T.C. KOCAELİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI ANABİLİM DALI
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HOWARD BARKER'S CATASTROPHE: DEFIANCE AGAINST THE AUTHORITARIAN LITERARY EPISTEME

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

Mahmood Waleed Hashim Hashim

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ÖZET

Bu tez, Howard Barker'ın (d. 1946 -) oyun yaratma zihniyetine ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Barker, 1980'lerde yeni bir tiyatro disiplini kuran, yazım, performans, olay örgüsü ve en önemlisi belirsizlik konusunda alışılmışın dışında bir yaklaşım sergileyen ünlü bir oyun yazarıdır. Otoriter edebi geleneklere direnmek amacıyla Barker tarafından yaratılan ve Felaket Tiyatrosu biçiminde Türkçe'ye çevrilen "Theatre of Catastrophe" ile oyun yazarı döneminin tiyatro geleneklerine yönelik tüm eleştirilerini bir araya getirmiş ve bu tiyatro nihayetinde onun en tanınmış mirası haline gelmiştir. Barker'ın oyunlarını ve zihniyetini, onun zihniyetini daha önce hiç bilmeden ilk kez deneyimlemek, Barker'ın izlediği genel yaklaşımın daha önce de belirtildiği gibi alışılmışın dışında olması nedeniyle kafa karışıklığına yol açabilir. Bu nedenle, Barker'ın oyunlarını daha iyi anlayabilmek için, bu tez Barker'ın erken dönem deneyimlerine ve tiyatro algısına ışık tutmaya çalışacaktır çünkü daha sonra benimsediği yaklaşım, 1970'lerden 1980'lere uzanan on yıllık dönemden oldukça etkilenmiştir. Barker'ın izlediği genel yaklaşım, edebi alanda norm olarak kabul edilene meydan okumak olduğundan, Michel Foucault'nun iktidar-bilgi ilişkilerinden yararlanmak, Barker'ın zihin dunyasının ve tiyatroyu kontrol edenlere karşı verdiği mücadelenin çok daha net bir şekilde anlaşılmasına yardımcı olacaktır. Barker'ın Michel Foucault'dan etkilenip etkilenmediği bilinmese de oyun yazarının edebi/politik kurumlar ile yazarlar arasındaki iliskileri kuramsallaştırması, Foucault'nun kuramsallaştırmasına benzemektedir. Barker'ın Felaket Tiyatrosu'nu, İngiliz tiyatrosunun teatral performanslarını düzenleyen zamanının iktidar-bilgi ilişkilerini eleştirmek ve bunlara direnmek için yarattığı söylenebilir. Net bir anlayışa ulaşıldıktan sonra, bu çalışma Howard Barker'ın *The Castle* (1985) ve *The Europeans* (1987) oyunlarını ve bu oyunların otoriter tiyatro geleneklerine nasıl karşı çıktıklarını inceleyecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Howard Barker, Felaket Tiyatrosu, Michel Foucault, Iktidar-Bilgi Elişkisi

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims at putting a spotlight on Howard Barker's (born in 1946 -) mindset of crafting plays. Barker is a playwright who established a new discipline of theatre in the 1980s which was famous for its unorthodox approach in writing, performance, plotting, and most importantly ambiguity. Theatre of Catastrophe was created by Barker in order to resist the authoritarian literary conventions, combining all of Barker's criticism regarding the theatrical conventions of his time, ultimately becoming his most recognisable legacy. Experiencing Barker's plays for the first time while having no former understanding of his mentality might result in confusion as the general approach that Barker follows is, as mentioned earlier, an unorthodox one. Thus, in order to reach a level of appreciation of his plays, this thesis will attempt to shed light on Barker's early experience and perception of theatre as the approach he adopted later was highly influenced by that decade which spanned from 1970s to the 1980s. Since the general approach that Barker followed was that of defying what was considered as the norm in the literary field, utilising Michel Foucault's power - knowledge relations will assist in providing a much clearer understanding of Barker's mindset and his struggle against those who controlled theatre. Even though it is not known whether Barker was influenced by Michel Foucault or not, his theorisation of the relationship between literary/political institutions and authors resembles that of Michel Foucault's theorisation. It can be said that Barker created the Theatre of Catastrophe to criticise and resist the power - knowledge relations of his time that regulated the theatrical performances of the English theatre. Once a clear understanding is achieved, this study will attempt to investigate Howard Barker's *The Castle* (1985) and *The Europeans* (1987) and how they counter the authoritarian theatrical conventions.

Keywords: Howard Barker, Theatre of Catastrophe, Michel Foucault, Power-Knowledge Relations.

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In the last two years, I started noticing a pattern with how novels and various entertainment mediums such as movies and TV series are being created. From my observation of these aforementioned mediums, I came to realise that they share a common trait, that being implementation of modern day politics. These mediums are no longer being used to offer readers and audiences creative works of art, but are used to spread specific agendas. Since I was already familiar with Michel Foucault's philosophy of the power-knowledge relations, and I managed to establish a link with how this influence is related to the discourse popularised by our modern day episteme. Later, it came to my surprise to see that Howard Barker's writings and views describe the issue of political intervention in art in a way that is almost identical to our time. Getting to read about Barker and his views was quite delightful since I shared similar views to his. Even more, I was delighted with the fact that his works did not seek to indoctrinate me, nor did they seek to direct me in a specific way. On the contrary, these works granted me enough space to freely interpret what I read. Thus, it became a desire of mine to write about Barker and his theatre, hoping that this thesis would be a beneficial source for those who are interesting to learn about Barker in the future.

I cannot carry on with thesis without first thanking my supervisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Murat Kadiroğlu. No amount of gratitude would describe how thankful I am for his insight, support, and generosity. I would also like to thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Harith Ismael Turki as this thesis is partially inspired by one of our discussions on the matter mentioned above.

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INTRODUCTION

For many centuries, theatre has held a significant place in various cultures and civilisations around the world, starting during the ancient/classical age and remaining relevant to this day and age. Throughout its existence which lasted over two millennia, theatre took many forms and adopted many approaches according to the culture it was born into, thus, it has become a reflection of that culture, its traditions, and beliefs. However, through its influence, theatre could change from an adapter of certain beliefs and traditions to the creator of those beliefs and traditions because theatre is a highly effective medium that could affect the audience to a large extent when handled with mastery by playwrights. Therefore, certain individuals from civilisations employed this medium in order to enforce or spread specific ideas, messages, and beliefs among the masses. An example of such a case is how the Greeks popularised the inevitability of destiny, and how the Romans popularised the militaristic sense of the empire (McDonald and Walton, 2007: 193). In its ancient beginnings, theatre was not a practice of shallow entertainment. As Grammatas claims, theatre in its earliest days took the form of religious festivals and ceremonies in ancient Greece which were meant to honour the gods of the Greek pantheon, and throughout many years, these ceremonies gradually changed their direction towards artistic and entertainment purposes during the ancient times (2010: 204). However, within the theatrical and artistic world of entertainment, theatre was still capable of spreading ideas and messages to the audience. For example, when looking at the works which were featured in theatre during that period in ancient Greece, tragedy seems to have been quite prominent, featuring great heroes who strive to achieve great deeds or prevent dangerous events from taking place only to meet their demise by the end of the play as they are punished by fate, as something which strengthens the idea of the limitation of the human being and his/her futile struggle against destiny. The ancient Greeks must have watched such plays attentively as tragedy was later labelled by Aristotle in his *Poetics* to be one of the most sublime of genres. On the other hand, Rosie Wylse describes the general atmosphere of the ancient Greek tragedies saying that they "were capable of creating an atmosphere of imminent

violence" (2014). At this point, one must ask himself/herself why would the Greek tragedy, a genre which contains scenes of horror and violence featuring characters whom the audience already knew that will face their demise and still watch, would be promoted to be one of the highest in the chain of genres. The answer to this question might hide in the argument that the higher-ups of that culture deemed tragedy to be such. In an attempt to install certain values in the minds of the ancient Greeks, the runners of that culture might have utilised tragedies because the morality of the ancient Greeks was not only influenced by the religious cults but also by the doctrines demonstrated in the play they watched on the stage. Although there was no religious scripture as in other cultures of other periods around the world, what was available to these people was the epics of old, such as the Iliad and the Odyssey which illuminated the path for the ancient Greeks by creating role models.

The classical plays might have influenced the ancient Greeks in some manner. The more plays an individual from that culture watched, the more influence they had on him. Eventually, whether consciously or unconsciously, those individuals would imitate the characters they see in the plays in real life. They would perform what was portrayed as 'good' and avoid what was portrayed as 'evil'. 'To teach and to delight' was the approach adopted during that time which is asserted by Gramatas's words who says that the ancient Greek theatre "aims at teaching and creating role models capable of guaranteeing the continuation and cohesion of the community as well as pleasure, entertainment and enjoyment for all those participating in the ritual" (2010: 200). Following this logic, one could understand that a medium which on the outside resembled the essence of a culture, the emotions or experience of a writer, now stands as a social medium for spreading ideologies and agendas. Of course, works of literature that are meant to reflect the emotions and the souls of their authors do exist, but there can be no denying that literature, and especially theatre, is a fertile medium to be purposed in a certain way by the authority of a certain time and place. Literature, says Margret Blanchard, has the potential to elevate any idea, putting emphasis on its significance and making it more universal and immediate (1972: 295). She continues by saying that fiction specifically has the ability to dramatise even the most subtle and

unconscious aspects of a literary experience (295). Thus, the authoritarian meddling of literature and specifically theatre becomes inevitable due to how viable this medium really is.

If one were to examine the following centuries and how literature was utilised back then, there would be a high possibility of coming across purposed works that are meant to strengthen the position of certain individuals, ideologies, or systems of thought. The Catholic Church, for example, once banned Roman theatres after the empire converted to Christianity in the 4th century A.D. labelling theatres as remnants of pagan practices. Nevertheless, the Church utilised theatre centuries later in what is now called miracle and mystery plays. Such plays were performed to teach the common people of the Middle Ages more about their religion by telling stories from the scriptures or of the Christian saints. Another example would be the English Elizabethan Theatre and how playwrights who received royal patronage had to write in a manner that would please the monarchy which was the authority of that time. William Shakespeare is a prime example because when he touched upon the topic of the English monarchs in his plays, he crafted every scene that revolved around them with great care in order to avoid the possible retribution of the Queen. The direction that was adopted by the English theatre during the latter half of the 17th century could also be seen as the result of the monarchy's influence. When his exile in France ended after the restoration, Charles II was eager to have some of the French theatre's characteristics influence the English theatre. Ultimately, this desire or whim of the new monarch gave birth to a new genre called 'Restoration comedies'. Another form of the authority's control over theatre is how theatrical performances were limited to only those that were approved upon by the monarchy or the Lord Chamberlain. The authorities at that time almost monopolised theatre while making use of 'The Licensing Act' of 1737 which fined any theatrical performance that was not approved by the authority. Even though his act did not prevail for long because private theatricals started to become a genuine phenomenon in English society during the 18th century, it does not mean that the authority's meddling with theatre had ended at that point. Other examples could be found and the same interference of the authority could be observed during the period when Barker was active. When

examining the reasoning for complying with the authority, Barker divides writers and authors into two categories. The first category includes those who write in a specific way regarding specific topics merely to please the authority, which shows that they were motivated by nothing other than fear (1997: 53). While the latter category is represented by writers who are either a part of the authority or are individuals who have adopted the ideology of that authority which is the category Barker always had contentions with (53). The second category is self-explanatory, but the idea of 'fear' which Barker associates with the first category is meant to represent the writers' fear of not having enough coverage or praise, or the fear of being unnoticed in the theatrical circles because once a writer does not comply with the norms the authority has decided, he/she will be destroyed by the critics favouring the authority belonging to that authority. Barker himself tells the story of how his plays were all excluded from the National Theatre of England due to their content not matching the authority's liking (1997: 89). Therefore, in such circumstances, the only way for writers and authors who aspire to be famous and succeed on the economic level is to 'comply'. Nonetheless, both categories contribute in spreading the authorities' ideology through their fiddling with literature. It is a peculiar formula built on the power of authority and the collective knowledge of the masses as will be later demonstrated by Michel Foucault's philosophy. The mentioned two factors give rise to one another, sustain, and enforce each other as knowledge is power and power necessitates knowledge. Naturally, there has not been a system of thought that remained dominant forever. Foucault demonstrates that all kinds of authoritarian systems bring with them a unique system of thought/knowledge so that it can maintain itself, or vice versa due to the reason that the rising of a new system of thought/knowledge will ultimately give birth to new bodies of power that will ultimately cease the position of authority (1972: 191).

Reading literature through the concept of the power - knowledge relations will help in visualising a coherent image about how literature and most mediums such as movies, documentaries, newspapers, etc. could ultimately be turned into projections of authority and its dominions of knowledge. If such a situation of utter submission would be taken to a logical conclusion, then the works of literature will suffer from becoming

predictable and formulaic as the same formulas would be reused endlessly. One could argue whether such a state has been reached or not, but more than two decades ago, Howard Barker looking through this power - knowledge lens, claimed that banality had already taken over the English theatre (1997: 17). This banality was one of the major factors that led Howard Barker to write in the controversial and unorthodox manner that he is actually notorious for. Theatre was a part of Barker's life for a quite long time considering that he wrote his first play when he was in his mid-twenties. Before that, Barker involved himself with every role that could produce a play on the stage, Barker was familiar with most aspects of play production from acting to set design. Due to this knowledge, Barker was able to oversee where theatre as an art form and even as an industry was heading, and one of the destinations was banality. Upon this realisation, Barker decided to create his own plays that were not compliant with the norms that were being followed in the literary circles. He established what he called The Wrestling School in 1988 which was a company that was specifically founded to produce his plays. Here it must be noted that establishing a company to perform his plays alone was not a behaviour that reflects extravagance or selfishness, but rather a necessity due to the fact that Barker's writings were so controversial that no other company agreed to host performances of his plays. If he wanted his plays to be performed, he had to make that happen by himself. Eventually, Barker succeeded with this project thanks to the actors who were welcoming of his ideas (22). The actors were, as he mentions, the ones who knew most about the terrible situation theatre is going through (33). One must admit that Barker's name is not a very popular one because his name does not stand for a brand that could fill the pockets of performance companies. His name is only known by his followers whose numbers are not intimidating, and by the writers and critics in literary circles, though not for good reasons. This is a natural result of his unusual approach that is difficult to be accepted by both the people who run the industry and by the audience itself because the first considers it as defiance while the latter complains about its complexity.

Barker's mind was a peculiar one as reflected in his writings. His plays are especially highly obscure and ambiguous. An outsider who witnesses or reads one of

Barker's plays for the first time would end up labelling those plays as bad writing and is quite unlikely to consider them enjoyable. However, little that outsider would know that these plays are intentionally written to be in this manner. They are, as the playwright describes, by design ambiguous, complicated, and insufferable for most (1997: 70). Barker himself knew that not many people would appreciate his works because those many have been restricted by the literary conventions that were set in place by the authority which made Barker label most of these conventional plays as "accessible plays" (85). However, even after reading his books on how theatre should function, one would still have issues in fully understanding where his point of view is coming from as he seems in his direction of thought anarchist, or anti-authoritarian in some sense. Therefore, Barker's interrogative train of thought is more explainable through the lenses of Michel Foucault's philosophy of the power - knowledge relation.

Barker's theatre can be accepted as an act of defiance toward the authority and its practice. He was very critical of the relationship between the theatrical authorities and the audience and playwrights on the other side. This relation where power influences literature stands in parallel to the philosophy of the power-knowledge relations that could be traced back to the French philosopher Michel Foucault. In the context of authority influencing literature, being familiar with the works and philosophy of Michel Foucault is highly valuable in understanding Barker's works and reasoning. Due to the many books he produced on the topic of power - knowledge relations, Foucault's name became always associated with this relation, and his books such as *Discipline and Punish*, *History of Madness*, *History of Sexuality*, and many others; all try to address the power-knowledge relations from different aspects. Most importantly, Foucault demonstrated how, throughout the ages, the change in the scales of power was accompanied by a change in human knowledge as well. Since a connection has already been drawn between power and knowledge, and how each is dependent on the other, it is only reasonable that if a body of power would collapse, the levels and forms of knowledge accompanying that body would collapse with it. If new forms and levels of knowledge would emerge giving birth to new systems of thought, then this would eventually lead it to hold a status of power. This idea of a temporary power - knowledge

system supposed to be relevant for a certain time at a certain place is helpful when looking at Barker's works as he wrote in defiance against the tropes and controlling forces of his day, expressing his stance by describing authoritarian writers as people "with a fatal disease", and that he, together with his school, aim to "keep our stage infection-free" (Barker, 2005: 2). It is quite possible that Barker would write in defiance against the current conventions that are being systematically spread into all corners regardless of the medium. Naturally, being the odd one in the group is quite difficult for that odd one will have to face the many and their judgments. That is what Barker had to deal with. His works were not received with open arms by the critics with whom he admits that his relationship was a complicated one (Barker, 1997: 68). The theatre critics being followers or representatives of the authority always resembled an obstacle in Barker's way. Their reviews of Barker's plays affected his popularity, pushing him away from gaining the spotlight and ultimately reducing the number of his audience, which was also a reality he was ready to accept. Interestingly, the mentality or the methodology of those critics is also related to a concept that Foucault tackles in his writings, that being the purposeful exclusion of whom the authority deemed as the 'other'. It is a common act for any regime to remove any opposition that can pose a threat to its well-being. Therefore, when it comes to an authority that derives its legitimacy from a specific system of thought, unfamiliar thinking will take the form of opposition in the eyes of the authority. Barker suffered from such measures, and Foucault wrote of how such measures can take any form the authority wants it to take, hiding them behind the guises of systems like judiciary, surveillance and even medicine. Thus, this thesis will put the spotlight on Howard Barker's iconic theatrical innovation, the Theatre of Catastrophe using an amalgamation of Michel Foucault's power - knowledge relations into Barker's ideology. Howard Barker's plays *The Castle* and the *Europeans* will be analysed in order to reveal how Barker's defiance against authoritative norms and conventions of his time was manifested on stage.

CHAPTER I

HOWARD BARKER'S THEATRE OF CATASTROPHE

1.1. HOWARD BARKER'S EARLY YEARS AT THEATRE

Despite being mainly known as a playwright, Howard Barker was also a poet, an essayist, a painter, and a screenwriter. These aspects of his character demonstrate that Barker was an admirer of literature and art. This admiration is further demonstrated through his dedication on stage as he involved himself in every role that could contribute to the creation of a play. Due to his involvement, Barker was able to stage his first play *Cheek* in 1970 when he was only twenty-four years old. After that year, Barker kept on producing plays to the point where his schedule seemed almost annual, ultimately producing 65 plays in the span of his 39 years career. Barker's style or approach to crafting his plays was not the same throughout his career because it changed gradually as will be demonstrated later. During the early 1970s, Barker appears to have been dissatisfied with the state of theatre as described by Charles Lamb saying that Barker "seemed to be increasingly at odds with the current theatrical climate of the 1970s" (2004: 1). Even the earliest plays of Barker could not be seen as fully compliant with the literary and political currents at the time. Therefore, it could be argued that Barker's involvement in theatre did not mean that he adopted the approach followed by playwrights back then but instead, he managed to merely observe the state of theatre while maintaining a status similar to a bystander. This distant stance that Barker took allowed him to evaluate and judge theatre properly as he was not a participant in the politicisation of theatre, which is best explained by Foucault who states that "only those who keep their distance from power, who are in no way implicated in tyranny, shut up in

their Cartesian poêle, their room, their meditations, only they can discover the truth" (1980: 51). In keeping his distance from exercising his power/authority over the audience, Barker managed to unveil how the English theatre was being influenced and manipulated by the politics of his time. He writes of how theatre was promoting the agendas and politics of both political wings, saying that the right wing was thrilled to go on moral crusades while the left wing was eager to promote a sense of unity through songs, humour, and laughter (1997: 53). Regardless of the direction, it could be understood that both of these political wings sought to control the audiences through implementing specific messages into theatrical works, and according to Barker's words, this process did not only influence the audiences but the playwrights as well (17). Through the increasing influence of the authority and its politics, Barker describes how both writers and audiences became afraid and cowardly due to the reason that they had their wits numbed and deceived by what the authoritarian state was promoting as 'unity'. Ultimately, such an act made the theatre end up in a state of repeating the same messages and morals repeatedly, figuratively transforming the stage of theatre into a stage for songs that everyone must recite (17). And the logical conclusion of repetition is banality.

In his observation of theatre, Barker realised that with the ever-repeated topics of authoritarian theatre and the banality it generated, the audience was not changing; moreover, the audience was lying to itself merely to convince itself that they are participants of unity. Under the right wing and through its interference with theatre, the audience was retold and fed the same public morality over and over again, leaving no space for the audience to speculate or question (Barker, 1997: 53). This is supposedly easier because people tend to like being asserted of their moral righteousness. On the other hand, the left wing's interference with theatre is described by Barker as carnivalmania which is his way of emphasising the left's obsession with repeating songs and humour to the point where they turned the plays under their influence into something that resembles a carnival (53). Even with this different approach, the audience remained the same as Barker likens the experience of attending such a theatre to the experience of attending a regular carnival, saying that people wear masks in

carnivals and once these carnivals are over, the masks are taken off and ultimately the audience remains the same (17). It is at this point where Barker's literary voice or approach starts to truly take shape which later manifested itself in the late 1970s and early 1980s as defiance against the authoritarian norms of both political wings. The final result of this attitude was Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe. A theatre built around Barker's understanding of tragedy, which at the same time pays no allegiance to any political orientation, and seeks only to push the audience's imagination into unprecedented grounds of moral speculation through resisting the popularised norms of the authoritarian theatre. It will not be surprising to see that this stance brought Barker limited fame due to the fact that he was addressing certain topics in a manner that went against the authority's liking. As a result of his defiant stance, the authorities had to make Barker suffer in one way or another. In his chapter dedicated to Howard Barker's theatre, Andy W. Smith describes how Barker realised with certainty that if he was to follow his voice, he could never attain the honorary status of a Royal Court writer because his plays will not be allowed to be staged in England's national theatres (2020: 156). Interestingly, this practice of removing Barker from the picture later became a criterion for evaluating himself. In an interview in The Guardian newspaper, Barker asserted this by saying that "I submit all my plays to the National Theatre for rejection. To assure myself I am seeing clearly" (qtd. in Smith, 2020: 155).

There are many parallels between Howard Barker's and Michel Foucault's criticism of the authority although we have not come across any mention of Foucault by Barker in any of his books, articles, interviews, etc. Still, the authority's way of operating and its influence on knowledge in literature from Barker's perspective will be best revealed through Michel Foucault's discussion of power - knowledge relations.

1.2. A BRIEF LOOK AT MICHEL FOUCAULT'S PHILOSOPHY

Michel Foucault is one of the most prominent French thinkers and philosophers. Throughout his life, Foucault held many academic positions at various institutions and universities in France to the point where he was nominated in 1969 to hold the position of professor of the history of systems of thought at the prestigious Collège de France till

his death in 1984. Foucault was an academic, a historian of ideas, a literary critic, and most importantly, he was a philosopher who criticised various aspects of modern society and raised so many questions on how societies, individuals, and even human knowledge have been under a process of constant reshape along the course of human history. When reading about Foucault and his works, one idea appears to stand at the centre of his philosophy; one that all of his works orbit around. That idea is the 'power-knowledge' relations where Foucault suggests that power is inextricably bound with human knowledge and that this power is what has been directing knowledge throughout history.

Foucault's ideas were not born randomly, but were an extension of his life experience and unique point of view on the world around him. Two notable factors could be pointed out, the first being his sexuality which played a role in influencing the way he viewed his surroundings and his place in society and how specific customs and cultures could stifle an individual. The second factor is The Second World War which sparked his early political notions and admiration of history which is evident in most of his later writings as he once states:

> I think that boys and girls of this generation had their childhood formed by these great historical events. The menace of war was our background, our framework of existence [...] Maybe that is the reason why I am fascinated by history and the relationship between personal experience and those events of which we are a part (qtd. in Jones, 1993: 10).

As the war ended, Foucault joined the École Normale Supérieure, the school that most French thinkers join as their first steps in their journey of becoming philosophers. There, Foucault was fed with the ideas of past great thinkers such as Marx and Hegel sharing their criticism of the bourgeois class. However, most noticeably, there are several positions where his philosophy is seen to have been influenced by the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Even though Foucault had less interest in Nietzsche during his later years as he once mentioned by saying that "Nowadays I prefer to remain silent about Nietzsche" (1980: 53), he does admit that he was fond of him during his early years to the extent of lecturing his students about him (53). Yet, one can safely assume that this fondness has shaped Foucault on many levels, influencing his writings and

forming what would later be his philosophy of the power - knowledge relation. Foucault states that if Marx was the one to specify the production relation, Nietzsche was the one who specified the power relation. For him, Nietzsche was "the philosopher of power, a philosopher who managed to think of power without having to confine himself within a political theory in order to do so" (53). Owing to his famous phrase that is synonymous with his name "God is dead" (Nietzsche, 1910: 125), Nietzsche's ideas are often mistaken to be anti-religious, and though he was not a supporter of the idea that religion should rise back into prominence, his reason behind the mentioned phrase could be seen as mere speculation regarding the destination morality is heading to after the Age of Enlightenment. It is common knowledge that during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the western world turned to science, reason, and logic to explain the world instead of aspiring to achieve answers from the religious institutions of Christianity, and when answers were indeed achieved through the use of this approach, Christianity faced a massive decline as the answers it provided were not credible for the masses anymore. Thus, the higher power of the divine was removed from the equation. Nietzsche speculated about where humanity would receive its morality from now that the arbiter of morality is now gone as a result of this metaphorical murder committed by science. Nietzsche believed that power, whether political, social, economic, did undoubtedly have massive influence over morality during the course of human history. For him, this already existing influence must ultimately escalate now that humans live in an era that excluded the Creator who used to monitor society. In *On The Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche says that

> Throughout history everywhere, 'noble', 'aristocratic' in social terms is the basic concept from which, necessarily, 'good' in the sense of 'spiritually noble', 'aristocratic', of 'spiritually highminded', 'spiritually privileged' developed: a development that always runs parallel with that other one which ultimately transfers 'common', 'plebeian', 'low' into the concept 'bad' (2006: 13).

A statement he makes to link how a person's status of being 'good' or 'bad' was not decided through examining that person's righteousness but rather, by his/her social status/the amount of power that person had.

With such a view on morality, Nietzsche seemed to go against the Enlightenment's notion of morality where it was considered to be objectively identifiable. However, Nietzsche's influence on Foucault here is not mainly related to morality, instead, the influence is perceivable in another connection that Foucault made which is taking the idea that power influences morality and using it to prove that power is and always has been influencing human knowledge. In other words, Foucault believed that ideas that are supposed to be objective and universal are rather, most of the time, historically contingent. Gerald Turkel explains how Foucault thought of power as the stead from which morality stems from unlike the common notion that morality stems from "universal principles of truth or transcendental values" (1990: 172). Foucault learned that morality rises during specific conditions and specific circumstances of mundane everyday life but at a specific moment in history. Turkel concluded that this inspiration from Nietzsche must have led Foucault to believe that the inquiry about such matters should not reveal congealed truths, ethics, or morals because the results must be contingent on specific factors and power bound (1990: 173). Ultimately, Foucault did not settle for examining morality alone due to the reason that he took this theory and applied it to knowledge, replacing the post-Enlightenment morality with the post-Enlightenment science/knowledge.

1.2.1. Power - Knowledge Relations

In an attempt to demonstrate how the power - knowledge relations were mostly unnoticed in academic circles, Foucault once described in an interview how most historic studies revolved around kings, generals, leaders, etc. He also notes that some of those studies might tackle the workings of certain institutions that belonged to those people (1980: 51). He continues by saying that what was not a topic of interest or was not in the spotlight of studies was power and how it operated, its general and detailed characteristics and mechanisms, coming to the conclusion that the "Mechanisms of power in general have never been much studied by history. History has studied those who held power" (51). The concept of power appears as a concept that everyone could have thought of, but in reality, reaching a sufficient understanding of this term is quite

complicated since the analysis around it is mostly blocked by excessive oversimplifications and misleading comparisons. Norbert Ricken comments on this issue saying that the term itself is surrounded by many aspects that increase the uncertainty of the term as the diffuse and popular nature of it affect each other; and that power as an idea has taken a deeply rooted place in everyday life, rarely escaping the predetermined lively ascriptions of significance, and ultimately rendering any attempt of a systematic readjustment and conceptual perception useless (2006: 541). Proceeding to say that power evades any kind of attempt which aims at using plain conceptual understanding and determination as the true significance of power depends on "far-reaching preconceptions and cannot be simplified separately from the self-interpretation of humanity" (542). This makes Niklas Luhmann's famous aphorism "the power of power seems to be mostly in the fact that one does not really know what it is in the end" credible to a certain extent (qtd. in Ricken, 2006: 542). Since power on its own is and was too difficult to grasp as a concept. It could be argued that the concept of power received little interest in academic circles due to it being a difficult concept to grasp. However, what had even less interest was the relation of power with knowledge. In this regard, few would ever come near the point where they could understand power, to truly realise its reach, and to be fully able to harness the true power behind power; 'true power' in this context stands for the ability to control human knowledge as its wielder wishes, and when one wields such power, he/ she becomes 'the authority' which reigns over the rest of his/ her kind. David Hume once said that

> Nothing appears more surprizing to those, who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye, than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and the implicit submission, with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers (2012: 22).

The few in Foucault's case are the bourgeois class. It appears that the cause of Foucault's struggle during his early years was the fact that the bourgeois class was the one to influence cultural costumes in France, thus, Foucault's 'abnormal' desires were deemed inappropriate. This ultimately led him to write extensively about the power that had ruled over him and over his fellow citizens through influencing their knowledge,

consequently making him reach and write what he was later known for. Foucault's belief that human knowledge is and always has been locked with an intimate relationship with power was the foundation stone on which most of his later writings were built.

Foucault writes in his book *Discipline and Punish* that "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (1995: 27). This belief challenged the traditional notion that viewed knowledge as a concept that operates on a level that lies beyond the confinements of the political, social and economic realms. But, contrary to that belief, Foucault suggests that knowledge is inextricably linked with whoever and whatever holds power. He continues by saying that it is of great naiveté to attempt at placing a separating line between power and knowledge similar to what "modern humanism" (Foucault, 1980: 52) try to do due to the fact that power and knowledge are greatly integrated with each other. Thus Foucault declares that attempting to dream of a time where either knowledge or power would cease to be dependent on each other is basically futile, and those who believe so are merely using a utopian lens in their viewing of humanism (52). It is an inescapable 'order' that has always existed, one that has governed human civilisation and transcended any space-time constraints while managing to be unique in its nature according to a particular time or place. It is safe to think that in most cultures, there are fundamental codes that act as the governing forces of that culture's language, exchanges, schemas of perception, values, techniques, etc. which establish the manner in which an individual from that culture would live. Foucault claims that this 'extreme' thought of having such codes of governance lies at the polar end of another extreme thought, that being the existence of philosophical interpretations which explain "why order exists in general" (Foucault, 2005: xxii**)**, interpretations about the laws that order obeys, the principles which account for it, and why a specific order is the one to govern and not any other (xxii**)**. These thoughts on the outside appear to perform two things: the first is describing the codes governing a culture that makes order, and the second analyses these codes on a philosophical level. However, there is a level that lies between those two poles yet it is obscure to both, a domain that deviates beyond the ability to be examined

through empirical methods. This level is the fact that 'order' exists in the first place. It exists beyond the reach of perceptual grounds "between the already 'encoded' eye and reflexive knowledge there is a middle region which liberates order itself" (xxii**)**. As long as this middle region makes clear the methods of being of order, it can be safely cemented as the "most fundamental of all" (xxiii). Foucault was quite curious to rediscover the nature of the basis on which knowledge and theory stood, about the space of order where knowledge was constituted, how ideas could appear, how sciences could be established, how philosophies were written as reflections of experiences, and how rationalities could be formed. Most importantly, he was curious about how all of this could be formed just for it to be dissolved and ultimately vanish afterward (xxii). Thus, he dedicated a portion of his writings for the purpose of putting a spotlight on the experience of order and its modes of being to demonstrate its developments - in Europe specifically - starting from the sixteenth century onwards, focusing on language, perception of creatures, and how they were grouped together.

1.2.2. Episteme

Now that the previous sections established that power and knowledge are connected and that the existence of an order that all things are related to is to inevitably exist regardless of time and place, it is possible now to understand one of Foucault's most central ideas: the episteme. It is true that an order of things where power and knowledge are mobilised has always existed, but it is incorrect to say that the same order has always existed. The orders of the world rise and fall, and most of the time, the collapse of an order means its eternal demise and destruction. Nietzsche suggested that with the rise of a new authority - power - that is going to run the new order of things, a new understanding of morality will emerge that would suit the convenience of this new authority. And as established earlier that new forms of knowledge will emerge at the convenience of the new authority, Foucault concluded that every form of a field of knowledge must be bound to a specific time period and nothing more. Foucault suggested that every moment or time period in history, even in the present time, has a

"corresponding structure of thought", an episteme as he calls it, describing it in his book *The Archeology of Knowledge*:

> Being something like a world-view, a slice of history common to all branches of knowledge, which imposes on each one the same norms and postulates, a general stage of reason, a certain structure of thought that the men of a particular period cannot escape (1972: 191).

An episteme, then, refers to how a given society or culture thinks at a specific moment in time. When an episteme changes, the main discourse of a given society will change with it putting emphasis on certain levels of knowledge that were neglected before. On the other hand, this change will also limit the levels of knowledge that belonged to the previous episteme. Thus, each episteme will popularise certain levels of knowledge while marginalising others according to the authority's benefit or policy. The process of change can take place in the following order: a supposed new power will become the new authority that would make use of its institutions for the sake of influencing people's knowledge by popularising or spreading a specific discourse that affects the collective knowledge on various levels. Ultimately, the new authority would be able to decide what is true and what is false according to the discourse it is popularising. Each change/shift is called an episteme. An example of a shift in of epistemes is when the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as the official religion of the empire. The scientific discourse in the Roman Empire changed significantly when compared to its status before the conversion due to the reason that branches of science were thrown away, allowing the branches that are related to new religious studies to take the stage. Before Christianity became the official religion of the empire through the efforts of Emperor Constantine the Great (272 CE-337 CE), the scientific discourse was mainly secular and faced no intervention from the emperors who preceded Constantine. Those who wished to study - or at least were able to - enjoyed the freedom of studying many branches of science like mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy. Christophe Rico claims that the intellectual heart of the empire, Alexandria, which even after the burning of its library in the first century B.C. during the conquest of Julius Caesar, managed to retain students and seekers of knowledge from around the world. However, as the power scales changed

with the spreading of Christianity, the aforementioned sciences were viewed as heresy; the library and its runners as infidels and heretics. Ultimately, the library was destroyed. Historic sources described that eventful day saying that

> Violent confrontations between Christians and some pagan Neoplatonists had been blamed for the destruction of the Library. In 391, the Emperor Theodosius ordered the destruction of all remaining pagan temples (Rico, 2017: 6).

Thus, the era, or in this case, the new episteme which was to be followed was that of limiting scientific discourse and discoveries to what was compatible with the church and the Bible.

With the mentioned mechanisms that describe the change of epistemes, one could, when possessing a decent amount of knowledge about history, point out a few of these changes. However, there is a specific change of epistemes that Foucault seems to have put so much emphasis on which is the reconfiguration of thought that occurred in the nineteenth century. In *The Order of Things,* Foucault describes the nineteenth century saying that analysis had demonstrated a coherence of thought throughout the Classical age - Foucault specifically uses the term "Classical age" to describe the period up to the midpoint of the seventeenth century (2005: xxiv). He continues by saying that the balance and harmony which existed between the theories of that time was shaken, removing them from the central stage of the scientific field, and mentions theories like the theory of representation, theories of language, theories regarding the natural orders, and those concerning wealth and value, all lost their past prominence:

> the theory of representation disappears as the universal foundation of all possible orders; language as the spontaneous *tabula*, the primary grid of things, as an indispensable link between representation and things, is eclipsed, [...] the analysis of exchange and money gives way to the study of production, that of the organism takes precedence over the search for taxonomic characteristics, and, above all, language loses its privileged position (2005: xxv).

In the midst of this reconfiguration of the theories of knowledge, Foucault says that "man enters in his turn" (2005, xxv). It is the age when humans began to take the central stage for themselves, dominating the domains of Western knowledge. Even with the change and reconfiguration of the theories of knowledge, one specific factor appears to be what caused the human to be the focal point of all things starting from that age onwards, and that factor is the imbalance in the scales of power because the scale represented by the Church was faltering. The Church's inability to offer logical answers about the world in an age where rationality and scientific methods were getting more prominence led to a decrease in the interest of people to follow the Church. An example would be the issue of how the Church supported the geocentric view of the universe at the time when the scientific community proved that it is in actuality a heliocentric system. With the culminated lack of other explanations regarding the world, the Church's position became weaker. Gradually, in the Western world, one could argue that 'the human' took the place of the divine.

Foucault says that those who claim that the investigation/ study of the human is as old as known history tracing it back to Socrates are "naïve" because he believes that this investigation of the human is merely a sort of a "rift in the order of things, or, in any case, a configuration whose outlines are determined by the new position he has so recently taken up in the field of knowledge" (2005: xxv). In the same context, Foucault follows by saying that it is quite plausible that this new episteme which revolves around the human should stay prominent for an equal amount of time, but definitely to "disappear again as soon as that knowledge has discovered a new form" (xxv). This assumption of his might be Foucault's way of saying that this episteme is relatively new, hence he describes it using the word "wrinkle" (xxv).

It must be noted that the shift which happened to knowledge in the nineteenth century did not take place suddenly for the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries did not lay in advance a well realised epistemological domain related to the human sciences. The terrain of this landscape was rough, since Foucault claims that one cannot encounter any political, philosophical, moral options, observation of the human body - at least in

Europe - analysis of sensation, nor even of imagination or passions (2005: 376). And the seventeenth and eighteenth-century sciences, and outside of life, language, or labour, "man" did not exist (376). This new domain of knowledge which emerged in the nineteenth century is labelled today as 'The Human Sciences' which is a multi-branched domain with each branch dealing with a certain aspect of the human being. Foucault describes this new domain and its branches saying that the emergence of each of those branches which each represents a field of knowledge on its own most certainly has been the result of a historic stimulant of some kind, be it a requirement, a problem, or, of course, the will of those who hold power, or the ramifications of their actions on the social, economic, or the political levels (376). Foucault provides two examples of this matter. The first is Capitalism, the extension, and replacement of the feudal system, which made significant changes on the social and economic levels during the time of the Industrial Revolution. The new norms that this system imposed on the individuals, and what they had to undergo because of their harsh working environments, severely damaged them on mental levels. These effects on individuals later managed to constitute themselves as a branch of the human sciences, Psychology (376). The second is in how the French Revolution massively affected the social scales that the Monarchy under Louis XVI was struggling to maintain. Ultimately, the revolution shocked the political and especially the social scales, giving rise to new social forms which lead to the establishment of the field of Sociology (376). The change in the scales of balance during the nineteenth century in regard to knowledge was inevitable. The old forms which were inspired and influenced by the discourse of the Church and the prominent theories then - especially the theory of representation - functioned in a specific way where only one answer presented it as the sole objective one. The mathematical approach of the theory of representation and the Biblically-bound answers about the world and what was seen as 'supernatural' did not match with the new systems and forms of post-enlightenment Europe. Hence, Foucault says that from that period onward, the epistemological field expanded in every direction, spawning various branches of knowledge, and providing multiple viewpoints and perspectives; something that was unachievable when using mathematics as the basis of an approach (378).

1.2.3. Eliminating the Other

Now that the previous sections established the power - knowledge relations and the concept of the episteme, another vital notion related to Foucault is at hand. Amidst the inevitability of the existence of order, the authority's influence on knowledge, and the changing epistemes, 'the elimination of the other' seems to be the most terrifying. 'The elimination of the other' is not a term Foucault uses; however, it is a suitable title for a practice that Foucault is dealing with in his *History of Madness* (1961). On the first reading, the aforementioned book seems to be a revisiting of how Europe dealt with people who suffered from mental illnesses while at the same time being a re-account of the different methods which were followed across several centuries; a historiography of medicine and early psychiatry beginning from the Middle Ages up to the modern era. However, Foucault slowly reveals that under this guise of isolating the mad to be treated, lies a completely different practice which this thesis labels as 'elimination of the other'. Based on the accounts mentioned by Foucault in his book, this section will demonstrate how authorities gradually come to use specific words such as accusations - in order to get rid of any sense of defiance against it. This section will broaden the reading of Howard Barker because he also suffered from many accusations because he did not submit to the authoritarian literary norms of his time.

Foucault tries to establish early in his book that if one were to take a look at the serene world of mental illness, it would become obvious that a clear separation between the 'modern man' and the 'madman' does indeed exist (2009: 32). Communication seems no longer existent as the modern man or the sane, the one who claims to be the party which holds reason, authorised a relation with the other party solely under the banner of mental illness while the latter can only communicate through showing conformity to order and its physical and moral constraints. Foucault says that a common language between these two factions no longer exists as one side has already decided that madness is to be constituted as mental illness demonstrating that the culmination of post-renaissance bias and especially the eighteenth century and its fields of knowledge caused this unfixable rupture regarding the dialogue between those two (2009: 32).

Since the scales of the power were tilted in favour of the sane, 'the sane' had the ability to define 'right' and 'wrong' to his liking. According to Foucault, it is this repetition and intensification of the supposed moral and intellectual superiority of the sane that was inescapable and caused the division to expand (32). "In our culture there can be no reason without madness" (36) says Foucault, a sentence that demonstrates how the sane intellectual human legitimised his existence by labelling others as mad (36). Foucault adds that the time and space in which the "Western man" (36) lived allowed him to adopt such attitudes as it was a fertile environment that allowed a structure of refusal to spread, a structure "on the basis of which a discourse is denounced as not being language, a gesture as not being an œuvre, a figure as having no rightful place in history" (35-36). With the word "œuvre" meaning artwork, its existence in the previous statement by Foucault will later demonstrate how Barker's artwork was refused.

The structure of refusal that the western man adopted towards the insane was not always the same because Foucault demonstrates that the manner in which 'man' dealt with madness throughout history differed significantly. For instance, Foucault says that during the Middle Ages and up to the renaissance, there was a debate surrounding what madness really stood for. Madness was a mystery to man during that period, standing in man's face and declaring its difference, something beyond his understanding, beyond his reach. Foucault shows that the historic accounts reflect how the people at that time considered madness as the manifestation of the dark powers of the world; some attributed it to images of the "Fall", of "Metamorphosis", and of the "End of All Things" (37). Yet despite all of these attitudes, he says that there were no severe actions taken towards madness other than banishing the mad outside city walls, and though it might sound harsh when taken at face value, it must be understood that such punishment was executed while knowing that the mad could be trusted to be taken care of by travelling merchants or pilgrims (51). It appears that such a custom was common in several big cities, especially in Germany, as Foucault gives an example of the city of Nuremberg during the fourteenth century, saying that records describe how out of the dozens of madmen who lived there, around twenty forced departures were performed within fifty years which is a fairly small number (51). It must also be mentioned that those forced

departures were not systematic removals due to the fact that they were only performed upon being arrested by the municipal authorities when committing a crime of some sort. An example would be how a madman was once departed from Frankfurt in the year 1399 for walking around the city naked, another departure was performed in Mainz a century after for the same reason (51). Foucault himself admits that the thought of a 'systematic removal' of the mad is "tempting"; however this hypothesis cannot stand as a fact because the fact was that only a certain number was removed for reasons mentioned earlier as there were many who were not; instead they were to be treated in hospitals. The Hôtel-Dieu in Paris had a specific bunker made solely to host the mad, and most of the major cities of Europe had such places like the Melun Châtelet, Tour aux Fous in Caen in France and gates of Lübeck and the Hamburg Jungpfer in Germany all to the purpose of treating the mad (51).

This view of madness appears to have held itself for most of the Middle Ages. Despite all the mystery surrounding the nature of madness, it was looked upon by many as some form of salvation and a way of escaping the harsh period of the Middle Ages (Foucault, 2009: 59). However, this view was not to be held forever since the rift in view that started to take shape by the beginning of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance was turning into a rupture. Foucault narrates how the images of the mad as they roamed the roads, the countryside, and the ships of merchants and pilgrims resonated in the psyche of the people (55). He adds that the ambiguity of such views slowly generated a sense of fear and threat which was amplified by the culmination of oral stories and morality tales that created a considerable mass weighing on the mentality of the people despite how fragmented the origins and factuality of those stories were. Thus, those "stigmatized vices" (55) gradually led to an understanding that meant denouncing madness as a form of moral critique (55). This was supposedly amplified even more due to the number of dead people rising as a result of wars and diseases, especially the black plague, and the image of death became prevalent in every mind as the actual 'end of all things'. Most importantly, Foucault says that this image of death became at a certain moment in time associated with madness (57). At this point in time, the previously held attitudes towards madness as it being a harmless state of being, a form of salvation, or a lack of wisdom,

were no longer prominent. Now that death and madness are held at the same scale, madness became a danger more fearsome than death itself, for death came from an exterior factor, but madness comes from within. It comes from the depths of oblivion that the sane could not fathom:

> The terms of the argument were therefore now reversed. It was no longer the end of time and the end of the world that would demonstrate that it was madness not to have worried about such things. Rather, the rise of madness, its insidious, creeping presence showed that the final catastrophe was always near: the madness of men brought it nigh and made it a foregone conclusion (57).

Thus, the seeds of how madness is viewed today were planted during the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, placing madness in the hierarchy of vices of that time.

Foucault then moves to the sixteenth century, the heart of the Renaissance to demonstrate how the view on madness had changed again, claiming that during that time madness became inextricably linked with reason in a polar opposite relation where each is measured by the other (2009:71). Nevertheless, since madness always had the shorter end of the stick, and since it was the age of Renaissance which was in its turn followed by the age of enlightenment; madness became more marginalised. Foucault even mentions that madness was starting to be represented in a negative manner, which he follows by mentioning Shakespeare and how he portrayed madness as an ultimate tragedy (81). Despite the fact that Foucault does not give a specific example when he mentions Shakespeare here, Macbeth could be a good example and the tragedy according to Foucault's reasoning lies in witnessing Macbeth slowly descending into madness and throwing away the qualities of bravery, honour, and kinship that he demonstrates at the beginning of the play. Foucault also claims that the literature of the following two centuries did madness no favour either (81). If the Renaissance period, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries stigmatised madness as a vice, then the eighteenth century aimed to "reduce it to silence" (86). According to Foucault scholars and scientists from the age of reason refused to even consider the perspective of madness. For them, madness was not necessary due to the reason that it resembled the lack of

everything the spirit of that age stood for (86). One such scholar who Foucault quotes is Descartes, whose writings labelled madness as an error of the senses, and that madness was not a state of the mind but rather a complete lack of it (87). Descartes viewed the mind of the madman as a damaged one caused by "persistent vapours of melancholia" (qtd. in Foucault, 2009: 81) producing no more than mere illusions to fool the senses. Descartes argues that even a mind in a state of dreaming is more factual than madness because dreams; no matter how delusional they are, still manage to retain some resemblance of reality. They are like the "imaginings of painters", they can represent ideas in different ways but are always ideas that are an extension of the real world (86). Madness is a completely different affair says Descartes, claiming that as long as he is thinking, he cannot be labelled insane:

> If one admits the possibility that one might be dreaming, and one identifies with that dreaming subject to find 'some grounds for doubt', truth still appears, as one of the conditions of possibility for the dream. By contrast, one cannot suppose that one is mad, even in thought, for madness is precisely a condition of impossibility for thought (qtd. in Foucault, 2009: 87).

With such writings, the mentality of the eighteenth century was no longer concerned with what madness stood for as it was not imposing any kind of peril anymore and has been "quashed by the exercise of Reason" (Foucault, 2009: 88) eventually, the only enemy in a domain ruled by this new sovereign became errors and illusions, which were both supposedly manifested in madness (88). Foucault states that between Descartes's writings and other writings like Montaigne, madness was not only marginalised when it was compared to the rationalism of that age but also exceeded that to drive the "unreason" to the underground in order to make it disappear (88).

Foucault narrates the story of how some psychiatrists in the nineteenth century such as Pinel, Tuke, and Wagnitz discovered that there had been a secret practice that had lasted over a century. That practice was the secret confinement of the mad in certain wards in hospitals (89). This might sound normal after reading what was mentioned above, however, the cruelty in this practice lies in the idea that the mad were not hosted as patients but prisoners. Even more, they were locked in the same cells as criminals,

unemployed, or the poor people (89). The interesting aspect about this practice was that it was not executed by separate or random individuals who inhabited remote cities, but a practice that was prominent in none other than Paris and in the Hôpital Général no less. Foucault mentions that one out of every hundred people found themselves captured and thrown into these cells (89). The purpose of this practice was not to heal but to confine and control. Most surprisingly, even though the group of psychiatrists mentioned earlier discovered this practice and witnessed the terrible conditions the mad were suffering from, Foucault says that the group "allowed them to remain" there (89), and this decision demonstrates the stigmas and vices that have been culminating since the seventeenth century that even psychiatrists could not release themselves from because, for them, the mad did indeed belong in places of confinement (89). When this practice of confinement was discovered in the nineteenth century, it was revealed that it had been held for over a century, gradually becoming more systematic with its approach of capturing and confining the mad. Foucault claims that this practice started with a royal decree which resembled reforms on the outside, but in reality, that decree would change the function of the establishment known as 'the hospital' ever since (90). Many found themselves in the Hôpital Général, the mad, the poor, the sick, and even those sent by royal or judicial decree, and all were supervised by directors whose authority surpassed that of mere physicians as they were granted a wide range of authority including administration, commerce, tribunals, policing, correction and even punishment. Eventually, Foucault states that the Hôpital Général came to resemble a semi-judicial structure more than a mere medical institution enabling it to judge and pass sentences while independent from the preexisting judicial institutions and courts (90). The people responsible for that practice had so much authority that the right to appeal could not be applied against their jurisdiction, nor could anything stand against "their right" of issuing execution sentences (91). The Hôpital Général was indeed an anomaly when it came to it being an initiation as the king had placed it halfway between justice and police systems, operating at the limits of legality. It was an unorthodox idea compared to any other medical experience in both purpose and function. Moveover, it was an instrument of repression and most importantly of instilling 'order'. Foucault owes the reason behind such a practice to a newly forming structure ruled by the bourgeois and

aided by the monarchy in France during that time, and this structure was in need of a new order which could grant them more control. Gradually, most cities had their 'Hôpital Général', all operating under the guise of regular health establishments as well as places that provide help to the poor. However, "there was more" because these institutions were not merely established to assist but to repress as well, following the will of the bourgeois of bringing order to the world of poverty and madness (93). Almost all of these institutions contained cells to detain prisoners held either at the expense of their families or the king himself. These unwanted individuals who were either captured, sent, or sentenced, ranged from young people to old ones, with no regard to their gender, and once they got in, there was no way out. The strictness of this age seems to resemble how the Middle Ages dealt with leprosy, but instead of segregating the lepers, it sought to confine the mad and poor. It also appears that this phenomenon was not a monopoly on France because Foucault mentions that this practice gradually became European in its dimensions as the number of these establishments of confinement reached hundreds, creating a whole network by the beginning of the nineteenth century (95). It was during such times that John Howard went on a pilgrimage-like journey around Europe to visit these places of confinement. And to say that he was discontent is an understatement because he witnessed the terrible conditions of those who had been confined there. The mad were thrown not with patients but with criminals, defiant young men, and vagrants (95). Those people represented a danger to the new forms of the order of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and by that time they were seen as an 'other' that posed a threat to society, a group whose integration into society itself is impossible (118). These new forms made sure that these people would view themselves to be "both a consequence of disorder and an obstacle to order" (98). Clearly, the levels of knowledge and discourse that were born from a culmination of the Age of Enlightenment's spirit, bias, and writings demonstrated that these forms do not seek to relieve and heal but to dispose instead.

At that point there was no turning point to undo or bridge the gap between the sane and the mad because madness, across several centuries, was labelled under many titles: superstition, unreason, illness, danger, etc. and a negative image - to say the least -

was carved into the collective psyche of the people. Foucault implies that it is a shame to witness this great division that the seventeenth century amplified because he claims that no clear-cut division could be made between sense and madness because both coexist in an "indecipherable unity" where one could be passed for the other, adding that any form of madness, if taken to its limits would not fail to be passed as wisdom. However, this unity was broken and the divide between reason and unreason created a natural extension in the form of institutional expression, that being 'Confinement' (140).

One might argue about how the division between the sane and the mad was caused by a failure to recognize what the nature of madness truly was. However, Foucault explicitly states that standing behind such a claim only hides the truth because 'our failure of recognition' holds behind it "an explicit consciousness" (150). This statement should not come as a surprise because the power - knowledge relations of that time required that any sense of an unfamiliar other who might disturb or pose a threat should be confined and put under surveillance. This new system of surveillance was, of course, not created to cure the mad, in fact; they were deemed 'incurable' upon arrival at a Hôpital Général like Bicêtre: "This absence of medical care, with the exception of the prescribed visit, meant that there was little practical difference between the Hôpital Général and a prison" (153).

Later, additional forms of viewing madness emerged which were based on a drawn comparison between madness itself with the moral order of society. These forms did not care to associate madness with a sickness of a character's fault but to associate it with the moral order where it can appear as a "disturbance" (174). Foucault mentions an example of these forms when an abbot called Bargedé was confined within Saint-Lazare in the eighteenth century. Bargedé was not mad in the manner of an insane person whose actions were carried through the brute force of his madness. He was merely a usurer, one who refused to repent despite him already knowing that usury is a sin in Christianity. He was one who took pride in his greediness. In this case, Bargedé was not accused of being mad due to a loss of reason but was accused of being so when his actions were associated with a given moral order, that being Christian ethics. One must bear in mind

that a man was labelled mad, thrown into a hospital, confined there, and judged incurable, all because of representing a disturbance to the system of thought/moral order that he originally belonged to. Thus, the institutions were not being used for their original purpose anymore, and the illness of 'madness' became a mere cover used by the authorities to confine any unwanted thought/disturbance to the order of that time.

This practice of confining 'the mad' is a real-life example of how the power - knowledge relations could be abused by the authority to instil its well-being. The mechanism of change requires accusations to stamp and label anyone who would pose a threat to the new authority and its discourse. In the narrative mentioned earlier, once 'reason' became the main discourse, the label of madness was abused to serve the ends of the authority of that time. Now if one would peek at Howard Barker's experience with the literary authoritarians, what becomes noticeable is the accusations that were used by the authoritarian critics in order to label him, demonstrating how each episteme has a certain 'other' who must be eliminated in one way or another due to that other's lack of compliance. This practice did not stop during the period Barker was active because the same strategy is still being followed by the authorities to this very day.

1.3. HOWARD BARKER'S SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

Barker's theatrical school of thought is best described using Foucauldian terminology since his literary voice always sought to subvert the literary conventions of his time. If Foucault described the power - knowledge relations and authorities employed them, then Barker tried to counter whatever influence such a concept might have had on theatre. The seeds of how Barker's form of theatre took its current shape began during his early years in theatre. Barker looked at the situation in the theatrical circles and the ideas of playwrights and described them as 'miserable'. He says that when a broken culture - most probably referring to the British culture - handed authority to despair which gave ground to obsolete theologies it allowed "philistinism to parade as democratic art" (1997: 20). Barker adds, saying that what was left after was no more than a miniaturist art which was not able to meet the visions and ambitions of writers or actors who were led afterward to take an approach of making their works simplistic and

clear, and most significantly, implement their own moral messages (20). Barker acknowledged how desperate that situation was and admitted that all the messages and the systems of thought that were pushing them, were not serving theatre in the slightest. He also notes that even the socialism he once followed mattered less as time progressed:

> I always knew socialism was a tragedy. I had represented it as tragedy early on [...] I had repeatedly studied its failure [...] I needed to know what meaning socialism had for me. I risked finding it had no meaning [...] It was no use repeating catechisms. It was futile to rest theatre on given things (21).

With that in mind, Barker made sure that the theatre he was going to create would take a different direction; for example, he sought that his theatre would deal with the audience in a different manner than the old theatre, as Barker calls it. He states that the actors of the old theatre behaved like salesmen who offered their plays to the audience as if they were mere products and that these audiences became nothing more than a group of customers (1997: 67). Naturally, any salesman who desires to distribute his/her products would seek to obtain the customers' satisfaction. The audience/customer satisfaction is also something that Barker criticised because seeking the satisfaction of the audience generated a sense of fear within the ranks of playwrights as they reflected in horror the possibility that the audience might not understand a certain scene, or that they might lose the narrative thread of a given play. The fruit of their fear turned theatre into a setting synonymous with a lecturing hall or even a jury box (80). As the end goal of the performances which belonged to the old theatre became mainly the audience's satisfaction, the stage was turned into something that resembled a deal struck at a market. Barker's theatre, on the other hand, attempted to throw away the concept of 'the deal' in order to relinquish the audience's status as customers, and forced it to abandon the thought of expecting any reward (67).

The idea of rewarding the audience might carry disrespectful implications because the old theatre seems to have been rewarding the audience for its efforts as in its effort of attendance, the effort of concentration, and the effort of surrendering its futile time. With this in mind, Barker wonders why playwrights would reward the audience in

the first place. Is theatre that intolerable? Is not art for itself necessary? It should be exactly the opposite, says Barker, because it is a privilege for the audience to witness art, and it is a privilege that the audience would hear and watch good actors (1997: 67). Thus, Barker's theatre decided to offer no reward due to the reason that it is not seeking to strike a deal with its audience, and that it perceives itself not as a product but as a necessity that the audience must attend and experience so that it can fill its spiritual hunger (67). Additionally, Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe does not only forbid the audience from any sense of reward and satisfaction, but it also tries to "dethrone its audience" (67). When witnessing catastrophe, the audience is no longer the judge or jury, and instead, it will surrender itself in the presence of the dominant actors who are above the audience in their performance and their literal elevation over them. In a Radio documentary, Barker openly admitted that he never seeks to prioritise the audience's desires when he is in the process of creating catastrophic plays. He says that

> When I work with actors, I say this is principally for us. The audience comes as a guest, but we don't put their interests before the work's own demands, we don't ask if it's accessible - I won't entertain that as a question (qtd. in Smith, 2020: 164).

This statement demonstrates how Barker and his catastrophe sought to stand in the face of the authoritarian influence on theatre during that episteme. One can only admire such an approach that reflects Barker's defiant spirit, similar to how Andy W. Smith complements it as she described it as "maddening, magnificent intransigence - the antithesis of most audience-wooing modern culture" (164). However, one must not misjudge Barker's theatre as one that underestimates its audience due to the fact that the Theatre of Catastrophe holds its audience in high regard and seeks not to offend nor attack it. In Barker's own words: "we are not seeking a theatre of masochism" (Barker, 1997: 67), but this approach is taken so that the audience would escape its malignant memory of how it was dealt with by the old theatre so that it can set aside its shallow sense of expectations and its hunger for reward (67).

What has been signaling hostility or approval towards Barker's works is identifiable by measuring how much that work is in sync with two specific terms: obscurity and accessibility. Those terms represent two completely different poles of critical judgement, the first is as old as criticism goes, a respectable concept marginalised in every politically oriented work. While the latter can be fairly described as a 'neologism' that was put to use by the corrupt political currents (Barker, 1997: 85). Accessibility is not something that is limited to theatre and not even to art alone, as it – apparently- can be applied to literally anything. Access to museums, information, education, and even to knowledge itself. It sounds liberal and just for a brief moment, but it hides behind its back a great suspicion of imagination and hatred towards privilege. The cult of accessibility considers inaccessible ideas or works as 'privilege', and privilege in this age of populism is a disgrace. Even more, if a work or idea fails to communicate and express itself then it is stamped with the seal of 'obscurity' (85). In this sham of democracy, society must spill out its entire culture, and artists now have an obligation laid in front of them, they must make themselves and their works be understood. The critical regime will approve of a work of literature if it deems it 'accessible'. This obsession puts immense pressure on writers, forcing them to write in accordance with what that regime desires to spread as information, writing simple narratives, rapidly absorbed characters, and a clear sense of 'good' and 'bad' (85). Such an environment poses a great threat to artistic freedom nay, this constriction goes way beyond artists as was mentioned earlier, for accessibility can be applied to anything. Thus, musicians, scholars, museum administrators, and most probably in the near future, philosophers all will be forced to taste doses of accessibility. Those who write inaccessible plays - not only plays - should take good care as they are to be threatened by the regime, at best, they will be labelled pretentious, anyone who collaborates with them will be labelled as fools, the actors who bring their writing to the stage as brainless exhibitionists, and the institution which houses the production as corrupt (87). Accessibility on the outside sounds tempting, giving an impression that it is equalising everyone and giving the same spaces and chances to all. However, accessibility dictates that everyone lead in one specific path that is drawn by the critical regime which promotes accessibility. Despite the variety of languages, it dictates that only one tongue

should be spoken, and despite the difference in morality, it dictates sharing one singular set of morals. When taking into consideration why and to what end accessibility is used, the characteristic that denies Barker's work becomes indeed a natural opponent, that characteristic being obscurity. Catastrophe will deny sharing what other writers and regimes promote as universal values, it will not give a definitive idea of 'goodness', 'evil', 'importance', etc. in its obscurity, the work will certainly be, in Barker's own words, "undigested", but more importantly, it will not wield to a certain party:

> This is a theatre of selfishness, and its maker is someone who sees himself or herself unashamedly as an artist, the power of whose imagination is their sole claim on public attention. This is a theatre whose business is not 'communication' at all, but expression (88).

Even though this theatre is called the Theatre of Catastrophe, Barker was on the verge of calling it a 'Theatre of Obscurity' in that it demolishes any sort of moral compact that could underlie a sense of 'accessibility', and repudiates itself from the concept of virtue which has weighed down the audience thinking that the author of the play they witness is on their side. A prime reason why his plays were excluded from the National Theatre of England for two decades. Furthermore, his plays were targeted by critics, like Michael Billington, who once described one of Barker's plays as "engagingly obscure" (qtd. in Barker, 1997: 89), which is indeed the case as Barker apparently enjoyed confusing the audience, saying that the pleasures of this theatre arise from giving anxiety to the lovers of accessibility (89). Charles Lamb says that even with pressure from the critics, Barker made sure that his plays would "became increasingly 'difficult'" (2004: 1). However, the use of the word "pleasure" must not be mistaken for a childish whim, rather, a fascination with the exaggerated reactions of an audience long under the spell of clarity and accessibility. It is difficult to label Barker's approach as a reaction because a reaction to something entails going down the opposite path, and Barker in his approach did not take sides and tried to stay as neutral as possible. In his own words, Barker says that

> I cannot for a moment pretend I have ever written for a public whom I judged in need of enlightenment. I have never wanted to 'tell' anything to anyone, or

> wished to alter their views on a subject. I was always engaged with the problems of my own psyche and the tensions within my own personality. The theatre I have chosen to embrace is one which makes no compact with its audience as to entertainment, ideological instruction, humanist celebration or changed perceptions (1997: 89).

The audience that Barker desired, the one that he held as the key to save theatre from its crisis, is an audience that demands the writer to concede nothing from it. This audience willingly desires to witness "the fullest expression of complexity" (47). It will demand writers and actors to push themselves and do more. This audience will be the one to define the pace of change, and only when such a sense of high demand exists, theatre will be free and ready to change.

In order to further negate both the audience and critics' satisfaction, Barker picked tragedy to be the genre for his catastrophe even though it does not operate in the same traditional sense as regular tragedies as will be demonstrated later. In Barker's eyes, the tragedies that existed during his time were not tragedies as he says that since the 1960s, these tragedies were mere "failures of the social services" (18). In order to stay away from being a mere social service to the audience or the critics, Barker sought to provide neither entertainment as in submitting to the politics of the left nor moral messages as in submitting to the politics of the right . Thus, catastrophe was to replace the old theatre's reconciliation and resolution with "a passionate assertion of human complexity" that cannot be malformed by ideology or constructed by the so-called goodwill of the collectivity of humanism (82). And for the purpose of achieving human complexity and negating from abiding by authoritarian agenda, ambiguity became one of Barker's most used tools when crafting catastrophic plays. The use of ambiguity seems to have been Barker's attempt at taking the audience seriously since he had the desire to provide every single individual in the audience with a unique experience. Barker suggests that with the use of ambiguity, every individual in the audience will reach a different interpretation, and will experience pain inflicted on them individually, a blessing from the "endless drizzle of false collectivity" (19). By taking this route, catastrophe challenges what the authoritarian state is spreading as collectivity, which is

no more than a way to control the public, and when each member of the audience is treated specially and individually they emerge equipped against lies. Barker describes his catastrophe saying that it offends the sensibilities. It drags the unconscious into the public place. It, therefore, silences the banging of the tambourine which characterises the authoritarian and the labourist culture alike (19). Even more, Barker's tragedy dares to achieve beauty in an age when no one dares to seek or aspire to achieve it, and the beauty lies in subverting "the lie of the human squalor" that nests at the core of the new authoritarianism (19). Additionally, when societies are to be categorised as uneducated and decadent, the complexity offered by tragedy becomes a source of resistance. Barker believes that since the authoritarians have removed life from the word 'freedom' as if they have bled it out, justice, as a word, achieved a new significance because only tragedy makes justice its preoccupation. Since no form of art is generating action as Barker claims, a pain-stimulating tragedy becomes the most appropriate form of art to be offered to "a culture on the edge of extinction" (19). With such an attitude to adapt, Barker faced some sort of complication when the audience first witnessed his plays. At that point, Barker was, as he himself puts it, "exhausted by certainty itself" and so, he was trying to make the audience reach a feeling of a mutual "not knowing" by using ambiguity and the space for interpretation he allowed the audience to have (21). However, the audience at that point was accustomed to the autocracy of the authoritarian playwrights and was naturally angered by Barker's plays. By means of influencing theatre, the authority had already manipulated the audiences' knowledge and their critical faculties. Barker mentions that the cause of such a reaction was the idea that theatre was dominated by Brechtian absolutism whose ideas were contrary to Barker's (22). Brecht's influence one theatre was quite perceivable in the 1970s and 1980s (Lamb, 2004: 1). Naturally, the ones who were angered the most were the critics as a considerable chunk of them represented the dominant authoritarian ideology of that episteme. Barker once stated that even the critics who once appreciated and supported his works are no longer doing so. He says that "Critics like Michael Billington and Irving Wardle-that range of middlebrow critic - now seem to be actively hostile towards my work" (qtd. in Smith, 2020: 163). This hostility is quite understandable considering the critics' background and objectives of manipulating knowledge. Mark Brown

theorised about the relation of hostility towards Barker's works and concluded that "much of the critical hostility is down to 'demands for naturalism, social realism, liberal humanism, functionality and, above all, meaning" (qtd. in Smith, 2020: 163). Basically, demanding what was suitable for the literary episteme of that time.

In its defiance of the characteristics of its episteme, catastrophe knowingly, immensely limited the number of its audience. However, the way catastrophe's audience is willing to venture into the unknown so that they can stimulate their imagination and be free of political manipulation, naturally makes them different from the majority of society who are ready to swallow anything they are given. This sense of difference should be far from being seen as negativity because, in actuality, it separates that audience as 'elitists' who are rightfully above the blind crowds. In such an episteme of authoritarian indoctrination and brainwashing, the duty of an artist is to utilise their imagination, speculating about life in the way it is lived while at the same time proposing to, consciously or unconsciously, speculate about life as it might be lived. And the more speculative the artist is, the more subversive he becomes and defiant against the authoritarian literary conventions. Thus he becomes, like his audience, above the writers of the journalistic theatre, who refuse to speculate and are limited by only exposing existing life, making him far away from being elitists (Barker, 1997: 36). Obviously, this approach goes against what the authority desires. and the regime of the populist political wings will defy elitism for being the art that aspires to celebrate complexity, difficulty, anything that could have a literary tone, i.e. refusing the naturalistic speech "and the elevation of language as the vehicle of complex articulation" (35).

Taking the mentioned above into consideration, the different directions which were taken by Barker on one hand, and the one taken by the authoritarian writers on the other should have become clearer. Barker sought to achieve beauty with his plays, he sought to respect the audience and deal with them as unique individuals; thus, he gave them the freedom of interpretation by reverting from using clarity and achieving satisfaction. The old theatre or the authoritarian theatre, on the other hand viewed both

theatre and its audience in a different manner. Implementing clarity and seeking audience satisfaction would come to be understood as the authoritarian playwrights' method to 'indoctrinate' the audience according to the episteme of that time. For example, Barker mentions how the authority, "the populist state" as he calls it, invented a "wicked idea" (1997: 22) which was the idea of the stable audience: an audience unable to change and far from being able to engage with the stage, a weapon created by the populist state to forbid any revolutionary texts from being created, "a notion of the people used against people" (22). Once that idea was created, the authority rushed to change the collective knowledge of the audience, popularising the audience's, its absence of concentration, its impatience, and their state of mind under the dictatorship of television habits. But never did the authority popularise the "appetite for challenge, truth, or discrimination" (22) because that would resemble an obstacle to their discourse. Ultimately, this new understanding of the audience invented by the populist state became the enemy of the artist, standing in his/her way as an immovable block of entertainment-seekers whose numbers and collective economic power prevented intelligence from being seen.

The brainwashing does not stop here because Barker gives more examples regarding the process of indoctrination as he describes the strange method by which the authoritarian playwrights begin to craft their plays. Apparently, the process did not start with the desire to create art; rather, it begins with the seemingly 'selfish' desire to improve the audiences and their lives. Barker narrates that when an authoritarian playwright begins to write a play, his/her concern is not the plot, the characters, or the themes, but the question of "What do people need?" (1997: 72). The search for a subject to the play is initiated once the answer to this question is found, and the writers and directors of the authoritarian theatre seem to justify the advertising of their plays through their ravenous appetite to improve people. Barker says that when a writer who belongs to the old theatre was asked about his/her reasons behind writing a certain play, the 'invariable' answer will probably be the desire to make the audience understand a certain 'thing' better, to make them know how a certain person feels, to heighten the perception of the audience about a certain issue, or most shamelessly, to dare and say

that they want to improve the audience's life quality (72). Barker describes this appetite saying:

> This is the social hygiene of the gifted aching to illuminate the ungifted, the above-prejudice correcting the prejudiced, and the artist instructing the herd. It is the essential manner of the humanist play which has as its project the strictly utilitarian end of making us good and happy (happiness supposed to be derived from 'understanding one another') and turning theatre into sticking plaster for the wounds of social alienation (72).

Besides the fact that this authoritarian theatre has diverted the goal of art from being related to expression to mere 'informing', it managed to stay relevant for three decades after WWII. The reason behind this long period of dominance is not only related to the authoritarian writers who seek to spread their agendas by manipulating knowledge, but to the audience itself as well who demanded to witness such plays. Barker owes this behaviour of both sides to the inseparable human drive of correcting and being corrected. Ultimately, the authoritarian social hygiene of 'illumination' and desire to be morally asserted turned the English theatre into a "theatre of social correction" (73).

It is due to the mentioned above that the audience will be in shock at what catastrophe offers. The audience that was accustomed to clear narrative threads and simple structures will be met with a play that would deprive it of clarity and political agendas. Barker states that when an audience whose intellect has been numbed by authoritarian plays first experiences the freedom catastrophe grants, its shock will be similar to that of uncaging a locked-up animal, hesitant and even resistant to the idea of its very freedom (81). This metaphor is Barker's way of describing the awe of experiencing his plays which the audience might unconsciously criticise due to the reason that it has been moulded in a specific manner by the authoritarian theatre. The first form of being shocked is generated from the language used in catastrophe as it will sound 'unfamiliar' to say the least, with rhythms and syntax beyond what is heard in day-to-day speech. Catastrophe's language is described to be dense and internally contradicting so that it can evoke and confuse. It is a language that sounds as contrived as poetry, sometimes even lyrical, dislocated, and coarse in some places (81). The

audience that has been programmed by the political theatre to seek messages and laughter would be more shocked as it witnesses the servile compact between the author and the performer who both seek to achieve the audience's unanimity on a certain topic be broken by catastrophe. The only unanimity catastrophe aspires to achieve is the unanimity of the audience's confusion and division, driving it towards its liberty by the right of individual interpretation, "its liberation from the shackles of meaning" (82). In defiance of the mentioned tropes, Barker's catastrophe started to take shape which made his theatre, as Elizabeth Angel Perez describes it as "a new sort of theatre, brutal and lyrical, intellectual and visceral" (qtd. in Smith, 2020: 154) something that would come to characterise his works from the mid-1980s onwards .

The true difference between the authoritarian theatre and Barker's theatre is most evident in two analogies; the first is made by Foucault, and the latter is made by Barker. In an attempt to describe how the authority is now so powerful to the point where its reach goes far beyond mere manipulation of knowledge and has reached a level of ultimate surveillance over the masses, Foucault describes Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon as the ultimate tool of control. Foucault talked extensively about how the authority manages to keep the masses under control, from using brute force, making the victim into the perpetrator to false accusations against the order of things etc. However, he describes that the current stability of any authoritarian regime is measured by the amount of surveillance it can perform (Foucault, 1980: 41). The authorities needed to keep the masses in a state of constant fear, and instead of using controlled crime, the feeling of being surveilled at every moment managed to keep the masses in line (41). Foucault claims that the Panopticon is the original concept that all governmental institutions are designed after. Designed by the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, the Panopticon is a circular prison where the cells are placed around the circumference and a space at the centre where a watchtower is erected that hosts the prison guards. The light coming from the windows of each cell will shine on the watch pit obscuring the guards. In that instance, the guard can see the prisoners but the prisoners cannot see him. And despite the fact that the guard can keep an eye on one prisoner at a time, his being obscure will cause the prisoners to think that the guard might be surveilling them at every moment.

This uneasy feeling will automatically force the prisoners to behave while at the same time will minimise the efforts taken to control larger numbers (Foucault, 1995: 200). The authoritarian theatre follows the same approach, denying the audience their privacy of thought and interpretation. Barker describes theatre as a box, in both a physical sense and a moral sense. In this box lies darkness, and in this darkness boundaries are nonexistent, and when there is no light, darkness will allow for all sorts of acts to happen; thus, criminal and promiscuous acts are permitted (1997: 75). In his play *The Bite of the Night*, Barker used darkness to allow 'the thought' to licence various acts, to be bitten by fear and even by love. However, this was not how it always was because Brecht ordered that light must fill the box (74). Brecht knew very well - driven by the desire to enlighten the people - that in order to instruct he needed light. Brecht was not authoritarian in the literal sense, but he could be seen indulging in the moral crusades which overwhelmed theatre at that time. For Brecht, there had to be an objectivity of thought, morality, and of meaning, a path he takes that is the exact opposite of Barker's approach, demonstrating that the relationship between instruction and imagination is polar opposites because the first requires light while the latter requires darkness (74). In his many disagreements with Brecht, Barker said that light makes the audience half-conscious of the stage, with the rest of the audience's attention being focused on the "neighbour" –most probably a metaphor for the people who are watching and surveying the individual as Barker literally says "In all collective culture your neighbour controls you by his gaze" (Barker, 1997: 74). Barker claims that only in darkness can the audience truly be with the actor where it is trusted to be free and to be truly responsible. Hence, it could be seen that entering black box theatre means surrendering to the power of the actor and the dramatist and allowing them to engulf the audience with the possibility of freedom. Due to the hidden nature of the box from the outside world, it owes that world as little as it desires, and the rules of the outside cannot be applied on the inside. Inside the box, the audience is unconsciously excited; a feeling born from a buried desire to witness a transgression, to attend to a sin, and even to acquire 'criminal perspectives'. Those desires are fulfilled by the black box theatre because the actor is committing the sin on behalf of the audience (75). Naturally, the followers of Brecht and the authoritarian playwrights in general seek the opposite of what Barker seeks. Light

stands for surveillance, and surveillance is control. If the audience cannot have their right of privacy of thought because the episteme sought to regulate unity, then it becomes obvious that theatre was merely a place of indoctrination. Even if the indoctrination would be neglected from this system, there would still be the issue with surveillance, which is, as Foucault notes, more than enough to control the people. That is the reason why Barker employed darkness in its literal and metaphorical sense. He wanted to return the audiences to have their right of privacy back, thus he gave them the necessary space to venture into moral speculations, allowing them to have all sorts of thoughts and interpretations.

CHAPTER II

2. *THE CASTLE* AS A CATASTROPHE

This chapter will be dealing with Howard Barker's *The Castle*. This play was described by Barker himself to be a catastrophe. Specifically, this chapter will be demonstrating how Howard Barker countered the theatrical conventions of his time that were set by the politics of that episteme. The main characteristics of the old authoritarian Theatre will be mentioned and will be contrasted by the characteristics of catastrophe and how it countered them.

The full name of the play is *The Castle: a Triumph* but it is always shortened to just *The Castle*. The play was first performed in 1985 and supposedly achieved what Barker designed it for because it managed to confuse and anger the authoritarian critics while honouring Barker's audience. *The Castle* is set in mediaeval England; however, the specific time and place are not mentioned. From the hints left in the dialogue, the setting of the play can be inferred by the audience to be taking place after one of the crusades. The play starts with the return of a group of men from the crusades to their homeland. To their surprise, they discover that the patriarchal and religious-based society they left behind seven years prior is now turned into a matriarchal-like society that has thrown religion aside. This new society has set aside most of the norms of the old one. The men discover that the fields and cattle were neglected, the church was abandoned, children have been conceived beyond the frame of marriage with elders who did not leave with the rest of the men, ownership of land was denied, monogamy was rejected, and non-heterosexual relationships are permitted. The conflict of the story starts with the return of the men and their attempt to restore the old order. This restoration of the older order is initiated when one of the main characters, Stucley, commissioned another character, Krak to build a castle so that they manage to fortify themselves from their potential enemy, supposedly the women, while at the same time stand to resemble the might of that order. The following scenes mostly revolve around

the power struggle as the men try to maintain their order and the women seek to restore their order. Throughout the runtime of the play, characters on both sides commit various 'questionable' acts or reveal acts they committed prior to the beginning of the play. As these characters know more about each other and their confrontations increase, the tension between these factions slowly rises. This leads to one of the most significant events in the play which is killing the chief builder of the castle by Skinner, a woman, thus stopping the progress of building the castle. *The Castle* does not have a climax like any regular story would. It ends abruptly in a Barkerian fashion without providing enough payoffs to the set-ups it established.

It must be clear by this point that Barker's defiant spirit refused to abide by the theatrical norms that the authority was enforcing during his time. However, that does not mean he did not allude to such a concept in his plays, not in the sense that he was compliant, but in the sense that he featured how each authority tried to enforce its own systems of thought. *The Castle* features a fictional shift of episteme. During the events of the play, within the society that was ruled by women, Skinner managed to establish her own cult which she used to spread her agenda, instigating a complete denial and refusal of men and their order. And when the male cast of characters return to the new order they try to reestablish the old order, but even though they deviate from it, they still use the same method, and that method is reconstructing the old system of thought in the manner that serves them best in an attempt to legitimise their existence. "The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (Foucault, 1980: 52).

The Castle features many characters but there are four main ones around whom most of the plot revolves around. Stucley and Krak from the faction of men, and Skinner and Ann from the faction of women. The one common aspect about all of these characters is that they all share a dark past to which they all indirectly allude. The violence they experienced during their past shaped their current ideology during the events of the play but even that is not described in detail. Stucley is a knight who is supposed to be the one in charge of the land where the play is set. He was in charge of

everything until he left due to the crusades seven years prior to the beginning of the play. Once he returns from the crusade, Stucley is bewildered by the change that took place during his absence. Even more, he discovers that his wife, Ann, has been cheating on him with the elders who did not depart with the rest of the men. Stucley was already traumatised by the war experience he had and was triggered once he faced the change that happened. He initiates the building of the castle and restores the Church and its authority since Christianity is in favour of a patriarchal system. He is also the one who holds the seat of the authority for the majority of the play. The second character is Krak, the only non-English character who is supposed to be one of the spoils of war, a slave of some sort even though he was not called that throughout the play and whom, owing to his intellect and capabilities, was held in high regard. However, Krak is the most mysterious of the cast, speaking few words only when needed unlike the rest of the cast who all speak a lot and like to monologue. His words and mannerisms are like that of a machine, precise and effective, yet even he was subjugated to violence with his family all being brutally murdered by the crusaders, Stucley and his men included, while also being forced to travel almost half the world away from his homeland. On the outside, he is that stoic figure of extreme intellect, but on the inside, he is fragile; thus he strived to put on a mask to hide his mental state. For most of the play, Krak takes a backseat and does not contribute much in the events other than being the architect of the castle. However, some layers of his character start to peel once he comes in contact with Ann. Once he has intercourse with her, his personality and demeanour undergo severe changes. By the end of the play, he obtains some sort of an epiphany regarding love which was not elaborated on other than the idea that he misunderstood what human relations should look like.

On the faction of women, Ann and Skinner are the main focus. Ann seems like a straightforward character at the beginning with her abandoning the norms of the old order, and being the pioneering woman who embraced the new order. However, she seems to have an issue with being led by the other characters. At the beginning of the play, she is a follower of Skinner, the one who was running the new order during the absence of men, but when the men return, she almost changes her allegiance once she

witnesses the return of her husband Stucley, but later, with the influence of Skinner, manages to hold a grip on herself. Her desire to bear children seems not to be born out of spite but in her belief that men, including her husband, never seek a simple life of stability, one that is far from conflict, a life which she found once the men were away, and once they returned, that desire became her way of convincing the men to lead into a different way of life. Ann seems like the only character to have something resembling a proper arc is Ann. From a thematic standpoint, her death during the final scenes makes sense in relation to her views and characterisation, with bits of contradictions spread throughout the play as Barker likes to do. The final main character, Skinner is stated to be a witch in the character list of the play. She is supposedly a former nun, and the person who led the women during the men's absence and the one who came up with the new order. Due to the suffering she had once endured, she is often seen taking an extreme route of handling any situation she faces. She justifies any act that could ensure the new order's wellbeing and she was the one who strived to cut down any possible connection that might be formed with the men once they returned. She opposed the restoration of the Church because she had established her own cult, and also opposed the building of the castle. In an attempt to stop the progress of the construction, she seduced Holiday, the chief builder who supervised the construction of the castle, and ultimately murdered him. She appears to abhor the men for being power-driven individuals, but in the final scene, she was welcoming of the idea that she would be the one to rule over the rest, proving that she longs for power just like the rest of the characters.

Earlier in this thesis, it was established that Foucault pointed out that across the ages, systems of thought rise and fall. That the new systems of thought are either a construct by the authority which claimed its place as the sovereign, or that this system of thought would eventually give rise to the new sovereign. And that Foucault labelled each of these periods as an episteme, which is a cognitive spirit at a specific period in history that would inescapably affect all fields of knowledge during that time period. Regardless of the nature of any given episteme, most lead to benefiting the authority behind it. The episteme that Barker had to face was no different in the sense that it sought to control the public and had to use the literature card to achieve that. It is

unfortunate that we have no mention of Foucault naming each episteme, which would have made it easier to recognise and differentiate. Nevertheless, the episteme of Barker's time affected literature in various ways and ultimately, the literature, or more specifically the theatre of that period was characterised by its clarity, naturalism/realism, moral messages as in moral/political messages, and finally entertainment. These characteristics have been decided by the authority to control the masses and numb their critical faculties. Thus, in order for Barker's catastrophe to be considered as a defiance towards the episteme of his time, it must subvert and counter all of the mentioned characteristics which will be demonstrated in the following sections.

2.1. CLARITY VS AMBIGUITY

There is no mention of Foucault in Barker's works, but throughout his writings, he seems to have used a Foucauldian lens when he was questioning the idea that theatre was being used by certain parties to promote certain agendas so they can control audiences. Barker confesses that when he started his journey with theatre, he was barely aware of the famous works and how matters were executed, only knowing - as he claims - that he was quite capable of writing dialogue. As the years passed, and thanks to his observant eyes, Barker came to realise that there is no doubt about the manipulation of the audiences' knowledge by the authority and playwrights belonging to it. When describing his discontent with that state, he said that using such a public medium to obtain selfish ends is of the utmost shamefulness and that it was an addiction that sought to control the audiences and direct them according to the runners of theatre. When the time came for Barker to establish his new theatre which was supposed to counter the norms and characteristics of the old theatre, he realised that he had to face what he described as a sacred obsession of the old theatre referring to 'clarity'. Barker states that during his time with theatre, the works that were truly celebrated were the ones that celebrated clarity. They are the ones that allowed the least sense of ambiguity, the least sense of contradiction, and the most willing to give messages to the audience to take back home, a "form of oppression masquerading as enlightenment" (Barker, 1997: 51).

The old theatre sought to give meaning to the audience, but catastrophe in its deconsecration of meaning refuses to indulge in clarity when producing art. Questioning what seems to be unclear is in itself a form of decadence in the eyes of this theatre, and clarity is viewed as authoritarianism. After all, Barker's intent behind catastrophe's design was to produce different theatrical experiences and effects, and that is why ambiguity and complexity are what this theatre basks in. Barker was convinced that such an approach will forge a new kind of relationship between the audience and the stage, abolishing the idea of entertainment and whatever entails it of oppressive intellectual practices (Barker, 1997: 79). Barker gives three reasons behind taking this path, the first reason being the audience's expectations that have been culminated over three decades of political theatre. This sense of expectation has caused an intellectual servility within the audience's psyche which is reflected in their desperate search for a message in every work of art they come across. The feelings the audience experience when no evident message is found are resentment and contempt. The policy of the old political theatre mutated the relationship between the audience and the stage to that of a mere trading deal where the dramatist deals with knowledge as a commodity and sells it to a "fee-paying class" (79). These three decades of brainwashing done by those who hold power affected the collective knowledge of the audience and to the point where they forgot what the main function of theatre really was. The second reason is that political theatre as a discipline intentionally eliminates complexity and contradiction. It seeks to make the audience feel comfortable by merely celebrating prior knowledge. Political disciplines operate on the assumption that shared morality is a thing. And in their desire to prove that they used the idea of exposure, and relentlessly went in their pursuit to unveil conspiracies, political parties, and social types. A sterile belief indeed (79). The third reason that Barker lists is how poetry and language as a whole on the stage were affected by the political theatre's insistence on clarity and realism. This insistence has effectively intrigued disfiguring speech of the public arena, dethroning poetry from the stage and installing the journalist as the sole source of truth. It is but a delusion to think that the theatre of clarity is serving its audience in its approach of clarity for it is in fact distrusting them by preventing them from their right of experiencing "the meaningless" (79).

It was Barker's conviction that despite the ambiguity of his plays, an audience would still come and watch, driven by a desire to experience pain and triumphs without the need to make compromises regarding moral responsibility. This audience will demand what the populist regime has the least: complexity, pain, contradiction, and absence that are born from the lack of solutions and moral speculation (Barker, 1997: 88). Catastrophe is a theatre built on ambiguity and what is performed on its stage is highly speculative since nothing is 'known'. Any judgement regarding catastrophic plays should not be passed during the performance itself but weeks after. This is because any judgement of these plays would fail miserably when passed by utilising merely seeing and hearing to construct meaning. Barker intended that the performance would lay the entirety of the play's onus with all its content on the audience, leaving it feeling either betrayed or exhilarated, cheated or honoured, robbed from its sense of reward it is accustomed to or robbed from any time to recess their souls (88). And as the audience leaves the theatre hall, the question of "What did it mean…?" will be heard repeatedly, a question which reflects the melancholy of an audience whose conventional ideas regarding theatrical performances were stripped away by the powerful, and was sent home with neither messages nor a sense of satisfaction to have witnessed a performance resembling 'real life'. This question is an archaic one, a mere reaction to the cultural oppression, or a populist spasm generated from a sense of naivety the audience has as it thinks that the actors are mere articulators and witnesses of their lives and problems (88). The ambiguity used in *The Castle* can be observed not only in the ambiguity of the motifs of the characters but also in the structural and moral levels.

Barker says that the ambiguity on the structural level of a play could be achieved through the interruption of narrative threads, the abrupt suspension of the story, the breaking of the - less relevant- interlude, and other devices that are aimed at complicating and overwhelming the audience's accustomed method of "seeing" (Barker, 1997: 53). One might be surprised at how disturbed and scared the audience can be when witnessing the interruption of the narrative thread, as they were oppressed for many years to be obeisant. In *The Castle*, the audience must have sunk into silence once they realised that Barker utilised ambiguity in the most terrifying way, that being the

absence of a third act. *The Castle* ends in scene six of act two, but it does so without providing a climax or conclusion of the story (Barker, 2006: 70). The audiences and readers of any media should already know that a coherent story should contain three structural sections: an introduction, conflict and climax, and finally a resolution; all resulting in a curve-like structure which refers to how the events of a story are introduced, escalated, and concluded. However, this is not the case with *The Castle* because it robs the audience of knowing how the narrative threads would be solved. Instead of concluding the narrative threads set-ups of the play and abiding by the conventions set by literary authorities, Barker cuts those threads entirely. Having murdered the chief builder of the castle, Skinner was sentenced to have the corpse of her victim nailed to her body (54). The mutilation of body and flesh seems to be a recurring device in Barker's plays, one which acts as "a site of transformation and contestation", for it exists in many of his plays and is described to be "an essential element of Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe" (Smith, 2020: 154). Regardless, Skinner's character arc was almost done, and her existence from a thematic standpoint was arguably coherent to some extent. But in Scene VI of Act II, it appears that her punishment is not the end of her journey as the characters of Nailer and Batter announce that she is the one who will cease control again, even with the existence of the male characters "BATTER: No…(Pause.)You govern it instead. (She quivers.)" (Barker, 2006: 68). The sudden switch of allegiances from the former master who is Stucley to Skinner is not explained. It is also not reasonable since the cast of the male characters all respect Stucley, and have been under his service for many years as they followed him even to battle. Thus making their choice of choosing Skinner, who was supposed to be a criminal, more ambiguous. Moreover, there is no conclusion to this plot as well due to the fact that there is neither a coronation nor an explanation of how Skinner will run the new order. The play merely ends with her shouting "There was no government…does anyone remember… there was none… there was none…there was none…!" (70), a statement that made little sense in the context of the play, in addition to the word "government" being literally used for the first time in the entire play in this very scene. Also, there was a foreshadowed conflict between the residents of the castle and the mysterious residents from Fortress. Since their first mention (53), the cast of the male characters, especially

Stucley, switched their focus on the future battle to happen between them and their new potential enemy, who Krak mentions that they have a weapon so powerful that it can render the defences of the castle useless:

> KRAK: They are experimenting with a substance that can bring down walls without getting beneath them. Everything before this weapon will be obsolete. This, for example, is entirely redundant as a convining method of defence (62).

Showing the residents of the castle losing a battle with another enemy, would have provided some catharsis to the idea of the ever-changing order of things. It would have given a parallel of how the cast of men characters destroyed the order that the female cast created, as the new enemy destroys the order enforced by the men cast. But, as mentioned earlier, the foreshadowed conflict was not shown as the play ended abruptly without providing such a payoff. Of course, this was an intentional move made by Barker and a key characteristic of catastrophe which naturally struck the audience at its abnormality. Charles Lamb describes this method saying that Barker would build up a scene in a logical manner, having a clear and consistent pattern. Then, Barker would present an event or occurrence that would violently break "the foregoing 'rational'" (2004: 2). The feelings the sudden suspension of the story evokes are indescribable as one is waiting eagerly to know how the next scenes will take place, enduring the ambiguity of and obscurity of the characters in hopes of reaching 'meaning' at the end, a hope they were never granted.

When it comes to moral ambiguity, catastrophe does not indulge in creating stories that revolve around 'good' and 'evil' people, nor does it allude to happiness being the ultimate end, reconciliation is either disrupted or fails to arrive in the first place, and even love is portrayed to be a manifestation of cruelty. *The Castle*'s characters all lie in a grey area where no moral distinction to help indicate who is right and who is wrong, for all characters commit crimes in their way of achieving their goals. In the name of duty and love, Stucley commits horrible acts during his seven years crusade, then proceeds to change religion just to fit his desires: "STUCLEY: Now, we

are closer to a man we understand, for at this moment of desire, Christ knows the common lot" (Barker, 2006: 37).

In seeking for a peaceful life where she could live with a husband and children, Ann commits adultery many times, cheating on her husband with his henchman, and her suicide causes the rest of the women at the area to throw themselves from the ramparts of the castle: "Raining women! […] Mind yer 'eads! [...] Raining women!" (Barker, 2006: 63). Then there is Skinner who, in order to defend her old order and prevent what could possibly be a threat to her and her cult of followers, ends up encouraging other women to kill their husbands and then murder an innocent man. Barker also portrays love differently than what the authoritarians had popularised, showing it as a generator of cruelty instead of kindness. Ann, the character who is loved by the other three main characters, almost brings their collective downfall. Stucley's loss of hope, Skinner's only loved one, and Krak's discovery of love once she seduces him. All result in cruel outcomes. This approach is seen as pessimism only by those who have been brainwashed by the agenda of optimism, those who refuse to admit that the appeal of such plays is not in the conscience they convey, but in how they make imagination inflicts pain as the plays are highly subjective and open to interpretation. This characteristic invites the audience to revisit the plays, not as an attempt to find their hidden meaning, but because the audience desires, through individual interpretations, to make the plays their own (Barker, 1997: 90).

2.2. MESSAGES VS LACK OF MESSAGES

In their approach of eliminating ambiguity and instructing the audience, theatre was turned into a lecturing hall. Once clarity is implemented then followed by political messages of either the right or the left, theatre is stripped from its artistic function. The authority made sure to spread its agendas knowing how effective this medium really is, and after three decades of surveillance, clarity and political messages, theatre was turned into a political establishment of indoctrination. Calling theatre a lecturing hall as Barker did is no exaggeration. It was turned into a school that the audience had to attend to witness the banality of repeated messages and ideas. Foucault himself points at

establishments that are meant to indoctrinate and adds public schools into the list of such establishments saying that are directed by the power of a certain episteme. In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes attending such establishments as a "ritual recoding" that "must be repeated as often as possible" (1995: 111). Barker on the other hand takes a completely opposite approach to authoritarian indoctrination as the whole idea regarding the creation of his theatre revolved around liberating the audience from the authority of the liberal/populist government. Barker writes of how there is no doubt about the English theatre being in a crisis that was obviously caused by the liberal "intelligentsia" (Barker, 1997: 45) that owns the theatre. And as some desired to overcome this crisis by asking the question: "what kind of theatre do we want?" (45). Barker redirects these attempts by asking the question: "what kind of audience do we want?" (45). The populist theatre used the method of celebration in theatre to convey a false sense of "unity" in the society, though the audience does not even know what to celebrate in the first place. The only apparent thing about this theatre is that it is filled with laughter. However, this laughter does not convey a sign of social solidarity, but rather a sign of subordination to the authority which is dealing with its audience with contempt, masquerading it as comedy (45). But even if the audience was applauding or cheering, it does not mean that they believe what they witness because they already know that there is a message to be pushed down the throats of the audience by the liberal theatre. it is its go-to method of controlling conscience after all. It is in this profound contradiction that lies in the depths of the audience's mindset that Barker puts his faith. That this contradiction - he thought - must spark an urge or a will that would push the audience "to know more, and to endure more", and of that, the audience is certainly capable, but it was always treated like a child by most theatres, even the best ones. It was always held by hand and led towards the meaning as if it is being spoon-fed ideas, contradicting what the original function of a theatre should have been, that being "a provider of versions" instead of "a disseminator of truth" (45). For this reason, Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe feels no shame towards its lack of an authoritarian ideology or its complexity as Barker once said "it is my first principle as a dramatist, and subsequently as a director of my plays, that the author does not instruct" (qtd. in Smith, 2020: 153). This direction is an exact opposite to the ritual Foucault describes because catastrophe

puts its faith in the audience's will to knowledge. Not any kind of knowledge but the individual will to knowledge that results in individual interpretations that are born by experiencing contradiction from what they witness on stage not a collectivist knowledge that was deemed objective by the authority. The contradiction and ambiguity that revert from using political messages push both dramatist and audience to explore the terrain, both half-knowing, and half-ignorant, with their journey mapped only by actors. It is a journey of struggle, which both must go through in order to find meaning. Ultimately, what each party reaches is "achieved individually and not collectively. There is no official interpretation" (Barker, 1997: 46). In this regard, Barker urges that if a scene carries two meanings then it should never be reduced to only one. If a dialogue carries within it its opposite, it should be left like it is. This does not mean that the new theatre would be able to see "both sides of the question", otherwise it is a sign of impotence and stagnation. This ambiguity will cover any message that could possibly be passed as preaching or spouting parables. In fact, Barker states that there is a need for a "theatre of Anti-Parable" where the 'moral' of a play is interpreted differently by each individual, provoking arguments instead of submissive head nods (46). Barker claims that the mentioned critical categories are only effective when the artist, the actors, and the audience cease to stand on common ethical ground. Barker says that in the old theatre, the playwright's right to educate the audience in this setting of coherent moral landscape, whether Christian, Bourgeois or humanist, was absolute. However, Barker states that the last decade underwent a deterioration in this moral consensus, finally giving space to question whether those celebrated statements of moral rectitude even carry the same weight and appeal they once had (51). These points are brilliantly employed in *The Castle* for the ambiguity of the atmosphere, the characters, their motivations, their inner thoughts, and the setting that prevent the audience from reaching an objective final opinion. When such ambiguity shrouds the play, the messages fail to be delivered to the audience, thus succeeding in defying the authority's desire to spread its agendas.

When reading the first scenes of *The Castle* the play appears to be a Feminist play, with the characters who are composed of men all being portrayed as oppressive,

power-hungry, sexually-driven megalomaniac individuals. However, when reading further, the female cast starts to show their agendas and motivations as well with attempts of murdering certain characters, with one of these attempts actually succeeding, provocation through committing fornication with other men, manipulating and seducing male characters, as well as demonstrating the same levels of hunger for power that the other side demonstrates. Barker never takes sides when presenting the characters in *The Castle* and leaves the audience to relate to or judge the characters and factions on their own. Each character will appear in a different way in each scene, making the audience experience an array of conflicting emotions, going back and forth between sympathy, disgust, hate, and wonder. Most of these characters are multi-layered and complex, and their backstories are not given in an info-dump but are hinted at to the audience while at the same time, leaving most things about them ambiguous and up to the audience's imagination. This is helped by the ambiguity surrounding the motivations and exact backstories of the characters. Each of the main four characters is given contrasting characterisation that would prevent the audience from constructing a certain message or theme. Stucley was said to have killed many during the time he spent in the crusade "CANT: Done much murder?" (2005: 9). A statement which he responds violently to, hinting that Cant's line might have struck a nerve. Additionally, Stucley seems to have picked a habit of threatening to use violence from time to time "Stucley: [...] I could kill you and no one would bat an eyelid" (18). He is also portrayed negatively with his desire to control and change the scripture. However, he was given scenes where he appears as a sympathetic character who refused to punish his wife even after cheating on him:

> STUCLEY: [...] I could not bring myself, for all the damage she had done me, bring myself to take revenge, any man would, you say, yes, any man would! Not me, though…! (66).

The same goes for the female faction, with scenes portraying them as victims and others as victimisers. Skinner is the best example of this as she is seen multiple times trying to kill or separate wives from their husbands. When the men return and Ann talks to her husband Stucley, Skinner tries to convince Ann to kill him:

SKINNER: Stab him!
ANN: What -
SKINNER: Now! Stab him!
ANN: What -
SKINNER: I will!
ANN: Wait!
SKINNER: Wait, why wait!
ANN: You can't - we haven't - WE HAVEN'T DISCUSSED THIS -
SKINNER: Fuck, he's running! (11).

Her most extreme act comes when she murders Holiday, the chief builder of the castle at the very end of act I (46). However, even such an extreme character is shown to have a tragic backstory that generated this hatred towards men. In the character list at the beginning of the play, Skinner is mentioned to be a witch but it was implied that she was also a nun once "BATTER: A nun wouldn't, would she? Not a normal nun -" (27). It is implied that she once committed adultery which is something that a nun should never do. Once she got pregnant, the church had her baby ripped out of her belly "If you haven't had love ripped out your belly, dragging half your organs with it, don't talk to me, you haven't lived!" (54).

With such characterisation, no moral message could be observed from the play because the audience cannot relate to any of the characters through the use of traditional morality. The audience is left to speculate whether the actions of these characters are justified by their past or not. Regardless of their conclusion, *The Castle* would have succeeded in preventing any moral messages from being had while making the audience venture into unprecedented grounds of moral speculation. This sense is amplified once the audience realises that Barker flipped the traditional archetypes in literature to stay away from any traditional sense of morality that could be perceived as ulterior messages. Stucley is mentioned to be knight and when examining him from the perspective of the popularised image of the knight, he would stand out as the exact opposite. Stucley is vulgar instead of being a gentleman, a war criminal instead of being a heroic saviour, and a rebel against God instead of being a righteous believer. The same could be seen with the rest of the characters. Holiday is a chief builder who is always working, Nailer

is the name of the priest which is also ironic considering Christ was nailed on the cross, Skinner is labelled as a witch but she was a nun, and Batter the servant ends up betraying his master Stucley.

Such plays are dubbed as 'disappointing plays' since they fail to achieve what the authority desires, unlike the 'important play' that succeeds in rewarding its audiences with messages, teaching them as if they were children. The notion of the reward has not yet disappeared as it still haunts serious plays. The basis of this infantile notion is built upon critical clichés. The play is considered rewarding when it is sensed to be 'Important'. The 'important' play is the ultimate objective that has always been sought by infantile critics. However, the play cannot be dubbed as 'important' unless the play itself denies its own importance. Barker says a play that aspires to be important needs to "trade in the very cultural, political and social conventions that constitute the discourse of the world *outside* the theatre. In other words, it replaces, reorganizes, or re-perceives the elements of existent ideology" (68). Barker emphasises the word "outside" by italicising it to refer to the politics and ideologies that were prominent during his episteme. These aspects cannot be achieved unless the 'importance' is sacrificed. For the infantile critics, an unimportant play is a disappointing play because it does not match their agenda, nor does it spread their valuable messages. This disappointing play walks away from gratifying the audience's hunger for political or social repetition. It snatches from its audience the satisfaction caused by identifying the enemy and celebrating already-existing knowledge. In *The Castle,* there are no rewards that the audience can actually think of. In its fearlessness of venturing into unreached moral grounds, the play generates immense internal struggle within the audience as they endeavour to reach meaning. *The Castle* did indeed throw away the cultural, social and political conventions of the outside world to the point where the audience cannot identify nor relate to any political or ideological currents outside the stage. The critics had to struggle with this lack of ideology as well, for the play confused those critics and the reception the play received was varied to say the least (Herbert, 1991: 1005). It takes the title of a disappointing play deservedly. The critics were lost in how to identify the main theme of the play. One of many attempts sought to label the play's main theme as that of

Feminism. But even with that label they failed to interpret the play according to that since *The Castle* as a catastrophe does not take sides, and when looking at the female characters, they accomplish some acts of defiance which could be understood as empowering in how they revolted against the old order, but at the same time, those characters all commit horrible acts. As a result, they cannot be taken as ideal examples for feminists. Naturally, the critics who desire their ideologies to be promoted would not be happy about such an approach, for example, David Nathan, an editor at the *Souls & Blues* magazine says that Barker "never bothers to substantiate central theme that women are less cruel than men and indeed sabotages it" (1007). Others like Benedict Nightingale, a critic for *The Times* newspaper claim that the play does not know how to handle sexuality and gender in a comforting way (1012). An article by *The Listener Magazine*'s Jim Hiley went on to say that *The Castle* depicts women as saviours who are on nature's side while depicting men as demonic and destroyers (1016). Others took a more neutral approach like Giles Gordon, who described *The Castle* as "unpleasant" but admitted that it was necessary (1018-1019), while others went far and beyond with their interpretations like Milton Shulman, who considered the play as anti-nuclear propaganda written against the British government, referring to the mysterious weapon Krak mentions: "They are experimenting with a substance that can bring down walls without getting beneath them. Everything before this weapon will be obsolete. This, for example, is entirely redundant as a convining method of defence" (Barker, 2006: 62).

Of course, the general themes of *The Castle* are not the only factor to cause this confusion and variety of reception because the characters are a factor as well. As described earlier, the characters all lie in a grey area where the audience can take no side. Stuckley, Ann, Krak, and Skinner, as well as the other side characters are trying to do what they think is the right thing, but on their way of doing so they commit various hideous and grotesque acts of violence, treason, adultery, etc. *The Castle*'s plot, themes, and characters offer only disclosure to its audience. It is "not an attempt to instigate a 'closure' that offers a model for changing an audience's values or beliefs, but rather a drama that is 'radically heuristic and exploratory" (Smith, 2020: 161). It is clear that Barker does not promote himself to be the one who holds the superiority of insight nor

does he act like the one who fills the status of a visionary, not even a 'just' man with a deep conscience. The obscurity of his works is prime evidence of the absence of these claims, an intentional choice made as this theatre celebrates the suspension of morality (Barker, 1997: 90).

In order for theatre to change, it must abandon the mindset of its purpose being mere entertainment and it must throw away its collaboration with the ruling order which it has refused to acknowledge to have been working with. By doing so, theatre will unburden itself from irrelevant didacticism. And as a result, evolve relationships with the audience beyond its old authoritarian shackles. If standing by the side of the authoritarian regime and abiding by its agendas means a political position then, complexity and ambiguity become oppositional political postures of profound strength. Though as logical of a connection as this might be, Barker refused to call it 'political posture', for he himself was against enforcing a certain belief on his audience. Instead, he labelled it as an "obligation", an obligation to the writer's "own imagination" where he is supposed to lead the audience into the grounds of moral conflict, and not use it to educate them about his 'superior' political knowledge:

> He does not tailor his thought to an ideology, but allows it to range freely over a landscape in which he himself should experience insecurity, exposing his own mortality, his politics, to damage on the way. . In an age of unitary thought and propaganda, this is his first responsibility. He forsakes in doing so his right to tell, he is destabilized, and this produces a critical attitude in his audience, which, since it is bred into doctrine of messages, experience at first the alienation felt by any public confronting a new art (Barker, 1898: 48-49).

Only when the dramatist is heroic enough to abandon the side of the authority and venture with his material into the unknown, is the audience honoured, and can tap into the real change of perception. In doing so, he is countering the authoritarian primacy of fact by reviving the true meaning behind the concept of 'knowledge' which is supposed to be the individual acquisition, not the collective. This is the very kind of knowledge that moral authoritarians from both political wings seek to suppress. Unleashing it gives rise to materials of a new kind of drama that deals with its audience as cognitive and

autonomous people who are able to witness pain far from the compensation of "political structure" (50). The pain from the lack of relatability with any of the characters, or any sort of controlling ideology in *The Castle* will liberate the audience and honour it by making it utilise their individual faculties to reach their own meaning.

Writers of the social correction theatre had a tradition of haunting newspapers to acquire some inspiration, in fact, they were totally dependent on it. The theatre companies called it 'researching materials' despite the idea that theatre is not related to research. Things cannot be dramatised, they are either drama or they are completely different things "They come into existence as art, or they are not art at all" (Barker, 1997: 73). The first consideration of these writers is not quality, but rather "whether the text is compatible with the prejudices of the age" (Smith, 2020: 155). The current age is already an age of relentless indoctrination supervised by the state. Information owns commercial empires and propagandist forces everywhere. Taking all of this into consideration, the last thing the people need is for the artistic community to join this initiation, and unfortunately, a lot of artists already joined in this farce so to say. barker says that theatre must not succumb to this wave of indoctrination and it must stand in the face of the news persuasive logic and return to the audience its rights of interpretation: "in this freedom from the oppression of meaning audiences will discover the necessity of theatre as a multitude of possibilities in which the constant imperative of judgement is willingly surrendered" (Barker, 1997: 82).

2.3. NATURALISM VS ANTI-NATURALISM

Naturalism/realism was one of the dominant characteristics of the authoritarian theatre. It was an effective tool to use in order to relate to the lives of common people and deliver them messages which would be difficult if attempted otherwise. As mentioned earlier, theatre was in a miserable situation after WWII. It was shackled by chains created with bourgeois intellectuals' power. With their authority, they managed to dominate theatre while also relating to the working class, the sexual, and the vigorous alongside the progressive. But due to them being class constructed themselves, they became highly concerned with this class's potentialities, and thus enforced the idea that

they lacked imagination and took it upon themselves to "educate" this working class, but through using "forms they themselves constructed" and thus was spread "the theatrical form of naturalism" (Barker, 1997: 32). The naturalistic theatre, or the realist theatre - Barker uses these terms almost interchangeably- took over after the WWII for over two and a half decades, driven by its extreme thirst to be an art form close to the lives of 'ordinary people', reaching its apotheosis during the seventies. During this period of naturalism's dominance, the theatre reached a state where it felt almost like a documentary, with emphasis on exposing living conditions, capitalist rackets, and the deprivation of classes. This period of twenty-five years of Royal Court plays had little ambiguity to offer the audience, spitting away everything while leaving nothing to the imagination. Eventually, theatre became the property of the authority and of the individuals following that authority. This monopoly caused stagnation in the minds of both new writers and audiences, as the first was forced to follow what was the law of the naturalistic theatre, and the latter had to swallow the realism it witnessed on the stage without being able to work their imagination. In retaliation to this stagnation, the Theatre of Catastrophe provides a great deal of imagination. Both sides had to comply with the knowledge spread by the authority in order for its rituals to carry on. In retaliation to this stagnation the Theatre of Catastrophe provides a great deal of imagination because it forces the writer to imagine and think dangerously, and forces the audience to be a part of the play because they are encouraged to use their imagination in order to interpret the play. Due to the ambiguity and obscurity of these plays, individual interpretations are born, making each member of the audience reach a different view, to the point of making the plays their own. The Theatre of Catastrophe is built to be a "property of the people" (54). It is meant to address the soul, to reach the grounds of common belief, and to test them by shaking their first principles. This is achieved by stimulating the audience's imagination, and even if those principles are to be affirmed at the end, it is important that this affirmation was reached after the audience's individual assessment. The authority of meaning lies within the grasp of the audience that was used to be retold, and fed the same public morality over and over, even by tragedies –traditional ones- especially since Brecht's epic theatre onwards:

> In a culture now so rampantly populist that the cultural distinctions of right and left have now evaporated, the public have a right to access to a theatre which is neither brief nor relentlessly uplifting, but which insists on complexity and pain, and the beauty that can only be created from the spectacle of pain. In Catastrophe, whose imaginative ambition exposes the reactionary content in the miserablism of everyday life, lies the possibility of reconstruction (54).

What differentiates catastrophe and makes it elitist is its refusal to be factual in an age where this obsession with information is taking hold of everyone's mindset. It renounces clarity and comes to terms with the fact that life is indeed complicated because things are much different than they seem. Most importantly, this 'elitist' theatre does what no other theatre does anymore, and that is to give its audience "the honor of being taken seriously" (36). Barker says that the authoritarian theatre is trying to hide its lack of both imagination and innovation behind the excuse that the audience's attention is made of forty-second-time spans which is why they resorted to clarity. But that is not true of course because when the imagination of the audience is stimulated, their attention grabbed, and their emotions engaged, they will have the capability to concentrate for many hours if needed. In Barker's theatre, it is the responsibility of both actor and writer to make the audience reach this state of concentration by luring them into the unknown life contained within the text. Taking the audience seriously carries strenuous ramifications not only on actors and writers but also on the audience because there is indeed a lot to bear when witnessing elitist theatre. Nevertheless, there are people who seek to be challenged, stretched, and even depressed as they experience a work of art. And when those people bare this, they will reach the territory where their perception can change:

> I believe in a society of increasingly restricted options that a creative mind owes it to his fellow human beings to stretch himself and them, to give others the right to be amazed, the right even to be taken to the limits of tolerance and to strain and test morality at its source (37).

Following naturalism/realism caused a lack of tension between the audience and the stage due to how predictable the material on stage was. Characters who act according

to a moral compass familiar to everyday life, or similar to that of the social and cultural backgrounds of the audience will only result in banal experiences where nothing unexpected happens. That is why the tension in Barker's plays is high because it functions by replacing explicit and personal political statements with beauty and terror, and is achieved by rejecting the expected actions or lines "the suspension of moral predictability" (58) in a given situation, it is achieved when wrong actions are so passionately performed by characters in their quest for self-consciousness, raising, as a result, a barrage of contradictory feelings (57). Thus, deconstructing even the traditional sense of catharsis regular tragedies offer.

In act I scene IV, a conversation takes place between Stucley and Nailer, the priest of the Church in Stucley's land. The conversation is initiated by Stucley who now refuses to believe in Christ since there was no mention of his sexual life nor his genitalia in the Bible. Having returned from the crusades to find his wife had cheated on him, Stucley's feelings and understanding of love became twisted, magnified by his paranoia to the point where he now desires to change the Bible and Christ's characterization to fit his current state of mind on the matter of romantic affairs: "this Christ who never suffered for the woman, who never felt the feeling which MAKES NO SENSE" (Barker, 2006: 35). In the following lines comes the true manifestation of the "suspension of the moral predictability" Barker mentioned, because Nailer who is supposed to be the most willing to defend Christ slowly joins Stucley on his ridiculous claims. This can be seen as a Barkerian way of reconstructing archetypes to achieve an anti-naturalistic state. When Stucley claims that Christ had an affair with Mary Magdalene, an early Christian who was converted by Christ himself and was mentioned to have aided him during the early days of Christianity (Luke 8:1-3), Nailer tries to debate that claim "There is no reference". However, he succumbs to Stucley's claim that such a thing would have been omitted by the Church "- BISHOPS - RIPPED - IT - OUT" (36). Then, Nailer was ordered by Stucley to restore this supposedly omitted story. Stucley even orders him to write this made-up story "in English!" not Latin, calling this new Bible "the Gospel of the Christ Erect!" (36). Stucley's imagination is triggered again "He is inspired again!", and a few more lines from his fictional story and they reach a point where they claim that "Now, we

are closer to a man we understand, for at this moment of desire, Christ knows the common lot" (37). The tension does not end here for Stucley's state of mind is beyond anything that could resemble common day-to-day morality, and the suspension of predictability goes even beyond because Stucley now inserts a peculiar note on Magdalene, describing her as "Sterile". A statement which he justifies by saying "So that they find, in passion, also tragedy…What use is a Christ who has not suffered everything?" (37). At this point Stucley's actions are understood, he is merely trying to project his martial state with his wife on Christ and Mary Magdalene. The sterile part of the story is a call back to a statement Stucley makes in the early scenes of the play about how he never succeeded in getting Ann pregnant (17). The most unexpected turn in this conversation is Nailer getting inspired by Stucley's made-up story, taking his own turn to add his adjustments, which Stucley welcomed immensely:

> (NAILER is inspired.)
> NAILER: Therefore – therefore – the missing symbol of communion is – is –
> STUCLEY: What?
> NAILER: Milk! Body, blood and semen!
> STUCLEY: Oh, luscious bishop of the new born church! (He shouts.) Bring him his hat! (37).

The scene continues reaching places far from being related to naturalistic morality, reaching even ridiculous levels. But most importantly, despite the tension, the pain, the fear, the invoked imagination, etc. none of those feelings are manipulative. They do not seek to direct the audience towards a specific point as they pull away from indicating 'correct actions' or 'correct analysis'. What proves that even more is how the complex and contradictory nature of the plays leads to individual interpretations, and as a result, fragmenting the audience instead of uniting it. (Barker, 1997: 59). This entire scene is also a demonstration of how the shift in an episteme takes place. Though Foucault tried to look at such changes from a historical point of view, Barker takes it to ridiculous extents unlike to push the boundaries of realism, breaking the authoritarian conventions.

Since theatre takes its forms when the writer starts judging the state of public knowledge, judging its vitality or sickness is how that theatre's forms are deduced. The

same applies to the Theatre of Catastrophe, as it takes its forms from the many assessments such as the assessment that knowledge is something that has been forbidden, that information is in the same state of being a commodity, but most importantly, that collectivist culture has managed to maim the imagination of the audiences, that the public has a hand in this act that befell the imagination, and that this very collusion is experienced and viewed as shame (Barker, 1997: 69). As a mere tool of the authority, the old theatre produced ideological art, it produced mechanical art. And whether it was meant to entertain –following the authority of the left- or to inform –following the authority of the right-, it nevertheless intensified the pain felt by the audience and led to the desire for moral speculation that has been marginalised to grow (70). And as mentioned earlier, catastrophe relies heavily on evoking imagination. To it, it is a way of honouring the audience, and an honoured audience will have the dramatist write hazardously far away from being led by their consciences, as dramatists -and writers as a whole- are paid so they can think dangerously. They have to explore their imagination because this is what the audience awaits and expects from them. If dramatists play this role of theirs safely, what virtue is left of them? If they are to write what anyone can expect or already know of, then that is basically theft. One must not agree all the time, if they do then that is just flattery (47). The state of mind of an honoured audience is that of anger, not due to disapproval but rather because the dramatist has taken the audience into a territory where it was reluctant to go before, and the illegitimate thought and the exposure to pain in art become creators of morality.

In his quest for triggering the imagination, and in his "refusal to engage with domestic naturalism" - an unambiguous ideological stance of his - Barker not only implements ambiguity and obscurity so that the audience can work their imagination and reach their own unique interpretation but also implemented some assets that are supernatural in nature (Smith, 2020: 155). At the beginning of the play when the characters are listed, Skinner is stated to be a witch. However, from reading between the lines she was revealed to be a former nun (Barker, 2006: 26). Skinner is not seen committing any act of witchcraft on the stage, carrying out her business through manipulation and incision only. But there is one specific scene where she indulged in a

supernatural event. In Act I Scene V, Skinner bears witness to the arrival of three mysterious figures who show up specifically in this scene and no other. The arrival of those figures is preceded by heavy snowfall even though the scene was set inside the castle:

> A heavy snowfall. SKINNER does not move. In the silence the sound of a metallic movement. Armoured figures appear from different directions. They congregate, are motionless (44).

From the midst of this emerge Baldwin, Roland, and Rignald, three characters who break the narrative and the realistic atmosphere of the setting, and their appearance gives motive to a major event in the story. No information is given about them, nor were they mentioned elsewhere except in this scene. Moreover, Barker gives no explanation about the nature of these characters, and judging by their unnatural entrance, they seem indeed supernatural. What is debatable, however, is that Skinner seems to be the only one who can sense them, this either means that they are ghosts or spirits that only Skinner can interact with, or that they are mere hallucinations in Skinner's mind. This is enforced by the fact that Holiday entered the same place where Skinner was talking with these figures and he only saw Skinner alone: "Yep? … (He looks around.) Somebody ask for me?" (46). Additionally, the snowfall was seen by Krak and Stucley and they were "bewildered" (42) but they saw no figures at all. Barker definitely played with this scene on multiple levels, making the audience feel lost just as they try to interpret the nature of this scene by using their imagination.

This anti-naturalistic style does not end at merely using supernatural elements that can turn the genre from a historical tragedy into a historical fantasy because at the end of *The Castle* another element was used that shatters the image that the audience was creating about the setting. And speaking of the setting, the approach used here can be labelled as anti-history. Being the 'problematic writer' that he is, Barker followed a certain belief regarding history. Not only *The Castle*, but the majority of his plays take place, not in original settings that he invented, but rather are set during certain, well-known time periods/ historical events. Following in the steps of what Shakespeare did

with his plays where the setting is historically true, but the plot and the details were not. This approach was taken by Barker due to his denial of official history and documented history (Barker, 1997: 23). This approach to viewing history it almost identical to Foucault's as he believed that manipulating the historical records is something that is probably to have happened by the hands of authorities "Historians, like philosophers and literary historians, have been accustomed to a history which takes in only the summits, the great events. But today, unlike the others, historians are becoming more willing to handle "ignoble materials" (Foucault, 1980: 37), and it is this distrust of the authoritarian records of history that later gave birth to a new literary theory which is neo-historicism.

Through his studies and readings of English history and specifically English socialism, Barker came to realise that the history that mattered the most was not in the written records but instead was "the history of emotions". He succumbed to the belief that what was most deserving of being described are the things that did not take place "just as the only history plays worth writing concern themselves with what did not occur" (Barker, 1997: 23). Barker said that the new writing began at the royal court that was concerned only with describing the things that were not seen, in other words, real life. Yet, Barker believed that writing should shift its focus to the imagination, and its engagement with things that did not happen, for real life is snatched, reproduced, and soporific. The audience had no other choice but to laugh in acquiescence as the political plays concerned themselves with what 'is'. To emphasise his points regarding his view of handling history in plays, Barker noted that the form of the play should not be created for the purpose of reflecting its ability to report certain truths - even if those truths cannot be told anywhere else - for that will render a play as news. Thus, the play must focus on its very "distinctive quality as form" (23) that being the living actor, the element of the play that cannot be mistaken with real life. Following the actor who is the line between reality and fiction immediately stimulates the audience's imagination, one of Barker's priorities that was cast into the same grave as fantasy by the naturalistic theatre. (23). In this regard, *The Castle* is indeed free of history. In the very first scene, the audience was put in a place where they should trigger their imagination to figure out the setting of the story. It is mentioned that the male characters returned from the holy

land after seven years of war, making the crusades the best answer, but that is not enough to establish a clear image for there are multiple crusades spanning four centuries. Also, the place where the events take place is not stated. What is even more bizarre is that the castle that was built is said to be unmatched in its stature and might, something that does not resemble a real historic castle, but a fantastical one (Barker, 2006: 47). This could be so because Barker wished it to be a symbolism of some sort, or just him trying to push the boundaries of naturalism. What makes it even more difficult to indicate the place is that the characters' names are mostly ironies of their official occupations. The priest is called Nailer, and Christ was nailed, the Builder is called Holiday, even though he was always working, the henchman is called Batter, reflecting his cruel behaviour, etc. The only regular name is Ann which is a common name for most historic periods that fails to give an indication of a specific period of time. However, the most extreme anti-history element that was used in *The Castle* is the inclusion of a roar from a jet engine at the very last lines of the play (70), leaving the audience to speculate what was actually real and what was not.

2.4. ENTERTAINMENT VS BARKERIAN TRAGEDY

One of the ways in which the episteme of Barker's time controlled the masses is through its carnivalmania. Where the Right sought to teach moral messages, the Left sought to unite the audience through laughter. But since this unity is as temporary as a mask worn only for a carnival, Barker considered laughter to be useless and decided that the "pain-stimulating tragedy" (Barker, 1997: 19) is more fit to counter the false sense of unity that the authoritarian regime was spreading. Before choosing tragedy, and at the beginning of his journey to free theatre from naturalistic theatre, Barker thought that satire was the answer. That choice of his allowed him to criticise certain tropes and forms of the naturalistic plays, succeeding at bringing down some walls that were built by naturalism to confine the audience, and as those walls were brought down, imagination was freed, making speculation and personal interpretation finally available to be experienced. However, satire was not the ultimate answer, and despite the fact that it liberated Barker for some time, it blocked his progress later on. As for why he used it,

it was because of the grotesque politics of certain moments in history that Barker could not find a point from which to view it objectively, nor to enact it in a tragic form. Though it should be understood that satire in Barker's plays should not be understood as comedy for he himself admitted that comedy is not the most efficient way of destroying one's enemies, and what laughter the audience has during Barker's plays is not a result public unity but rather of disbelief as his comedy is filled with extreme cruelty. In *The Castle*, the previously mentioned scene of how Stucley and Nailer got so carried away that they ended up changing the Bible, is so ridiculously exaggerated that one can only chuckle or even laugh from the extremity of disbelief:

> NAILER: Milk! Body, blood and semen!
> STUCLEY: Oh, luscious bishop of the new born church! (He shouts.) Bring him his hat!
> […]
> HUSH: (Carrying a tool bag.) Couldn't find a hat, but this – (He holds it upside down, shrugs.)
> STUCLEY: Yes – Yes! Place it on him, crown him! (Barker, 2006: 38).

This understanding of laughter started with Barker's *The Power of the Dog* where the play's opening scene is Churchill and Stalin dividing the world between themselves at the Yalta meeting. Pushing the baseness of such characters to the scale presented in this scene can only lead to disbelief, and then laughter. And since then, Barker says "I realized that my theatre would be about dislocation and not unification" (Barker, 1997: 33). Obviously, such a take during Barker's time stock out like a sore thumb for most directors held two notions in their heads and never strayed away from them, the first being their appetite to achieve personal gain, and the second is represented in their belittling view of the audience because they never trusted them and viewed them as partially educated masses that are in need of protection, particularly from complexity, ambiguity, and any probable disorder that can be born from the audience's utilisation of their imagination. The amount of cruelty the Theatre of Catastrophe features demonstrates that this theatre is not everyone's cup of tea. It requires more of its audience which is something rare when taking other theatres into consideration. Such theatres, along with the entertainment industry embraced a fallacy

for quite some time that being the longing and insistence of depressed people for song and oblivion. However, there are others who seek to embrace the problem and hunger for its abolition. This second type is made of people who are capable of withstanding the weight of witnessing catastrophe. A Theatre of Catastrophe would be far from being called 'entertaining'. Such a theatre exists in an area that entails maximum risk, to its playwright's imagination and invention. It also entails risking its audience's comfort, commanding its attention and loyalty (52).

In its methods of dealing with the audience, catastrophe does differentiate that audience as elitists. The old ways of seeking to satisfy the audience, focusing extensively on the 'reward', theatre was turned into a bargaining place where each party must be happy and satisfied at the end, as writers get their money, and the audience is satisfied with the clarity of the moral assertion they witness on stage. But the elitist theatre would never strike a bargain with its audience, and its audience would not accept to be taken lightly, and will not be looking for a reward merely for their effort of attendance, but they will attend because they want to witness art (67). And in doing so, they surrender themselves to the writer and actor knowing that their expectations will not be met and their personal desires will be disappointed because the 'Disappointing play' takes a different approach than the 'Important play' as it refuses to reward the audience and instead focuses on delivering them a wound. This wound is the new theatre's aim and the intention of its actor. It is this wound which is the product of the actor's performance that will cause the audience to suffer continuing anxiety. This anxiety will drive the audience to witness the play in a new light, experiencing it away from the confines of ideology. Eventually, the audience will come to understand that the new theatre is a necessity for its emotional and political survival (68).

The Castle is technically a tragedy since this was the genre Barker chose for his new theatre. Though catastrophe does not embody the traditional sense of a tragedy, it does contain some elements that would disturb the audience. For instance, *The Castle* features the downfall of its four main characters as a result of their hamartia. Reading the play, one discovers that the cast is significantly flawed on multiple levels with not a

single one of them who can be considered as the moral compass of the story to whom the audience can relate. Stucley and Skinner are victims of paranoia, upon which most of their acts are based. Due to their horrific background, these two characters were left to be eaten by the paranoia of what the other might do next. Upon his return, Stucley tries to reinforce the old order by commissioning a castle, but when setting aside the symbolism of that castle, it immediately stands out to represent Stucley's fear of a possible assault. The castle he commissioned is described to be unmatched in scale and unbreachable. This castle's additional function is to restore the life he once had with his wife because once he accomplished the construction, he would still go back to her even after cheating on him:

> STUCLEY: [...] I could not bring myself, for all the damage she had done me, bring myself to take revenge, any man would, you say, yes, any man would! Not me, though…! (66).

However, Stucley's paranoia led him to be deeply indulgent in that task, neglecting his wife whom he loses in the final scenes of the play as she plunges herself with a knife in the very place he erected to protect her (63). Additionally, and in Barker-style twist of cruelty, it appears that there is a mysterious faction that was building a castle of their own called "Fortress", which even surpasses Stucley's castle: "THEY ARE BUILDING A CASTLE OVER THE HILL AND IT'S BIGGER THAN THIS" (53). This faction is rumoured to have a weapon so powerful it can bring down the castle's mighty structure. There is also a hint that despite its scale, the castle is also breachable from the inside, for the murder of the chief builder was committed within it by one of the characters who was supposed to live there. Ultimately, Stucley's castle was unfinished, his wife was gone, his future was threatened, and his kingdom was foreshadowed to be conquered by the other faction.

Having suffered too much earlier in her life, Skinner is also a victim of paranoia. However, her paranoia led her to take the belief that men are her true enemy. The play hints at Skinner's past struggles, with a few specific lines standing out, referring to her being tortured in one point of her life, but the reasons behind that are not mentioned.

One can only speculate about the reason which led her to be tortured, but the most probable answer is that Skinner at one point of her life abandoned her chastity when she was not meant to. Skinner is described as being a witch, but there was one mention of her that she used to be a nun at a point in her life: "Never saw a nun do that -" (26). It was also mentioned by her that she had a child who is no longer alive "If you haven't had love ripped out your belly, dragging half your organs with it, don't talk to me, you haven't lived!" (54). When connecting these threads, one can construct a narrative in which Skinner was a nun and then committed adultery, and because of that, she was severely punished by the Church. And taking into consideration how Barker is not afraid of depicting violence on stage, one can go as far as saying that her child was ripped out from her. Once that narrative was set as her background, a significant segment of her character is understood. However, that terrible experience she had, led her to not only hate the Church but generalise all of the sufferings she underwent as something all men are responsible for. Her hatred reached extremist levels and later turned into paranoia of killing all men that dare to oppose or threaten her reign: "Now! Stab him!" (11). Once she saw that there was a power vacuum in the kingdom once the men left, she jumped to take over, influencing the women there to overthrow the old order, and of course, the Church which was what initiated her suffering. Once the men return, she urges the women to kill their husbands and she gets upset when they start to show a soft spot for their husbands when they reunite: "I WON'T ALLOW IT" (12). In her despise of the castle and what it stands for, she proceeds to murder the chief builder; Holiday, thus stopping the castle and the old order from being reinforced again. However, Skinner was discovered by the rest to be the murderer and her punishment came to remind her of her old sin. If her child was ripped out of her once, then now she had to bear the sin of murder by having the corpse of the man she killed nailed on her front body as if she was pregnant again:

> The decayed body of HOLIDAY is strapped to her front. She leans backwards from her burden, a grotesque parody of pregnancy (57).

Additional to her punishment, the woman Skinner loved the most, that being Stucley's wife Ann, committed suicide, the cult and community she led for seven years crumbled and her ultimate fate was left unanswered by the abrupt ending of the play.

Ann's demise can be credited to either her optimism or her naivety. Her acts at the beginning of the play give an image of defiance towards the old order, and the audience would rightfully think that she shares Skinner's hostile attitude toward men. But with each scene she is in, a clearer image of her starts to form. Her acts of disloyalty and unfaithfulness are not directed as some sort of revenge against her husband but are in fact a desperate attempt to live peacefully. The ideal life Ann wished for was that where she had her husband -or in actuality any man- leave his military and violent mongering, a life where she lives with him in a remote place, surrounded by children:

> ANN: Off the coast. A barren place with nothing to lure murder for……
>
> KRAK: No such place.. (56).

Once her husband leaves, she sees Skinner's agenda as a chance to make that happen. The men who stayed behind were all elderly, the ones who due to their age, are no longer capable of indulging themselves with violence. With such elders she had intercourse, and from this intercourse, she got pregnant four times:

> STUCLEY: [...] How many bastards, then?
> ANN: One and three died. (17).

Her desperation to have children and live the life she has in mind never stopped, and once she saw her husband back, she attempted to convince him but was disappointed to see that his experience during seven years of war amplified his war-mongering and turned him into a paranoid being. Once she gave up on her husband, she tried to convince Krak of what she dreamed of, eventually seducing him and as a result got pregnant. However, once she saw the other faction and the potential conflict that would inevitably occur, she finally realised that the place she has been fantasising about her entire life cannot exist in this world, for the potential for violence is inseparable from

human nature, and ultimately, with her being pregnant, proceeds to stable herself in the guts, and dying as a result (63).

The final character of the main cast is Krak. Compared to the rest of the characters, Krak seems to be the most static during most of the events of the play but undergoes a significant change to his demeanour and his perception of human relations. Being an architect, his characterisation is pushed too far to the point where he perceives humans by measuring them in his mind. He is quite distant from the rest of the characters, not primarily because he does not belong in that setting, but in the fact that he seems to lack a proper understanding of human emotions. It was mentioned that his family was murdered by Stucley and his men during the Crusades, but it was not established as the main cause behind his attitude:

> Stucley: You sit there - you have always been so - had this - manner of stillness - most becoming but also sinister - dignity but also malevolence - easy superiority of the captive intellect (62).

Krak's tragedy lies in that despite his incredible intellect, not only in him being an architect, but also his fluency in other languages and other fields of sciences, he still lacks human emotions, and that he had failed to find what 'love' truly means even after being married years ago. However, once he had intercourse with Ann, his emotions started to conflict with each other as he experienced a feeling he had never experienced before. Once Ann commits suicide, he attempts to have intercourse with another character, but realises that since it is forced, the emotion he felt is nonexistent: "KRAK: Not it! […] NOT IT! NOT IT!" (66). This emotion which he longed for can only be achieved with Ann, and she was dead.

With all of its main characters' practically being important or highborn figures in their respective environments, each character's downfall is initiated as a result of their hamartia, further demonstrating the tragic elements of the play. However, this is still not enough as catastrophe is supposed to start with tragedy and go beyond that. And for that to happen, the previously mentioned characteristics of Barker's episteme must be countered and must be applicable to the play at hand.

One of the many charges directed at Barker was that his works were pessimistic. But Barker himself admits that this is not the case. His works indeed pushed the audience to the limits of their tolerance and gave them a large dose of pain and defeat, but all of that is not a synonym for pessimism. He says that the word 'pessimism' is a narrow concept, close to the totalitarian mind, and used to the advantage of the totalitarian state to outlaw any depressing thoughts that might pose a threat to the public morality, thus, becoming a disfavour to this state. In the state's attempt to maintain the nauseating cheerfulness of literature, any thoughts that were deemed "depressing" were to be exercised by their artists in private, contributing to the increase in the suicide rate of progressive artists (53). Such an atmosphere is not a fertile spot for tragedy for its essence depends on the "spectacle of human pain" and their charismatic defeat. Nevertheless, Barker's *The Castle* defies this authoritarian attitude because this play as a catastrophe seeks to achieve neither solidarity nor collectivity that could be used by a ruling regime (53). *The Castle* is not a play a person watches to be delighted, the mere act of watching the play is exhausting, to say the least, similar to all catastrophic plays. The act of witnessing characters face their downfall in a manner of utmost cruelty, the ambiguity of everything surrounding those characters and the setting they inhabit, the intentional misleading of the audience between naturalism and fantasy, and the abrupt end of the play, all fall far away from being called entertaining, and the audience will struggle to get through the runtime of *The Castle,* willingly or unwillingly. Barker himself kept using the word 'work' in his play believing that it is indeed a work to be done by both actors and the audience. Of course, the audience did not expect to work their way to appreciate what they see, let alone suffer while doing it; yet despite all that conspired against them, they managed to overcome those obstacles with the aid of believing in the actors (83).

CHAPTER III

3. *THE EUROPEANS* AS A CATASTROPHE

The second play to be analysed in this thesis is *The Europeans.* This play will be analysed in the same light as *The Castle* where examples from the play would be given to demonstrate the main characteristics of catastrophe. *The Europeans: Struggles for Love* was commissioned in 1984 by the Royal Shakespeare Company. But was later rejected (Smith, 2020: 156). The play was later staged in 1987. Of course, the reason behind this rejection was not because the play was poorly written but rather, as Lyn Gardner puts it, due to the reason that Barker "tells us what we do not want to hear in ways that we find difficult to swallow" (2020). As stated earlier, Barker himself once

stated that having his plays rejected reassures him that his eyes and mind can still pierce through the fog of authoritarian literary norms and its conventions (Smith, 2020: 155). *The Europeans* is supposed to be set in the 17th century but similar to the previous play, there are enough anachronisms to free it from history, which is something that will be shed light on in the following sections. The story starts literally at the point where a great battle had taken place between the Austrian and the Ottoman empires which is loosely based on an actual siege that took place in 1683. When the play begins, calamity has already struck and what follows is the aftermath of war reflected in how the citizens of the Austrian Empire are striving to survive. The play features many characters most of which are meant to be archetypes, which could be seen in their names such as The Painter, First Mother, Second Mother, First Beggar, Second Beggar, etc. The plot of the play follows two characters: Katrin and Starhemberg. Katrin is a girl who was raped during the siege, and had her body brutally mutilated, ultimately became pregnant. Because of her desire not to be a mere number in the list of war casualties, Katrin decides that she is going to deliver her baby in public. She wants to let as many people as she can know of what she has suffered. At the final scenes of the play, her plans fail because the act of delivery becomes excessively graphic to the point where the character of Emperor Leopold orders the delivery to be concealed.

The second significant character is Starhemberg. Though he does not have a clear motivation throughout the play, many scenes were dedicated to Starhemberg. He is the character who comes in contact with all of the other characters. He also influences two important events in the play: the first where he manipulates Orphuls to kill his mother, and the second where he delivers Katrin's baby to the Ottomans. Even though the play might seem about Katrin and her efforts of not letting her suffering pass as mere history which seems true when experiencing the play only once, Starhemberg seems to be the one who is pushing events forward from behind the scenes. The audience is able to see more characters as the play follows Strarhemberg as he interact with the other characters such as the scene where he visits the slums of the poor people, and the scene where the audience is introduced to the imperial academicians. At the final scene of the play, it was hinted that Starhemberg might have had a hand in spreading the agenda of

demonising the Ottoman faction. He also contributes in allowing feuds to persist such as in the scene where he antagonises the poor people and how he delivers Katrin's baby to the Ottomans in what appears to be a sign of continuation of struggle between the two factions.

Before applying the characteristics that Barker utilises in defiance against the episteme of his time, there is one specific scene in *The Europeans* that needs to be addressed first. While *The Castle* features a change of epistemes and how authorities use their power to influence knowledge, *The Europeans* features a scene where the authority is discussing how to manipulate art to numb the masses and redirect them where this authority desires. In scene VIII of *The Europeans,* Leopold the emperor of Austria, gathers his imperial academics in order to discuss an important matter which is elucidating "the principles of a new art" (Barker, 2006: 129). According to Leopold, Europe is in a state of slumber and it should be stirred from it and for that to happen, they need a new art. A difference in priorities is demonstrated when examining the characters of Starhemberg and Leopold as both desire to rise from the ashes of the past but their methods and priorities are different. Starhemberg aims to change the human by utilising his past trauma and pain while Leopold puts art first, thinking it would be the saviour of Europe. Regardless of who is right and who is wrong because no one can decide that in Barker's view, the way that scene is handled is quite peculiar, resembling that of a meta-comment on the state of theatrical and literary circles during Barker's time. This scene also serves another purpose that will be discussed in one of the following sections. Most of the characters who appear in this scene are exclusively created for this scene alone except Leopold, the Painter, and Starhemberg. Upon his call on the academicians of the imperial academy, Leopold tasks them with laying the principles of new art. However, similar to how they operate in real life, the critics suggested banal ideas since they started lying about art being for the people, and that the people desire celebration of falsities, of themselves, and of non-existing heroism (Barker, 2006: 129). All of these suggestions were denied by Leopold who, despite his childish demeanour that he demonstrated throughout the play, took a relatively neutral stance during this assembly. What makes this assembly even more important is that

some suggestions that are almost identical to Barker's were spelled out. The imperial academics' reactions to those opinions are also similar to how Barker's works are perceived and dealt with by the critics and literary circles of his time. Arst, Feliks, and Stensh represent such critics with their collective agendas and bias. On the other hand, The Painter, Bomberg, and even Starhemberg give opinions and ideas that are criticised for being different. When suggesting "An art of shame" (130), Bomberg was verbally attacked by the court. This attack was pointed not at his suggestions but rather at his character:

> I think that gesture is typical of Professor Bomberg, who is needless to say, not among the most popular of teachers - […] the students are unwilling even to attend his lectures (130).

Barker himself was judged merely by the fact that not many attended his plays: "Barker's relationship with theatre critics has been fraught with tension and misunderstandings from both sides throughout his career" (Smith, 2020: 162). Similar to other accusations that have been thrown at Barker, Bomberg is accused of pessimism and that his ideas are depressing: "You will depress the people with your introspection [...] you see, you are a pessimist -" (Barker, 2006: 131). This is a direct parallel to the practice of eliminating the other described by Foucault, similar to how the label of madness was used to eliminate any opposition and how ambiguity was used against Barker to eliminate complexity from theatre. After all, the authority, as Foucault states, is "the basic agent of morality, of ethical-juridical supervision and control" (2018: 110). Thus, Barker's and Bomber's ideas in their respective environments are a threat to the morality that was created by the authority and a form of rebellion. The arguments that follow in this scene are exactly the arguments Barker has always aimed at refuting in his works. Arguments of unity, happiness/laughter, and messages. All were the demands of the imperial academicians and all of which Barker sought to defy. The imperial academicians and their mentality on art are supposed to represent the main approach to art in Austria. They are the national artistic and literary voices of that culture but their voices are that of the state, not that of the individuals. Their artistic voices are a tool of indoctrination which pays a striking similarity towards the National Theatre in real life

which Barker describes as "an ideological construct" that cannot be considered in any sense as a "benign provider of facilities to serious artists" (qtd. in Smith, 2020: 155). And speaking of these mentioned arguments, *The Europeans* embody them in every sense as will be demonstrated in the following sections.

3.1. CLARITY VS AMBIGUITY

In contrast to *The Castle,* the setting of *The Europeans* is not as ambiguous due to the reason that it is inspired by real events. Consequently, *The Europeans* relies on the ambiguity of its characters and of their choices instead because none of them can be described or be understood entirely. In fact, seeking to have a simple grasp of those characters is a challenge on its own as understanding the backgrounds and the choices of these characters would support an 'either…or' scenario due to the fact that there are enough hints that could contradict any trait a character demonstrates in the play. A feature synonymous with Barker's approach who says that

> Under ordinary circumstances, the character remains unexplored, unexposed; the nerves are quite concealed. But in order to force that exposure on characters, I always set them within catastrophic situations. The characters onstage are not simply in unlikely situations but usually disastrous ones (qtd. in Smith, 2020: 153-154).

Starhemberg, Katrin, Leopold, Orphuls, and many other characters, demonstrate contradicting behaviours, increasing the ambiguity of each scene further. Starhemberg, for example, is the most complex character in the cast. He has blurry motivations, obscure goals, conflicting personality, unknown background, shaky allegiances, and a strange understanding of basic concepts. In the earlier scenes of the play, he is portrayed as a man of honour who would protect his country and defend its people; a humble man who is loyal to his emperor and devoted to his God:

> LEOPOLD: Oh, Starhemberg, they do so love the bastard, they love the bag of bones who showed no terror, who sat out the siege when emperors fled, this moment I have dreamed of, I kneel, I kneel to thee who saved Christian Europe (Barker, 2006: 91).

These aspects are reflected in how the people around him treat him with the utmost respect from common foot soldiers to the emperor himself who begrudgingly respects Starhemberg despite his despise: “Restore us, Starhemberg, who has no flaws” (103). However, and with each scene, these mentioned qualities of his will be contradicted one by one. The biggest obstacle here is that Barker does not mention whether Starhemberg has been hiding ulterior motifs and views from everyone during the time he was climbing the chain of command or whether his attitudes were changed solely due to the effects the latest war had on him. For instance, Starhemberg appears to hate the crowds claiming that under the proper circumstances, they would turn on their own beliefs:

> During the siege I had half the cannon turned to face in [...] Every night a dozen citizens slipped out with handkerchiefs on which were written WE LOVE ISLAM in mis-shapen Arab script (103).

Starhemberg even claims that some commoners proposed burning the “effigies of Christ” and later had the imperial standard stuffed within a drain-pipe. Thus he proclaims “I loathe the crowd” (103) and describes them by saying that “The innocent are not innocent” (104). In later scenes, he is seen visiting the slums only to start quarrelling with the poor people and the beggars. Among his various interactions with the beggars, one specific line further strengthens the ‘either…or’ argument which was intentionally implemented by Barker since he purposely implements contradictions to increase the sense of ambiguity: “DON’T STAND BEHIND ME I HATE THAT [...] DON’T COME UP BEHIND ME” (115). This line that is emphasised by being written in all capital letters. In his efforts of countering the authoritarian sense of indoctrination and control, Barker appears to have designed Starhemberg to make the audience reach many interpretations through speculating. One of these interpretations could be his fear of treason since he mentioned that the beggars and the common people were willing to side with Austria’s enemy in the middle of the siege. A second guess would be that he likely prefers overseeing everything and fears what lurks in the shadows because he was seen in several places in the kingdom playing the role of a watcher of some sort, surveilling and assessing the state of the people after the Siege had ended. The idea of him not being able to oversee the people he distrusts might be horrifying to him. This

could also resemble an authoritarian desire to control on behalf of Starhemberg. If he wanted to oversee the people he deems dangerous and wants to rehabilitate, then these desires are synonymous with the Foucauldian concept of surveillance since he clearly says that "there is no penitentiary system without general surveillance" (Foucault, 2018: 135). The third speculation is that Starhemberg was sexually assaulted at a certain moment in his life and the act of people standing behind him triggered some disturbing memories within him. If the third speculation is true, something which allowed to happen courtesy of Barker then, Starhemberg's attraction towards Katrin is understandable since both have been victims of sexual assault.

Barker also gives more ambiguity to Starhemberg's actions through deconstructing the archetype of the honourable and loyal soldier. Starhemberg's dissatisfaction does not end at the mere feuds with the poor but reaches even the emperor himself because he is discontent with how the Hapsburg couple are running the empire "I can conceive of no improvement in the nature of the government" (104). At the same time, he is shown to be humble and obedient to the emperor in other scenes. Yet again, his behaviour during Katrin's delivery scene is pure defiance towards the orders of the emperor and it can be confirmed that if Starhemberg had more power or authority, his feud with the emperor could have escalated. Such escalation did not occur thanks to the emperor turning a blind eye to Starhemberg's behaviour. Additionally, Starhemberg being a devout believer is also refuted because similar to his discontent with the monarchy, he is so with the religious institution as well, preferring Orphuls's way of being a religious figure to the regular men of the Church. An attitude caused by the fact that Orphuls does not hold his celibacy. Since Starhemberg searches for love in his own peculiar manner, Orphuls's behaviour was something that he respected "I would rather take your blessing than a thousand cardinals stinking of celibacy shook their absolution over me" (111). As the play progresses, another layer of Starhemberg is peeled, contradicting his 'gentleman' behaviour. Literally for no reason, Starhemberg abuses his power by ordering Susannah to show him what is beneath her dress few moments after declaring himself to be humble and claiming that he "command nothing any more […] go down and let me look at you - your hair - your crevices -… (She lies

down among the benches, draws up her skirts…. STARHEMBERG stares down at her, and up occasionally" (107). These contradicting aspects about Starhemberg's character serve to add more ambiguity and complexity to the play. This can be dubbed under the structural ambiguity that Charles Lamb describes where he says that catastrophe would logically built up a certain scene just to violently break its rationale later (2004: 2). With the multiple scenarios that could be reached through different interpretations, clarity is nowhere to be found.

There is also the theme of love that is unexplained in the context of the play. The full title of the play is *The Europeans: Struggles for Love*. Yet there is little to nothing that could resemble love in this play. The characters in *The Europeans* might appear to be striving to reach 'love'. However, not even one 'regular' act of love is present in *The Europeans* due to the fact that those who speak of love in the play go to extreme ends. Barker tends to portray love as a progenitor of cruelty since acts of violence are committed in its name. For instance, Starhemberg is someone who demonstrates peculiar behaviour that should imply love or affection. Nevertheless, the play does not elaborate on this behaviour, ultimately rendering his actions random at best while keeping his ulterior persona ambiguous. With his presence in most of the scenes in the play, Starhemberg interacts with Susannah, Katrin, the Second Mother, and an Officer in manners that are supposed to be relatable with love. However, none of their interactions seems to resemble pure love. Starhemberg's interaction with Susannah where he orders her to show him what is beneath her dress is not an act of love, but rather of mere sexual desire (Barker, 2006: 107). Susannah is a character who does not distinguish between love and lust since she has issues with drawing a separating line between the two, a flaw in her character that Orphuls abuses. However, the significance here is that Starhemberg does not proceed to do anything afterwards. He might have already known that Susannah cannot distinguish between those two concepts and he knew that he can abuse his powers even further if he wants to. However, he does not elaborate and what seemed to be a set-up for an upcoming plot immediately vanishes, making his order seem like no more than a whim. The second character to indulge in what seems to be a love relationship with Starhemberg is Katrin. There is a certain amount of chemistry between

these two characters but that chemistry could be interpreted in two different ways where the first is plot related and the latter is love that could be sprouting from genuine affection. The first lies in Starhemberg's desire to rebuild the European individual using their broken pieces from the past: "we must invent the European now, from broken bits" (105). This desire of his was found in Katrin whose tragedy she wants to demonstrate in public something that was to Starhemberg's liking and supported immensely. The second could be genuine affection, as the play ends with Starhemberg and Katrin kissing despite the fact that there has not been a proper build-up to reach such a conclusion to these two characters: "Lights rise and fall [...] They embrace. They kiss" (154). The assumption mentioned above of how Starhemberg was drawn towards Katrin due to them sharing a past where they were assaulted might play a reasonable factor.

The third character that could be seen to come across the theme of love is Orphuls. Similar to Starhemberg, Orphuls's understanding of love is also a disrupted one. He is demonstrated to be an excessively self-loving character who acts selfishly and greedily which is a behaviour that runs contrary to how a priest should act. What might also come close to the idea of love or at least provide a different view on love is the intercourse he has with Susannah. However, the bond between Orphuls and Susannah appears to be not of love but of lust, at least from Orphuls's point of view. Despite her feelings for him, Orphuls only seeks to interact with Susannah out of lust alone, refusing her marriage proposal and calling her "my own bitch" (114). There is also his relationship with his mother, a character whom he quite hates despite her love for him. After the siege, Orphuls has been saving some loaves of bread not for himself but to seduce Susannah to have intercourse with him. When his mother asks for some, he reluctantly gives her some bread but keeps scolding her as a result. In their conversation together, Orphuls seems to intentionally disagree with his mother even on the key characteristics of his own character since he denies his ambitions which he mentioned several times just so that he disagrees with his mother: "I am not ambitious. It is you who is ambitious" (112). Throughout their dialogue, Orphuls wishes death upon his mother many times saying that he is amazed that she still lives despite the siege and her old age. Orphuls then proceeds to wish her death and later ends threatening to murder

her himself. Orphuls's mental state becomes highly questionable in the later scenes of the play, increasing the ambiguity surrounding his inner mind. With a lengthy conversation with Leopold and the empress, he tries to justify his murder of his mother with various arguments all reflecting a twisted understanding of what regularly passes for common sense and morality. He claims to require "unhappiness", an argument the Empress mockingly responds to saying "And this is such a happy age!" (142). This contradictory exchange continues as Orphuls begins to put the blame on his mother this time, claiming that her life was a burden on her. He says that he had to put her at rest, and despite mentioning that the death of his mother "meant much to" himself (142), he later contradicts that by mentioning that he felt "Excessively alive" (142) after committing his crime. Orphuls then starts channelling into his megalomania to the extent where he puts himself in the place of God, reinterpreting key events and ideas of Christianity and ultimately claiming that what he committed was some form of necessary evil. He declares that the best service to God is not thanking Him but rather denying Him gratitude. "I think if I were God" says Orphuls, he would remind mankind of how wasteful they are of God's gifts: "I erred in some respect, they fill me with disgust, have you no notion of God's horror?" (143). Orphuls's deed in this sense is a form of divine retribution. Orphuls then resorts to justifying the murder of his mother by claiming that without the cruelty he committed no one would have understood pity. In his state of mind, pity and cruelty are "the twin towers of the soul" (144). Orphuls's rattling continues with him touching on Judas's story claiming that he did not betray Jesus Christ despite the fact that the Bible says otherwise: "He that dipped his hand with me in the dish, the same will betray me" (The King James Version Bible, 2004, Matt, 26:23) and he, as a potential Bishop, should know this fact the most. Ultimately, the various excuses he utters do not redeem him in the eyes of the emperor and empress, and was sentenced to death "and you must die" (Barker, 2006: 144), an event which is not shown but was later confirmed by Susannah who says "My priest is dead" (145). All these justifications could be seen as meaningless when taking into consideration that the death of Orphuls's mother might have been motivated by a sentence Strahemberg uttered in his frustrated state of mind. After his plan of granting a public delivery for Katrin fails, Starhemberg receives the news of his mother's death. In that scene he says

to Orphuls “And then, perhaps...kill yours...” (140). What is worth mentioning is that Orphuls respects Starhemberg immensely and by the accounts of other characters, he seems to have romantic feelings towards him “you are in love with Starhemberg, he eats your soul” (141), something which explores the theme of love even more. However, it cannot be said that Starhemberg shares the same feelings for Orphuls since he did not demonstrate any act of this ilk in the play. This on its own is an ironic trait of Orphuls since the one he loves the most does not share the same feelings towards him in the same manner that Orphuls does not hold the feelings of love towards his mother and Susannah being the ones who actually love him. This aspect increases the ambiguity of the theme of love even more and drives the audience to come up with different interpretations far beyond the confinement of authoritarian ‘meaning’.

3.2. MESSAGES VS LACK OF MESSAGES

Since *The Europeans* depends significantly on its characters, the ambiguity surrounding those characters’ motivations and goals carried with them Barker’s will of not educating the audience. This attribute rendered this play empty of conscience. After all, Barker does not seek to educate or instruct (Smith, 2020: 153). Upon first reading, *The Europeans* might stand out to be a story about the conflict between the west which is represented by the Austrian Empire and the east which is represented by the Ottoman Empire. During this first reading, it would appear that the Austrians are filling the role of the ‘innocent’ who is going against a tyrannical enemy. However, this perspective changes when rereading the play because doing so will demonstrate that most of the characters belonging to the Austrian faction cannot be labelled as purely ‘righteous’ due to the fact that they commit many atrocities during the siege and even after it. The level of neutrality Barker took is noteworthy because even the characters who were perceived as the persecuted at first reading turn out to be, in some sense, persecutors themselves or ‘sinners’ in the least sense. This forbids the play from giving any sort of messages to its audience. The main example is none other than Katrin who is one of the most pivotal characters in the play and the girl whose rape and mutilation drive most of the events forward. Katrin’s suffering also marks the motif of bodily violence which Barker resorts

to in most of his plays (154). During the earlier scenes of the play when the clergy of the church were taking her account of what had happened to her, Katrin mentions a dream she had multiple times before tragedy befell her. She speaks of how she dreams of ill matters befalling innocent people which is something that she herself admits is madness: "Listen, this is madness, this is proof!" (Barker, 2006: 96). One specific dream of her she mentions in detail, telling of how an innocent Ottoman girl was assaulted by Christian soldiers:

> Christian troopers rancid with the saddle and STAKE HER TO THE GROUND WITH KNIVES, her naked haunches, her perfect breasts they slash into a running sieve of blood, all channels red, all drain of horror, what satisfaction could I have from dreaming only my Turks die? No, revenge must be upon the innocent. Now, am I mad? (96).

Katrin was shown to be a believer in the prejudice the Austrians have towards the Ottomans, believing that even their children are destroyers. When taking into consideration her choice of words, that being "satisfaction" and "revenge must be upon the innocent" (96), one can reach an entirely new interpretation. If that feeling of 'satisfaction' provided her with comfort as she was seeing the 'other' suffer, then what befell her is some form of an unholy judgement because she suffered in real life the dream she used to see. Her dream can also be hinting at the possibility of how the Austrian faction in the story could have committed the same atrocity that Katrin had to endure but on Ottoman girls. This interpretation is further strengthened by Susannah, Katrin's own sister who refuses to pity her even after what she had to endure "I don't pity you, Katrin", describing her as being "more cruel than any clot of raping mercenaries" (97). In other accounts, Katrin is shown to be insensitive to the people around her and judgemental of others: "she looks at him, laughs, then the women go out... STARHEMBERG is left alone on a darkening stage" (129). Susannah also describes Katrin as someone who brings out the worst in people:

> You made me utter sentiments which in any case I do not feel. You do that to people. Let's go home (97).

Of course, this interpretation is not meant to undermine what she had to endure but the point is that Barker does not want his audience to fully take sides even with a character who has suffered as horribly as Katrin. Instead of using her as an analogy about the casualties of war who are portrayed in such scenarios as pure and innocent, Katrin here is written to be a problematic character with flaws on both spiritual and moral levels which prevents the audience from taking sides.

There is another interpretation that must be mentioned here despite how dark it might be. It has already been established that Barker wishes the audience to come up with different interpretations of his work, and this is achieved through the overuse of ambiguity that offers no one clear and objective interpretation and thus, no moral message for the audience. Combining this with the fact that Barker's theatre lacks any conscience and another layer of the rape of Katrin can be unveiled. In the events of the play, Katrin's rapists are supposed to be from the Ottoman army; however, Barker left enough hints to suggest that the ones who actually committed that hideous act were from the Europeans faction. This interpretation should come as no surprise because taking a certain side on this conflict would seem contradictory to Barker's policy of no indoctrination. One of the hints regarding this interpretation is the rapists' description. Katrin admits that the four people who raped her did not wear uniforms and she was also not sure of the number of people who assaulted her:

> There may not have been four. And they may not have been soldiers. But they did have weapons and the Turk does not wear uniform so for the sake of (93).

This statement is quite strange considering that just like any other organised army, the Ottoman forces were almost always depicted in paintings wearing their uniform. There is also the hint about how Katrin failed to verbally communicate with the rapists. Even though this seems like an evidence regarding the involvement of some Ottoman soldiers in this hideous act, this evidence could be shattered by taking into consideration that there are many characters who spoke different languages during the runtime of the play. The European faction is represented by the Austrian Empire, and the Cambridge

Dictionary definition of an empire states that it is a group of countries ruled by a single person, government, or country. Thus, this fact further strengthens the argument that the people who assaulted Katrin are not Ottomans because she could have been assaulted by any other ethnic group belonging to the Austrian Empire that speaks a different language. Additionally, there are multiple examples of different languages uttered in the play such as "Nihil comprehensa" (100), "Dux. Imperator" (119), "Generalissimus" (120), "Gloriosus Austriae" (120), and "LE SIXIÉME ÉTAGE! [...] la clarté, das licht" (121). There is also the mention of the existence of a Polish community that aided in the siege "Polish cavalry" (130). Furthermore, the European faction has demonstrated that it is suffering from a degeneration in its morality after the war. This is emphasised with the character of Orphuls, the priest who was nominated to be a bishop, one of the highest titles to be given to a member of the Catholic Church. However, even with such a position, Orphuls abandons the laws of both Christianity and state, whoring and even going as far as committing murder. One of the imperial academicians pointed out to the fact that morality has underwent a degradation saying that

> IPSTEIN: Morality [...] Has utterly collapsed.
> LEOPOLD: It does in sieges. Like cakes left in the rain (100).

The sense of neutral moral stance and lack of messages could also be seen through the character of Orphuls, the soon-to-be Bishop who commits most of the seven deadly sins. For a play that deals with archetypes, *The Europeans* presents the archetype of a priest and flips it on its head due to the fact that Orphuls is no ordinary man of God but rather a sinner, a hypocrite, and a blasphemer. This deconstruction goes contrary to the naturalistic way of how a priest should be portrayed. Instead of a flawless pious man of God, Orphuls contributes in weakening the state and image of the religious institution, even in the eyes of the play's characters. At the beginning of the play, Orphuls seems like an ordinary priest but later, he is shown to be highly attached to earthly tethers considering his title. For instance, he regularly complains about being hungry way more often than other characters do: "What I would not give for a piece of chocolate now [...] God forgive me, I would die for aloaf now" (98), and his dialogue in these scenes is constantly interrupted just to declare that "I am commissioned by the See, oh, God, give

me a loaf," (99). He also demonstrates acts of selfishness: "Had I a single slice, I should pass by the dying and not show it" (99). With his behaviour, Orphuls walks into the territory of taboos in Christianity, committing four of the seven deadly sins and contravenes one of the Ten Commandments which forbids committing murder. Orphuls wavers in front of lust since he commits adultery with Susannah as seen with his lines "Undoing her dress, she steps into the darkness. Pause, then he follows" (99) and "How tightly I did hold the woman's arse to me, her warmth, our miserable thin blanket and I kissed her hollowed neck with tears all down my face neck with tears all down my face" (110). He is also portrayed as a glutton since he is demonstrated to desire food too many times. He demonstrates acts of greediness: "Both he and SUSANNAH go to grab it, but he is the swifter" (99). Additionally, he demonstrates acts of pride: "Don't betray me. I am ambitious" (110). It must also be mentioned that he is also quiet vulgar with his speech and mannerisms: "Oh, fuck, it is the man who saved Vienna" (111), and: "YOU CATACLYSMIC BITCH" (141). Orphuls's character is pushed to its limits with his relationship with his mother who is called 'First Mother'. These two characters share only two scenes: the first is an unhealthy conversation while the latter is literally Orphuls burying his mother whom he himself killed. Both scenes serve to demonstrate the degradation that the Austrian faction has sunk into as even their best man of God has turned into a blasphemous murderer. And as mentioned above, Orphuls here subverts the audience's expectations by not being the pious Christian archetype, and as a result, negating the audience from entirely siding with the Austrian faction.

3.3. NATURALISM VS ANTI-NATURALISM

Unlike the previous play, *The Europeans* is actually set during real historical events, specifically after The Battle of Vienna in 1683. This historical event is one which carries pivotal importance because it represented the victory that Europe was so eager to achieve against the Ottoman Empire due to the fact that the Ottomans have had the upper hand in Eastern Europe for over three centuries. A real historic event that takes place since the Ottoman Empire under the young Sultan Mehmet IV was not as mighty as it once was during its prime. The Battle of Vienna marked the beginning of the

decline of the Ottoman Empire as some historians put it (Gündüz & Öztürk, 2008: 316). However, choosing this particular date to be the setting of the play is a peculiar choice because the focus of the plot was neither on the battle itself nor was it focusing that much on the politics between the two warring factions. Despite the fact that the play borrows real historical characters like the emperor in the play who is a real historical figure, Leopold I, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (1640-1705), as well as Starhemberg who is known as Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg (1638-1701), it does not try to be historically accurate. Instead, the play prefers to tell a story about the aftermath of war rather than what is supposed to be a glorious victory for the Austrians. The play does not even harness many historical figures in its fictional narrative, settling on using two characters only, those being Leopold and Starhemberg. Katrin, Orphuls, the Painter, the First Mother, etc. are all archetypes that represent what the society after such an event would be like. Barker mentions how the most interesting histories are those that are not recorded by historians. This statement demonstrates his denial of official and documented history (Barker, 1997: 23). Thus, he chose to tell side stories instead of a grand narrative. *The Europeans* is about on a girl who got raped, a romance between a common girl and a priest, the relationship between a mother and her son, and an emperor and his academicians.

A plot point about a raped girl, a plot point about a romance between a girl and a priest, about that priest and his mother, and another about the emperor and his academicians. All of these plot points seem like subplots in a setting that could have been used to tell a grand tale, a tragedy on a massive scale. But since he refused to obey the written authoritarian narrative, Barker constructed another narrative of his own. This approach resembles Foucault's preference of writing about the "ignoble material" (Foucault, 1980: 37) since he mentions that most written histories focus kings and generals and abandon the stories of the 'insignificant' common people. Barker's preference of writing about such matters is understandable through "his rejection of naturalism", its involvement in theatre, and his knowledge of the "ideological processes that underpin it" (Smith, 2020: 155). He manages to remain neutral throughout the play humanising both sides, and avoiding the demonisation of either factor. Of course, the

characters in the Austrian faction all despise the Ottomans but Barker, through the hints he leaves throughout the play, the atrocities he makes the European faction commits, and through the short yet important dialogue of Jemal Pasha, demonstrates that he took no evident political, religious, or moral stances:

> The ceaseless propaganda of the Christian church has stirred up subject races, some of whom we have convincing proof are cutting off parts of their bodies to discredit the Ottoman authorities […] you persist in identifying me with all atrocity (152).

Choosing to write about non-existing characters is not the only method that Barker used so that he could free himself and his play from official documented history because he decided to use multiple anachronisms spread throughout the play. This method constantly keeps reminding the audience that this play does not follow traditional storytelling, nor is it trying to teach a history lesson about events that are long gone. Such use of anachronisms can be seen with the phrase uttered by the empress, this phrase is "writing novels" (Barker, 2006: 92). Since it has been established by this point that the play takes place in 1683, the concept of a 'novel' should not exist at that point in history because despite the dispute over the first written novel, the first samples of this genre originated in the eighteenth century, with these samples being Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740). Another anachronism is the phrase "we would die in a seaside hotel" (27), specifically the word "hotel" which is another term that was not used back in the seventeenth century. The concept of accommodating travellers is an ancient one because the Romans did build similar establishments. However, they did not represent the modern understanding of hotels. Additionally, these establishments were a monopoly for politicians and figures of importance which did not allow everyone the opportunity to utilise such establishments. With the end of antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages, what was available for everyone were inn, abbeys, and monasteries. During the later Middle Ages, records speak about the existence of almost 600 of such establishments in England alone (Bonvin, 2003). Only later in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century did hotels in the modern sense emerge such as the 'Royal Hotel' in London which was

established in the early 1800s (Bonvin, 2003). In the other parts of the world, there were similar attempts of adapting this concept such as 'City Hotel' in New York City in 1792, and the Tremont House in Boston in 1829. Thus, uttering the word "hotel" in *The Europeans* is another attempt at confusing the audience. The third anachronism is "SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST" (115). This phrase was uttered by Starhemberg and it being an anachronism is a self-explanatory one due to the fact that this phrase was used in *The Origin of Species* (1859) which was published in the nineteenth century. There is no evidence that could explain the use of this phrase in the context that Starhemberg used in it other than Barker's intention to break the sense of naturalism during his day. This phrase is also written with capital letters identical to the title of chapter IV in *The Origins of Species* which carries the title "Natural Selection; or the Survival of the Fittest" (Darwin, 1895: 101). The final anachronism is the empress's phrase "rococo and a little jazz!" (Barker, 2006: 134), with both of the mentioned artistic genres being foreign to the time period of the play because Rococo is a style of late Baroque architecture that was popular during the middle of the eighteenth century while Jazz as a musical genre started in the later years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century in the United States. Such usage of anachronisms is justified by Alireza Fakhrkonandeh who says that Barker's catastrophes thrust forward a "now" which makes them "resist being turned into a commodified "new" (2019: ix). Fakhrkonandeh continues, saying that such a method will keep catastrophes away from becoming "ideologically overdetermined history of the present moment" (ix).

Another method that Barker utilises to break the naturalism towards historical connections in his play is the entirety of the aforementioned Scene VIII where Leopold and his imperial critics gather to discuss art in a meta-commentary on the state of Theatre and art in general. The arguments that are drawn in this discussion highly resemble the arguments that were prevalent during Barker's time. Most of the characters who appear in this scene are exclusive to this scene, except Leopold, Starhemberg, and The Painter. Upon his call on the critics of the Imperial Academy, Leopold tasks them with laying the principles of new art. Similar to how they operate in real life, the critics suggested banal ideas lying about art being for the people, they desired celebration of

falsities, of themselves, and of non-existing heroism. All of these suggestions were denied by Leopold who, despite his childish demeanour, took a relatively neutral stance during this assembly. What makes this assembly interesting is the existence of opinions about art that are similar to Barker's. The imperial academicians' reactions to those opinions are also similar to how Barker's works were perceived and dealt with by the critics and literary circles of that episteme. The characters of Arst, Feliks, and Stensh represent such critics with their collective agendas and bias. On the other hand, The Painter, Bomberg, and even Starhemberg give opinions and ideas that are criticised for being different. When suggesting "An art of shame" (Barker, 2006: 130), Bomberg was verbally attacked by the court. This attack being pointed not at his suggestion but rather at his character: "I think that gesture is typical of Professor Bomberg, who is needless to say, not among the most popular of teachers–[...] the students are unwilling even to attend his lectures" (130). Barker himself was judged merely by the fact that not many attend his plays. Similar to other accusations that have been thrown at Barker, Bomberg was accused of pessimism and that his ideas are depressing: "You will depress the people with your introspection [...] You see, you are a pessimist" (131). What follows are exactly the arguments Barker has always aimed at refuting in his works. Unity, entertainment/laughter, messages, and the lack of imagination of naturalism were the demands of the Imperial academicians. All of whom Barker sought to subvert throughout his career. This scene, along with the many anachronisms mentioned above, serve to break and counter the naturalism that was a characteristic of the authoritarian theatre.

3.4. ENTERTAINMENT VS BARKERIAN TRAGEDY

The Europeans is far from being labelled as an entertaining play. This play definitely manages to grab the attention of the audience but to entertain is not its function, and 'joy' would be the most unlikely feeling that the audience might feel once they leave the performance. As Barker believes, there is a purpose behind the writers' urge to entertain the audience because with laughter, a sense of false unity is born. Totalitarianism is one of the many objectives that the authority seeks to achieve because

once such an objective is achieved, individualism and personal interpretations become almost extinct. Naturally, Barker would not allow for just a practice to interfere in his plays because, after all, his theatre is about "dislocation and not unification" (Barker, 1997: 33). Barkerian tragedy can be seen as that which "resist the trivilisation of experience, which is the product of the authoritarian regime" (qtd. in Rabey, 1997: 200). Thus, *The Europeans* is desgined to be a brutal play by every sense of the word and inside such a play resides no entertainment. Throughout the performance of *The Europeans*, the audience would witness vulgar language, rape, murder, decapitations, mutilation, blasphemy, fornication, cannibalism, and many other tools that were put to use in order to break the audience out of their comfort zone, dragging them in the area of "maximum risk" (Barker, 1997: 52) and forcing them to use their imagination. *The Europeans* as a catastrophic play is the natural foil to the carnivalmania which the left wing promoted during the episteme of Barker's time. Barker calls the obsession songs and laughter that the left wing promoted during his time as carnivalmania. A term which accurately describes how such works have short effects on the audience similar to removing a carnival mask once that carnival is over. Thus, *The Europeans* has no desire to make the lives of its audience better nor does it embrace the fallacy that the audience is a mere collective that is desperate and longs for song and oblivion. *The Europeans* as a catastrophe seeks to achieve no solidarity, but to separate the audience leading them to achieve individual understandings of the play. Also, instead of being entertained, the audience will be exhausted because of the fact that act of watching catastrophes on its own is a struggle on its own. Barker kept referring to his catastrophic plays using the word "work" demonstrating the collective effort of both audience and actors as they have to struggle to construct meaning. The natural result of such an approach is the accusation of 'pessimism', the stamp that the authoritarians favours, and by which it can outlaw any idea that it deems 'threatening' to the morality it constructed. However, David Ian Rabey asserts that what the authoritarians see as Barker's use of pessimism does in fact "deepens one's experience of life" (1997: 6). In *The Europeans*, the literary position that the character of Bomberg takes and the criticism he received for it highly resembles the kind of criticism Barker had to endure, something that has been discussed in the previous section.

The Europeans embodies Barker's catastrophe in every sense. It is a tragedy in Barker's mind for it definitely delivers its audience a wound. The play might seem to end on a proper note with Staremberg and Katrin kissing: "They embrace. They kiss" (Barker, 2006: 154). However, the actual tragedy had already befallen the Austrian empire at the very beginning of the play, and throughout the runtime of the play, more atrocities take place. Sam Theilman describes it by saying: "It's always the day after the apocalypse for Howard Barker" (2009) which is an accurate description considering what had taken place at the beginning and during the events of the play. Additionally, the full title of the play *Struggles for Love* does not suggest that the true meaning of love was finally found at the end. It is quite the opposite because the conflict between the two empires carried on with no sign of a treaty or an armistice. The everlasting conflict was indirectly foreshadowed in a conversation with Starhemberg "Let us be vicious, as we are, and you be vicious, as you are… but no trespass" (Barker, 2006: 119). This one line could be what influenced Starhemberg's final decision during the final scene of the play, leaving all prejudice lurking still in the hearts of the characters including Starhemberg himself. There is also the unsolved corruption of the nobles and the laziness of the emperor, which were also on Starhemberg's list of objectives that were not achieved by the end of the play.

Considering the amount of brutality, moral ambiguity, lack of ideology, and anti-naturalistic elements that the audience of *The Europeans* will have to endure, the audience will definitively differentiate itself from ordinary audiences. The desire of the audience of catastrophe to willingly have themselves be dragged into unknown grounds to deliberately receive a wound as their morality is shaken and their imagination forcefully stimulated, crowns them as elitists. This description is not limited to the audience alone because the author can be described in the same manner as well once he/she performs the writer's duty of utilising imagination, forcing both audiences and the writers themselves to speculate about how life could be, unlike the authoritarian writers who refuse to speculate and settle with describing how life 'is'. *The Europeans* as a Barkerian tragedy stands out as an elitist work because it stands in the face of an age obsessed with clarity, laughter, and messages. This play also manages to honour its

audience by forcing both writer and audience to utilise their imagination. With *The Europeans*, Barker does cement both himself and his audience as elitists for the play never resorts to being clear or entertaining, nor does it seek to teach the audience. As mentioned above, *The Europeans* does not demonstrate a clear allegiance to any of the two factions in conflict which makes it take an unknown moral stance. Even though the majority of the play revolves around characters from the Austrian faction, these characters are not written to play the role of the 'good' characters because all of them have been portrayed as either criminals or at least sinners. In its utilisation of moral ambiguity, this play manages to make the audience both pity and hate the characters. Starhemberg, Katrin, Orphuls, Leopold, and others will make the audience feel lost as none of them resembles a balanced character that could allow them to identify with, and thus fail to follow the events of the play using the common everyday morality. If the playwright manages to make the audience reach this point, then the audience is truly honoured because they have reached a point where they must question their own morality. As the audience endure the wound offered by catastrophe, they become distinguishable from the other audiences, and once that is reached, the playwright will becomes distinguishable and elitist as well. At this point, the playwright refuses to make a deal with the audience unlike the authoritarian theatre who puts audience satisfaction as a priority (Barker, 1997: 67). The compact that is built on audience satisfaction in the populist theatre is non-existent in catastrophe, and thus, *The Europeans* ends with no satisfying resolution to what has been established during the play. Even the theme of love that exists in the full title of the play *Struggles for Love* is not achieved. The audience may have expected to witness a play about a romance but in actuality, *The Europeans* features anything but that since its characters act in a manner that pays no resemblance to love. The imaginary compact of love in the minds of the audience is shattered by the act of rape that drives the plot forward. Once the audience turns a blind eye towards that in order to find love in other characters, they are shocked again with lust instead as manifested in Orphuls's behaviour. Even motherly love is twisted in this story, with Starhemberg having what seems like an Oedipus complex towards his mother. Orphuls's killing his own mother, and Katrin's abandonment of her daughter at the end of the play also reinforce that shock.

CONCLUSION

Howard Barker was dissatisfied with the authority's fiddling with theatre. He thought that it is shameful to use such a public medium as a trajectory of political messages and propaganda. This issue was not unique to the period Barker was active in but it is a phenomenon that has appeared multiple times throughout history. The authority's intervention with literature can be observed in many cultures during many different time periods. The ancient Greek theatre, despite being one of the oldest forms of literature, is no exception. The plays during that time were meant to create role models and archetypal characters for the audience. Since ancient Greece did not have religious scriptures like other civilisations from later time periods, the plays acted as a moral compass to the people of ancient Greece. This direction of creating role models was influenced by the authority at that time in order to control the people. The same happened later in Europe. The Church utilised literature to spread its Christian teachings among the masses. For most of the Middle Ages, the permitted theatrical practice was mystery plays and miracle plays where the first tackled stories from the Bible while the latter narrated the stories of early Christian Saints. These types of plays contributed to spreading the ideas of the authority of that time which was mainly bound by the institutions of the Catholic Church. Later, William Shakespeare himself had to take the authority of his time into consideration, presenting the monarchy in his plays in a manner that would avoid the Queen's retribution. Other examples could be seen in how Charles II's influence affected the English theatre in how certain theatrical conventions were brought from the French theatre. This later because known as the Comedy of manners. The monopolisation of theatrical performances also demonstrates a form of an authoritarian influence. During that time, private performances were stages only if they were approved by the Lord Chamberlain or the monarch himself.

This phenomenon, which appeared multiple times throughout history and was evident during Barker's time as well, is explainable through Michel Foucault's philosophy of the power - knowledge relations. Foucault theorised that there is an inescapable relationship between power and human knowledge. Every authority would employ its power to influence the people's knowledge in order to popularise specific discourses that would benefit the authority. This thesis demonstrated how literature is part of human knowledge and that it is a fertile medium that could be used by different authorities to spread their agendas. Foucault's philosophy also describes how power - knowledge relations are time contingent, meaning that a given discourse would change periodically in accordance with the shift of the power scales. When an authority changes, the discourse and the levels of knowledge that it popularised would change as well. Foucault named this concept 'episteme'. Each episteme represents a new authority and a new discourse. With each episteme, literature takes a different direction, or at least, new movements or literary schools are born to accommodate the ideology of the new authority. Howard Barker had to deal with the episteme of his time as well, not in accommodating it in his works but to resist it altogether. This resistance led to discrimination against Barker and his works which mutilated his public image and limited the number of his audience.

Since he was a passionate participant in creating plays from a young age, Barker was observant of the state of theatre. He realised that the English theatre was not being used to stage the artistic voices of playwrights, but to spread the politics of the right and left wings. The old theatre, as Barker calls it, used to popularise the moral crusades of the right wing and the carnivalmania of the left wing. Later, Barker identified four characteristics belonging to the old authoritarian theatre, all of which he highly criticised. The first of these characteristics is the obsession with clarity. The old theatre did not seek to express, but to satisfy. To this end, playwrights turned theatre into a trading stage where the ultimate goal was audience satisfaction. The plays belonging to these playwrights had to be as clear as possible in order to avoid the possibility of the audience's not understanding and, as a result, their dissatisfaction. The second characteristic is naturalism which was the demand of that time. Naturalism or realism

sought to be close to the people's lives and after more than two and a half decades it started to numb the audience's imagination. The authoritarian playwrights employed this characteristic to prevent the audience from thinking in a dangerous manner where they would leave the grounds of regular day-to-day morality and venture into unprecedented grounds of moral speculation. Another characteristic is the obsession with messages. The old theatre was eager to give messages to the audience, and whether it is the morals of the right wing or the false sense of unity in the carnivalmania of the left, both sought to teach and to teach either of these politics is indoctrination. The fourth characteristic is entertainment. This aspect of the old theatre is mainly used by the left wing and its carnivalmania. The authoritarian playwrights sought to unite the audience, and in their endeavour to do so thought that laughter would make them reach that goal. In reality, laughter is a temporary sense of unity that does not lead to actual change. It is similar to attending a carnival where wearing masks demonstrates a sense of unity. However, these masks are taken off after the carnival, ultimately staying the same.

These four characteristics all worked in favour of the authority during the episteme of Barker's time. With the constant repetition of these characteristics, banality took over the English theatre and reduced it to a mere lecturing hall of political agendas. Barker's criticism of the authority's interference led him to create his own theatre that was created to defy the authority's meddling with theatre. Thus, Barker designed his Theatre of Catastrophe to defy and counter the five main characteristics of the old authoritarian theatre. Ultimately, Barker used ambiguity instead of clarity, anti-naturalism instead of naturalism, the lack of messages instead of a conscious theatre, and chose to make his plays tragic instead of entertaining.

The first play that this thesis examines as a catastrophe is *The Castle*. This play talks about a conflict between two groups, a group of men and a group of women who both seek to control a fictional place set in mediaeval England. The way in which each faction follows to enforce its existence is synonymous with Michel Foucault's philosophy. Those two factions seek to change the collective knowledge and discourse of the people in the play's setting. For example, the women dispose of the religious institution altogether and use the church as a barn for cattle. Thus, disposing of anyone

who would question their sexual behaviour. The men, once they returned from the Crusades, reestablished the church since the patriarchal system is supported by the church. Additionally, alterations to the scripture take place so that it matches the mentality of their leader after his seven-year war experience.

The Castle embodies the defiant characteristics of catastrophe. The play is highly obscure and ambiguous which is demonstrated in both its structure and setting. Most importantly, it is demonstrated in its characters and their motives. The play's ending remains ambiguous because it ends without providing a proper climax to the story leaving the audience with many questions about the nature of the setting and the destiny of the characters. Stuckley's conflict with the residents of Fortress remains unresolved, and the play takes away the payoff of the many setups made throughout its run-time. Also, Skinner's illogical coronation as the new authority once again is also left unexplained. She was in conflict with the male cast during the entire run-time of the play and was even punished for her crime. However, she was reassigned as the authority once again regardless of the existence of Stucley. Her last phrase regarding the lack of a government has no explanation either and it is out of place considering the narrative of the play. *The Castle* also employs moral ambiguity in order to further increase the overall obscure tone of the play. All the main characters follow no specific and clear moral compass as they commit horrendous acts for the sake of their own desires. Stucley commits many murders and manipulates Holy Scriptures for his own ends, thinking he is restoring order and protecting the woman he loves the most. Skinner seeks to protect the women of the village from the patriarchy, but ends up destabilising even the stable, healthy relationships, and eventually murders an innocent man so she could stop Stucley's plans. In her desire to live peacefully, Ann commits adultery many times, and her obsession leads not only to her death but the death of many other women in an act of mass suicide.

The Castle also defies the old theatre in that it does not seek to teach the audience any moral or political messages. Barker always sought to artistically express himself and stayed away from satisfying the audience, or worse, teaching them. Thus, *the Castle* was designed in a way that offers no such thing and the audience cannot

identify with the characters on a moral level. The terrible, contradictory acts committed by the characters help amp up the play's ambiguity and will lead the audience to interpret the actions of these characters in multiple ways. This lack of messages also confused the critics who watched the play and could not identify its main objective. The third characteristic is anti-realism which is demonstrated in how the play introduces supernatural elements in the play's fictional yet grounded setting. Skinner's interaction with the figures of Baldwin, Roland, and Rignald, all of whom resemble ghosts or spirits. Their presence which was accompanied by snowfall inside the castle, and the fact that no one managed to see but them demonstrate their supernatural nature. There is also the mysterious sound effect at the very last moment of the play which is described to be that of an aeroplane engine. This effect breaks the setting entirely since the play was supposed to be set in mediaeval England. Thus, the sound effect throws away any resemblance to the realism the play had built.

The fourth characteristic defies the obsession with entertainment by turning the play into a Barkerian tragedy. With the amount of cruelty, foul language, and some absurd scenes, *The Castle* manages to wound its audience. The play does feature tragic characters in the sense that some of them die, such as Ann. The rest of the characters have what they hold dearest taken away from them, as in how Stucley lost the person he loves the most in the place he created to protect. Also how Stucley's kingdom is threatened by the residents of Fortress. The play itself is exhausting to watch and the audience struggles to keep up with the characters and their deeds.

The second play to be analysed as a catastrophe in this thesis is *The Europeans*. The play is set in the 17th century inspired by a real historic battle that took place between the Austrian empire and the Ottoman Empire. The play does not concern itself with the grand event of the battle, but rather the aftermath of the battle itself. The play puts most of its focus on the European faction, specifically on two characters; Katrin, a young woman who is supposedly raped by the Ottomans, and Starhemberg, the hero who contributed the most to the battle the Austrians won. *The Europeans* also embodies the characteristics of Barker's catastrophe. For instance, it is highly ambiguous. The characters' actions, motives, and inner thoughts are all unknown to the audience who

can only speculate and come up with multiple reasons for every action they witness on the stage. The contradictory nature of each action committed by the play's characters feeds an either-or scenario. Starhemberg, the hero of the people is shown throughout the runtime of the play going back and forth between being a hero of the people to someone who merely abuses his power and fame. He is seen in some scenes as a loyal servant of the emperor, and in other scenes, he clearly defies the emperor and his methods of running the empire. In some scenes, Starhemberg is described as the hero of the people, however, there is an entire scene of him arguing and mocking the same poor people. And in another scene, he warns the emperor of the poor people, saying that they are more dangerous than their enemy who is outside their walls. The emperor Leopold is also portrayed in a contradictory manner, portrayed most of the time as an easygoing man. But, in some scenes, he is portrayed to have a serious demeanour. Orphuls is probably the most complex. He does not act as the priest he is supposed to be. Instead, he indulges in every possible sin that goes against Christianity. He demonstrates envy, commits murder, indulges in adultery, behaves in a gluttonous manner, and is too prideful as demonstrated by his megalomania complex. His actions up until the end of the play do not have a clear motive behind them. He was seen being manipulated by Starhemberg, by his mere ambition, his god-complex, and his twisted understanding of love. Yet not one of these can be viewed as the main sole reason behind his actions.

The intense moral ambiguity of the characters makes the play that lack any meaningful messages. Since the characters act in a contradictory way and have no specific moral compass, the audience cannot identify with any of them. Even the characters that are supposed to be the victims are seen behaving in a manner that would disturb the audience. In this case, instead of routing for characters to achieve their goals, the audience would distance themselves from the characters. A significant chunk of the play is dedicated to Katrin and how she was raped during the battle. However, the play does not entirely take Karin's side, even though this horrendous act was committed against her. Instead, the play dedicates many scenes to demonstrate that she herself is a flawed character who wishes ill upon people and was glad to see Ottoman girls be raped in her dreams. Starhemberg, the archetype of the heroic figure is flipped on its head

because he is described to be the hero and the liberator of the people, but his actions and his demeanour are completely the opposite. Even Orphuls, the priest who is supposed to represent the religious authority is portrayed in a negative way. Thus, *The Europeans* leaves no place to teach the audience or give them any clear messages. This characteristic is also emphasised by the fact that the play does not have a proper conclusion because there is no clear victory, the conflict between the two empires survived, and the effects of war did not heal.

Unlike *The Castle* which used supernatural elements to break reality and become an anti-realist play, *The Europeans* makes use of anachronisms instead. Several anachronisms are spread throughout the runtime of the play referring to concepts that should not have been invented during the 17th century which is the period in which the play is set. There are references to novels which is a genre that was not yet invented. There is also a reference to hotels which also did not exist, at least in the modern sense. Another anachronism is how the empress refers to To Jazz music. Another method that is used to break the realism of the play is the existence of an entire scene that resembles the state of English theatre when Barker was active. This scene demonstrates arguments similar to the ones Barker went against during his career. There is also a controversial character Bomberg whose ideas resemble Barker's ideas, and because of that he was criticised.

The Europeans defies the obsession with entertainment of the old authoritarian theatre. The play features many terrible acts being committed, featuring scenes of body horror like decapitations and cannibalism. It also dares to address sensitive topics like rape and blasphemy. Combined with the lack of a proper conclusion to the main ideas, *The Europeans* manages to deliver a wound to its audience which is the main purpose of a Barkerian tragedy. Thus, the play succeeds in countering the obsession with entertainment that was evident in the old authoritarian theatre.

Howard Barker's approach of writing plays did not cement him as a famous playwright. In fact it harmed his fame and economic status. However, this happened not because of his lack of talent and literary capability, but due to the criteria of the episteme

of his time. If Foucault settled with describing the concept of the power – knowledge relations, then Barker sought to defy it for the sake of art, putting his reputation and career on stake. His Theatre of Catastrophe is a stark stance of defiance, and the two samples plays taken for this thesis: *The Castle* and *The Europeans* are catastrophes that do indeed defy the literary episteme of Barker's time. They do not submit to the literary norms and conventions, and instead, they counter them using opposite characteristics. These plays respect the audience and revert from indoctrinating them, preferring to be ambiguous so the audience can have the freedom of interpretation. Barker designed these catastrophic plays in order to return theatre back to its supposed function which is that of artistic expression while wounding the audience in order to make them change on their own far from authoritarian intervention.

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