarlochan demands a change in the music, ‘the twinkle twinkle’ in the backdrop considered unfit for this scene, Andrew declines this offer saying “You can’t keep exerting control like this. Have faith in my interpretation” (*Behud* 224). Asserting his authority in the production process, Andrew says “At some point during rehearsals the writer always becomes surplus to requirements” (*Behud* 227). At that moment, the Director assumes authority over the production; then, when events become more complicated with the advent of the demonstration, the politician assumes control, saying “Without this building there are no artists. If this play goes ahead and there’s bloodshed, do you suppose anyone in this region’s going to support you? In a year your funding will be hacked away and this place will die” (*Behud* 239). As the theatre is partially state-subsidised, this has a deterring impact on their decision.

The withdrawal of her play leaves Tarlochan devastated and she succumbs to a panic attack in Scene 14 (*Behud* 245).

Andrew: It would be irresponsible of me to place the theatre in further jeopardy so I'm afraid the decision has been made for me.

Tarl: Is this real?

Joanne: No writer has the right to frighten a community.

Tarl: Has this really happened?

She grabs Joanne and feels her body all over.

Joanne: (Angry.) Get off me!

Tarl: Stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down... (*Behud* 246).

She tries to regain control over her characters once more, to no avail. Tarlochan, frustrated, asks "is what's in my head stronger than what's real? ... Or is it the other way around?" (*Behud* 246). She tries to retreat from this huge white space, also to no avail. To her distress, she is confined in this theatrical space, where reality and fictionality merge. She has been absorbed into the fictional world created in her own imagination.

Joanne: [...] Creators have been overtaken by commentators. No-one reads books any more, they read about them, no-one even has any real opinions, they just like to hear them being discussed. It's people who don't actually do anything who set the agenda.

Tarl: But if I didn't write the play, no agenda would exist.

Joanne: The time for writing is over (*Behud* 247).

In Scene 16, Tarlochan is "*furiously writing on the last page of her notebook*" (*Behud* 251). She "*reads out the beginning of Scene 16 to the audience. As she reads the characters do what she says*" (*Behud* 251). Although Khush attempts to prevent it, Amrik sets fire to the script of *Gund*. Without warning, Amrik shoots at Tarlochan without effect, then Tarlochan "*lies down next to the GIRL's corpse and puts her arm around the dead body*" (*Behud* 252). Unexpectedly, endless sheets of papers begin to be copied from the photocopier, and cover the stage. Surprisingly, Khush begins to read the script.

Khush: (*Reads.*) Prologue. Dawn. The stage is black. The lights go up slowly to reveal an Asian woman, Tarlochan, lying on the floor in front of a plain desk and chair in a huge stark white space.

Khush fades out. Tarl slowly gets up just as she does at the start of the play. She goes to sit at the desk, picks up a red notebook and starts to write (*Behud* 252).

The ending of the play spawns myriad interpretations. Whether the author-character Tarlochan has been killed by Amrik or just "*lies down next to the Girl's corpse*" as per the stage directions is left ambiguous (*Behud* 252). Is the play still emerging from her

imagination or out of control? The audience has previously been informed that the gun is only a prop when Tarlochan attempts to kill her characters in the middle of Scene Six. Now, it seems implausible that Tarlochan has been killed by this gun. Intriguingly, as the storyworld presented on the stage is already make-believe and pretence, it would not strain credibility should a character be killed by a pretend gun during the performance.

What complicates the matter further, the ending also suggests that the author will be endlessly revived through the circular narrative of the plot. If an author puts himself or herself on stage as the writer does in *Behud*, it seems to resist the death of the author in very obvious ways. Furthermore, *Behud* closes with the playwright Tarlochan, who has been revived through the stage directions, with pen in hand. In feminist literature, the pen principally raises implications concerning the portrayal of a defiant and assertive woman in the face of the paternalistic codes of a male-dominated world, highlighting her capacity for challenge and imaginative creativity. It signifies an image of resistance, as implicated in Bhatti's words: "That's what I feel my role is – to keep on creating drama I believe in, to maintain my voice, to write from the heart and hopefully make work that is both challenging and entertaining" (2011).

The ending does not proceed to a conventional ending, but rather, in the tradition of Pirandellian plays, "conclude[s] abruptly, unexpectedly, the action aborted in the middle of things" (Paolucci 2009: 5). More significantly, "it is also a powerful statement of the impossibility of ever attaining truth" (Farrell 2006). Through this metatheatrical element, which as discussed before was condemned by the literary critics, Bhatti offers "a theater that forces *inwardness*, self-awareness, the dialectic of consciousness and self-consciousness, as we search for our true selves" (Paolucci 2009: 6). The play opens up multiple layers of illusion and forces the audience to meditate on the internal processes of writing, creation and censorship.

With this play, Bhatti seems to deconstruct the writing and creative process not to reproduce it but to demonstrate its mechanisms. *Behud* is the dramatisation of the very act of writing and the creative process involved in producing a literary work. Bhatti undertakes narratological and metatheatrical manipulations to contribute to the theatricality of the play.

There is a fictionalised Bhatti in the play whose authority is breaking down: Tarlochan. She loses her authorial authority, becomes a character in her own play, and is arguably killed by one of the characters, only to be revived later through the fiction. But there is also another figure (a kind of ghostly figure) of the author behind this fictional author: Bhatti. Actually, Bhatti's experience of the whole *Behzti* Affair revolves around being externally constrained and censored. Bhatti's experience reads as a play in which the author figure is suddenly aware of her role as censor or as controlling figure over her own characters. She then turns inward to break down her own position of authority, as author, over her characters. What happens when the author's authority is lost and the characters take on life of their own?

Tarlochan has mastery over her characters up to a point. With the disintegration of this authoritarian voice, each character begins to speak for himself or herself including also the author-character. There is a skirmish of ideas between characters, each asserting his or her own point of self-interest. The characters take over control of the play, gaining a certain autonomy, and the competing discourses prevail, rather than an authoritarian voice. As in the realm of Bakhtinian carnival, "While authoritarian discourse demands conformity, the carnivalized discourse renders invalid any codes, conventions or laws which govern or reduce the individual to an object of control" (Bauer 1997: 716). Ironically, the idea of the carnivalesque as practised by the violent misrule of the Sikh community and the murderer character as the censor only subverts Bakhtin's idealistic conceptualisation of the carnivalesque as a potentially liberatory space, defined by

Bakhtin as “the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal” celebrating “the gay freedom of thought and imagination” (1984: 49, 10). Bakhtinian theory seems to fall short in accounting for the text here. If the author is losing control, it means all the characters, including the author character, are in some sense equal, and if they are, is it a kind of Bakhtinian world of liberation and democracy or a kind of Hobbesian world of self-interest? If this is a world in which the author’s authority, by implication Bhatti’s authority, is dissolved and is lost, then what kind of world is this that they are left with? Is it the Bakhtinian world or is it the Hobbesian world?

Another way of looking at the play is to read it as a kind of psycho-drama in which the stage is imagined inside of a head, as best exemplified in Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame*. It is generally taken to be a play where one can perhaps identify each character with a particular part of the psyche. Whenever one finds himself or herself in a potentially censorial situation involving authority and control, she or he has in our mind the politician, the policeman, the authorial figure, the actor, all these conflicting parties in the psyche.

To conclude, Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti’s plays *Behzti* and *Behud* offer a very rich content for an exploration of various operations and forms of censorship, from hard to soft, overt to covert or indirect to direct. At the turn of the century, the focus of censorship has drastically shifted, as Joanne in *Behud* states: “This is no longer about presenting anal rape and foul language to the converted few. We’re risking lives” (*Behud* 239). The performance of *Behzti* marked a significant moment in the history of British theatre. Censorship was seen to be alive and well with the play banned outright upon public protest by local Sikhs whose religious sensitivities had been offended. The events surrounding the *Behzti* Affair triggered controversial debates over the question of free speech and censorship.

In the process leading up to the premiere of *Behud*, the security measures the Coventry Theatre had to consider reveal the implicit but influential face of new censorship. Some aspects of the process amounted to a virtual deterrent: the local police asked for a significant sum of money for a police presence for one night; the unsupportive attitude of the local council, which as the major fund-granting body of the theatre, might lead a small scale theatre company to abandoning the project. More significantly, public protest, or even a milder censure, might lead the playwright to self-censorship. Bhatti's fictionalisation of the *Behzti* Affair, *Behud*, peopled with community elders, the police, a politician, a director and a journalist, evidences a very acute manifestation of censorship in its contemporary form. One possible perspective is to consider not only types of censorship but also the people or bodies involved in and performing this new kind of censorship. Drawing upon the Foucauldian conceptualisation of power as dispersed and complicated, censorship has also metamorphosed into a much more diverse and diffused form in its operations. The role of the censor has been undertaken by different censorial agents and pressure groups. Helen Freshwater embraces an "inclusive model of censorship" which corresponds to "the diverse experiences of censorship, and which reflects the socio-historical specificity of instances of control, conditioning or silencing" (2003b: 1). Censorship today operates across a wide spectrum which entails an exploration of each case of censorship in its peculiar sociohistorical circumstances.

It is, however, significant to note that *Behud* is not simply a political commentary or documentary or an agitprop play, neither is it a direct and explicit attack on censorship, but rather an artistic response to the experience of censorship. It leads to a kind of interiorized exploration of questions about the authority of the author, the relationship of the author to the characters, and the internal processes of censorship. Bhatti introspects and examines the role of the author, and the ways in which the writer or dramatist acts as

a kind of censor. In this sense, this relates to both her own personal experience of censorship in the case of *Behzti* and to the contents of the play.



CONCLUSION

On 26 September 1968, the post of the Lord Chamberlain in the United Kingdom was officially abolished by an Act of Parliament. This ‘annus mirabilis’ of the British theatre heralded the moment that playwrights were no longer required to submit their plays to obtain a licence before performance. With particular focus on the Theatres Act of 1968, this dissertation set out to explore representations of and responses to censorship in post-war British drama, both in the immediate aftermath of the official abolition of stage censorship and over the following 50 years. In particular, it has looked to trace the consequences of the shift from formal state censorship to other kinds of censorship that are much more difficult to theorise and to articulate. This approach sprang from the recent upsurge of interest in the reconceptualisation of censorship in new theoretical ways. The present study not only addresses the theoretical debates over censorship but also scrutinises the ways in which censorship has transformed over the course of time and affected post-war British drama. It has pointed to three fundamental socio-historical twists in the understanding of censorship, each of which has been explored in the detailed studies of the works of three prominent British dramatists of the second half of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, all of whom confront issues relating to censorship more or less intimately and directly in their work: Joe Orton, Anthony Neilson, and Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti. It has presented a case study and lengthy discussions of each work, respectively Orton’s *What The Butler Saw*, Neilson’s *The Censor* and Bhatti’s two plays, *Behzti* and *Behud*.

Part One has provided the theoretical framework of the dissertation. In this section, drawing upon the legacy of the 1960s, which is the starting point of this study, the discursive transformation in the understanding of censorship and of the rationale behind it has been presented. It might be helpful here to recap the theoretical development

in censorship studies. Censorship has conventionally been perceived as a simple political dichotomy between conservatives and liberals. In this traditional conception of censorship, the censored is assumed to be wise and victimised while the censor is seen to be philistine and victimiser. This idea owes its emergence to the legacy of pre-1968. The rationale behind this political alignment is obviously the long-established existence of an institutionalised body of formal state censorship (the Lord Chamberlain's Office) that automatically positioned people as against or for.

Recently, under the 'new censorship debate', many scholars have expended some theoretical effort into reconceptualising censorship. The conventional view of censorship as a regulative force on the artist's work, relying on a straightforward and hierarchical relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, has been contested on the grounds of its theoretical shortcomings. Instead, an appreciative attitude towards the complex and constitutive nature of censorship, based on the idea that censorship is not merely a prohibitive act but rather a constructive one, has been foregrounded.

Drawing upon this stream of new theorisation over the last fifteen years, scholars such as Helen Freshwater, Beate Müller and Nicole Moore have stressed the limitations of the constitutive conception of censorship, which falls short of explaining more complicated cases of censorship such as censure, sponsorship, subsidies, no-platforming, and the use of new technologies. These scholars tend to argue for a more inclusive model of censorship, which stresses that censorship operates across a wide spectrum or continuum, from harder to softer forms of censorship. This entails exploration of each case of censorship in its own spatial and temporal specificity, and a particular concentration on the experience of the object of censorship. Scrutiny of a censorial event in its own particularities renders it an individual case. While none of these scholars go so far as to explicitly state that we cannot have a theory of censorship as such, this seems the logical conclusion of their discussions. This dissertation has presented a strong case

for the argument that the attempt to draw up a clear and neat taxonomy or theorisation of censorship is problematic.

If we are to continue this project of trying to theorise censorship (and perhaps we should), then what is needed might be a return to a Marcusean understanding of free speech and censorship, reinvigorating a Marxist and leftist analysis. Within the British context, liberal assumptions have traditionally glorified free speech as an asset while condemning censorship as a dull conformity. Marcuse did, paradoxically, find freedom of expression a compliance and stated that “freedom is to be found in censorship” (Sammells 1992: 4). For him, within the capitalist system, free speech not only turns out to be empty but also harmful as people are in practice subjected to pseudo-liberty. The logic behind this claim is that the capitalist system, advancing on false consciousness, only offers controlled domains of freedom. The promise of free speech closes off radical potentialities, instead leading to reconciliation with the tenets of the status quo. Free speech as an outlet of expression implicitly consents to the authority maintaining and reproducing the prevailing system.

Part Two has provided insights into the working mechanism of the Lord Chamberlain’s Office, underscoring its arbitrariness and inconsistencies. Secondly, it has emphasised the need to pay critical attention not only to the history but also to the historiography of censorship, to the ways narratives about the history of censorship have been structured, in order to interpret the role of censorship in the development of British theatre. Thirdly, it has provided insights into the ways in which various forms of censorship persisted after the official abolition of 1968, and more significantly it has helped to initiate a dialogue with the recent different reconceptualisations of censorship.

As is the case with the discursive transformation in theoretical debates of censorship, this chapter has also shown that censorship in modern Britain falls into three vital distinct periods content-wise: the 1960s, the 1990s and the 2000s. In the 1960s,

obscurity, nudity, violence, sexuality, vulgar language, homosexuality and the representation of significant public figures (particularly politicians) in a humiliating manner on the stage were the main concerns of the Lord Chamberlain. However, by the end of the 1990s, there had been a remarkable discursive transformation in the understanding of censorship. Over the last fifteen years, censorship, as well said in Joanne's words in *Behud*, "is no longer about presenting anal rape and foul language to the converted few. We're risking lives" (*Behud* 239). The core debate has mostly moved to ethnic and religious sensitivities and their representation on stage in a multiracial and multicultural Britain. In the aftermath of the removal of the post of the Lord Chamberlain, censorship was expected to vanish completely but it simply evolved into other forms of censorship through censure, pressure groups, limiting access to communication or police defence.

In Part Three, lengthy discussions of four plays, *What the Butler Saw*, *The Censor*, *Behzti* and *Behud* have been presented. These discussions centre on the representations of and responses to censorship in the aftermath of the official abolition of formal state censorship in the United Kingdom. One chapter has been dedicated to each dramatist, and the historical, cultural and literary contexts and the theoretical insights provided in Parts One and Two have been brought to bear on each of these case studies.

Chapter Three has been dedicated to Joe Orton's *What the Butler Saw*. The play has been discussed as positioned on two significant thresholds: the play straddles the abolition of formal state censorship, having been written before the passing of the Theatres Act of 1968, but first performed after it. It has therefore offered a peculiar case study for the exploration of both transforming social and cultural values as well as the shifting understanding of censorship. More significantly, the play has two different endings: Joe Orton's original manuscript or the 'holograph version' and the one revised after his death by Sir Ralph Richardson, which is commonly referred to as the

‘bowdlerised version’. Although censorship was officially abolished, the actor starring in the play (Richardson) intervened in the script and the penis of Sir Winston Churchill’s statue was transformed into a cigar. The implications of Richardson’s controversial intervention in the play has shown that the mantle of censor has been assumed by other censorial agents. It has also deployed some of the insights of psychoanalytic theory, in particular that of Lacan, to offer a rereading of the apparent act of censorship by Sir Ralph Richardson of the amputation of the penis from a statue of Winston Churchill in Orton’s original text. In doing so, it has shown that the replacement of the penis by another phallic figure, a cigar, has opened up the text to polyvalent interpretations.

In the light of this study, further research might be undertaken. The points beyond the scope of this chapter could be focused on and new perspectives on Joe Orton’s other plays could be obtained. In particular, *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1964), *The Ruffian on the Stair* (1964), and *Loot* (1966) might lead us to a new subject of study as they also provide different instances of censorship. What is significant here is that Joe Orton was writing before the removal of stage censorship and was murdered shortly before its abolition. Alongside these plays, all his work might be explored to investigate whether he was anticipating the abolition of censorship and writing deliberately to challenge it or whether he was always writing more carefully than his earlier work to anticipate censorship. His well-known fame as a ‘Lord of Misrule’ and his mischievous fake letters to the Lord Chamberlain’s Office strengthen the former. An interesting study might emerge which would enable us to explore the transformation of the understanding of censorship, the arbitrary decisions of the Lord Chamberlain and a playwright’s role in defying censorship.

Chapter Four has been dedicated to Anthony Neilson’s *The Censor*. It has argued that the play offers rich material to explore the relationship between public and private, between external censorship and inward self-censorship and repression. The character of

the Censor in the play is an image of self-censorship as well as a representative of external censorship in terms of his profession as a censor in the film classification board. In *The Censor*, it is seen that the Lord Chamberlain's Office has been replaced by another institution, personified by the Censor, who does not really have a name in the very beginning. Moreover, when the contextual framework in which it was produced is taken into consideration, the play functions as a political statement. Just like the multi-layered storyworld of the play, its different reception as a private love story or a political statement points to its designation on both planes of internal and external censorship. It also raises questions about the relationship between art and censorship. In this case, a work of art produced by Miss Fontaine has been categorised as pornography by the state, much to her discontent. Thus, the strength of this play resides in the fact that it connects the socio-political background and issues with the private level in the play.

A further study might be conducted into the ways in which the In-Yer-Face tradition of the 1990s, which deals with taboo-breaking subjects as its chief concern, could be performed on stage. The extent to which controversial scenes of In-Yer-Face plays could be put on the stage is questionable. An exploration of their representation on the stage alongside a comparison between different productions of plays by different directors might prove fertile. Considering *The Censor* in the broader context of In-Yer-Face theatre, which obviously has a provocative and antagonistic relationship to censorship, is worth further investigation.

Chapter Five has been dedicated to Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti's plays *Behzti* and *Behud*. In this chapter, the first play *Behzti*, which was closed down due to public pressure, brings forth questions about the shifting focus of censorship mainly from sexuality or nudity to ethnic and religious sensitivities. Although the content of the play has nothing to do with censorship at all, the scandal it brought about in the aftermath of its premiere at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre initiated heated debates over free

speech and censorship. Significantly, this case has displayed that, over thirty years after official state censorship was abolished, censorship was still alive and well, as a religious community successfully censored a play through violent protests. It has also showed that censorship operates across a spectrum, including its soft and hard forms as well as old and new methods. This was not state censorship (even if the state was culpable in some ways); rather, it was censorship that had evolved into new forms: here community pressure became the censor through the threat and actuality of violence.

In the second case, the playwright strikes back by dramatising what she experienced with the play *Behud*. *Behud* is a fictionalised version of the *Behzti* Affair, raising many complex questions in relation to the complicated nature and variable operations of censorship. With this play, rather than a direct satirical take on real-life events or verbatim theatre, Bhatti turns inward and delves into the intricate internal processes of self-censorship. In the light of these discussions, perhaps the most satisfactory outcome from this dissertation is a new direction for research: the section on *Behud* in particular has highlighted the need for a more rigorous investigation into the increasingly complex relationships between authority, authorship and censorship, an intellectually challenging area that has not yet been fully explored.

Bhatti deals with post-immigration family trauma in her later plays *Fourteen* (2014) and *Khandan* (2014). They centre on shattered family lives and the conflicting desires of family and children in immigrant families; however, it is interesting that she has avoided controversial subjects when compared to her earlier work. Potential controversies might have caused her to write on less provocative issues. Another point to make here, these plays include such contentious issues as extra-marital pregnancy and adultery. It is seen that these issues do not cause controversy where they do not touch upon religious and ethnic sensitivities.

One thing this dissertation has not addressed in great detail is the relations between gender and censorship, and ethnicity and censorship which was only briefly discussed in the section looking at *Behzti*. An obvious path for future research might be to explore this further, building on the work of authors such as Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasrin, American author Judy Blume, Cuban poet Maria Elena Cruz Varela, and South African author Bessie Head, with particular attention to each case of censorship in its own specificity. Perhaps reading of the work of Bhatti alongside the work of playwrights like Tanika Gupta, another British playwright and woman of colour, might result in informative and worthwhile discussions regarding the treatment of ethnicity issues and their involvement in these issues as women playwrights. David Lane also hints at a potential exploration of Bhatti's *Behzti* (2004) and Gupta's *The Waiting Room* (2000) in terms of how they tackle ethnic and cultural sensitivities (2010: 118-9).

This dissertation has begun to sketch a narrative of how representations and responses within the theatre to censorship have developed and changed from the 1960s to the present day. Currently, the debates around censorship render it problematic to develop a coherent model of censorship, and the remarkable disintegration of political dichotomies has demonstrated that people traditionally on the left might argue in favour of censorship and people on the right might argue for free speech. Over three decades after the official abolition of the Lord Chamberlain's censorial practices on the British stage, new forms of censorship (not state sanctioned censorship) proved to be alive and kicking as we have theatre plays being attacked or prevented from full staging, as in the cases of *Behzti* and *England People Very Nice*.

Very recently, 'safe spaces' and 'no platforming' at universities have become controversial, raising ongoing heated debates regarding whether they are posing a threat to free speech and debate in Britain. 'No-platforming' occurs when by picketing the venue student unions or pressure groups either on the left or the right ban, disinvite or

cancel events or speeches which are, they believe, unfit or inflammatory to do on campus. Although some consider it democratic protest, as it does not censor someone completely but does not allow her or him to speak at a particular space, some describe ‘no-platforming’ as a form of censorship which intends to silence opposing views and dissenting ideas in a university, where purportedly open debate should be guarded.

When the controversial debates around the censorship of *Behzti* and the protests against *England People Very Nice* are taken into consideration, these censorial interventions and no-platforming have obvious similarities and the question of performance becomes potentially more problematic. With the current increase in ‘no-platforming’ and ‘safe space’ protests, we might expect these forms of intervention to materialise in the theatre, an art of performance and a live experience.

All these given examples illustrate that censorship has metamorphosed into much more diverse and complicated forms in its operation. The role of the official censor has been undertaken by different censorial agents as well as by the public. Public pressure can promote “a culture of intimidation” which might subsequently cause theatre practitioners to approach such contentious issues as religion and ethnicity with more caution (Freshwater 2009: 2). Thus, it works behind the scenes by creating fear – fear of potential violence, fear of controversy, fear of lost funding – which then turns into self-censorship which is not visible but works on such an insidious level that it might ultimately disrupt public dialogue and, even worse, imagination itself.

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APPENDIX

1- How does the Lord Chamberlain's Office¹⁸⁵ work?

In accordance with the Licensing Act of 1737, in the United Kingdom, any new play intended to be performed before a paying public audience had to be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain¹⁸⁶ for official permission at least one week prior to its performance. However, neither in the Act of 1737 nor in the subsequently passed Theatres Act of 1843, were fixed code of rules precisely identified. Until its official abolition on 26 September 1968, the censor acted under the Theatres Act of 1843, which enabled him to refuse a licence whenever “he shall be of opinion that it is fitting for the preservation of good manners, decorum, or of the public peace so to do” (Nicholson 2003: I, 23). As the “arbiter of permissible taste”, the Lord Chamberlain gave orders as to what could be shown on stage and how (Greene 2005: 117). He had an Office staff working under his authority, including the Comptroller, Assistant Comptroller, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, and their minor staff. Furthermore, there were Examiners¹⁸⁷ and Readers, “part-time workers outside the Office whose identity is – like most of the mechanism of censorship – generally kept quiet” (Findlater 1967: 231). As one of the senior members of the royal household, the Lord Chamberlain and his staff were appointed by himself, and were responsible only to the Queen.

A play was submitted to the Lord Chamberlain by a manager, not by the playwright himself. With each submission, the manager was charged a non-refundable fee (two guineas) for reading, even if the play was rejected. The average number of plays submitted to the Office was approximately 800 to 850 a year (Findlater 1967: 230).

The Lord Chamberlain in fact read only a small number of these plays personally. In the Office, the act of reading was mainly done by one of four Readers or Examiners.

¹⁸⁵ St James's Palace, Stable Yard, the Lord Chamberlain's Office, the Office can be used interchangeably to define the Office.

¹⁸⁶ Lord Chamberlains (1727- 1968): Charles, Duke Of Grafton (1727-1757), William, Duke Of Devonshire (1757-1762), George, Duke Of Marlborough (1762-1763), Granville Leveson, Earl Gower (1763-1765), William Henry Cavendish, Duke Of Portland (1765-1766), Francis Seymour, Marquess Of Hertford (1766-1772), George, Duke Of Manchester (1782-1783), James, Duke Of Salisbury (1783-1784), George, Earl Of Dartmouth (1784-1812), Francis, Marquess Of Hertford (1812-1821), James, Duke Of Montrose (1821-1827) and (1828-1830), William Spencer, Duke Of Devonshire (1827-1828) and (1830-1834), George Child Villiers, Earl Of Jersey (1834-1835), Richard, Marquess Wellesley (1835), Francis Nathaniel, Marquess Conyngham (1835-1839), Henry, Earl Of Uxbridge (1839-1841), George, Earl De La Warr (1841-1846) and (1858-1859), Frederick, Earl Spencer (1846-1848), John, Marquess Of Breadalbane (1848-1852), Brownlow, Marquess Of Exeter (1852-1853), John, Viscount Sidney (1859-1866) and (1868-1874), Orlando, Earl Of Bradford (1866-1868), Francis, Marquess Of Hertford (1874-1879), William, Earl Of Mount Edgcumbe (1879-1880), Valentine, Earl Of Kenmare (1880-1883), Edward, Earl Of Lathom (1883-1886) and (1886-1892) and (1895-1898), Charles, Lord Carrington (1892-1895), John, Earl Of Hopetoun (1898-1900), Edward, Earl Of Clarendon (1900-1905), Charles, Viscount Althorp (Later Earl Spencer) (1905-1912), William, Lord Sanhurst (Later Viscount Sandhurst) (1912-1921), John, Duke Of Atholl (1921-1922), Rowland, Earl Of Cromer (1922 -1938), George, Earl Of Clarendon (1938-1952), Roger, Earl Of Scarbrough (1952-1963), Cameron, Lord Cobbold (1963-1968) (Johnston 1990: 263-4).

¹⁸⁷ The Examiners of Plays (1738-1969): William Chetwynd (1738-1778), Thomas Odell (Deputy Examiner) (1738-1749), Edward Capell (Deputy Examiner) (1749-1781), John Larpent (1778-1824), George Colman (1824-1836), Charles Kemble (1836-1840), John Kemble (1840-1857), William Bodham Donne (1857-1874), E. F. S. Pigott (1874-1895), G. A. Redford (1895-1911), Charles Brookfield (1911-1913), Ernest Bendall (1913-1920), George Street (Senior Examiner 1920) (1914-1936), Henry Game (Senior Examiner 1936) (1930-1963), Geoffrey Dearmer (Senior Examiner 1953) (1936-1958), Charles Heriot (Senior Examiner 1958) (1937-1968), Lt-Col. Sir St Vincent Troubridge (Assistant Examiner) (1952-1963), Maurice Coles (Assistant Examiner) (1958-1965), I. Kyrle Fletcher (Assistant Examiner) (1964-1968), Timothy Harward (Assistant Examiner) (1965-1968), Rev. Albert Evans Jones (Welsh Reader) (1931-1968) (Johnston 1990: 265).

Thus, the arrival of a script at the Office initiated a kind of hierarchical process. First, it was read by one of the Readers or Examiners who then submitted to his superior, the Comptroller, a document including a brief synopsis of the play, advisable changes, doubtful scenes, sentences, phrases, and words and finally suggesting a recommendation or a refusal or a number of demands for changes in the script. The Comptrollers did not necessarily have to read every single play; if the Reader thought the play innocuous, he could pass the play, bypassing the hierarchical process (Findlater 1967: 231). However, if a play included a controversial or offensive content, the Comptroller was consulted. In extremely controversial cases, the Lord Chamberlain also became involved in the reading process. He either read the underlined parts or the whole of the play if necessary (Findlater 1967: 231). In some contentious cases, the Lord Chamberlain also consulted external bodies, such as the Home Office, 10 Downing Street, the Public Morality Council, clergymen, associations, and actors/actresses. When the required changes were carried out in the script, the play was given a licence for performance on the stage. Office members would secretly police the performances and should a play deviate from the conditions or its licence or if there were any improvisation in performance, the licence could be withdrawn. The theatre company could be warned or fined for this transgression. This was not a regular practice as it was impractical and unmanageable.

To censor a play outright, to preclude any performance on stage, was the last resort of the Lord Chamberlain. Rather, he preferred to reject a play by demanding a number of alterations including many removals, additions, excisions, omissions on the script before it could be licensed to be performed on the stage. The Lord Chamberlain did not have to identify the reasons for these modifications, he just blue-pencilled inappropriate parts. A lack of any standard criteria for a licence or a rejection prompted arbitrariness, inconsistencies and contradictions in decisions.

Negotiations, correspondence and meetings, which were considered to be confidential, were instigated between managers and St James's Palace. The meetings for compromise took place between managers or directors and the members of the Office, not directly between the Lord Chamberlain and the playwright, both of whom very rarely attended. This process sometimes excessively prolonged the licensing process, even taking months. A playwright, informed about the demands by a manager, either would engage in this negotiation to retain some parts significant to the play, or would be discouraged by this process and would leave his/her work in the waiting box of the Office. Another alternative was the private theatre: if a playwright was unwilling to make any changes to his/her work then, rather than distorting his artistic integrity, s/he could resort to staging the play in a private theatre. As a loophole in the censorship system, private theatres enabled a playwright to perform a play intact; however, invariably there was financial loss due to a much smaller audience. If a playwright earned his/her living through writing, there was no alternative other than seeking negotiation with and yielding to the Office. Or, s/he could only publish his/her work but could not put it on the stage without the sanction of St James's Palace. Ultimately, because of the deterrent effect of censorial practice, an author might decide against drama and choose to fictionalise his or her ideas and imagination in another genre. As Nicholson aptly puts it, "preventing the unacceptable from being written or even imagined is probably the ultimate goal of censorship" (2003: 1, 2).

Not only works written after 1737 but also translations of much earlier works were subject to the licensing system. The most significant examples for this, *Oedipus the King* and *Lysistrata*, were censored and it took a long time for them to be licensed. Even Jacobean and Renaissance plays were not spared censorship and they were performed in bowdlerised versions (Nicholson 2003: 1, 7). During a parliamentary discussion in 1913, the MP Francis Neilson argued against the absurdities of censorship with a striking example:

I wish to point the difference between the way Shakespeare is played in Germany, where they are unfettered, and the way it is done in this country. I have never seen in *Romeo and Juliet* the scene between Lady Capulet, Juliet, and the nurse. If I want to see that scene I have to go to Germany to see it ... The same is true with regard to many other scenes from Shakespeare” (qtd. in Nicholson 2003: I, 7).

The plays written before 1737 were partially censored, not by the official authority, but by managers. Although the Lord Chamberlain took no responsibility for this kind of intervention, his restricting powers over the theatre were mimicked by managers in regard to other plays.

In the fight between the Lord Chamberlain and his opponents, an overwhelming number of managers and directors positioned themselves on the side of the censor. This remained the case until a short time before censorship was abolished. What would make managers and producers side with the Lord Chamberlain, who took severe and absurd measures against theatre plays? They had vested interests in their financial concerns. Any play sanctioned by the Lord Chamberlain could be put on stage in different parts of the country without intervention. They preferred a centralised institution of censorship for this, rather than relying on local authorities. Things only began to change with managers and producers when Arts Council’s subsidies for theatres effectively increased, after which artistic integrity began to take precedence over commercial success.

Outraged by the draconian measures of the Lord Chamberlain, in October 1907 a group of writers called for the abolition of censorship. A petition signed by 71 writers¹⁸⁸ was sent to *The Times*, in which they attacked the censorship mechanism “which was instituted for political, and not for the so-called moral ends to which it is perverted – an office autocratic in procedure, opposed to the spirit of the Constitution, contrary to common justice and to common sense” (qtd. in Nicholson 2003: I, 15). When the protests grew, a Joint Select Committee was set up in 1910, as a result of which an official Advisory Board was constituted. During debates in the Committee meetings, the Lord Chamberlains’ lack of intellectual experience in the theatre, the monopolised power he held in censoring and his representation of the conservative aristocratic order were all contested.¹⁸⁹ However, contrary to expectations, the Advisory Board foundered on the issue and did not produce a more liberated environment. It gained the censor a more democratic appearance; however, the Lord Chamberlain’s power was consolidated. He would consult the Advisory Board if necessary, and more importantly, the members of the Board would be appointed by himself. Indeed, nothing in fact changed except the perpetuation of the Office and its working mechanism.

Furthermore, British theatregoers were not only morally protected from any indecent material, but were also physically under the protection of the Lord Chamberlain whilst in the theatre hall. He supervised and controlled safety exits, curtains, fireproof scenery, the fixed seating, proper ventilation, and the sanitary conditions of a theatre building in London (Findlater 1967: 9). However, all investigations were carried out by the Greater London Council in the name of the Lord Chamberlain. Thus, “on stage and off, in both text and building, his safety precautions must be observed” (Findlater 1967: 9). Moreover, it is significant to note that his role as licenser of the theatre was a minor

¹⁸⁸ These writers included Henry James, Joseph Conrad, W. B. Yeats, J. M. Barrie, John Galsworthy, W. S. Gilbert, Laurence Housman, H. G. Wells, Thomas Hardy, J. M. Synge, George Meredith, Pinero, and Granville-Barker.

¹⁸⁹ The Office included some members who had associations with the theatre: for instance, one of the Examiners Ifan Kyrle Fletcher was a theatre historian and antiquarian bookseller, while senior Reader Charles Heriot (we see his name often in comments on plays) was a former actor, writer and producer.

part of his duties. He was also the supervisor of all ceremonial occasions related to the royal family including:

He is the organizer of royal levees, investitures, and garden parties; he arranges the reception and entertainment of foreign royalties and heads of state; he is the Queen's official emissary to the House of Lords; [...] he carries out the Queen's wishes in filling such royal jobs as Poet Laureate, the Keeper of the Jewel House [...] He keeps an eye on the well-being of the six hundred royal swans, and the maintenance of the royal art-collections [...] (Findlater 1967: 10).

As these responsibilities suggest, the Lord Chamberlain had very close affiliations with the monarch and the state. We should consider the position of St James's Palace. Within the British legal system, Queen and King are the heads of state, following which come the Prime Minister, Parliament and other governmental bodies of state. It is significant to note that the Lord Chamberlain's Office ranked higher than Parliament and functioned separately, autonomously and independently of the Prime Minister. It was not a sub-department of the Home Office, reinforcing both its importance and autonomy. The fact that the Office formed part of the household of the Queen served to complicate matters. Moreover, recently-available archives reveal the traffic of correspondence between St James's Palace and 10 Downing Street. Thus, it is not difficult to imagine the tensions and intricate networks that existed between them.

Jongh describes censorship of the theatre in the United Kingdom as "a secret, or rather concealed system of censorship" as the Lord Chamberlain's archives were only made available to the public in 1991 (2000b: ix). This belated public accessibility has shed significant light upon the influence of censorship on the evolution and development of British theatre. The archives, one file for each play submitted to the Office (almost 45,000 in total), are currently held at the British Library Manuscript Collections under two headings: LCP (Lord Chamberlain's plays) and LCP CORR (Lord Chamberlain's Correspondence Files). In June 2001, further material was transmitted from the Lord Chamberlain's Office to the British Library, adding a further 150 boxes of files to the 300 already there, each containing approximately 150 files.

ÖZET

Bu tez, 1968 yılında Birleşik Krallık'ta tiyatro üzerindeki devlet sansürünün resmi olarak kaldırılmasından günümüze kadar geçen yarım asırlık süreçte, sansüre tepkileri ve sansürün temsillerini incelemektedir. 1968 Tiyatrolar Kanunu sonrasına odaklanan bu çalışma, sahne sansürünün kaldırılması akabinde, çeşitli sansür şekillerinin nasıl direnç gösterdiğinin ve fiili olarak varlığını sürdürdüğünün anlaşılmasına yöneliktir. Bu çalışma son yıllardaki sansürü kuramsallaştırma girişimlerinden hareketle, sansürün tarihçesinin yanı sıra tarih yazımına da eleştirel bir dikkat gerektiğinin ve sansürün tarihiyle ilgili metinlerin nasıl yapılandırıldığının üzerinde durmaktadır. Sansürün İngiliz tiyatrosunun gelişimi üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmek amacıyla, bu tez geçtiğimiz elli yıldaki, doğrudan ya da dolaylı olarak eserleriyle sansürle yüzleşmiş üç önemli İngiliz oyun yazarının yapıtlarının detaylı bir incelemesini yapmaktadır: Joe Orton, Anthony Neilson ve Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti. Her bir yazarın eserine bir bölüm ayrılmış ve sansür anlayışındaki kırılma noktalarını tartışabilmek için emsal teşkil eden dört oyun seçilmiştir. Bu çerçevede Orton'ın *Uşak Ne Gördü?* (1967), Neilson'un *Sansürcü* (1997) ve Bhatti'nin *Behzti* (2004) ve *Behud* (2010) adlı oyunları incelenmiştir.

Uşak Ne Gördü? oyunu, sansürün işleyiş mekanizmalarını ve tarihsel dönüşümündeki geçiş dönemini göstermektedir. Bu oyun, bir yandan, hem etkisi zaten azalmış Viktoryen paternalizminden hem de sansürcü diktasından kararlı bir kopuşun şafağında durmaktadır. Diğer bir yandan ise, -sonrasında vadettiği- özgürlük umudunu karşılayamayan 1968 paradoksunun tartışmasına temel oluşturmaktadır. 1990'lar sansür anlayışında yeni bir değişikliğe şahit olmuştur. Bu değişimi meydana getiren etkenler arasında; liberaller ve muhafazakârlar arasındaki sansür anlayışındaki siyasi dikotominin çözülmesini, Lord Chamberlain'in (Başmabeyincinin) arşivinin halkın erişimine açılmasını, sansürün yeniden kuramsallaştırılma girişimlerini, -Foucaultcu "iktidar"

kavramından hareketle- teorik gelişmeleri ve değişen sosyo-politik ve kültürel iklimi sayabiliriz. Bu dönemde yazılan *Sansürcü* adlı oyun, hem oto-sansürün işleyişine dair bir metafor hem de politik bir ifade olarak dönemi yansıtmaktadır. Yirmi birinci yüzyılın sosyo-politik ortamında sansür süreklilikleriyle beraber, çok farklı yeni formlara evrilmiş; hatta o kadar karmaşıklaşmıştır ki, her tekil sansür vakasının kendi tarihselliği içerisinde incelenmesi gerekli olmuştur. Daha da önemlisi, sansürün odağı argo dil kullanımı, müstehcenlik veya cinsel tercihteki farklılıklardan ziyade -giderek artan- dinî ve etnik hassasiyetlerdeki farklılaşmalara kaymıştır. Bu bağlamda, *Behzti* oyununun halk protestosu sonucu sansürlenmesi “ifade özgürlüğü” ve “sansür” tartışmalarını gündeme getirmiştir. *Behud* adlı çalışma ise oto-sansür mekanizmasında, bir kontrol figürü olarak yazarın rolünün, karakterleriyle olan ilişkisinin ve zihninde kurduğu içsel süreçlerinin sanatsal bir incelemesini sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Sansür, Savaş sonrası İngiliz tiyatrosu, 1968 Tiyatrolar Kanunu, Başmabeyinci (the Lord Chamberlain)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines responses to and representations of censorship in the British theatre in the immediate aftermath of the official abolition of formal state censorship in the United Kingdom in 1968, and over the following half-century. With particular focus on the Theatres Act of 1968, this study provides insights into the ways in which various forms of censorship persisted after the removal of stage censorship. Drawing upon recent reconceptualisations of censorship, it highlights the need to pay critical attention not only to its history but also to its historiography, to the ways narratives about the history of censorship have been structured. In order to trace and evaluate the impact of censorship upon the development of British theatre, this dissertation centres on detailed studies of the works of three prominent British dramatists of the last fifty years, all of whom confront issues relating to censorship more or less directly in their work: Joe Orton, Anthony Neilson and Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti. One chapter is dedicated to the work of each dramatist, with four plays selected as case studies: Orton's *What The Butler Saw*, Neilson's *The Censor*, and Bhatti's two plays, *Behzti* and *Behud*.

What the Butler Saw marks the transition from a system of formal state censorship into a new world of apparent freedom, and the beginning of a slower shift in the understanding of censorial operations. The play stands at the dawn of a decisive liberation from the already dwindling impact of Victorian paternalism and from the dictates of the blue pencil. But in many ways the promise of freedom of 1968 was to fall short. The 1990s marked another twist in the understanding of censorship. The decay of simple political dichotomies between liberals and conservatives in attitudes towards censorship, the release of the Lord Chamberlain's archives, the newly available theoretical foundations offered by Foucauldian reconceptualisation of power, and the shifting socio-political and cultural climate of the time, all contributed towards a watershed in the

understanding of censorship. Set on the two planes of internal and external censorship, *The Censor* reads as both a political statement and an exploration of internal processes of self-censorship. The early twenty-first century is marked by another new twist in censorial operations. Alongside its older forms, censorship has persisted and evolved into new forms, and been complicated to such an extent that its exploration necessitates the study of each case of censorship or censure in its immediate socio-political and historical particularities. Most significantly, the targets of censorship shifted from being primarily vulgar language, obscenities, and differentiations in sexual practices, to growing religious and ethnic sensitivities. The effective censorship of *Behzti* by local community leaders and religious groups offers a focus for a study of ongoing debates over freedom of expression. Dramatising a fictionalised version of the *Behzti* controversy, *Behud*, Bhatti's later play, is an exploration of the role of author as a (self-)controlling figure, of the relationship of the author to her characters, and of internal processes of self-censorship in the imagination of the artist.

Key Words: Censorship, British post-war drama, the Theatres Act of 1968, the Lord Chamberlain