Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

English Language and Literature

# THE EVOLUTION OF DAVID HARE'S POLITICAL DRAMA AS OBSERVED IN *FANSHEN*, *THE SECRET RAPTURE* AND *THE ABSENCE OF WAR*

Tuba Ağkaş Özcan

Ph.D. Dissertation

Ankara, 2017

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Tuba Ağkaş Özcan tarafından hazırlanan "The Evolution of David Hare's Political Drama as Observed in *Fanshen*, *The Secret Rapture* and *The Absence of War*" başlıklı bu çalışma, 05.06.2017 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Doktora Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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o **Tezimin/Raporumun.....tarihine kadar erişime açılmasını istemiyorum ancak kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisinin alınmasını onaylıyorum.**

o **Serbest Seçenek/Yazarın Seçimi**

05 / 06 / 2017

***Tuba AĞKAŞ ÖZCAN***

## ETİK BEYAN

Bu çalışmadaki bütün bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi, görsel, işitsel ve yazılı tüm bilgi ve sonuçları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu, tezimin kaynak gösterilen durumlar dışında özgün olduğunu, Prof. Dr. A. Deniz BOZER danışmanlığında tarafımdan üretildiğini ve Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Yazım Yönergesine göre yazıldığını beyan ederim.

*Tuba AĞKAŞ ÖZCAN*

## DEDICATION

*This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved husband Halil İbrahim*

*and*

*to my pretty son İbrahim Asım.*

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# ÖZET

Ağkaş Özcan, Tuba. "David Hare'in Politik Tiyatrosunun *Fanshen* (Devrim), *The Secret Rapture* (Sessiz Ölüm) ve *The Absence of War* (Savaşın Yokluğunda) Oyunlarında Örneklendiği üzere Evrimi." Doktora Tezi, Ankara, 2017.

Bu tezin amacı David Hare'in politik tiyatrosunun 1970'ler, 1980'ler ve 1990'ların sosyal ve siyasal şartları çerçevesinde nasıl bir evrime uğradığını açığa çıkarmak ve bu evrimi yazarın söz konusu üç döneminin her birinden belirgin bir oyunu, sırasıyla *Fanshen* (Devrim) (1975), *The Secret Rapture* (Sessiz Ölüm) (1988) ve *The Absence of War* (Savaşın Yokluğunda) (1993)'u inceleyerek örneklemektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, her bir oyun kendi döneminin siyasî şartları çerçevesinde ve yine kendi dönemindeki tiyatronun içinde bulunduğu koşullar dâhilinde incelenir. Oyunların bu şekilde bağlamsal çerçevede ele alınması, Hare'in İngiltere'de her bir on yılın genel siyasî durumunu analiz etmek için benimsediği değişken tutumları ve izlediği farklı yolları göstermede fayda sağlar. Bağlamsal çerçevenin yanı sıra, oyunların kapsamlı bir biçimde analiz edilmesi Hare'in politik tiyatro yazımının *Fanshen*'de (Devrim) sosyalist siyaset bahsine ve sosyalist devrim betimlemesine odaklıyken, *The Secret Rapture*'da (Sessiz Ölüm) sol görüşe ait değerleri sadece karakterlerin özel hayatlarının sınırları içinde göstermeyi amaçladığını ve *The Absence of War*'da (Savaşın Yokluğunda) kurumların – sağcı muhafazakâr değerlerin etkisi altında olsalar dahi – gerekliliğinin savunucusu haline geldiğini kanıtlar. Bu üç oyun ayrıca, Hare'in politik tiyatrosunda kullandığı epik tiyatro tekniklerinden sinemacılık tekniklerine, klasik tiyatro formlarından çağdaş formlara kadar geniş bir yelpazede bulunan tekniklerin ve tiyatro formlarının örneklenmesine de yardımcı olur. Oyunların temsil ettiği zaman aralığı da Hare'in saçak tiyatro gruplarından ana akım tiyatrolarına geçişini gözlemleme olanağı sağlar. Bu tez, sonuç olarak Hare'in politik tiyatrosunun söz konusu üç dönem boyunca tartıştığı temalar ve konular, kullandığı teknikler ve oyunlarının sahnelendiği mekânlar bağlamında ve her bir dönemin politik gelişmeleri çerçevesinde evrildiği kanısına varmıştır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler**

Politik Tiyatro, David Hare, *Fanshen* (Devrim), *The Secret Rapture* (Sessiz Ölüm), *The Absence of War* (Savaşın Yokluğunda)

## ABSTRACT

Ağkaş Özcan, Tuba. "The Evolution of David Hare's Political Drama as Observed in *Fanshen*, *The Secret Rapture* and *The Absence of War*." Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara, 2017.

The aim of this dissertation is to expose how David Hare's political drama evolves within the social and political context of three decades, the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s and to illustrate this evolution by examining one distinctive play by the playwright from each decade, respectively *Fanshen* (1975), *The Secret Rapture* (1988) and *The Absence of War* (1993). In accordance with this purpose, each play is analysed within its contemporary political context as well as in its theatrical context. Such a contextual study of the plays helps to expound the varying attitudes Hare adopts and the different roads he takes in order to deal with British contemporary politics of each decade. In addition to the contextual framework, the extensive analysis of these plays demonstrates the evolution in Hare's political playwriting from an overt representation of a socialist revolution to discuss socialist politics as exemplified in *Fanshen*, through the depiction of the virtues of the Left only within the boundaries of the characters' private lives as illustrated in *The Secret Rapture* to the assertion that the institutions are required though they are dominated by the principles of the Right as argued in *The Absence of War*. These three plays also help to instance the wide range of techniques and forms Hare employs in his political drama from epic theatre techniques to cinematographic devices, from classical dramatic forms to novel forms of his time. Besides, the scope of the plays provides the opportunity to observe Hare's transference from fringe theatre companies to mainstream theatres. It is concluded in this dissertation that Hare's political drama evolves, in terms of the themes and the issues he discusses, the techniques he utilises and the theatrical venues his plays are staged, throughout three decades and under the influence of contemporary politics.

**Keywords**

Political Drama, David Hare, *Fanshen*, *The Secret Rapture*, *The Absence of War*

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# INTRODUCTION

*"And different periods' pleasures varied naturally according to the system under which people lived in society at the time . . . The theatre was required to deliver different representations of men's life together: not just representations of a different life, but also representations of a different sort."*
(Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre* 181)

This dissertation analyses the evolution of David Hare's political playwriting within the scope of three decades, the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s by dealing with one distinctive play of the playwright from each decade, respectively *Fanshen* (1975), *The Secret Rapture* (1988) and *The Absence of War* (1993). In line with this objective, first, the development of political drama is explored and then Hare's literary career as a political dramatist is laid bare. It is further discussed how his political drama evolved within the context of the political, social and dramatic developments of each decade. The evolution in his themes and techniques as well as his transference from the fringe to the mainstream theatres is demonstrated by means of the analysis of the selected plays.

## 0.1. British Political Drama

British political drama was born in the late 1960s as a result of certain political and social events that took place in the world and in Britain. The political atmosphere around the world in the late 1960s and early 1970s was characterised by certain happenings such as the Vietnam War, Soviet politics and student protests in Paris. The young leftists around the world were first and foremost "disenchanted" with the politics of Soviet Russia and "the murderous repressiveness of Stalin's regime" (Boon, *About Hare* 12). They were deeply disturbed by the Soviet interventions in Hungary and its treatment of "the Hungarian rebels" in 1956 (Hughes 132) as well as by the Soviet action against the ""democratization' of the political system" in Czechoslovakia (Reed 14-15). Besides, the war in Vietnam, which aimed to defend the South from the communist threat coming from the North, also led to leftist youth uprisings in the world, which caused the Vietnam War to get out of control. For Richard Boon, the Vietnam War had a "centr[al]" place among the "causes" that gave birth to the "student, or student/worker, demonstrations [which were seen] in every month of the year [1968]"

(*About Hare* 15). These protests gained speed in the same year with the student and worker uprisings in Paris as well as with the French government's response to them, which caused unrest not only in France but also around the world, especially among the leftists who were about to lose their remaining hopes in revolution.

British intelligentsia responded to, in a certain manner, the Vietnam War, Soviet politics and student protests in Paris as well as Labour Party politics. Hence in the late 1960s and in the early 1970s, British social and political climate was under the effect of the repercussions of these worldwide events and its own politics at home. In Britain, "Vietnam was the difficulty. The left of Labour Party was deeply opposed to President Johnson's escalation of the war" (Anthony Lewis 243). When Harold Wilson, the Prime Minister between 1964-1970, attempted to deal with the problem, his "pro-American line" caused reaction among the public and "by 1968 a large anti-war movement had emerged in protest at the destruction of life by the massive American force in South-east Asia" (Pugh 255). Wilson's stance against the protests resulted in further disillusionment with his government. Together with the protests against the Vietnam War, events in Paris "unif[ied] the non-affiliated Left in a manner that far exceeded the heady days of CND both in numbers and in militancy" (Bull 9).

Besides, there was another factor that united the leftist groups in post-war Britain, and this was their dissatisfaction with Labour Party politics on domestic issues. Britain was ruled with a "co-operative spirit of the wartime coalition" in matters of economics and politics after the end of World War II (Boon, *About Hare* 10). As a result of Labour Party's inefficiency to realise "a full programme of socialist change" as promised by the Labour government in 1945 (Bull 5), the young left no longer trusted parliamentary politics or leftist party politics. Hence, the "disenchanted" leftist intellectuals and young people came to "reth[ink] traditional socialism to envision new forms of social governance and organization" (Boon, *About Hare* 15). As they realised that there was no hope or trust left to put in politics even that of the Left or of Labour Party, they directed their attention towards extra-parliamentary activities.

Among the intelligentsia in Britain who rose against certain political events at home and around the world, the dissident voice of a certain group of dramatists was dominant who were not satisfied with the present state of the world and of Britain. David Hare (1947- ), Howard Brenton (1942- ), David Edgar (1948- ), Trevor Griffiths (1935- ), Caryl Churchill (1938- ), John McGrath (1935-2002) and Howard Barker (1946- ) were some of these dramatists. They no longer believed that revolution or change in society was possible by means of books or theories so they made use of the theatre for political purposes. Therefore, except for Arnold Wesker, not any of these playwrights signed *The May Day Manifesto*, which was prepared by Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and Edward Thompson and which was signed by many fellow academicians, writers and activists. This manifesto which was dated in 1967-1968 targeted to express the discontent with the state of Britain and particularly that of Labour Party as well as the criticism of rising capitalism. According to David Hare, by means of this manifesto, "[Britain] had not the slightest chance of being affected" or changed (*Left-Handed* 9). What Raymond Williams and his fellow friends proposed in the manifesto was in line with traditional leftist ideology (6). Instead of taking such theoretical or academic roads, Hare and his contemporary dramatists found a way of their own and "[t]he organized and disorganized left t[ook] to the streets" (6). They knew they could not get the change they demanded without "weeping for change" or without "fight[ing]" literally "to death" (10). They were discontented not only with the present state of the world and Britain but also with the previous generation's responses to the war, war crimes, and inefficient politics. For Hare, the playwrights of the previous generation were "doing – and saying – nothing" and "equat[ing] contentment with tranquility" (*Obedience* 17). It was the active disobedience of the newly emerging playwrights that primarily set them and their plays apart from the previous angry young man generation and its drama.

The playwrights of the late 1960s and the early 1970s found the opportunity to speak on politics and social problems relatively more comfortably by means of certain developments experienced in the social and theatrical arena of Britain in the late 1960s. Two acts were passed that would affect individual freedom and that would respond to the demand for freedom of voice in theatre. The first one of these acts was the Sexual Offences Act that passed in 1967 and that allowed to "decriminalise homosexuality for

consenting adults over the age of twenty-one" (Shellard 136). In the same year, the Abortion Act also passed in the Parliament and it legalised abortion in the United Kingdom (136). These acts not only provided more freedom for homosexuals and women, but also encouraged the playwrights to treat, with less trouble, the issues related to these marginalised groups. In addition, as a result of the efforts of the theatre practitioners for decades, the Lord Chamberlain's Office was abolished in 1968 and "the cessation of the Lord Chamberlain's powers of censorship broadened the scope of what could be discussed on stage" (Dorney 139). Also, since the process of censorship by the Lord Chamberlain's Office had been taking much time, the ending of censorship allowed the playwrights to produce their plays in relatively shorter time. It is through this opportunity that small theatre companies were founded with the collaboration of small groups and theatre found the chance to go beyond the established venues and companies.

As a result of certain political and social upheavals as well as the developments in different spheres of social and theatrical life observed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, British leftist playwrights tended to deal with political subject matters overtly in plays which were mostly produced by newly established small, touring and collaboratively working companies. As a consequence of this tendency among the leftist playwrights, British political drama took its place in theatrical history of Britain though not under the guidance of a certain manifesto in thematic or technical terms. Some of the representative plays by some prominent political dramatists are David Hare's *Plenty* (1978), David Edgar's *The National Interest* (1971), Trevor Griffiths's *The Party* (1973), Howard Brenton's *The Churchill Play* (1974), John McGrath's *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black Black Oil* (1973), Caryl Churchill's *Owners* (1972), and Howard Barker's *Rule Britannia* (1973).

Political drama set out with the purpose of bringing forth progress and change in social and political terms by dealing with social and political issues. Political dramatists wanted to achieve a different world by means of theatre, which came to be known as the "theatre of socialist political change" whose "workers . . . consciously place themselves on the side of the working class" (Craig 30). These dramatists considered theatre a kind

of tool for “injustice to be addressed” and a means for “a social system which relieves the ubiquitous suffering of the poor” (Brenton 17). David Hare started his dramatic career, like many other political dramatists, “to advance political ends” (Hare, *Obedience* 140) and to “improve life in [certain] ways” (“David Hare” 186). Although some playwrights like Howard Barker “offer[ ] no programme for change” (Patterson 87), they still believe in “the power of theatre to generate excitement and interest far greater than that which might be expected from the few who attend a piece of political theatre” (86). British political dramatists, in accordance with their loss of faith in institutions and with their aims to achieve social advancement, portray British society with its different segments and in different time periods. They draw upon “the guardians” of the institutions in Britain with a critical stance: “politicians are presented as clowns, policemen as role-playing thugs, priests as crooked cartoon cut-outs” (Ansorge, *Disrupting* 5).

The primary productions of British political drama were realised by the fringe theatre companies which were not appealing to “the regular theatre-going public of the time” (Hay 153). Hence, what these companies sought was no other than “new audiences” (153; Grant 116). Moreover, the political dramatists who wrote plays to be produced by the fringe theatre companies believed “that their work could only have meaning or effect through a search for new audiences in new venues” (116). That is why these companies were touring around the country to find their new audiences who were mostly from lower class, who did not have time or money to go to the theatre in cities and who were not much represented in mainstream theatres. With the help of such temporary theatres, political dramatists were “no longer reliant on conventional theatrical venues” (Bull 2). As a kind of protest against the mainstream theatres, they made use of almost every venue to perform their plays “and new venues such as pubs, community centres, ‘arts labs’ and working men’s clubs began to spring up to cater for the increasing demand” (Shellard 148). That is why political theatre is also known as “underground” or “fringe” theatre, which refers not only to the subject matters of the plays but also to the venues they were staged. The fringe, in fact, originated from “the ideas and efforts of performers, directors, and playwrights who were not associated with any of the existing theatres or permanent theatre buildings” (Hay 153). For Peter

Ansorge, who used the term "underground" for this "new theatrical phenomenon," the primarily distinctive nature of political dramatists was that they did not need building-based theatres and they could take theatre to venues outside the boundaries of traditional theatres (*Disrupting* 1). Hence, the plays produced by the fringe theatre companies were "never designed to be played in conventional theatres"; so, the techniques and forms used in these plays were "in no way suited to the limitations of traditional staging" (Hay 153).

By revolting against the limitations of the mainstream theatrical venues, touring companies of the newly emerged British political drama virtually defied bourgeois ideology in the mainstream theatre that happened to be associated with the naturalist and realist techniques. That is why political dramatists "consciously attack[ed] the norms of the naturalist stage" (Ansorge, *Disrupting* 3) and used "the dialectical Brechtian model" (Bull 16). However, as observed from their works, political dramatists borrowed as well, to a certain extent, from "the naturalistic tradition of social drama which had dominated left-wing theatre since the mid-fifties" (16). Other than the Brechtian and naturalist techniques used side by side, what characterised the political theatre companies was the fact that most of the plays in their programme were "developed through collective improvisation," that is, with the contribution of the playwrights, the directors and the actors/actresses (Barnes 11). These works were the initial projects of the political dramatists in the face of the immediacy of social and political happenings; and their message related to political issues were to be conveyed to the audience in order to raise consciousness.

British political theatre challenged not only the established theatres but also the conventional relationship between the audience and the performance on stage. In order to convey the political message, the plays produced by the political theatre companies attempted to set a kind of "communion between actors and audience" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 202), which was an influence of the American theatre companies on British theatre. American theatre came to affect the British stage by means of "the American group theatres" such as the Puppet Theatre, Paper Bag Players, La Mama and the Living Theatre (Ansorge, *Disrupting* 1). For British political dramatists and theatre

companies, the American expatriate, Jim Haynes with his Drury Lane Arts Lab in Edinburgh became a significant example (Itzin 9). A number of theatre companies were founded after the example of Jim Haynes's experimental Arts Lab and British political theatre gained life first and foremost with the help of such companies as

> the *Pip Simmons Theatre Group* founded by Pip Simmons in 1968 (disbanded 1974), *Inter-Action* formed by Ed Berman in 1968, *Hull Truck Company* founded by Mike Bradwell in 1971, *John Bull Puncture Repair Kit* established by Michael Bank and others in 1968, *The Freehold* formed by members of Wherehouse La Mama in London, 1969, *The Red Ladder Theatre* (formerly *Agit-Prop Theatre*) established in 1968, *Portable Theatre* founded by David Hare and Tony Bicat in 1968, *7:84 Theatre Company (England and Scotland*) founded by John McGrath in 1971, the *Ken Campbell Roadshow* formed by Ken Campbell in 1971, *The Belt and Braces Roadshow Company Ltd* set up by former members of the *Ken Campbell Roadshow* and *7:84 Company* in 1973, *The Joint Stock Theatre Group* established by Max Stafford-Clark and David Hare in 1974*, The People Show* founded by Mark Long and others in 1966, *Welfare State* formed by John Fox in 1968, and *Shared Experience* founded by Mike Alfreds in 1975. (Barnes 11-12)

Political theatre groups, in time, came to be known with a new name; especially "[f]rom 1974 on, the term 'fringe' [was] used less and less, as the concept of an alternative theatre . . . gain[ed] credence" (Bull 95). Moreover, after the foundation of those initial companies, it was observed that the programmes of the political theatre groups could not be limited only to "trade unions, socialism, and the working class" since matters like "race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality" came to enlarge the scope of political drama (Kritzer 5). For instance, the Black Theatre Co-operative, which was founded in 1979, aimed to present the political concerns of the black people and to develop black theatre together with the newly founded "The Black Theatre Forum (BTF) [, which] started in 1985 . . . and organized an annual Black Theatre Season 1985-90" (King 211). Apart from only "black" groups, "black female drama groups" also came into existence in the 1980s like "Theatre of Black Women (TBW, co-founded 1982 by Evaristo), the Women's Troop, and Munirah" (211). Besides these, more specific groups also flourished which were concerned with issues related to ethnicity, particularly that of Asia. Together with Tara Arts, which started in the 1970s, The Asian Co-operative Theatre and Kathakali were the companies that contributed to "the development of . . . asian (sic) theatre" in Britain (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 59). As for the women's theatre groups, some exemplary ones were "Black Mime Theatre, Women's Troupe, Clean Break, Imani-Faith, Monstrous Regiment, Mrs Worthington's

Daughters, Red Ladder, Siren, Talawa, Theatre of Black Women, Women's Playhouse Trust, Women's Theatre Group" (Milling 76-77) as well as "The Red Stockings, Red Shift, The ReSISTERS Group, Scarlet Harlots" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 59). As for the gay/lesbian theatre, there were companies like "Character Ladies, Gay Sweatshop, Female Trouble and Siren" (Milling 81).

Since British political drama commenced with the activities of small, mostly touring theatre companies in new theatrical venues, it is not a coincidence that political drama is associated with the fringe or alternative theatre. However, the productions of political drama were seen in a variety of theatrical venues; though political drama started in the fringe, it was welcomed at subsidised and commercial theatres as well. Almost all of the political dramatists, who started their career in the fringe, started to move, even as early as the 1970s, from the fringe companies to the mainstream and commercial theatrical venues. They had their plays performed not only at the Royal Court Theatre but also at the National Theatre and the West End theatres. When these playwrights were writing for both the fringe and the mainstream, in time "the division between the fringe and mainstream theatre . . . bec[a]me eroded" (Grant 116). One of the reasons for certain dramatists' transition to the mainstream was their being "'better' playwrights" (116) and their having "reached maturity" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 243). Another reason was their aim "to reach a greater number of people" in mainstream theatres (Dorney 168). This was a kind of strategy which was initiated by Trevor Griffiths, who believed that "the major citadels" must be "penetrat[ed]" by political dramatists in order to convey their message to a larger audience from different classes (Billington, *State of the Nation* 258). Simon Trussler claims that Griffiths, though a political dramatist, "remained relatively uninvolved with 'alternative' theatre, having found his feet early and decisively at both the National and the RSC – and of course on television" (348). However, this was only in "relative" terms since Griffiths was writing in the 1970s "for both the Royal Shakespeare Company and [also] 7: 84" (Grant 117). Griffiths's example, writing both for the fringe and for the mainstream, was followed by other political dramatists such as David Hare, Howard Brenton, David Edgar, Caryl Churchill, and, to a certain extent, Snoo Wilson. In fact, except for John McGrath and John Arden, who "were determinedly moving away from the mainstream towards the

fringe" (Trussler 349), many of the political dramatists in the 1970s, had their plays produced both in fringe and in mainstream theatres.

The last reason for the political dramatists' transition towards the mainstream was not directly related to the dramatists themselves but it had to do with the National Theatre and the Royal Court Theatre managements and their policies in the 1970s. These subsidised theatres aimed at supporting young dramatists and "cast a benevolent eye towards their struggling fringe rivals" (Elsom 159). The Royal Court, for instance, was already supporting new playwrights since William Gaskill became its artistic director in 1965, a tradition which continued after Gaskill's departure in 1972 (Trussler 350). In 1970, the Royal Court prepared "a *Come Together* season for fringe companies" (Elsom 159). As for the National Theatre, whose building was opened in 1976, its director Peter Hall "enlist[ed] the support of living writers: in particular, the younger generation of Howard Brenton, David Hare and Stephen Poliakoff" together with the established playwrights (Billington, *State of the Nation* 255). Hall's aim was to achieve at the National Theatre a kind of a "dialogue between the classic tradition and contemporary drama" (255). Even when the National theatre building was not yet completed, Hall became the director in 1974 and stated that "he wished the Cottesloe Theatre in the new National Theatre Building to be devoted to visiting fringe companies" (Elsom 159). In spite of all the encouragements of the subsidised theatres in favour of alternative productions, these plays did not comprise the major part of the National and the Royal Court repertoire (Bull 97).

On British political drama, some literary figures in Britain and in Europe were influential in technical and thematic terms. In terms of political and social themes, the most widely recognised effect is Bertolt Brecht's (1898-1956), whose forefather Erwin Piscator (1893-1966) was the man who coined the term of "political theatre." Piscator was the theatre director of the trade union educational centre in Germany, Volksbühne, where he worked with the belief that "the main issue" which was to be dealt with in theatre was "[man's] relation to society" and what was represented on stage was to have an effect on social changes (Allan Lewis 222). According to Brecht, too, it is possible to improve people's mentality through theatre since "it is precisely theatre, art and

literature which have to form the 'ideological superstructure' for a solid, practical rearrangement of our age's way of life" (23).

Brecht's impact on British theatre is mostly claimed to have begun with his company Berliner Ensemble's visit to London in 1956. Nonetheless, Brecht was not unknown before the World War II to the British leftist groups (Willett, Introduction 15). It was in 1928 when, for the first time, a Brecht play, *The Threepenny Opera*, was reviewed in *The Times* (Jacobs and Ohlsen 23). Brecht himself also visited London during the war in order to find employment in the film industry. At the time of this visit, he met with the poets W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood at the Group Theatre to share his ideas and plans on "an international association of workers in the theatre" (31). As for to what extent Brecht's theories on theatre were known in Britain, "[they] had been given some exposure, though very slight, in post-war Britain, and had aroused little response" or "antipathy" or "caution" (35). In 1955, after watching Brecht's plays performed by German and Austrian exiles in Britain, Oscar Lewenstein paid a visit to Germany to see Brecht's productions. This visit allowed him to produce *The Threepenny Opera* at the Royal Court Theatre and helped Joan Littlewood's production of *Mother Courage* at the Theatre Workshop in February 1956 (35). Apart from Lewenstein, British directors like George Devine, John Dexter, William (Bill) Gaskill, and Peter Hall had already seen Brecht's productions in Germany before they saw them in Britain. The effect of Brecht's plays reached a peak when the Ensemble came to England and this effect was at first mostly in terms of technique. As most of the British audience did not know German, the reviews were generally "on acting techniques, stage design, and general production methods" (39). This was one of the reasons why Brecht's first influence was observed on the directors before the playwrights.

British political dramatists borrowed from Brecht's theatre not only its political content along with the intent to transform the society but also its techniques which are not realistic and which force the audience to respond to the play's performance in an intellectual manner. What Brecht opposed to in conventional German theatre of his time was naturalism and Brecht's epic theatre was born in opposition to naturalistic theatre. Although he continued to make use of "th[e] [scientific] objectivity [of the

Naturalists'],” he “shift[ed] [it] from thematic contingency into the institutional stability of form” (Szondi 69). However, it is his challenge against naturalistic theatre that primarily characterised his drama and influenced British political drama. Although, like Brecht, British political dramatists made use of naturalist techniques in their plays from time to time, the most distinctive feature of British political drama is its “working against the naturalized 'objectivity' of theatrical realism” (Worthen 146).

The first reaction to naturalism in theatre appeared when the performative aspect of theatre was recognised in the early twentieth century by a number of theatre practitioners and theoreticians. They attempted to reform the understanding of theatre which was reduced to a state of purely “textual art” as a result of the realistic approach (Fischer-Lichte 20). Vsevolod Meyerhold, Max Reinhardt, and Erwin Piscator's innovations in theatre were all for the purpose of activating the audience and making them react intellectually to the play. These dramatists attempted to “overcome,” by means of certain theatrical devices employed on stage, “[t]he passivity of the audience in the bourgeois theatre” (136). To begin with, in Russia, Meyerhold used rotating scenery and semi-acrobatic actors, and exposed the bare brick wall at the back of the stage, all in order to attack the bourgeois theatre in the name of the industrial proletariat. Stage machinery which was used in order to arouse the audience's attention and to encourage their intellectual response “was . . . closely identified with the Russian Revolution” (Willett, *The Theatre* 110). As for the innovations in Germany, Reinhardt was considered one of the most important directors of the pre-war German theatre with 136 plays he directed “[b]etween 1905 and 1933” (Brockett 508). In these plays, he abstained from committing himself to naturalist staging techniques (Pilikian) and he experimented with techniques as well as “production styles and theatre architecture” which he harmoniously united with the language of the play (Brockett 508). Similarly, Piscator, the leading figure of the documentary theatre, shattered the realistic illusion created on the stage by employing such technical methods as “[s]hort, rapid scenes” and “placards, signs, graphs, and posters point[ing] out what was happening on the stage” (Allan Lewis 223). His production of *The Good Soldier Schweik* (1928), an adaptation of Jaroslav Hašek's novel, is “a landmark in theatre history” (222) because of these innovative stage techniques. Brecht, who was influenced by Piscator during their

collaboration, believes that "the real front-line battles were fought out mainly by Piscator, whose Theater am Nollendorfplatz was based on Marxist principles, and by [Brecht himself] at his [Brecht's] Theater am Schiffbauerdamm" (65). They fought this war successfully with the help of the techniques they employed; as Brecht states, "[they] introduced music and film and turned everything top to bottom, [they] made comedy out of what had originally been tragic, and vice versa. [They] had [their] characters bursting into song at the most uncalled-for moments. In short [they] thoroughly muddled up people's idea of the drama" (65).

These technical novelties in theatre that appeared through the works of Meyerhold, Reinhardt and Piscator were introduced to British theatre primarily by Brecht. That is why the stage design which is not naturalistic and which calls the audience to take part in the performance in an intellectual manner was known in Britain by the name of "Brecht" or "Brechtian." Brecht indicates that "[w]e need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself" (190). Here, Brecht introduces the two basic principles of epic theatre: one is the use of historical setting while analysing the man's condition and the other one is the call for the audience to approach the historical representation intellectually. These two crucial principles of Brecht's epic theatre were introduced to British political dramatists, as it is claimed by W. B. Worthen, by means of John Osborne (1929-1994)'s *The Entertainer* (1957) and they became the characterising features of British political drama. *The Entertainer* explores "the function of class in British imperial expansion," which is held up as an example by political dramatists as observed in their plays set in a historical setting, especially that of the World War II (Worthen 157). Osborne's play also draws the audience "into a more urgent and actual relation to the stage" by making "use of popular music hall in a 'straight' play" (157). Hence, the representation of the social condition in its historical context and the intellectual participation of the audience by means of certain techniques were inherited by the British political dramatists through *The Entertainer*.

Other than these imported influences, British political drama was influenced by domestic figures as well. At the time when the Berliner Ensemble visited, "the postwar situation in Britain was hospitable to, or compatible with, epic theatre practices, accommodating a space for political opposition in theatrical representation that produced a hybrid British form of recognizably Brechtian theatre" (Reinelt, *After Brecht* 1). In 1956, Britain was already witnessing the break-out of a revolution on stage which was led by John Osborne with his *Look Back in Anger* as well as by the other first-wave playwrights of British post-war drama like John Arden, Arnold Wesker and Joan Littlewood. These dramatists adopted a social realist approach in their criticism of institutions and employed working-class protagonists revealing their frustrations. Michael Patterson posits that the British political dramatists were influenced by two different playwrights from this generation of the 1956-revolution. For Patterson, political dramatists of the 1970s fall into the categories, the "reflectionist" and the "interventionist," which are represented by Wesker and Arden, respectively (24). The reflectionist road follows the conventional realist tradition and in this mode, "[t]he characters are not random individuals but, while remaining believable, operate as representatives of social types" (17). In reflectionist works, since the characters are realistically drawn and "recognizable" and given "in acceptably realistic situations, the audience has the opportunity to compare their experience with that portrayed in the play" and they are emotionally involved in what is performed (17). Howard Barker, Howard Brenton and Trevor Griffiths are the names that Patterson puts into the realist category of political drama.

The interventionist style, on the other hand, indicates the "modernist" mode, it is represented by Arden and it takes the example of Brecht's epic theatre that distances the audience emotionally (Patterson 18). As Patterson points out "the modernist willingly embraces and acknowledges a biased non-objective viewpoint, and employs a form that challenges not only how the world is ordered, as realism does, but challenges our perception of the world itself" (9). The play in the interventionist style 'intervenes' between the reality performed on stage and the audience's perception of this reality by inviting them to question it rather than receive it in a passive manner. For Patterson, political dramatists, David Hare, John McGrath, Caryl Churchill, and Edward Bond are

the representatives of this interventionist strain. David Hare's plays, following the modernist tradition along with Arden, aim to "intervene" with what is represented on stage and how the audience perceives it. Hare's plays do not allow the audience to absorb without questioning what is presented on stage since Hare believes a play's meaning is produced during its performance and when the audience participates in it intellectually.

**0.2. David Hare**

David Hare, one of the pioneering British political dramatists, was born in 1947, in "St Leonard's-on-Sea, Sussex, England" (Kerensky 175). For his education, he attended schools mostly on scholarship: "[he] was, from the start, a scholarship boy, . . . making his rather troubled way through society by brains and not by birth" (Hare, *Obedience* 17). First, he went to Lancing College, where he met another playwright-to-be Christopher Hampton, and then to Jesus College in Cambridge University, where he studied English under the supervision of Raymond Williams. In Cambridge, he also completed his MA studies and was mostly interested in directing plays as well as seeing films at the cinema (Kerensky 175). Although Hare is originally from "lower-middle class," as he himself admits (Hare, Seminar), and he hates institutions like Cambridge, his education in established institutions including Cambridge "gave him a secure sense of belonging" to these institutions (Bicât 16). However, after founding the fringe company the Portable, he came to think that "[he] was putting Cambridge behind [him] as decisively as [he] could" (*Left-Handed* 13).

As for his career in the world of business, "Hare first worked for A. B. Pathé, the film company" (Fitzpatrick 2). Following the events in the late 1960s, like many political dramatists, Hare began his career as a playwright in fringe theatre companies while he also became "a theater and film director, theater founder, and literary manager" (2). He became the director of the Portable Theatre Company between 1968-1971; he worked as the literary manager at the Royal Court Theatre between 1969-1970; he continued his Royal Court career as a resident dramatist between 1970-1971; and in 1974 he became one of the founders of the Joint Stock Theatre Company (Kerensky 175). The fact that

he worked both in the fringe and at the Royal Court "symbolic[ally]" comes to mean "the coming together of the two great 'movements' – Court and Fringe – of post-war political theatre" (Boon, *About Hare* 26).

Political and social upheavals in the late 1960s helped David Hare to realise the power of the theatre and "to think of the theatre as real" (Hare, *Left-Handed* 5). He and his friends relied on "the theatre's unique political power and its power to tell the truth" because for Hare "in an age in which politics is marked by mendacity, then obviously the theatre is very well suited to talking about politics as they're really practiced" (Interview 225). According to his reasoning, if "[one] want[s] the world to be different[, if one] want[s] injustice to be addressed[, if one] want[s] a social system which relieves the ubiquitous suffering of the poor[,] . . . theatre might be an effective, even an appropriate, way of achieving such things" (*Obedience* 19). As a result of this belief in the power of the theatre, Hare, together with Tony Bicât, founded the Portable Theatre Company, one of the touring fringe companies which aimed to take theatre to the lower classes who could not attend theatre in those days.

Correspondingly, the primary aim of the Portable was, like that of other fringe companies, "to advance a specific political agenda" towards social progress (Boon, *About Hare* 20) since its founders and playwrights no longer trusted British institutions (Hare, Interview 214). The Portable, in fact, is a controversial issue as its founders reject its being labelled "political" by emphasising that the plays performed by the company encompassed various ideas some of which could not be considered political (Bicât 22). However, the Portable is accepted to be one of the forerunning and significant political theatre companies in its time (Boon, "Keeping Turning Up" 33). By means of the issues handled in the plays, the Portable provided its audience "with a view of an England which [was] facing the steepest of moral declines, 'running wild', obsessed by various violent perversions, bent upon some hideous and parochial course of self-destruction" (2). According to John Bull, the reflection of Britain in the Portable plays did more than suggest social and political progress since "the stress was always less on any discussion of change than on the presentation, almost the celebration, of the decay" (17). However, it was only in the scenes of decay taken from the British present or history that the

playwrights explored any positive alternatives for the future, though they could not find any useful ones. It was not just the decay which was staged by the Portable but the protesting and reforming voices against this decay were also represented. During the Portable performances, the audience watched the events they witnessed outside the theatre; what they heard in the plays was none other than the "[v]oice of [their] generation, brought up on rock music, the 'Nouvelle Vague' and demonstrati[ons] against the Vietnam War" (Bicât 21-22). The dramatists' efforts were always in the direction of performing plays in such a way that these plays "connect[ed] with real life" (Brenton 6).

The fact that the Portable, like many of the other fringe companies in the 1970s, was not permanent and the message it needed to express was urgent caused the plays and the playwrights to be limited by certain technical boundaries. Neither the playwrights had plenty of time to write the plays nor did the Portable to produce the plays, which were, therefore, expected to be concise and direct in conveying the meaning. One of the playwrights of the Portable, Tony Bicât says that "[o]ddly, neither of [me and David Hare] thought we were writers; it was only clear once we'd started Portable that we'd have to write at least the first show ourselves" (18). To illustrate, *How Brophy Made Good?* (1969) and *What Happened to Blake?* (1970) were the plays Hare wrote in a very short time in order to meet the need for something to stage by the Portable. Hare says about the writing process of these plays that "it was a time of sort of violent rejection of culture, I wanted plays to deliver at once. So I started by writing short plays in which I expected that in the first thirty minutes you'd get absolutely everything ("An Interview" 165). One of the technical results of the limited conditions of the Portable was the fact that the plays were less aesthetically concerned and lacking "luxury of finesse" (Hare, *Left-Handed* 15) because it was the subject matter that required more energy. The Portable also forced the playwrights and the directors to use the stage economically due to the need for "immediate presentation in any number of theatrical 'empty spaces' across the UK" (Ansorge, *Disrupting* 10). As a result of the non-permanent venues, the plays were to be economical in terms of staging and the duration of the performance. Therefore, as Tony Bicât states, the plays were staged "cinematic[ally]" in that they "consisted of short scenes with blackouts" and on the

stage “there was no set except for four chairs, and only a few simple sound and music cues” (19). Evidently, the immediacy of the subject matter not only limited but also shaped the technical aspects of the plays. The Portable, for example, aimed to raise the political consciousness of the audience by employing “shock[ing]” and “disturb[ing]” techniques (Hare, *Left-Handed* 15; Bull 17). In this way they would be able to force the “audience into realizing that the ice they were skating on was perilously thin” (Hare, *Left-Handed* 15).

The Portable Theatre Company closed down for financial reasons at the beginning of the 1970s but even when it was alive, its playwrights started to have their plays performed simultaneously in mainstream theatres. In the 1970s, David Hare had many of his plays staged in mainstream theatres as well as in the fringe: *Slag* (1970) and *The Great Exhibition* (1972) were performed at Hampstead Theatre. After he became first literary manager then resident dramatist at the Royal Court, *Slag* was revived and *Teeth ‘n Smiles* (1975) was staged at the Royal Court Theatre. Moreover, when in 1974 *Knuckle* was performed at the West End; *Plenty* (1978), under his own direction, found its audience at the National Theatre. Other than the first plays he wrote for the Portable, we see only one prominent play of Hare’s, *Fanshen* (1975), which was produced by a fringe theatre company, the Joint Stock. While working in all these various theatres, David Hare, a playwright who started his career as a dramatist in the fringe theatre companies, felt no “ambivalence, scepticism [or] doubt” in any of them because “as a political dramatist he has had many homes” (Boon, “Keeping Turning Up” 46).

As a direct result of writing for the mainstream, political dramatists tended to avoid writing only “politically” and to free their plays from the technical limitations of the touring companies. David Hare came to realise “that the demands of what you would wish to accomplish politically cannot be so easily reconciled with what is artistically possible” (Hare, *Obedience* 22). In the years after the Portable, David Hare’s writings showed some changes but it is hard to claim that he was totally isolated from the Portable experience or to draw an obvious line between his times at the Portable and those after the Portable. Following the closure of the Portable, he belonged neither to the fringe nor to the mainstream, and the central force that “dr[ove] his work” became a

"sense of 'homelessness'" (Boon, "Keeping Turning Up" 46). After transferring to the mainstream stages, it became a central issue of debate among the critics of drama whether political drama died or not. However, political drama cannot be limited to the fringe, and it did not come to an end with the closure of fringe companies or with the playwrights' changing venues. This is why, Hare responds to the question of whether political drama is alive or not as follows: "'Yes, of course it's uneven. It's an art form, for goodness' sake'" (*Obedience* 139). From time to time, political dramatists "los[t] faith in the possibility of movement at all" since they saw that little changed in society in spite of all their efforts (*Left-Handed* 29). Even at such times, Hare thought that nothing they did was in vain; for him, "even if [political drama] has been a lifetime of failure, it has not been [and will not be] a lifetime of waste" (*Obedience* 143).

Political drama maintained, even in mainstream theatres, its ultimate purpose to reflect society at present or in the context of history, to search for the possibility of change or improvement and to challenge the oppressive nature of the establishment. Throughout his career, during the Portable years and after, David Hare is observed to have, in one way or another, "a zeal to portray the whole society" catching the changes in particular moments (Hare, "David Hare" 186). So, it is not surprising that critics of Hare's drama truthfully observe that "cultural changes provide the thematic focus and structure of [his] plays" (Boireau 26). It is for certain that Hare lays bare and criticises certain problems in the social and political life of Britain but, while doing this, he does not play the role of "a social doctor prescribing remedies for [their] national ills" (Ludlow 149). Moreover, while examining the issues related to British contemporary society and times, either implicitly in the background or explicitly, Hare does not allow his plays to be topical and he does not record every topical event; in this way, he differentiates his plays from newspapers. He opposes the idea that theatre is a kind of journalism purely "because it can sometimes incorporate real-life material" (*Obedience* 27). Hare also does not accept the "prejudice" that "[p]olitical writers [can be] treated as short-order chefs" who write on given topics (*Left-Handed* 40). Hence, it is not a coincidence that Hare's plays are not based on "single issues" – excluding such plays as *England's Ireland* (1972) and *Deeds* (1978) (Boon, *About Hare* 4). Hare refrains from writing directly on particular events of political or social life but it is an undeniable fact that he

makes use of contemporary material, which is because of the fact that he cannot deal with the society unless he refers to the social or political facts.

Hare, even in his plays at the beginning of his career, is beheld to handle personal and emotional matters along with issues related to the society. While illustrating the social and political matters, Hare's plays, apart from *Fanshen*, "foreground human behavior" and explore "the notion of identity and how that identity is expressed, repressed, displaced, disguised, or achieved" (Oliva, "David Hare" 212). According to David Hare's understanding of theatre, theatre can function properly only "when it's about everything" (Hare, *Obedience* 32). Theatre, for him, should not be overloaded either by private or by public materials: "A theatre which is exclusively personal, just a place of private psychology, is inclined to self-indulgence; a theatre which is just social is inclined to unreality" (*Left-Handed* 34). That is why, Hare's plays not only focus on social and political criticism but also aim to depict the man's position in the face of social and political problems.

When asked about the performance of his plays, Hare states that he is interested in how the audience receives them, "how [a play] hits [the audience]" (Hare, Seminar). For Hare, it is only "living" theatre, rather than novels or journals, which can allow its recipients to experience "strong feeling [and] strong intelligence" at the same time (*Obedience* 59). A play comes into existence, according to Hare, when it is performed: "A play is not actors, a play is not a text; a play is what happens between the stage and the audience" (*Left-Handed* 30). In addition, Hare believes that "a play only moves us as an audience when our response to it is . . . unforced" (*Left-Handed* 46). According to Hare, if a playwright explicitly tells the reader/audience the political view that s/he holds and asks them to follow her/his views, this attempt "insults the [reader/]audience's intelligence; more important it insults their experience; most important it is also a fundamental misunderstanding of what a play is" (30). In fact, for political dramatists in general, a playwright should not assert his/her existence as a "god-like" figure. Hence, Hare does not want to accept Brecht's provision of mottoes, slogans or his giving the reader/audience "the god-like feeling that the questions have been answered before the play has begun" (29). As Hare believes in the power of the

performance itself and expects the reader/audience's intellectual as well as emotional involvement, he does not approve of Brecht's directing the audience's reception of the performance. Brecht, by means of the alienation technique, does not let the audience engage with the performance in emotional terms. Hare "find[s] unattractive" the way Brecht approaches his audience and his material since the latter is "determin[ed] not to be caught out in any kind of humanist stance, not to wear your heart on your sleeve, not to show passion, not to show feeling, rarely to show love, rarely to write about the heart" ("David Hare" 85).

Hare, however, while criticising Brecht's dramatic theories and practices, omits an important detail related to Brecht's career. When the later phase of Brecht's career is analysed, it is possible to see how he allows the audience to be moved emotionally other than intellectually. Taking into consideration different stages of Brecht's career, it can be said that, first of all, Brecht collaborated with different writers in *Lehrstücke* plays in the 1920s and 1930s in line with his ideas in the theoretical article "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre." These plays are extremely didactic just as Brecht proclaimed in the first phase of his career (Esslin 133). It is obvious in these early examples of Brecht's dramatic practice that there is a kind of denouncement "of our world, but there is no sign that they ever inspired anybody to want to change it" (Willett, *The Theatre* 176). During the exile years he experienced first in Scandinavia and then in the United States through the 1930s and 1940s, Brecht wrote his widely recognised plays including *Life of Galileo Galilei* (1937-1939), *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939), *The Good Person of Szechwan* (1940), and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1943-1945). These are among the plays through which Brecht is known in Britain and with which he affected the British playwrights. The theoretical work he committed to paper following these works is notable especially in comparison to his ideas at the beginning of his career. In "A Short Organum for the Theatre" (1947-1948), Brecht avoids being propagandistic or forcing the audience to side with a certain political view as he admits that "the 'theatre' set-up's broadest function [is] to give pleasure. It is the noblest function that we have found for 'theatre'" (180). Furthermore, in this short work, Brecht defines the theatre "as a place of entertainment, as is proper in an aesthetic discussion" and invites his audience and himself, too, "to discover which type of entertainment suits [them] best"

(180). He wants to leave the reception of theatrical performance to the audience without his own intervention, a fact which Hare does not take into consideration while criticising Brecht.

It is not only Brecht but also Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), Maxim Gorky (1868-1936) and Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) as well, whom Hare raises his voice against and, for him, all of whom "play God" in a way ("David Hare" 188). Especially when questioned about the influence of Beckett, Hare clearly states that "he's actually guilty of what political playwrights are accused of: being more keen to put across his message than to describe" or than to show it in action (187). Moreover, Beckett, according to Hare, does not take interest in "how the audience received his [Beckett's] works" while it is Hare's ultimate purpose "to convey message to the audience" (Seminar). Related to Chekhov, what Hare critically approaches is Chekhov's idea and practice of "portray[ing] a whole society by outing people in a room" ("David Hare" 190). Other than Hare, the road which is taken by Chekhov to examine society is challenged by Brecht as well, as observed in his usage of historical setting to depict the society and the individual in progress. Brecht believes that "social, economic, political conditions . . . determine [man's] behaviours; hence, he sets the basic principle of his epic theatre as to scrutinise the man in its social and historical context" (45). However, Hare asserts that, in his portrayal of society in its historical context, he follows Shakespeare rather than Brecht, who also exposed himself to the works and dramaturgy of Shakespeare while constructing his theatrical practice. Hare specifically adores Shakespeare's "put[ting] everything on the stage" with "the idea that the stage actually shows everything" ("David Hare" 190).

Hence, by disengaging his drama from the dramatists like Brecht or Beckett, who allegedly "play God" in the plays and who do not care about the audience's reception, David Hare insistently attributes the roots of his dramatic idea and practice to his British predecessors. To begin with, Hare believes that a play is born when performed and together with the audience and he links his perception of performance with that of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), for whom "nothing is real, nothing exists in the theatre until the audience arrives" (52). In this respect, Hare also follows Bernard Shaw (1856-1950),

who refuses "to impart one final message to the world from his actual deathbed" as a result of his belief in the power of plays rather than the words of the playwright (Hare, *Obedience* 92). In relation to having "an interest in social problems," David Hare claims that his and his generation's drama comes from a tradition that goes back to Bernard Shaw in Britain as well as Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) in Europe. He says that "interest in social problems" comes to be known with Ibsen in Europe and Shaw in Britain ("David Hare" 188). In spite of the direct contribution of Brecht to British political drama, the fact that Hare refers to the playwrights of "well-made" plays like Shaw and Ibsen as his predecessors brings to minds his classical education at Cambridge University. Moreover, as far as his allegiance to Wilde and Shaw is concerned, it can be stated that Hare is a supporter not of "individualism" but of "fabianism" as well as "universal humanity and experience" (Richmond-Garza). This trace in Hare's drama will more clearly reveal itself in his later career when he searches in his political drama for "the common good" of the people no matter which ideology they adopt (Hare, *Asking Around* 8).

Apart from Shaw and Wilde, David Hare is inspired, as he claims, by Osborne's search for change in society. Yet, the road Osborne takes during his search for social progress is different from that of Hare's and the other political dramatists'. Osborne believes, as a playwright, that "[his] own contribution to a socialist society is *to demonstrate* (emphasis added) those values in [his] own medium, [though] not to discover the best ways of implementing them" (83). As understood from Osborne's purpose to demonstrate rather than to implement socialist values, it can be stated that Osborne's generation "d[oes] not attempt to have an impact upon British culture by providing a political analysis or [explicitly] advocating change" (Shank 49). On the other hand, it is the aim of political drama to seek, to illustrate and to promote social change by "disturb[ing]" and "shock[ing] the audience with the help of "bizarre, surreal manifestations of late-sixties sub culture" (Bull 17). In addition, unlike political dramatists, Osborne's generation does not challenge the hierarchically established theatre of the bourgeoisie so their depiction of social change is only within the limits of the play's text (Fraser 2; Shank 49).

Still, Osborne is, without a question, one of Hare's "theatrical heroes" together with Joan Littlewood, George Devine and Peggy Ramsay simply because of "the[ir] impulse to shout 'no' when the world is quietly mouthing 'yes'" to the state the society is in (Boon, "Keeping Turning Up" 46). Hare was impressed by Osborne's portrayal of the English society. Undeniably, "[i]t is impossible to speak of John without using the word 'England'" because "[h]e had, in some sense, made the words his own" says Hare to express his admiration for Osborne (*Obedience* 57). For the political dramatists to take example, Osborne initiated the idea of "express[ing] chronic social discontent," by reflecting the society one lives in (DeVinney 92). However, there is much difference between the Osborne generation and the British political dramatists in that the two generations experienced different social and political upheavals, which caused them to deal with different social and personal matters in their plays. David Hare concisely explains the difference between the problems experienced and dealt with by the two generations:

> Whereas the collapse of the empire, the invention of the nuclear bomb and the brutality of Stalinism defined the thinking of people a little older than us, so the murderous war crimes of the Americans in Vietnam, the failure of social democracy under Harold Wilson and the continuing threat actually to use that terrible bomb marked our own. (*Obedience* 49).

While dealing with social and personal matters, the plays by Osborne's generation foreground "self-exposure, self-excoriation and even self-annihilation" (48). On the other hand, as Hare asserts, his generation is "much more concerned to tell stories which might offer some equally passionate defence of the collective" (48) and which "must lie outside the scope of their personal experiences" (Ansorge, *Disrupting* 20). Although political dramatists are observed to be making room for personal and private matters in their plays, their presentation of such matters is not purely based on their own experience of social and political events but on how the society respond to these events.

In some of his interviews, David Hare talks about those domestic and European influences on his understanding of drama with the belief that he belongs to a certain lineage of dramatists. Yet, at the same time, he denies any influence on his plays claiming that he is "a literature student" and he is knowledgeable about "what others have done" so he does not like "repeating what others did" (Hare, Seminar). Similarly,

Hare rejects any assumption that he learned playwriting either in fringe or in mainstream with the enforcement of outside conditions. On this matter, he states that "[he] believed good writing was unforced, that it came not just by the application of conscious effort, but from some spontaneous source inside ourselves" (*Left-Handed* 46). However, it is hard to survive in the theatrical world for Hare, who describes his experience with the help of a resemblance: "Theatrical life has always more resembled Stendhal's description of the battle of Waterloo – foggy chaos interrupted by sudden bursts of apparently random activity – than it does the generals' own view of battle as steady, purposeful and always in a forward direction" (*Obedience* 97). As a result of his varying experiences in fringe and in mainstream, inside and outside of Britain, and the social and political events he came across in different time periods, Hare came to "b[uy] all sorts of different artistic prescriptions" at different times. He speaks on this matter as such:

> At one time or another, I have believed that all theatres should be touring theatres; I have believed that all plays should be presented by ensembles; I have believed that my own work should be presented on the ends of piers; and even, at my most demented, I have become convinced that directors should be altogether eliminated from the process of making theatre. (90)

Not only Hare's perception of the theatre but also his approach to political playwriting, as well as his treatment of political matters, the techniques he used and the theatres where his plays were performed changed through the decades. This dissertation will deal with the different phases of Hare's dramatic career from the 1970s, through the 1980s to the 1990s by closely analysing one distinctive play from each decade, respectively *Fanshen*, *The Secret Rapture* and *The Absence of War*. Before looking into David Hare's plays which will be analysed in every chapter of this dissertation, it is necessary to give a brief information about his stage plays which will not be examined. Although David Hare wrote screenplays for television such as *Man above Men* (1973), *Licking Hitler* (1978), *Dreams of Leaving* (1979), *Saigon: Year of the Cat* (1983) and *Heading Home* (1991) as well as films like *Wetherby* (1985), *Paris by Night* (1989), *Strapless* (1989) and also opera *The Knife* (1987), here his stage plays will be introduced since the basic concern of this thesis is related to the evolution observed in Hare's stage plays.

Hare's plays in the 1970s are the early examples of his artistic life as a political dramatist which he started under the heaviness of the political matters to be dealt with immediately. Hare appeared as a playwright and a director in both individual and collaborative productions of the Portable he co-founded. He was of the opinion that "the political and social crisis in England in 1969 had grown so grave that [he] had no patience for the question of how well written a play was" (*Left-Handed* 63). *Inside Out* (1968), *How Brophy Made Good* (1969) and *What Happened to William Blake* (1970) are the plays Hare wrote in a very short time for the Portable Theatre Company. Hare, inspired by Kafka's diaries, produced an "experimental version" of *Inside Out* together with Tony Bicât (Hare, Interview 214). *Brophy*, "[t]he first thing [Hare] actually wrote" (214), critically deals with the media industry while *William Blake* gives a brief account of Blake's life. Hare wrote for some other theatre companies than the Portable like Traverse Theatre Company. For this company, he wrote *Deathshead*, a two-minute play on the issue of venereal disease, to be produced at the Edinburgh Festival in 1972.

Other than these plays he wrote individually, Hare, at the beginning of his dramatic career, also wrote plays in collaboration with other political playwrights to be put on the stage by political theatre companies. *Lay By* was written in 1971 by David Hare, Howard Brenton, Trevor Griffiths, Stephen Poliakoff, Brian Clark, Hugh Stoddard, Snoo Wilson and produced by the Traverse Theatre Company. It is a play about taboo subject matters such as pornography, violence and cannibalism which had been almost impossible to represent on stage until the abolition of the Lord Chamberlain's Office in 1968. Hence, "[i]t is difficult to imagine a theatergoer in 1972, or at any time, who would not have been shocked, horrified, and offended by *Lay By*. But such was precisely the intention of the playwrights" (Fitzpatrick 25). *England's Ireland* (1972) is another topical and collaborative work written for the Portable by David Hare, Howard Brenton, Tony Bicât, Brian Clark, David Edgar, Francis Fuchs, and Snoo Wilson. It criticises the presence of English soldiers in Northern Ireland by means of a historical view of English colonialism particularly in Northern Ireland.

In the 1970s, Hare's political plays were staged not only by fringe companies but also in mainstream theatres. *Slag* was produced by the director Michael Codron at the

Hampstead Theatre in 1970 and then it was revived in 1971 at the Royal Court Theatre. It provides a satirical approach to the institution of education with the help of three women who run a girls' boarding school, Jeanne, Ann, Elise. At the beginning of the play, they vow not to have relationship with men and repeat "feminist" statements but it is only Jeanne who really means to defend feminism. Although they continuously discuss political and philosophical issues like feminism as well as matters related to school, they do not take any action to execute their ideas or ideals. *Slag* is, thus, "the first clear articulation of Hare's career-long fascination with the relationship of individuals to institutions" (Boon, "Keeping Turning up" 37). The play also satirises "the idea of feminist separation" since Hare believes that "the male and female [should] mesh in spirits" (Interview 216)

*The Great Exhibition* was, like *Slag*, produced at the Hampstead by Michael Codron in 1972. Although these two plays were not produced by the Portable, "they are certainly Portable plays in ethos and spirit" (Boon, "Keeping Turning up" 37). *The Great Exhibition* presents the public and private life of a Labour Party MP, Charlie Hammett. The correlation between Hammett's career in the House of Commons and his relationship with his wife reveals Hare's interest in the closeness between the public sphere and the private sphere. With the help of a Labour MP, who stops attending the Parliament meetings and who neglects visiting his constituency, Hare reprehends the politics of the post-war Labour government, that of Harold Wilson. Hammett, who claims to be a socialist, fails in putting into practice his ideals. Hammett's private life becomes a failure just like his public one in that he and his wife Maud betray each other and both hire a detective to spy on one another. Hammett met Maud for the first time during the socialist uprisings in 1968 and what they had primarily in common was their socialist views. However, both their political views and their private relationship turn out to be "[a]s ineffectual as the Wilson government" and they "have only good intentions to recommend them" (Fitzpatrick 20).

Following *The Great Exhibition*, David Hare was seen in another collaborative work, *Brassneck* (1973), on which he worked together with Howard Brenton and which was produced at the Nottingham Playhouse. Hare and Brenton claim to have developed

"British epic" by means of the techniques they employed in *Brassneck* (Boon, *About Hare* 29). The play provides a panorama of the capitalistic world in Britain with all its vices with the help of a historical analysis starting from 1945, through 1960, till 1973. Corruption in the commercial business is analysed with the Bagley family portrayed through generations. The play, in fact, "depicts capitalism in terms of human brockerage," a system according to which "[p]eople are commodities, bought and sold like pork bellies, real estate, or drugs" (Fitzpatrick 29).

Hare's "comic" tone and "humour" in his early plays become "darker and more subdued" in his plays after *The Great Exhibition* and *Brassneck* (Fitzpatrick 21). Besides, with *Knuckle* (1974) and *Teeth 'n' Smiles* (1975), Hare starts to move away "from the broad satirical works of his apprenticeship in the theater" (51). *Knuckle* critically depicts the English society corrupted by capitalism and was staged at the commercial theatreland of Britain, the West End. The play was produced by Michael Codron at the Comedy theatre with Michael Blakemore as the director after its first production at the Oxford Playhouse. Related to *Knuckle*, Hare says that "[he] never until [he] wrote *Knuckle* felt [he] had anything uniquely valuable to say as a writer" (Interview 218). In *Knuckle*, Hare tells the story of Sarah, an outcast, a misfit in the British society where she lives in the 1970s. However, Sarah is an absent character and it is not known whether she is lost or has committed suicide or has been killed. Curly, her brother, appears after spending so many years in the business of gun-selling and starts looking for her at the beginning of the play. This is how Hare grounds his story in his detective fiction-style play. Curly, to find his sister, poses questions to various characters who have taken part in Sarah's life. During these questionings, Hare deviates from the detective fiction convention as he uses "longer passages and monologues, often delivered to the reader/audience, [which] serve as a commentary on morality and advance a variety of perspectives" (Oliva 38). His main aim is to lay bare how the capitalistic system always wins and how it is always on stage while idealistic characters like Sarah play the role of "absentee."

*Teeth 'n' Smiles* was first produced at the Royal Court Theatre in 1975 and directed by the playwright himself. It has a historical setting by which the rock 'n' roll and the

youth culture in the 1960s is illustrated. Rather than the energy and optimism that is expected from the words "rock" and "youth," the play presents the disillusionment of a rock band's members, particularly that of its singer Maggie. While rock seems to be, for the people outside it, "exciting and authentic," what its members search by means of rock is "escape through adulation, drugs, and alcohol" along with the music (Fitzpatrick 47). The play starts with the expected concert of the group at Jesus College Ball at Cambridge University and ends with Maggie's arrestment for carrying drugs. Although she is innocent, she wants to go to the prison and to suffer in order to dispose of the sense of futility in her life. For Hare, "*Teeth 'n' Smiles* is about the fag-end of idealism. It's about utopianism when it turned sour" (Interview 221).

In spite of Hare's consistent illustration of the political and social atmosphere of the times he lives in, the way he illustrates changes in time. At the beginning of his dramatic career, specifically between 1968 and 1975, "Hare's plays show a more overt concern for society's morals and for the inequalities of class" (Oliva, "David Hare" 212-213). In the plays *Slag*, *Lay By*, *The Great Exhibition*, *Knuckle*, and partly in *Brassneck*, the responsible one for the miseries of the characters is "the system" since Hare, at those times, was reflecting his disillusionment with the post-war Labour government, that of Harold Wilson (213). However, starting "[w]ith *Teeth 'n' Smiles* the political critique changes focus" because in the plays after *Teeth 'n' Smiles*, the individual characters are also made responsible "for the[ir own] ineffectiveness and unhappiness" (213). Hare represents his political critique by means of the private lives of the characters because he is aware of the fact "that private existence is not separate from, but profoundly influenced by, public life" (Rabey 167). Correspondingly, his plays after *Teeth 'n' Smiles* tend to pinpoint the fact "that the personal is political" (167).

One of the plays in which Hare deals with the politics through the private lives is *Plenty* (1978), Hare's first play produced at Britain's National Theatre. Hare's career which started in the late 1960s in the fringe theatre and which continued at the Royal Court Theatre and the West End stages reached its peak with this play since *Plenty*, as his fist play at the National Theatre "took him to the heart of the theatrical establishment" (Boon, *About Hare* 30). In *Plenty*, the action takes place in twelve scenes which are put

one after another not chronologically but in an order that starts in medias res and then continues by presenting bits and pieces of events. The protagonist Susan Traherne experiences throughout these scenes the events that took place at different times during and after the World War II, all of which reveal a lot about her deteriorating psychology. The period of the time reflected in the play ranges from 1943 to 1962, throughout which Susan undergoes various hardships not only on the battleground but also within the capitalistic business and political world of post-war Britain. *Plenty*, like *Teeth 'n' Smiles* and like many of Hare's early plays, depicts the disillusionment of the protagonist with the state of post-war Britain as it is "one of the sharpest critiques of postwar Britain" (L. Taylor 49). Although "overcoming death and winning the war, fills [Susan] and, by implication, all the English, with a hope," this hope "is doomed to disappointment" as seen in the events that take place after the war like the Suez crisis (Fitzpatrick 56).

In the same year Hare wrote *Plenty*, in 1978, Hare also joined in a collaborative work, *Deeds*, together with Howard Brenton, Trevor Griffiths and Ken Campbell. The play was first produced at Nottingham Playhouse under the direction of Richard Eyre. *Deeds* dramatises how a working-class protagonist, Ken Deed, strives to find out the reason for his baby's death and then to express his grief, in an anarchic manner, to a number of authoritative people including MPs. By means of Ken's story, the playwrights make a criticism of a number of institutions like hospitals, marketing industry and Parliament.

As seen in the examples above, Hare, who started writing plays as a necessity in the late 1960s, had his plays performed in various theatrical venues through the 1970s, at the end of which he became an established political playwright in the mainstream. Hence, in order to trace Hare's fringe roots, it is beneficial to deal with a play from the 1970s which is staged by a fringe company and which carries fringe attributes in terms of themes, techniques and production process. *Fanshen* (1975) stands out as a distinctive play of Hare's in the 1970s with its explicit presentation of social revolution, its unambiguous use of epic techniques and its production as a result of the workshops conducted by a fringe theatre company. In the first chapter of this study, *Fanshen* will

be analysed with its features reflecting Hare's approach to political drama with reference to the politics and political drama of the 1970s.

In the 1980s, political drama was heavily affected by Margaret Thatcher's government and her politics that regarded economic gain as the basic determining factor in different fields of life. The style and the content of theatre changed in that musicals and theatrical practices which entertained, which provided relief, and which produced money were more in the foreground at the commercial and the national theatres. Putting aside a few political plays, political drama in general was unable, during the first half of the Thatcherite rule, to respond to the politics of the time which was individualistic and competitive. Hare, in this period, wrote plays which were not directly related to British politics and which were all set outside Britain: *A Map of the World* (1982), *The Bay at Nice* (1986), and *Wrecked Eggs* (1986).

*A Map of the World* was first performed in 1982 at the Adelaide Theatre Festival and then staged at the Sydney Opera House. It was transferred to London and produced at the National Theatre in 1983. The setting of the play is far from Britain, Bombay, where a UNESCO conference will be held in 1976 on poverty in the third world countries. It is later understood that this is a film version of Victor Mehta's novel and the play continues with the rehearsals of this film along with real-life events and discussions among the characters. The discussions between British reporter Stephen and Indian-born novelist Mehta take place on the dichotomies between old and young cultures, leftist and rightist politics as well as fictional and real-life events. However, it is a woman, American Peggy, who initiates the debates between these men since they fight to win her affection. In the play, "Mehta and Stephen are like knights in a medieval joust and – as his name guarantees him – Mehta is the Victor" (Homden 116). Hare also, by dealing with the third world issues, "theatricalizes politics with a global focus" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 96) and, at the same time, reveals his discontent with the right-wing politics in Britain and his interest in the possibility of a utopia (Homden 119).

*The Bay at Nice* and *Wrecked Eggs* were produced as "a double bill" in the Cottlestoe Theatre and directed by the playwright himself in 1986 (Hare, Introduction xi). The aim of the playwright in producing the plays as "a double bill" was "to offer a kind of cold war contrast" by setting one of them in Soviet Russia, *The Bay at Nice*, and the other one in the USA, *Wrecked Eggs* (xi). In *The Bay at Nice*, Valentina Nrovka is portrayed as a responsible woman who sacrifices her art, her youth and her bohemian comfort in Paris to live in her native country. She once studied art under the supervision of Matisse in Paris, another Russian who became an expatriate and whose painting Valentina is asked to identify at the beginning of the play. Valentina is not only a responsible citizen who does not desert her country for good but also a responsible mother who bears with her daughter Sophia's self-centered demands, especially divorce. *The Bay at Nice*, along with Valentina's story, reveals in the background how the Soviet Russia was in the 1920s referring to issues like socialist rule, the Party and emigration to France. On the other hand, *Wrecked Eggs* deals with "spoilt Americans" who have no sense of responsibility either towards their country or towards the future generation (xi). Loelia and Robbie commemorate their divorce with a party which only Grace attends not out of a sense of friendship but because she wants to recover psychologically from her recent abortion. Loelia and Grace talk about their abortions and reveal how they do not want to attach themselves to one final relationship. In terms of attachment to one's native country, although Robbie seems to be a typical American who is hardworking and ambitious to earn money in spite of hardships, he does not have a distinctive sense of belonging to his country. By means of *Wrecked Eggs*, Hare discloses his critical approach towards American society in that all social relations in America are dominated by capitalism.

In the second half of the 1980s, political playwrights stood against the centrality of economic gain in various institutions and mostly reflected its demolishing effects on personal lives. Only in the second half of the decade was Hare able to produce plays directly dealing with Thatcherite politics and its effects on individuals as can be seen in his collaborative work with Howard Brenton *Pravda* (1985) and *The Secret Rapture* (1988). In thematic terms, "investigation of betrayal, revolution, propaganda and corruption" which were dominant in Hare's plays of the 1970s "gave way to romantic

love, to death, to faith and to art itself" in his plays of the 1980s (Homden 5). He tended to deal less with the problems of class and society than those related to concepts such as civilisation, "identity and morality" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing the Politics* 138). The primary reason for his focusing on universal values in the 1980s was apparently the fact that the Welfare State and its principles were openly attacked and completely abandoned not to be revived again. Hare also "explicitly disowned the methods of the theatre of the Left" in the 1980s (Homden 4) and staged all his plays in mainstream theatres.

*Pravda* (1985), Hare's collaborative work with Howard Brenton, was first put on stage at the National Theatre. The play examines the media industry and journalism in Thatcherite Britain, in which the media became a tool of the government and a constituent of the capitalistic system. In *Pravda*, "capitalistic evil" is presented in a "cartoon[-like]" manner and the "characters are [shown as] grotesque caricatures" (Fitzpatrick 31). In the play, Lamber Le Roux represents the capitalistic hunger and he is "loosely modeled on the Australian media tycoon Rupert Murdoch" (30). In opposition to Le Roux, Andrew May is created as an idealist journalist but his idealism has to yield at the end to Le Roux's crushing power. What makes capitalism strong is shown in the play to be the support of the government which prioritises the free-market economy and individual enterprise at the expense of the public in general. Since the state and the media support each other, it is not surprising that Le Roux is portrayed as a type who "would win everything," which makes the play "true to life" (Brenton 46).

*The Secret Rapture* (1988) was Hare's first and only stage play he wrote on his own in the 1980s which directly deals with the state of Britain under Thatcherite rule. It not only examines Thatcherite politics critically but also analyses their influence on individuals. Different from the focus on the community in *Fanshen*, *The Secret Rapture* concentrates on the private life of its protagonist disclosing the politics in the background. The play was produced as a distinctive play of Hare's in the 1980s with its traces of tragedy and the idea of morality in a world of competition. *The Secret Rapture* will be analysed in the second chapter with its representative features of Hare's style in

his political plays of the 1980s, with reference to the politics and political drama of the 1980s.

During the 1990s, theatre was caught in between its own dissident character and the need to survive in spite of the economic and political hardships in the post-Thatcherite world. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall, British leftist intelligentsia had no longer any belief in state socialism or in any systematic value system. In thematic and technical terms, what characterised the plays of the period was the increasing lack of belief in grand narratives, the strivings to survive in the post-Thatcherite times as well as the confrontations and the wars that took place among various states around the world. In the 1990s, Hare was playwriting still with leftist consciousness and his disillusionment with institutions at the beginning of his career continued in the 1990s. But, for the first time, by means of his trilogy, *Racing Demo*n (1990), *Murmuring Judges* (1991), and *The Absence of War* (1993), Hare wrote directly on British institutions. While reflecting upon the institutions, Hare is observed to be optimistic and "[b]etween the innate conservatism of the institution and the extremity of those wishing to reform it, [he] charts a course towards the depths of romantic possibility" (Wu 111). As opposed to many other leftist writers and thinkers, he believed that institutions should be preserved though with necessary reformations. This point is considered to be a departure in his career because, for the first time, he attempted to promote "the common good" supplied by the institutions (Hare, *Asking Around* 8). However, Hare retained his leftist perspective while handling the institutions overloaded by rightist principles and advocated the idea that the institutions should be reformed, and then preserved since they serve the common good of the public.

Hare's trilogy is observed to be a critical account of the principal institutions in Britain, the church, the court, and the political parties. *Racing Demon*, the first play in Hare's trilogy, scrutinises both the Church of England and the people who have different kinds of attitudes towards faith and religion. *Racing Demon* principally criticises that the church is treated as a commodity in commercial Britain under the Conservative influence in that the primary aim of the priests is proclaimed to be increasing the number of the church-goers with the help of certain campaigns and advertisements.

*Murmuring Judges*, the second piece in the trilogy, lays bare the troubles and the vices that afflict the institutions of law and the police force as well as the prisons. These three establishments are examined separately and in relation to each other indicating how a specific problem in an institution affects the operation in the other one. Moreover, the restrictive and oppressive rules adopted by these institutions as well as the pressure of the Conservative government on them is scrutinised scrupulously and the hard conditions under which the professionals have to work are exposed.

The last play of the trilogy, *The Absence of War* was written with the aim of encompassing many of the ideas proposed in the previous two. The play reveals Labour Party's having lost touch with its roots and criticises it taking into account "the common good" of all the people and institutions in Britain. Besides, rather than being particularly national, *The Absence of War* gives more room to the "perennial and universal questions about the relationship between the governors and the governed, the ethics of politicking, the integrity of belief, and more" (Glenn 235). *The Absence of War* appears as a distinctive play in Hare's career in the 1990s and it will be examined in the third chapter with its illustration not only of Hare's style in the 1990s but also of the post-Thatcherite period by providing an outlook for the future of the politics in Britain particularly that of Labour Party.

In conclusion, by analysing *Fanshen*, *The Secret Rapture* and *The Absence of War*, this study intends to draw attention to the three phases that Hare's political drama underwent. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s, under different political and social conditions, the way Hare treated his political material changed. That is why, the political and social background information is given at the beginning of each chapter of this study. To inform the readers about what happened in British politics before analysing a particular play prepares them for the political issues Hare handles in that play. Moreover, the background provided in relation to the theatre of the particular decade in each chapter helps to reflect upon Hare's place among his contemporaries. This study aims to demonstrate the three specific periods of Hare's career in political drama by means of three plays which are selected according to the extent they illustrate the distinctive attributes of Hare's political drama in these three decades. The theatres

where these plays were produced help to show Hare's transference from the fringe to the mainstream. The technical analysis of the plays display the various techniques Hare made use of to convey his political message ranging from epic theatre techniques to cinematographic devices. The analysis of the themes in these plays by contextualising them within the political and social atmosphere of the decades demonstrate Hare's changing attitudes towards the politics of his time and towards political drama as he reflects in his plays.

# CHAPTER 1

# DAVID HARE'S POLITICAL DRAMA IN THE 1970S: REFLECTION OF BRITISH POLITICS THROUGH A SOCIALIST REVOLUTION AS OBSERVED IN *FANSHEN*

*"Agitators are a set of interfering, meddling people, who come down to some perfectly contented class of the community, and sow the seeds of discontent amongst them. That is the reason why agitators are so absolutely necessary. Without them, in our complete state, there would be no advance towards civilization."*
(Oscar Wilde, "Soul of Man under Socialism" 8-9)

"The theatre could not remain aloof from the stresses of the time," says Oscar G. Brockett in his *History of the Theatre* (573). He draws attention to the close relation between the theatre of a society and the events as well as the changes experienced in the social and political domains of that society. The 1970s of Britain, the primary force that affected the 1970s' British theatre, took form under Conservative and Labour Party governments interchangeably, especially in terms of their policies related to the economy, Northern Ireland, and women's rights together with other social issues. These major issues were portrayed by British political dramatists and particularly by David Hare in their plays. The aim of this chapter is to manifest how David Hare's playwriting is influenced and shaped by the political conflicts and social developments of the decade and to determine his place among his contemporaries in terms of reflecting their times. Accordingly, the chapter intends to explore the issues of the economy, women's rights and the conflicts between different factions as seen in *Fanshen* (1975). The representation of a socialist revolution in the play helps to illustrate the dreams of the 1968 generation about a political change towards socialism. This play also allows one to analyse Hare's experience in a fringe company and experimentation with epic theatre techniques in his early career.

## 1.1. The Social and Political Context of the 1970s

The UK had a Conservative government with the Prime Minister Edward Heath between 1970-1974 and a Labour government between 1974-1979 with the Prime Ministers Harold Wilson and James Callaghan. The governments of both the parties

were all haunted by the worsening economy and the industrial unrest which were rooted in the miners' strikes and the conflicts experienced with the unions. The confrontation of the government with the miners basically originated from the Industrial Relations Act, which was introduced by Edward Heath government in 1971 in order "to control escalating wage demands and check unofficial strikes" of the unions (Pugh 288-289). Nevertheless, the trade unions refused to obey the requirements of the law and "the TUC [Trade Unions Congress] threatened to expel any union that registered under the new Act" (289). Even if the workers seemed to be complying with the Act, their decision was in favour of strike. As a result, in 1972, workers in the industries of electricity, in mines and partly in railways went on strike and caused the loss of "no fewer than 23 million working days," which was the highest number since 1926 (289). These strikes affected not only the economy but also the social life of the country (Harper 6). In addition to the strikes, the politics of the Arab countries to cut the oil supplies caused the country to experience "a severe international energy crisis" (Marwick, *British Society* 153). As a result, the Conservative government in 1974 announced a "State of Emergency," according to which the government embraced "the three-day working week" and conducted "regular power cuts" (Harper 6). As a result, the principal industries worked only for three days a week out of five working days and the television broadcasts stopped after 10.30 every night (6).

After coming to power, the Labour Harold Wilson government repealed the Industrial Relations Act, which caused a lot of controversy. Accordingly, they agreed to the unions' "demands for higher wages" (Harper 6); however, this time, together with the wages, the inflation also rose and the government needed to borrow from I.M.F. (International Monetary Fund) in 1976 (6). Following Harold Wilson's resignation in 1976, James Callaghan became the new Prime Minister of the Labour government, whose period was also affected by economic problems and relations with the unions. In 1978, it was announced, as an economic precaution, that the highest wage increase would be only 5 per cent (Pugh 298). This rate was considered to be "unnecessarily tight" by the unions and they supposed that this decision of the government was transitory and the wages would be increased soon (298). But, the unions were frustrated with their expectations and they started new strikes, particularly in the public sector

(298). The winter in which these problems were experienced was called the "'winter of discontent'" and it brought the end of the Labour government "because it destroyed their claim to be competent to handle the unions" (298). It also gave birth to a new age with a Conservative rule under Margaret Thatcher's administration, which would continue for eleven years.

Another important issue that had a significant impact on the 1970s' political and social life of Britain was the civil war in Northern Ireland. It had repercussions in Britain as observed in the confrontation of the Irish Republican Army with the British troops on Bloody Sunday in 1972 as well as in IRA's bombing London in 1977. These events caused the whole period to be permeated by violence and anarchy. The longstanding dispute between the Unionist Protestants and the Republican Catholics continued in the 20th century. The administration of Ulster was conducted "by the Unionist-Protestant majority in the Stormont Parliament [since the 1920s]" while "the Catholics who lived in the province suffered severe discrimination, particularly in housing and employment" (Pugh 291). The clash between these two groups deteriorated through the decades and in the 1950s, the Catholics started to sympathise with the IRA (291). IRA is in fact "a Catholic organization whose aim is to achieve a united Ireland" (Harper 6). In the 1960s, the Catholics started a new campaign against the rule of the British in Northern Ireland (Pugh 291-292). During this campaign, the Catholics were confronted by the police force and, by and by, the violence increased between the policemen and the protesters; therefore, the British government sent Northern Ireland troops to take over the control (Harper 6; Pugh 292) but

> in time the violence of the campaign began to be turned upon the troops, and in 1971 the first British soldier was killed in Northern Ireland. On 30 January 1972 a demonstration that had been pronounced illegal resulted in the death of thirteen people at the hands of the troops in Londonderry. 'Bloody Sunday', as the incident became known, was a fatal error by the authorities because it completed the alienation of the Catholics. (292)

As a response to this event, "[i]n March 1972, the Stormont Parliament is suspended and Direct Rule from Westminster is imposed" by the British government (Megson 25). Although it was intended to prevent the problems from deterioration, the clash between the two groups continued and "1,100 people died between 1969 and 1974 alone" (Pugh

292) while throughout "the 1970s 2000 lives were lost . . ., over 60 of them in mainland Britain" (Harper 6). The reason for the deaths in Britain was the result of the IRA's new strategy, which was to introduce terror to Britain as a revenge for the Bloody Sunday (Megson 25). In accordance with this new strategy, "seven IRA bombs exploded in London in January 1977," as a result of which "violence on the mainland became a regular feature of British life" in the 1970s (Billington, *State of the Nation* 242).

In the 1970s, along with these instances of violence, anarchy and unease, there were also some improvements in social life, especially for women. The Women's Liberation Movement which came into being in the late 1960s was a kind of "hopeful sign for social change in the post-war era" especially according to the leftist intelligentsia (Perrigo 124). The origins of the movement go back to small groups of women from different places of Britain who came together with the aim of "explor[ing] their experiences of being female in [British] society" (133). The entire decade of the 1970s saw the organisation of various "feminist campaigns" and "national conferences" (133) as well as "the opening of many women's centres – some funded by council grants – and the staging of other events exclusively by women for women" (Harper 20). What the women aimed through these organisations was to discuss their problems which they asked to be considered in the political arena. That is why, "[o]ne of the early slogans of the Women's Liberation Movement was that 'the personal is political'" (Wandor, "The Personal" 58). By means of this slogan, what was emphasised was the fact "that there is no detail, however small and intimate, of social and individual life, which does not have a wider political meaning" (58). The first one of the women's conferences was the National Women's Liberation Conference, which was held at Ruskin College, Oxford in the year of 1970 (Megson 3-4). As for the women's centres, some of them were "[t]he first Women's Aid refuge [which] was founded in Chiswick in 1970" (Perrigo 135), "[t]he first Rape Crisis Centre [which] was opened in London in the 1970s" (135), and "the campaigning group Women Against Rape [which] was formed in 1976" (136). All these organisations were platforms where women could express their problems and their demands both from the government and from the society.

Some official and legal improvements for women had already started with the Labour government policies when they came to power in 1964. The reforms introduced by the Labour government "indicated an implicit recognition that a greater liberalization of the law on family and sexual relations was needed" (Wandor, "The Personal" 50). An act related to abortion, David Steel's Abortion Act, which passed in 1967 (Perrigo 134) and the availability of contraception methods allowed women to experience sexual intercourse for pleasure rather than for procreation (Wandor, "The Personal" 50). Moreover, the Divorce Reform Act made it easier for women to get divorced when it passed in 1969 (50). In the 1970s, there were some more improvements in relation to women's rights and social position partly because of their work and campaigns within the context of the Women's Liberation Movement. For instance, as a result of the efforts of the campaigning group Women Against Rape, the Parliament passed the Sexual Offences Act in 1976 (Perrigo 136). Some other acts passed in the Parliament to women's benefit such as the Sex Discrimination Act, the Social Security Act, the Employment Protection Act (1975), and the Domestic Violence Act (1976) (Megson 4). Women who began to take a more active part in the industrial and public sectors were more pleased with "equal pay for men and women" that was introduced by the Equal Pay Act in 1970 although it "bec[a]me a reality by the end of 1975" (Wandor, "The Personal" 50). As a supplement to this act, the Sex Discrimination Act passed with the aim of "eliminat[ing] sex discrimination in employment, education, housing and the provision of other facilities and services" (Perrigo 138). Moreover, some words in daily language were changed in order to hinder discrimination; for instance, "'Ms' began to be used instead of Miss or Mrs which revealed a women's married status" and "'chairperson' and 'spokesperson' [came to be preferred] to chairman and spokesman" (Harper 20).

## 1.2. British Political Drama of the 1970s

### 1.2.1. Issues Political Playwrights Dealt with in the 1970s

The political dramatists of the 1970s mostly dealt with the atmosphere of unease in the country which was caused by civil war and violence in Northern Ireland and in Britain

as well as economic problems; in short, they examined "the state of nation," in Michael Billington's terms. That is, the "mood of hesitation and doubt" as well as "uncertain[ty]" of the future dominated not only the 1970s' social life but also theatrical productions (Brockett 573). The political dramatists of the 1970s wrote on the violence in Northern Ireland as well as in Britain, on economic problems across the country, and on feminist issues which come to the fore as a consequence of the Women's Liberation Movement. One of the plays that directly deals with the Northern Ireland problem is *England's Ireland* (1972), written in collaboration by the political dramatists David Hare, Tony Bicât, Howard Brenton, Brian Clark, David Edgar, Francis Fuchs, and Snoo Wilson. The play "attempted to show, in 1972, how Northern Ireland had reached its current state of crisis" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 216). Howard Brenton, in *The Churchill Play* (1974), criticises how the individual rights and freedoms are "curtailed by the state" as observed in the government's "imposition of direct rule from Westminster and a policy of internment without trial" (222). In *Bingo* (1973), Edward Bond expresses the inefficiency "of art and the writer's moral impotence in the face of social cruelty" (228). As for economic problems, Caryl Churchill's *Owners* (1972) deals directly with them and foreshadows the Thatcherite economic policies. The economic and social problems of the 1970s were so influential that even the playwrights who were not considered 'political' wrote some plays dealing with the political subject matters of their contemporary society. While Christopher Hampton, in his *The Philanthropist* (1971), criticises the academia for their indifference towards the chaos in society, Tom Stoppard writes of "the volatility of the times" in his Conservatively political play *Jumpers* (1972) (224). Besides, Alan Ayckbourn's *Absurd Person Singular* (1972), like Churchill's *Owners*, presents prevalent economic problems and prophesises the new problems that will be introduced with the Thatcherite rule (224).

As for the issues related to women incited by the Women's Liberation Movement, these issues were considered to be 'political' since 'personal is political' and they were represented on stages of political theatre. However, feminist matters came to be handled mostly by the newly emerging women's theatre groups and feminist playwrights. According to Michelene Wandor, women could not find a place in men's writing even in political drama:

> Women have rarely been the subjects of drama, either in their own right or in their relations with men. This has also been as true for earlier movements of political theatre. Notions of the working class have been strongly male-defined, and agitational theatre has concentrated on struggles engaged in by men, with the women either being converted to the men's struggle or virtually absent from the political arena altogether. ("The Personal" 49)

That is why, women decided to establish their own theatre groups and companies in order to give voice to women's concerns and problems. The first Women's Theatre Festival was held in 1973 by the Women's Theatre Group at the Almost Free Theatre, whose artistic director was Ed Berman (Wandor, *Carry On* 47). The organisers of this festival later continued their activities under two names, the Women's Company (48) and the Women's Theatre Group (51). One of the prominent feminist playwrights of the decade is Caryl Churchill, whose *Vinegar Tom* (1976) was put on stage by the feminist theatre company Monstrous Regiment and sheds light on the oppression of women by providing a historical perspective (Megson 88). Olwen Wymark is another forerunning feminist dramatist who "explored female subjectivity in plays such as *Find Me* (1977) and *Loved* (1978) (52). Pam Gems, in her play *Queen Christina* (1977), wrote a biographical story by "plac[ing] women's experience centre stage" while Michelene Wandor created, in feminist tradition, a "fascinating adaptation of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's verse novel *Aurora Leigh* (1979)" (52).

Other than the major events and developments, political dramatists also referred, in the background of their plays, to some other topical events that happened in the Britain of their times. David Edgar's *State of Emergency* (1972), for instance, is "a chronicle play on the year of 1972 showing the major events of that twelve months" (Itzin 142). Caryl Churchill's *Owners* (1972) deals with Labour Party's failure in housing policy in the background. Howard Brenton's *Magnificence* (1973) not only criticises different institutions such as the political parties, the police force, and the judicial system but also refers to the Angry Brigade as a background event. Other than the present state of Britain, political dramatists also provide the reader/audience with a panoramic view of the country since the World War II as observed in David Edgar's *Destiny* (1976) and *The Dunkirk Spirit* (1974) as well as in David Hare and Howard Brenton's collaborative work *Brassneck* (1973) and Hare's *Plenty* (1978). Political playwrights are also critical

both of the 'fascist' rules as seen in Peter Barnes's *Laughter* (1978) and of the Labour Party governments and politics in Britain as observed in Howard Barker's *That Good Between Us* (1977) and in David Hare's *The Great Exhibition* (1972).

Hare in the 1970s dealt, implicitly or explicitly, with the issues that influenced the 1970s' political and social life, namely, violence in Northern Ireland, economic problems and matters related to women. As mentioned above, he participated in the collaborative work that treats the problems in Northern Ireland, *England's Ireland*. He undermines the superiority of material gain in the capitalistic world in *Knuckle* and in *Fanshen* he indirectly criticises British politics by representing the land reform in China. Hare also created women protagonists to illustrate the contribution of women to the social and political changes not only in the 1970s but also in the previous decades. While his *Teeth 'n' Smiles* reflects both the ideals and the frustrations of the 1960s' youth, *Plenty* explores the role of women during World War II and in the business and political worlds after the war. He refers to the rights that women recently achieved such as the right to divorce in *Fanshen*. Although *Slag* has a critical approach towards feminism and feminists, Hare's treatment of women in general is not misogynistic.

### 1.2.2. Theatrical Venues Where Political Plays Were Staged in the 1970s

As seen in women's theatre, the Women's Liberation Movement affected not only the subject matters and themes of the plays but also the theatres and companies which put these plays on stage. That is, other than the subject matter of the political plays, the political and social condition of Britain played a role in the foundation (and sometimes collapse) of theatres and theatre companies, the kinds of theatres these plays were staged in and also the techniques mostly employed by the playwrights. Due to the economic problems in the Britain of the 1970s, for instance, the prices of the theatre tickets rose, which affected the number of the theatregoers especially of the fringe theatres:

> A 'value added' (or sales) tax imposed in 1972 increased ticket prices by some 10 percent, and in 1974 they were further affected when actors won an increase in their minimum weekly wage from an absurdly low $48 (which it was often charged had amounted to an indirect subsidy for producers) to $72. Other increases in

> production costs, combined with rapid inflation, served to drive ticket prices ever higher. (Brockett 592)

Therefore, in the midst of the 1970s, it was very hard for some theatres to survive financially. While some of them "were cutting back on their seasons, the sizes of casts, and overall personnel, others were turning to plays calculated to have a wider appeal, and several were threatened with complete collapse" (592). Although the Arts Council subsidies continued to increase throughout the decade even in small amounts (Bull 96), for the first time in 1975, the Arts Council grants did not increase, which directly affected the theatre (Billington, *State of the Nation* 265). In the second half of the decade, however, "Arts Council grants improved" mostly owing to Labour Party politics (243). For Billington, "the theatre is always better off under Labour than the Conservatives" since the Labour came to support artistic activities (243).

In spite of the economic difficulties, fringe and regional theatre companies flourished in the 1970s since "[t]he Arts Council was continuing to fund the building of new theatres in the regions and the arts scene was, on the whole, buoyant and creative" (Dorney 166). Fringe theatre became "abundantly lively with a number of itinerant groups – Monstrous Regiment, Foco Novo, Hull Truck and Black Theatre Co-Operative," all of which aimed "to complement metropolitan buildings such as the Bush, the Soho Poly, the Orange Tree and the Almost Free" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 242). Fringe theatre was also vibrant with the activities of such companies which targeted "highly specific audiences" and which "were committed to a particular perspective" (Bull 108) as the Women's Theatre Group in 1974, the Gay Sweatshop in 1975 and the Asian company, Tara Arts in 1977 (Billington, *State of the Nation* 265). Some of the fringe theatre groups of the 1970s were agit-prop groups like the Scottish 7:84, the English 7:84, Belts and Braces, and Monstrous Regiment (Bull 107). Although agit-prop groups in the early 1970s "[were] essentially undynamic, preaching patterns of repetition rather than change" (109), they proliferated like other fringe companies together with the political and the economic problems of the 1970s and their main concern in the productions became "the traditional class-based view of political struggle" (108).

The political dramatists who had started their careers in the fringe continued to write plays for the fringe theatre companies in the 1970s. But at the same time, the plays by most of them were also produced in the subsidised and even commercial theatres. Other than Hare's first plays written for the Portable Theatre Company and *Fanshen* he wrote after the workshops held in Joint Stock Theatre Company, most of his plays in the 1970s were produced in mainstream theatres.

### 1.2.3. Forms/Techniques Political Dramatists Used in the 1970s

Together with the fringe playwrights, what was also transferred to mainstream theatres was some of their staging techniques. Political dramatists of the 1970s made use of various techniques such as "epic, satire, social commentary, historical metaphor" in order "to analyse the state of the nation" which was characterised by constant unease in the 1970s (Billington, *State of the Nation* 282). Epic theatre techniques were widely used and preferred in the political plays of the 1970s. John Arden, who was among the previous generation of socially conscious playwrights, influenced the political dramatists in terms of using epic techniques as he was already known to be "the English disciple of Brecht" (Bull 112). For John Bull, for instance, Arden's influence is indisputable on the political play *England's Ireland*. As Bull states, it was "from this point on [that] political theatre [started to] mov[e] ever closer to versions of the epic" (113) as observed in the plays by other political dramatists like David Edgar and Edward Bond:

> Bond had already produced *Narrow Road to the Deep North* in 1969, a parable play owing much to Brecht's 'Lehrstuck'; and he followed this with a series of plays using an epic format: *Lear* (1971). *Bingo* (1973), *The Fool* (1975), *The Bundle* and *The Woman* (1978). Even David Edgar, a writer whose early work was entirely in an agit-prop vein, . . . [started to employ] surrealism and naturalism being played one against the other. (113)

Other than Bond and Edgar, Griffiths, Brenton and Hare also experimented with epic possibilities in their works of the 1970s. They made use of historical setting for the aim of "seeking in the past both a starting-point for debate and a way of reanalysing history" (115). Moreover, by writing historical drama, political dramatists – who mostly subscribed to leftist ideology – could produce "a left-wing history that would offer, in

terms of perspective and/or subject matter, an alternative to the establishment version of the past" (Peacock, *Radical Stages* 79). Griffiths is a political dramatist who makes use of history in his plays; for instance, his *Occupations* (1970) examines "the widespread factory occupations that took place throughout Italy in September 1920" (80) and his *The Party* (1973) examines the Paris events in 1968 by contrasting the ideology behind these events with that of the English intellectuals. Brenton makes use of a historical character in his *The Churchill Play* (1974) in order to explore the present state of Britain. David Edgar rewrites "*Rome and Juliet* set in Northern Ireland" in his *Death Story* (1972) while Hare employs the 1940s' Chinese setting in his Brechtian play *Fanshen* (1975) (Itzin 143). Hare also provides a panoramic view of Britain after the World War II to the 1960s in *Plenty*. As these political dramatists transferred to the mainstream venues, so did the epic features of their plays not only in playwriting but also in staging. David Hare, for instance, directed his own play *Plenty* at the National Theatre, which was an indication of the fact that epic was welcomed at the National. Moreover, mostly under the effect of epic staging techniques, minimal and less luxurious settings started to be favoured on big stages of the 1970s. For most of the directors, "[s]mall was beautiful and big was now bad. . . . there was an accelerating skepticism about large-scale theatrical institutions: something fed by the proliferation of studio spaces and independent companies" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 238).

The technique of "re-examination of history" is not only found in epic plays; it is also encountered mostly in the agit-prop plays of the 1970s (Bull 115). There can be given two important examples for the agit-prop plays dealing with history and written in "historical documentary" style (Peacock, *Radical Stages* 86). The first one is Steve Gooch's *Will Wat, If Not, Wat Will?* (1972) which is "an attempt to demystify history by telling the story of the peasant uprising of 1381 from the viewpoint of the peasants themselves" (86). The second example and "the most theatrically successful historical agit-prop play of the decade was John McGrath's *The Cheviot, The Stag and The Black, Black Oil*," which was performed in 1973 (89). It deals with "the Highland Clearances of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century" in order to criticise the contemporary British politics related to Scotland (92).

### 1.3. *Fanshen*

In the 1970s, when the alternative theatre companies flourished, one of the most important companies founded in London was the Joint Stock. It was co-founded by David Hare, Max Stafford-Clark, and David Aukin in 1974. After the collapse of Hare's first company Portable, these three figures "met among the ruins of Portable Theatre and decided that since [they] were all freelance members of the awkward squad, [they] were likely to need [their] own facility for putting on plays" (Hare, *Left-Handed* 65). The productions by this new company seemed to be a kind of "continu[ation of] the work of Portable Theatre" (Introduction i) since it aimed "to be an outlet for those who had served an arduous apprenticeship on the fringe" (Ritchie 15). After its foundation, William (Bill) Gaskill, who was "the country's best Brechtian director" also joined the Joint Stock (Billington, *State of the Nation* 238). What he may have aimed to achieve through this company was to create "an ensemble group similar to the Berliner Ensemble" (Homden 43). Hence, it can be asserted that one of the basic characteristics of the Joint Stock was its being a political theatre company. The company aimed to "produc[e] work that was politically challenging" like many other contemporary alternative companies (Shellard 150). The Joint Stock produced a number of political plays such as *The Speakers* (1974), an adaptation from Heathcote Williams's book by William Gaskill and Max Stafford-Clark (Ritchie 35); *Fanshen* (1975), an adaptation from William Hinton's book by David Hare; *Yesterday's News* (1976), a production by the Company and Jeremy Seabrook (47); *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976) and *Cloud Nine* (1978), plays by Caryl Churchill (49, 67).

But, at the same time, the Joint Stock, just like the Portable, "[wa]s not a hard-line political group. It [wa]s mobile, flexible and apparently more concerned with depicting society than with changing it" (Billington, "Savoring" 8). Moreover, it had not only political but also artistic concerns in its productions because the Joint Stock was basically founded as "a response not to the inertia of the main theatrical institutions, but to the aesthetic limitations of the supposed alternatives" (Homden 43). Another distinctive feature of the Joint Stock compared to other alternative companies was its working method which required "the involvement of writers in collaborative

preparatory work with actors" (Shellard 150). The actors, the directors, and the playwrights came together when they had material which would determine the nature of the play such as a book to adapt from. They worked in workshops, they made research related to their material, and then "let the writer develop the resulting ideas" in a certain period of time before the rehearsals (Billington, "Savoring" 8). Since the text of the play was produced in collaboration, the text became "an end-product rather than a starting point," which was the "chief innovation" of the company (8).

There were two reasons lying behind the democratic working methods of the Joint Stock. One was the atmosphere that came into being after 1968, in which all the "authority figures were suspect" and according to which "the theatre began to hunger for a semblance of working democracy" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 239). The second reason was the belief among some directors including Max Stafford-Clark and William Gaskill "that writers always spoil things" as they are "tied to one view of the world – their own – [while] in experimental work actors and directors must feel free" (Hare, *Left-Handed* 67). Hence, at the Joint Stock, playwrights, directors, and actors worked in close co-operation with each other to produce plays while, at the same time, "[d]irectorial taste remained a dominant factor" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 267). This new working method may not have "revolutionise[d] British theatre" (267) or provided any "major shift in British theatre practice towards the democratic workshop approach" (Homden 47). However, it is an undeniable fact that "it did open up a different way of working that enriched political theatre" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 267).

*Fanshen* (1975), David Hare's 'fringe' play, was one of the most important productions of the Joint Stock Company; it was "the show which above all established Joint Stock's identity" as a company with political concerns and with the workshop method in advance of the performance (Ritchie 12). The play was adapted from William Hinton's history book with the same title, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (1966). The idea of the play came from Pauline Melville, an actress (Hare, Interview 219). After reading William Hinton's *Fanshen*, she brought the book to Gaskill and said that the Joint Stock would create an interesting adaptation out of it

(Introduction ii). Probably to represent the theme related to democracy in the book, Gaskill considered arranging the workshop of the company "as an exercise in democracy" (Ritchie 17). In accordance with this idea, all the actors, the directors – Stafford-Clark and Gaskill – and the playwright worked together for "five weeks [through] practical workshops, research and discussion that provided Hare with the raw material" (Boon, *About Hare* 30). Although such kind of a playwriting "was unnatural to [Hare]," he tried it because he "didn't want to be – [he has] never wanted to be – a *professional* playwright" and because he wanted to be open to such a democratic way of writing (Hare, Interview 219). The discussions in the group provided the 'raw material' for Hare and the workshop helped "to enrich and inform the play" but this process could not supply "structure or dialogue" for the play (Introduction iii). Moreover, as it was a hard work for a group to adapt a book of about seven hundred pages long, a playwright's individual struggle was required (*Left-Handed* 67). Hence, Hare, as a result of his individual work for four months, produced "a play entirely of [his] own" (Interview 219). Then, he also spent some time with Hinton and determined on what to add and what to omit by taking into consideration Hinton's suggestions (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 53). Although, at first, Hinton was not interested in the play, he demanded certain changes after seeing the premiere (Homden 51). Hare's meetings and correspondence with Hinton contributed to the "dialectic[al]" character of the play since both the authors' views appeared in the final text (51).

In relation to the writing process of the play, David Hare claims that "[he] was very little influenced by any particular discovery in the workshop, but [he] was crucially affected by its spirit" (Hare, *Left-Handed* 68). In fact, it is possible to observe the 'spirit' of the workshop, which was maintained in a democratic way, reflected in the play and to see one of the main themes of the play, which is about everyone's having a voice in administration, practiced in the workshop. In other words, during the production process, "the political subject matter" of the play and "the moral instincts of the company" were allowed to work together as well as to support and to interact with each other (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 53). Moreover, the actors and the directors tried to adapt their working process to the revolution process experienced in the play: "Actors directed, directors acted, all were entitled to question and criticise; . . . status

and authority broken down and analysed. . . . The Long Bow villagers had improved their existence. Joint Stock would do the same" (Ritchie 17). Besides, as the peasants in the play introduce themselves by means of their possessions since their share from the distribution is determined according to how much they already have, the actors and the directors, during the rehearsals of the play, came together and classified themselves according to their incomes. Moreover, they did not neglect self-criticism whenever they met, which is one of the main themes in the play in relation to the leaders. (Hare, "David Hare & Max Stafford-Clark" 54; Homden 43; Reinelt, "*Fanshen*" 132). By practising in the company what the peasants did in the play, the members of the company allowed the major themes of the play to come to life among themselves, too.

*Fanshen*, after a production process of seven months, was first performed in Sheffield at the Crucible Studio Theatre on 10th of March in 1975 (Ritchie 45); then in London at the ICA on 21st of April and at Hampstead Theatre Club on 12th of August in 1975 (Page and Julian 4). As for the American production, *Fanshen* was put on stage in Milwaukee Repertory Theatre in the season of 1975-1976 while its premiere took place at the Soho Repertory Theatre during the 1982-1983 season (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 52). When the theatres the play is performed in are taken into consideration, it can be argued that "[u]nlike many of Hare's other plays, *Fanshen* [was] often produced by regional theatres on both sides of the Atlantic" (52).

Before closely analysing the play's themes and techniques, it is of vital importance to explain what the word "fanshen" means as well as to introduce Hinton's *Fanshen* and Hare's play *Fanshen*. "Fanshen" is a word coined during the revolution in China, which Hare and Hinton explain with its different meanings and associations in the introductory parts of their works. Although its first meaning is "'to turn the body' or 'to turn over,'" it has, for the "landless and land-poor peasants," such meanings as "to stand up, to throw off the landlord yoke, to gain land, stock, implements and houses" (Hare, *Fanshen* 5;1; Hinton vii). Furthermore, for the people who have experienced the revolution in the Long Bow village in China, as represented in Hare's and Hinton's *Fanshen*, it comes to mean "to enter a new world" (5;1; vii). In spite of the verbal form of the word in its origin, in the play it is used both as a noun and as a verb but with the

same meaning. This study, too, will use both of the forms interchangeably and to mean revolution or to bring out revolution.

Hinton's book is based on his observations during his visit to "the village of Long Bow, Lucheng County, Shansi Province, China, during the spring and summer of 1948" (Hinton ix). He was a tractor technician living in America and he went to China in order "to help in the comprehensive land reforms" (Gindin 165). The land reforms in China took place between 1945 and 1949, during which "China was being systematically transformed into a Communist state" (Peacock, *Radical Stages* 102-103). When Hinton went to Long Bow, the land reforms in the village had already started two years ago and "w[ere] under investigation by a work team dispatched jointly by the People's Government and the Communist Party Committee of Lucheng County" (Hinton ix). Hinton joined this work team in order to observe what was happening between the group members and the peasants. It is not only the land Hinton talks about in his book; he deals with a number of issues related to the village as well, such as "politics, medicine, law, military strategy, and agriculture" (Gindin 165).

"*Fanshen* is an accurate historical record of what once happened in one village" says Hare at the very beginning of his play (*Fanshen* 5;1). Hare adapts in this play only one part of William Hinton's book and dramatises how the peasants in this village, Long Bow, "situated four hundred miles south-west of Peking" will bring out a revolution and "buil[d] a new world" for themselves (Hare, *Fanshen* 5;1; Hinton vii). The relevance of a revolutionary movement in China to the politics in Britain is a controversial issue. Hinton believes that what happens in China during the revolutionary period concerns the whole world and that "[w]ithout understanding the land question one cannot understand the Revolution in China, and without understanding the Revolution in China one cannot understand today's world" (xii). However, he also asserts that the influence of this revolution would be mostly on "those countries where agricultural production is a main source of wealth – and the relation between owners and producers a main source of social conflict" (xiii). Hence, to Britain, which is a "centralized and politically and culturally top-heavy" country, the revolution model from China and "a model for change based on redistribution of land [should be] of marginal relevance" (Donesky

48). Moreover, according to Finlay Donesky, China could not be influential on the world or on European politics in terms of revolutionary consciousness since it closed itself to the world in the later decades. Hence, Donesky posits that what encouraged Hare to write on China "was the remoteness of the revolutionary period in China from European consciousness," which, for Hare, "could be bracketed off from subsequent historical developments and presented as a plausible model of change" (47). In *Fanshen*, by making use of a historical event in a different part of the world, "Hare took on the role of an alternative historian by default" (Homden 44). Through the revolution represented in *Fanshen*, he produced an alternative "left-wing history" which is "applicable to the social and political concerns of contemporary Britain" (Peacock, *Radical Stages* 79). Hare, in fact, had already tried his hand in representing "the apparent socialist revolution in Britain" with his collaborative work *Brassneck* but it "had merely hastened society along the old grooves" (Homden 46). Hence, he needed to find a model for revolution in a 'remote' corner of the world and in a 'remote' time period of the history (46).

Hare, himself, reveals why he decided to write *Fanshen*: he wanted "to write about a society and to cover a period of time in which one felt that people's lives were being materially and spiritually improved" ("Commanding" 119). Moreover, after getting "sick to death with writing about England," what he wished for was "to write a positive work using positive material" (119). Besides, "[i]n the mid-1970s, Hare shifted his attention from the world of Britain and Europe to that of Asia, in a conscious attempt to enlarge his social focus" (Gindin 165). Hence, he did not give up writing for the west and he "deliberately" presented a positive portrait of a society in *Fanshen* as a model of change not only for Britain but also for Europe (Hare, "Commanding" 119). Many of the issues which are examined in the play in relation to the land politics of an agricultural society are also existent in European and British politics such as "political leadership" (119), the imbalance between the poor and the rich, the corrupt institutions and leaders, "justice," "hearings on agricultural and economic issues," and "inquiries that demanded self-reformation" (Gindin 165). Moreover, both in the text of the play and during the performance, it is observed that "the play's characters speak, and swear, not in a form of Anglo-Chinese dialect but in short and direct English phrases," which

implies that the play is not a simple historical "documentary" but it directly addresses the British society (Peacock, *Radical Stages* 103).

*Fanshen* gives an account of the land reform achieved with the initiation of the Communist Party members and with the undisputable contribution of the peasants in China in the years between 1945 and 1949 (Peacock, *Radical Stages* 102). *Fanshen* lays bare many changes that happened in people's lives in Long Bow but in general we see the events in the play as given in two periods in which people experience two kinds of fanshen. In the first period of fanshen, the reader/audience is given the primary changes that occur in Long Bow with the overthrow of the feudal system. And then in the second period of fanshen, the aftermath of the revolution is given when this time the corrupt cadres are to be fought against, a period that emphasises the need to struggle for more reformations. The main argument maintained throughout the play is that struggling for more freedom and towards a more civilised society should never stop because corruption never ends. This basic idea is repeatedly strengthened by means of the epic techniques and the cyclical course of the play. This is because of the fact that "Hare lets the [reader/]audience 'know' through the structure of the text" and makes the "[t]hematic issues" to be "manifested in the structure" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 53). As the main idea and the other themes of the play are inseparable from the techniques, as all of them complement each other, this chapter will introduce and analyse the technical and thematic concerns of the play in relation to each other. During the close analysis of the themes and the techniques, this study will also point out the political implications the playwright underlines through them.

*Fanshen*, both in technical and in thematic terms, is known to be Hare's "most Brechtian" play although Hare makes his own contributions to epic and reveals his own political concerns specifically related to Britain in the play (Boon, *About Hare* 5). Nevertheless, in his interview with Georg Gaston, Hare responds to this claim saying "[n]o" (219). Hare does not accept the Brechtian character of his play claiming "that Brecht was more interested in describing the rottenness of the old society than he was in showing the beauty of the new" and that he himself in *Fanshen* has drawn an optimistic portrait of a newly established society (Hare, Interview 219). However, Hare's ideas can

be “contradict[ed]” (219) as will be seen in the analysis of his play and as Brecht does not represent pure rottenness or violence in his plays. For instance, “*Caucasian Chalk Circle* does not show the violence in prerevolutionary Russia, nor does *Mother Courage* portray the carnage of the Thirty Years’ War. Brechtian narratives always begin with the social condition to be examined,” just as Hare’s narrative does in *Fanshen* (Reinelt, *After Brecht* 116-117). Moreover, in a theatre company which makes use of Brechtian aesthetics and which employs a working method similar to that of Brecht’s Berliner Ensemble, it is almost impossible for its playwright to avoid Brecht (Boon, *About Hare* 5). What Hare achieves in *Fanshen* is truly his own “unique” style: still, it is “related to the Brechtian project, intentionally or not” (Reinelt, “*Fanshen*” 127). Although Hare claims that neither his play nor his style is Brechtian, he, as a political dramatist, borrows a lot from Brechtian aesthetics and writes a play with a number of characteristics of Brecht’s epic theatre. Therefore, this study will emphasise the Brechtian characteristics of the play while analysing the themes and the techniques.

*Fanshen* comprises of two acts with seven sections in Act I and five sections in Act II, in which the sections are also divided into small parts. In the division of the two acts, what is considered is not the two periods of fanshen. The second period of fanshen has already started in Act I with the introduction of the new leaders. However, the questioning part of the corrupt cadres is left for the beginning of Act II just as the feudal lords are questioned at the beginning of Act I, which allows the starting points of the two acts to correlate with each other. The sections in the play function as episodes in Brecht’s epic theatre, “in that no effort is made to relate one scene to another” and between the scenes, the “[t]ransitions are fluid but specific” (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 54). Both the sections and the parts mostly “ha[ve] a central action that illustrates some new lesson or event central to the struggle to fanshen in Long Bow” (Reinelt, *After Brecht* 116) and these actions are generally summarised in the slogans. Hence, it can be stated that each one of the scenes in *Fanshen* have “gestic” character just like the scenes in Brecht’s epic theatre (Homden 42). Besides the social gest, Hare makes use of another epic theatre element in *Fanshen*, historisation, just as he does in many of his plays (Reinelt, “*Fanshen*” 138). By means of a historical setting, Hare

allows "the [reader/]audience to think historically" and to approach the events intellectually (138).

In *Fanshen*, the social roles the characters represent are more in the foreground while their names or individual identities are less important than the general state and development of the society. As the play puts more emphasis on the communal sense and experience of the revolution, it leaves less place for the psychological development of the individuals. This "emphasis" of the play "on man as a social rather than a psychological creature" is another characteristic of epic theatre borrowed from Brecht (Fitzpatrick 32). Most of the characters in *Fanshen* are not developed and some are Communist Party representatives or landlords while some others are peasants. Hare categorises the characters in *Fanshen* in his early notes to the play and puts them into certain groups which demonstrate their social function such as "cadres," "work team," "officials," "struggle group," "poor peasants," and "landlords, struggle objects etc." (Hare, "Spare Notes"). The spelling of some characters' names in these notes may differ a little from their spelling in the last version of the play. The cadre group includes T'ien-Ming, Cheng-K'uan, Yu-lai, Wen-Te, Hsueh-Chen, Man-Hsi, Chun-Hsi, the last one of whom is not included in the last version of the play. This first group is at the head of the organisations in the first period of fanshen and in Act I. The work team members are Hou, Little Li, Chang Chuer and Chi-Yun. The work team is responsible for fanshen in the second period; while the first two of them come to the village towards the end of Act I, the appearance of the other two and the activities of the group in general are observed in Act II. As these two groups are at the head of the revolution in two periods of fanshen, and as they are known as 'leaders' by the peasants, this study also refer to them as 'leaders' along with 'cadres' and 'work team members.' The officials group are the two secretaries who represent and introduce the Party politics to the cadres and to the work team; they are Liu and Chen. The struggle group comprises of the peasants who start the first revolt against the landlords and they are Fa-Liang, Tui-Chin, Chung Lai's wife, Chou-Har, Mi-Tho, the last two of whom are not included in the last version. Poor peasants are the characters who make decisions about people's fanshen in the second period of fanshen and they are named as Ting-Fu, Huan-Chao, Tao-Yuan, Lai-Tzu, Old Lady Wang and Lai-Tzu's wife. However, we do not see Ting-

Fo and Lai-Tzu's wife in the last version of the play. The last group is composed of the landlords who are Kuo Te-Yu, Ching-Ho, Ching-Ho's daughter, Lai-Hsun, and Lai-Hsun's mother. Again, in the last version, instead of the names of Lai-Hsun and his mother, we see the landlords, C'hung-Wang, Ch'i-Yun and Shen Chi-mei. (Hare, "Spare Notes")

Just as the characters are treated as social beings rather than as individuals, actors, too, during the performance of the play, are given the responsibility to convey the social message rather than to purely act their role. Since it is the social argument of the play that is to be foregrounded, the actors of the Joint Stock are expected to put a distance between themselves and the roles they play. Hence, the actors, "under the direction of William Gaskill and Max Stafford-Clark, present and clarify arguments" without "characteris[ing]" (Cushman 26), which is in line with what Brecht proposes for epic performances (136). Moreover, again as in epic theatre, the actors of *Fanshen* are given more than one role and *Fanshen* is performed "with about nine actors taking the thirty or so parts" (Hare, *Fanshen* 5; 1). This technical aspect of the play strengthens one of its thematic arguments, which is related to "change" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 54). As Judy Lee Oliva asserts, "[n]ot only are the villagers in Long Bow continually asked to reappraise their roles in the transition from feudalism to communism, so too are the actors required to 'change'" (54).

Another important technical characteristic of the play which is in line with Brecht's theatre reveals itself with the stage directions given throughout the play, especially immediately before the play starts: "*There are no sets, and no lighting cues. It should be performed using authentic props and costumes. At one end of the acting area is a small raised platform on which scenes are played. The rest of the acting area thrusts forward into the audience*" (Hare, *Fanshen* 5; 1). As Janelle Reinelt states, such kind of a stage direction "calls for an epic aesthetic in design: no sets, no elaborate lighting, authentic props, and costumes" (*After Brecht* 115). Furthermore, the fact that the stage should thrust forward into the audience "reflects the reach for analytic democracy in the play's content," which indicates how there is a harmonious relationship between the techniques and the themes of the play (Megson 131).

Besides these epic elements, the documentary character of the play which claims that this "is an accurate historical record" (Hare, *Fanshen* 5; 1) and which makes one of the actors show Hinton's book as a hard copy document for proof is also a feature of epic theatre. The footnote for the speech of the actor that introduces the book says that "[t]he actor should give publisher and current price" (7; 1.1). Another actor explains to the reader/audience the meaning of "fanshen," tells what happens in the book and emphasises the fact that "[m]any of the characters [who have witnessed this revolution in China] are still alive" (7; 1.1). On the one hand, the play claims to be a truthful account of real-life events. But on the other hand, by presenting Hinton's book, the reader/audience is reminded that this is a play adapted from a book and not more than a re-presentation of the events narrated in it. Hence, in spite of Hare's opposing views related to Brecht's alienation techniques, he, like Brecht, alienates his audience from the illusion of the performance.

Another example of Hare's use of Brechtian alienation can be found in the initial part of the play where the characters introduce themselves without action by directly addressing the audience. To introduce themselves, each of these characters talks about their possessions and working conditions, which give many clues about the peasants' lives in a Chinese village in 1946 under the rule of the landlords:

> CH'UNG-LAI'S WIFE: . . . In 1946 nearly all the people lived off the land. Landlords claimed from fifty to seventy per cent of their tenants' crop in rent. The rate of interest on loans went as high as one hundred per cent every twenty days.
> I am Ch'ung-Lai's wife. I have no land.
> CHENG-K'UAN: A family might possess a few sections of house, each section six foot by nine, made of adobe and straw. Each person might own a quilt, a quilted jacket, cotton trousers, cotton shoes. A bowl.
> I am Cheng-K'uan. I have one acre.
> T'IEN-MING: The soil of Long Bow was poor. Without manure nothing would grow. The main manure was human manure, the foundation of the whole economy.
> I am T'ien-Ming. I have half an acre.
> . . .
> FA-LIANG: In Long Bow landlords and rich peasants owned two acres or more per head. Middle peasants owned one acre, poor peasants half an acre per head. Hired labourers owned no land at all.
> I am Fa-Liang, a hired labourer. (Hare, *Fanshen* 5-6; 1.1)

From these declarations, it can be deduced that, other than the two opposing parties of landlords and peasants, there are classes even among the peasants themselves. They are classified according to a hierarchical order determined by possession and there are even ones who have no land and who live on as "hired labourers" or "beggars" (6; 1.1). In fact, it is because the economy of the village is based on agriculture that the classes in Long Bow are established in accordance with how much land the peasants have. The living conditions of the peasants in a class-based society revealed at the beginning of the play prepares the reader/audience for the revolution that will take place against the rule of the landlords.

The characters who introduce their classes also inform the audience about many other problems in the village which will be referred to in the rest of the play. The historical background to the village and also to the events dealt with in the play is given by Man-Hsi. He mentions the political organisations and groups who are at war with each other, the nationalists and the communists, who came to power after the Japanese invasion ended. The issue of marriage and the state of women in this society is voiced in the play by Hu Hsueh-Chen. The reader/audience learn from her speech that "Chinese peasant women had their marriages arranged by their parents, and were often sold as children into landlords' households. Only when a woman became mother-in-law in her own home did she command any power in a household" (Hare, *Fanshen* 6; 1.1). Another fact learned from the peasants' direct speeches is that Long Bow is Catholic and its church was "built in 1916 by Belgian Catholics" (6; 1.1), which reveals the fact that they were converted by some Europeans. Hence, other than the Japanese and the nationalist enemies, it is understood that another outsider has once intruded on their land. As Shen Ching-Ho explains, it is the Catholic Church which has "the largest building in Long Bow" (6; 1.1). However, its function is more important than its building since "[i]t [has] acted as a bank and orphanage" and allowed "[m]any of the poor of Long Bow [to] b[uy] their wives from the orphanage because it [is] cheaper" (6; 1.1). In this way, the church has become one of the constituents of the feudal regime in terms of exploiting the peasants in general and women in particular by selling them for marriage. Hence, the problems disclosed by the characters pinpoint the issues that need to be changed, fanshened, such as women's place in society or the institutions of the feudal rule.

After the main issues to be examined in the play are submitted directly to the reader/audience and certain epic techniques are employed for the conveyance of these issues, the action starts with the first part of section one. Starting with this part, throughout the play, three main technical elements are used and all of them help the themes of the play to be conveyed in a more influential and stronger way. They will be exemplified and given in detail while analysing the play but here, their nature and function will be introduced briefly. First, slogans are used and shown on stage and they have the function of the slogans in Brecht's theatre in that Hare, just like Brecht, "uses [them] to explain and advance dramatic action and to heighten the political nuance" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 54). The slogans in the play either introduce or summarise a section or a part by briefly giving the subject matter or signify certain statements which have been underlined through the action. These statements are especially related to the communist system the peasants are about to establish and to the communist ideology they adopt. Second, cyclical structure is used to emphasise the cyclical nature not only of the play but also of the history in Long Bow and even in China. From the very beginning of the play, for instance, the peasants complain about the meetings; they have already attended many meetings and they will attend even more in the future. Tui-Chin is one of the representatives of these people, these are his statements about meetings in different parts of the play: "Twenty years ago we had a meeting" (Hare, *Fanshen* 7; 1.1.1), "Another meeting. Do the meetings never stop?" (34; 1.6.1), "I have my own classification, that's enough. I'm tired and I'm going to bed" (62; 2.10.1). Other than the meetings, what repeats itself in the play is the concept and practice of fanshen, which gains different meanings every time it is employed. Whenever a problem appears with the previous system, a new change is introduced and it is called fanshen. At this point, what Hare aims to emphasise is that "[t]he fanshen is not the result of a single change but a continuous process of definition and redefinition" (Homden 40). Cyclical construction of the play also helps one of the main messages to be given: there should be continuous struggle for revolution to be achieved although every struggle undertaken by different people seems to be repetitive. In other words, every member of the society should try to correct the mistakes made by the previous generation or the system, so that the reformations can continue until reaching an ideal

state. The third main technical element is simultaneous action on stage between different characters. It is an element that strengthens the democratic nature of the play, which lies both in its production process and in the messages it strives to give. By means of this technique, different characters' "multifarious reactions" to the same issues are revealed and at the same time, "the chaotic and confused environment" they live in is illustrated (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 55). Furthermore, by giving voice to different characters' opinions, "the dialectic [in the play] is made concrete," which is another characteristic that makes the play an example of Brechtian epic (Homden 40).

The action in *Fanshen* starts with the announcement of a meeting which calls out to the peasants to defy the unfair rule of the landlords. The play "is Hare's only play about the working class" challenging those higher up on the socio-economic ladder and it is at the same time "his only play that does not directly embrace the notions of postwar British cultural fragmentation or economic instability" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 52). Nevertheless, *Fanshen* can be related to British politics and to the politics in any corner of the world in that "it does present the causes and effects of political change, with specific focus on the individual and collective lives of the peasants in the Chinese village of Long Bow" (52). Hare, one of the 1960s' generation who had socialist dreams, depicts a socialist change in the play. However, by presenting the political change in *Fanshen*, what Hare aims is "not to stimulate action outside the theatre but to resuscitate or generate a belief that change is sometimes possible" (Homden 46). The theme of political change is developed in the play through the word fanshen, the meaning and "the implementation" of which is not known either by the reader/audience or by the peasants (40). They will not be able to perceive, even at the end of the play, what fanshen means or whether it is proper to execute the changes that come along with it (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 52). However, throughout the play, both the reader/audience and the peasants are allowed to "undergo a parallel education about the meaning of revolution, the turning over from feudalism to communism" (Homden 40).

The Long Bow in *Fanshen* is a Chinese village which is already in a civil war between the nationalist and the communist groups. The communist representatives are the ones who will hold the meeting for the organisation of the peasants to take action against the

landlords, with which fanshen will start. The landlords are from the nationalist group and they are called "traitors" since they have collaborated with the Japanese during their invasion (Hare, *Fanshen* 8; 1.1.1). T'ien-Ming is the first cadre from the Communist Party who starts the first period of fanshen which takes place in five steps and along with which a number of political changes occur in the peasants' lives. Each step clarifies the meanings of fanshen in different ways and they altogether constitute the movement itself, fanshen. These meanings are the ones given both by Hinton and by Hare in the introduction parts of their works. In the first step, landlords are named and punished (fanshen: "to throw off the landlord yoke"); in the second step, people's beliefs in feudal slavery are undermined (fanshen: "to turn over," to change people's minds); in the third step, physical action is taken against the landlords for their possessions and land (fanshen: "to stand up" against the landlords); in the fourth step, the lands usurped from the landlords are distributed among the peasants (fanshen: "to gain land, stock, implements and houses"), and in the fifth one, it is revealed that all these changes have occurred with the initiation of the Party, whose name is to be kept as secret, and that the changes should continue on different levels of social life by institutionalising the Party principles (fanshen: "to enter a new world"). (5; 1; Hinton vii)

The first step towards fanshen is to determine who the traitors are and to put them on trial by forcing them to admit their offense against the peasants. Accordingly, Ch'i-Yun and Shen Chi-mei, the two landlords, are killed in front of the people, after which the stage direction says that "[*t*]*hen* Shen Ching-Ho*, the landlord, passes across the back of the stage*" (Hare, *Fanshen* 13; 1.1.2). It is implied that there are more landlords who should be tried and that fanshen has only just started; in other words, the peasants are required to struggle continuously in order to make the revolution succeed. The second step following the punishment for the landlords is to fanshen the feudal roots in the peasants' minds since they still believe that they, as the peasants, do not have any right to possess anything and they have to serve the lords who own all the land. As this step is an intellectual one, one of the slogans in this section is "Asking Basic Questions" (13; 1.2.1), which implies the need to question the slavery of the slaves and the lordship of the landlords. It is this very intellectuality, questioning, being aware of the classes that makes the present revolution different from the previous ones in China. As Secretary

Liu explicitly says "[t]he difference is, this time, we think. We ask questions. We analyse" (13; 1.2.1). However, it will be seen through the rest of the play that their attempt for revolution, either, will not take the people to an ideal end; still, they will have contributed to the process of progress. Secretary Liu and T'ien-Ming have meetings with the peasants and two meetings take place on stage between the leaders and the peasants, "*which are played antiphonally for the rest of the section*" (14; 1.2.1). The first one is among Man-Hsi, Yu-lai and Liu while the other one is among T'ien-Ming, Fa-Liang and Ch'ung-Lai's Wife. Their speeches sometimes overlap but do not interrupt each other, whose mutual aim is to change peasants' internalised beliefs about the feudal slavery so that they can fanshen and found the Peasants' Association. This is how T'ien-Ming and Liu try to persuade the peasants in parallel conversations:

> *Slogan*: The Forming of the Peasants' Association
> MAN-HSI: We depend on the land.
> LIU: On whom?
> MAN-HSI: On the person who owns the land.
> LIU: The landlord.
> MAN-HSI: Yes. We depend on the landlord for a living.
> LIU: Yu-lai?
> MAN-HSI: If the landlord didn't rent us land, we'd starve.
> LIU: But who gave him the land?
> MAN-HSI: He bought it.
> LIU: How did he make the money to buy it?
> YU-LAI: If…
> MAN-HSI: No, let me, leave this to me. It's not… Listen… I've forgotten what I was going to say.

> FA-LIANG: Why do we need to know?
> T'IEN-MING: You must not just do things. You must know why you do things.
> FA-LIANG: Why?
> T'IEN-MING: Because you need a theory… (14; 1.2.1)

Although the peasants understand that collaborators with the Kuomintang should be tried and punished, it takes time for them to accept that landowners are not the ultimate owners of the land and that the peasants do not need to serve the lords in order to survive. It is because of the fact that "[t]he thinking of feudal society over several thousand years is stamped in people's minds" and it takes time for them "to get rid of these backward things" (En-lai, Part I.11). Moreover, at the root of the peasants' inability to question the status of the landlords, there lie two systems of thought that exist in Chinese society. One is Confucianism, which preaches that "earthly success

demonstrates the moral law that virtue and 'right thinking' bring rewards," according to which "it [i]s immoral for the poor peasants to question the power and wealth of the gentry" (Donesky 46). The other system of thought supporting the status quo is Geomancy, which teaches that "the configuration of the heavenly bodies at one's birth determines one's destiny" (47). In the play, it is only when they are asked to think about their past lives in poverty that the peasants can realise that "[they] have all suffered for [the landlords]" (Hare, *Fanshen* 17; 1.2.1) and then, they are able to perceive the need to question their serfdom.

After the peasants are organised and persuaded about the main reason for their sufferings, the step that should be taken, the third step of fanshen, is to implement their energy in achieving economic prosperity and to subvert the main power source of the landowners. In the first part of the section three, the peasants challenge the landlords with the support of their newly founded union, the Peasants' Association. Although the landlords believe that they will continue to collect their rents, the peasants declare that they will no longer pay the rents nor will they work for the landlords; moreover, they demand the landlords to pay back (Hare, *Fanshen* 18; 1.3.1). The peasants who are known by the reader/audience from the previous scenes and who defined themselves in those scenes by their little possession or by their degree of serfdom, re-introduce themselves this time by their allegiance to their union, the Peasants' Association. Cheng-K'uan and Yu-lai have become the representatives of the revolution; while Cheng-K'uan is the "Elected Chairman," Yu-lai is the "Elected Vice-Chairman" (18-19; 1.3.1). Ch'ung-Wang is the landlord who is challenged by the peasants in this scene; all his possessions are taken by force after they are found in secret places around his house and it is decided that he is to be punished. Following the economic revolution, the fourth step to be taken is to distribute the wealth and the land taken from the landlords among the peasants. Ch'ung-Lai's Wife, Man-Hsi, Fa-Liang, Tu'i-Chin, and Cheng-K'uan recover from their poverty to a certain extent. However, only Hu Hsueh-Chen's fanshen is left for later because it is claimed that she has not made enough accusation against the landlords. In the following section, she also achieves her fanshen after her active participation in the movement. With Hu Hsueh-Chen's fanshen, until the end of the fourth section, all the peasants seem to have totally and satisfactorily fanshened.

After the economic revolution, it is time for the newly-established system in Long Bow to institutionalise, which is the fifth step. T'ien-Ming explains to Man-Hsi that "[he is] a member of the Communist Party" and it is the Party who "organized the army," Eighth Route Army, to which the peasants owe their fanshen and "wh[o] led the battle against the landlords" (Hare, *Fanshen* 27; 1.4.1). Hence, although "the Communist Party is an illegal organization" (27; 1.4.1), the political and social basis that the reforms and the institutions in the village are dependent on should be formed according to the Party doctrines and the leaders of the revolution are to be model communists:

> T'IEN-MING: The Party must be the backbone of the village. It must educate, study, persuade, build up the People's organizations – the Peasants' Association, the Village Government, the Women's Association, the People's Militia, it must co-ordinate all these, give them a clear line to follow, a policy that will unite everyone who can be united. Without the Party the village is a bowl of loose sand. So its members must get up earlier, work harder, attend more meetings, stay up later than anyone else, worry before anyone else is worried. We must become the best organized, the most serious group in the village. All in secret. We must lead, not by force but by example. By being good people. By being good Communists. (28; 1.4.1)

T'ien-Ming's explanations emphasise how it is necessary to found certain institutions such as schools, army, and a union for women, all of which are to be governed by the Communist Party principles. His speech reveals one of the messages given in the play: in order for fanshen to go on effectively, institutions that will serve the people should be founded and supported.

By describing the changes and developments that initially happened with the introduction of fanshen, David Hare deals with the theme of political change in order to reveal that people can change both the political administrations and their own living conditions. However, he does not let the play idealise either the changes or the communist revolution which lies at the root of these changes (40). In fact, "it could have been easy for [Hare] to present an idealised, didactic picture of the society of Long Bow; but this he resolutely avoids" (Cave 190). Accordingly, Hare employs a satirical approach in the play towards the principles put down by the Party for the distributions, towards the cadres that introduce and implement the changes in the village and towards

the peasants who benefit from fanshen. What Hare aims to underline by means of his critical representations is to show that not any one of the changes introduced in the name of the revolution is enough on its own although he implies, at the same time, that these changes contribute to the progress of the revolution. He supports his criticism of the changes by means of the cyclical structure of the play, a technique which makes the "dialectic" in *Fanshen* "truly dynamic" (189). The criteria considered for the distributions, for instance, require to be constantly changed and renewed. Whenever a new method is introduced for "distribution[, this new method] seeks a better, more exact solution, but justice exists only in context and only on a provisional, transitional basis" because, in every method, there is always a group of peasants who are left out (Reinelt, *After Brecht* 118). Hence, the movement requires a continuous "remaking," constant reformation and struggle after which the ideal state may be achieved (Cave 189; Billington, "Fanshen" 12).

The first distribution takes place in the fourth step of the movement and, as it is understood from the case of Hu Hsueh-Chen, not everyone could get a share from the distribution no matter they were poor or not. The criteria for the distribution were that people would get a share according to whether and how much they participated in the struggle against the landlords, and the degree of their poverty would be taken into consideration after it was proven that they struggled enough. This condition could be easily abused since people might participate into the struggle only for the aim of material gain. During the first distribution, only Hu Hsueh-Chen could not fanshen but later in the play, it is observed that Hsueh-Chen also fanshened since she decided to take an active part in the movement. Her story is told through epic theatre tools and the reader/audience is given her actual struggle not in action but in narration: "*In a series of tableaux on the platform* HU HSUEH-CHEN*, her husband and* T'IEN-MING *act out the story that* CH'UNG-LAI'S WIFE *tells*" (Hare, *Fanshen* 28; 1.4.2):

> CH'UNG-LAI'S WIFE: Liberation and the settling accounts movement were to Hu Hsueh-chen what water is to a parched desert. She won clothes and threw away her rags, she won a quilt and threw away her flea-infested straw, she won land and gave up begging. Knowing that these gains were the result of struggle and not gifts from heaven, she attended every meeting and supported those who were active although she herself was afraid to speak in public. [A medical doctor who has revolutionary communist ideas proposed to her.] . . . They were married in

> February 1946. . . . She became more active when he explained that fanshen could only be achieved through struggle. She finally mastered her shyness and became secretary of the Women's Association. (28-29; 1.4.2)

It is left ambiguous whether she was active to gain wealth or for the Party ideals; struggle for ideals and corruption are put by the playwright side by side and even inside each other.

After the problematic first distribution, as a requirement of the cyclical structure of the play, there comes a new directive from the Party for a new distribution; however, there are problems with its criteria, too. It is claimed in the directive by the Party that "many peasants have still not fanshened" (Hare, *Fanshen* 30; 1.5.1) and that "[s]erious feudal exploitation still exists"; therefore, "[t]he land must be further redistributed" (31; 1.5.1). However, much of the land has already been distributed so the leaders, Yu-lai, T'ien-Ming and Cheng-K'uan, decide to make use of the land of the middle peasants. The middle peasants is a kind of category or class which will be used by the leaders from this scene on and which comprises of the peasants who are not too poor or without any property and who have got a certain amount of share from the previous distribution:

> CHENG-K'UAN: There aren't many gentry left in Long Bow. Two landlords, four rich peasants, it's not going to go very far.
> YU-LAI: Middle peasants.
> CHENG-K'UAN: You can start on the middle peasants certainly …
> YU-LAI: Plenty of those.
> . . .
> CHENG-K'UAN: The middle peasants already don't work as hard as they should, because if they work hard they become rich peasants, and if they become rich peasants we take it all away. Like cutting chives. (31; 1.5.1)

If the middle peasants work hard and earn more wealth, they will be classified as rich peasants, which means that their property can be taken by the leaders to distribute to the poor peasants who are the poorest ones and who will be able to fanshen after the introduction of this directive. Nevertheless, with the invention of such categories, certain groups of peasants turn against each other and a new class system is introduced by the leaders. Cheng-K'uan, one of the leaders, is aware of this fact when he says that "[b]ut if you take away their goods all you do is drive them over to the enemy side," which Yu-lai considers "a risk" (31; 1.5.1). Apart from this risk, there is another

problem with the directive, which says that "[c]ut off feudal tails, this time [the leaders] must examine family history. Anyone whose father or grandfather exploited labour at any time in the past will have their wealth confiscated" (31; 1.5.1). According to this theory, it is not labour that determines the rights of people but their lineage; people are not regarded as individuals or according to their present state. Hence the leaders examine the peasants' family history and force them, especially the middle peasants, to redistribute their lands. The leaders use violence even against women and children and they are observed to be disrespectful of the dead people who they disturb under the earth for the sake of carrying out the directive. These violent scenes are not performed, they are only narrated and given as background information by T'ien-Ming (32; 1.5.2). What Hare is critical of in the case of this second distribution is the contents of the directive and the violence of the leaders who disturb even the dead; however, more than this, he draws attention, with the help of such violent representations, to "the moral dangers inherent in enthusiasm and complacency" during the realisation of the revolution (Cave 189). In spite of all the efforts of the cadres to redistribute the land, "there [a]re still many families who felt they ha[ve] not fanshened" (Hare, *Fanshen* 33; 1.5.2).

Since the distribution executed according to the directive is also problematic, new criteria are required to distribute the lands. Moreover, even if some changes and developments have occurred and even if some people have fanshened, poverty in Long Bow along with the oppression and the corruption of the leaders seem to be still alive. Hence, there appears a need for a completely new period of fanshen with new leaders; accordingly, the work team is delegated by the Party, to lay the foundations of the second period of fanshen. This new period starts in section six; it, too, has a cyclical structure. The scene in section six opens with "[*a*] *single man working in the field. As at the opening of* SECTION ONE" (Hare, *Fanshen* 33; 1.6.1). Peasants continue working on the land and the leaders continue holding meetings, sometimes by force. However, with the coming of the work team led by Hou and Little Li, "[the] whole pattern of progress, error and renewed optimism is to be repeated" (Homden 41). The work team starts a new reform which is this time based on the Agrarian Law, which makes fanshen sound more institutionalised. The reform that starts at the beginning of the play gets

corrupted and now some of its mistakes will be corrected with this law and with this new group. First of all, there are still people in the village who have not fanshened yet since their shares are taken by the leaders during the first distribution. Little Li reads the names of the poorest peasants, who have not been even referred to in the previous sections but who will, this time, get the most share from the distribution. Furthermore, according to this law, people will be no longer judged in relation to their lineage or given land according to whether they have struggled or not:

> LITTLE LI: . . . Now the Draft Agrarian Law will correct all mistakes [in the past] because it is firmly based on the slogan: 'Depend on the poor peasant, unite with the middle peasant, destroy the feudal system.'
> . . .
> Lands and goods are to be redistributed on one basis and on one basis only: how much you have now and how many there are in your family. So no longer is it a question of what sort of person you are, of whether you are thought to have helped or hindered the movement. This time, those with merit will get some, those without merit will get some. All landlords' property will be divided and everyone will get a fair share. Now how is this to be done? (Hare, *Fanshen* 40; 1.7.1)

Nonetheless, there is an important problem with the implementation of the law which will need reforming in the following parts of the play. The peasants are classified among themselves as poor, middle or rich peasants and these classes will be determined by the poorest ones. Here, "[t]he balance of power shifts from one extreme to the other" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 57) but it is disputable whether a group of people, not a real court composed of impartial members, will make right decisions about other people's lives. The poorest peasants are at the table of decision-making about who will get how much from this distribution, in short, "[they] are holding a knife in [their] hands" (Hare, *Fanshen* 40; 1.7.1). The jury members' personal affairs with the ones about whom they make decisions do not let the jury be unbiased. Since the play "*Fanshen* is not the abstract incarnation of an ideology; its ideals are constantly shaped and qualified by human realities" (Fitzpatrick 34). The poorest peasants in the play are observed to be "determined, unreliable, and biased," which is an indication of the fact that their motivation as human beings is complicated and that there is a discrepancy between what is targeted by the law and what is achieved while it is executed (Homden 41). In fact, it is aimed, by the Agrarian Law, that the poor peasants who could not fanshen so far, are given voice during the distribution; nevertheless, their personal

relations with the ones they question appear to be always interfering with their decisions throughout the questionings:

> HUAN-CH'AO: I'm a blacksmith. I have very little land because I don't farm. I have four sections of house. I have a family of four. That's all.
> HOU: Discuss in groups.
> OLD LADY WANG: There's no need. He's a middle peasant.
> LITTLE LI: You must first discuss it in your group.
> . . .
> HOU: Listen, it doesn't matter what sort of a blacksmith he is…
> LAI-TZU: It matters to us.
> . . .
> YUAN-LUNG: He's a poor peasant.
> OLD LADY WANG: If we say he's a poor peasant, he'll get something in the distribution and … I don't want him to get anything.
> LTTLE LI: That really isn't..
> OLD LADY WANG: If he were a good blacksmith I'd be happy for him to be a poor peasant.
> HOU: Good and bad don't come into it. (Hare, *Fanshen* 42-43; 1.7.2)

As observed through the dialogues, for Old Lady Wang, Huan-Ch'ao's being able to fanshen is totally dependent on his being a "good blacksmith" or not (43; 1.7.2). There is not an objective criterion for the division and for the definitions of poor, middle, rich peasants, which causes endless discussions with no result. Similar attitude of the peasants is observed when a jury of the peasants judge the corrupt cadres. For Cheng-K'uan, for example, different suggestions are put forward in terms of punishment by the jury members according to their degree of grudge against him. The decisions differ from "[s]end[ing] him to the People's Court in Lucheng," "[s]uspend[ing] him from the Party" (50; 2.8.1) to "just mak[ing] him give everything back" (51; 2.8.1) and even killing him.

While the questionings are carried out, the jury's personal animosity against the questioned does not let them be fair. Moreover, the jury members sometimes demand brutal punishments which are not suitable for the crimes. After Cheng-K'uan, Hsueh-Chen is questioned and the peasants display the same hatred against her. In spite of the fact that she is ready to list her wrongs and face the punishment, some of the peasants judge her only by looking at her face before she is allowed to defend herself:

> HUAN-CH'AO: . . . it's not what she did, it's that – look on her face…

> HSUEH-CHEN: Please…
> HUAN-CH'AO: Of course she's got her list, it's perfect, but her face…
> LAI-TZU: You can't blame a woman…
> HUAN-CH'AO: Look at it, just look at it. She knows she's going to pass, that's what I can't bear, and it shows in her face.
> HSUEH-CHEN: I promise you, I don't know. (Hare, *Fanshen* 53-54; 2.8.1)

The peasants are angry about the hierarchy which is firmly established first in feudal times then in the revolutionary period but the decisions they make without any sense of justice remind one of the brutal treatments in feudal times as referred to in the play. Hence, it is obvious that it will take time in Long Bow village to establish a judicious society with no trace of hierarchy. Hou constantly reminds the peasants that they should dispose of all feudal practices since "[they] are living in a new society" (52; 2.8.1).

The most recent step of fanshen, that is, the distribution of the land among the poorest peasants, also fails since the Communist Party disapproves of it. As a result, the Party asks the work team to introduce a new method of distribution in accordance with the directives of the Party. A representative of the Party, Secretary Ch'en, blames the work team for their listening only to the poor peasants and their total opposition to the middle peasants by pushing them to the enemy side. During the revolutionary period in China, there was a concept which determined the behaviours of the communists and it was "'utter devotion to others without thought of self'" as Mao Tsetung worded it (qtd. in En-lai, Part II.27). Nonetheless, when this concept was used as "the basis for agricultural and industrial policy," it was called "extreme equalitarianism which le[ ]d to the expropriation and transfer of the property and earnings of laboring people, with adverse influence on social cohesion and production" (27). Hence, here in the play, what the work team members do is defined by Ch'en with the words "Left deviation" (Hare, *Fanshen* 57; 2.9.1) and "Left extremism" (56; 2.9.1). The work team have tried to achieve an ideal, an 'extreme' equality with "an excess of zeal" (Rabey 170) by taking from the labouring middle peasants and giving to the poor ones. Although this is an "utter devotion," in Mao's words, to poor peasants (qtd. in En-lai, Part II.27), it is in defiance of the middle peasants and it "produces an unrealistic leftist bias, leaving the delegates to return and attempt a just synthesis of previous experiments" (Rabey 170). Accordingly, what the work team has to do now, in order to amend their wrongs, is to redefine the middle and the rich peasants in Long Bow and to try not to lose the middle

peasants who are considered to be "the allies" by Ch'en (Hare, *Fanshen* 73; 2.11.1). However, there is a problem, again, with this new command: although Ch'en asks the work team to reconcile with the middle peasants, the well-being of the other two classes of peasants may be neglected and, particularly, the work team may lose the support of the poor peasants.

This recent change in the policy of distribution is the last one introduced in the name of fanshen. Secretary Ch'en, towards the end of the play, explains what kind of criteria will determine the Party policies hereafter. He explicitly says that "absolute equality" between the peasants cannot be and has never been the criterion or the aim of fanshen (Hare, *Fanshen* 74; 2.11.1) since the only target of the Party is to abolish the feudal system and to found "[a] People's Republic" (73; 2.11.1). The reason for the impossibility of establishing equality in its full sense for all and of distributing all the lands equally is the fact that the land that can be given to the peasants is limited. Hence, Ch'en believes that, from now on, "everyone's improvement [and fanshen] must depend on production, on their new land, their new tools" (76; 2.11.2). It is time for the Long Bow peasants, at the very end of the play, to work on the land that was distributed and to "produce in great abundance" rather than to seek equality or to demand new distributions (74; 2.11.1). However, this last policy may be also changed just as others have changed: "Each level of leaders does its best to understand overall policy and apply it locally. If you are given a theory you must test it in practice. If it fails in practice it is up to you to send it back. Everyone must be active. Everyone must think all the time" (76; 2.11.2). The peasants will try different methods just as they have tried throughout the play and their "[e]xperience [will be] constantly the test of the strength of an argument," of every change (Cave 190). It is asserted in the play that all the changes introduced in Long Bow are parts of a process through which people can construct their political views. Ch'en's words, in this sense, express in a nutshell what Hare wishes to convey in the play: "Land reform can't be a final solution to men's problems. And reform is just a step opening the way to socialism. And socialism itself is transitional. All we've done these past few years is give as many people as possible land to work. But our political choices have still to be made" (Hare, *Fanshen* 76; 2.11.2). The play starts with a change and introduces new ones on-and-off both in theory and

practice, all of which contribute to the improvement of the social and political life in Long Bow, but none of which is adequate by itself. Hare shows all throughout the play that fanshen, in other words, revolution is not only one change, but it is open to be renewed with new changes. The characters complain about the constant changes in policies and in practices; however, these changes are crucial levels of progress – in Ch'en's words, part of a "transitional" period – which the society should experience step by step. All the economic, political and social changes that come along with fanshen should be patiently carried out however repetitive and boring they are so that the revolution can be achieved fully.

The revolution of the Long Bow society is not complete yet; although their life has progressed by means of fanshen and of a number of changes that follow it, the new world the peasants have recently built "is [still] far from Utopia" (Gindin 166). With every distribution method, a kind of development is observed in the society; however, there is a problem with every method and there is always a group of people who are neglected and a different group who are privileged. Equality may be difficult to achieve in practice as seen throughout the play but the problem is that the most basic element of an administration for Hare, justice, could not be established. In the court scenes, for instance, the peasants make decisions on totally personal grounds. Hare criticises not only these peasants' attitudes but he also discloses the impracticability of the ideals which are brought forth by the newly established system. He creates in the play a "sober and interrogative attitude to the contradictions of revolution" by underlining "[t]he limits of justice and democracy" (Megson 133). Instead of a blind-eye propaganda of the revolution, Hare shows its deficiencies in providing an ideal state of justice for the people. At this point, he puts forward his own idea about political changes and revolution. What should be aimed at through revolutionary politics, for Hare, is not only changes but "the creation of justice" (Gindin 166). When "ideal justice" seems to be impossible, Hare asks at least for a kind of "practical justice" (qtd. in Reinelt, *After Brecht* 119). He believes that and also lets the peasants in Long Bow realise "that politics is not a matter of power games but a concern with basic human rights and principles" (Cave 191). Even in the case of Yu-lai's punishment, who is one of the most corrupt cadres and who is hated most by the peasants, Hare proposes a balanced

approach, a middle way, and calls "for a rational balance as the essence of judgement" (190). That is why, in spite of all the crimes Yu-lai committed, the playwright makes Secretary Liu defend Yu-lai's rights. With the help of the character Liu, Hare states that the peasants should "hate only what Yu Lai [or any corrupt leader] has done, not want him dead" (190).

Apart from the changes that take place in political and economic terms, it is possible to observe in *Fanshen* some other changes which occur in the social life of Long Bow village with the introduction of fanshen. These are developments specifically related to women and their position in society, which can be regarded as 'political' when the principle of 'the personal is political' is taken into consideration. Through Hu Hsueh-Chen and Old Lady Wang, it is indicated that women's rights start to be considered in Long Bow society and women are allowed to go beyond the boundaries of their home and to experience the working life outside. By means of these characters, Hare echoes, to a certain extent, the activities of women to obtain their rights during the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain. With this movement, a lot of women in Britain, like Hsueh-Chen and Old Lady Wang, went out to work, "began to challenge the assumption that their main roles in life were those of housewife and mother" and "[t]hey wanted to be treated as equals to men in law, in employment and in pay" (Harper 20). However, while referring to the developments in women's lives, Hare, again remains critical of them by showing that women characters may be corrupted or may abuse the rights given to them and that remaking and more fanshen is required in this field just as in politics.

In Hu Hsueh-Chen's case, it is put forward that one aspect of the communist ideals is the belief in equality of women with men and respecting their right; accordingly, the Women's Association is founded to allow women to seek their rights and to support each other. Hsueh-Chen's husband, as a communist, tells her that "as a product of the revolutionary army and its Communist education, he believed in equality for women" (Hare, *Fanshen* 29; 1.4.2). Therefore, he helps her in housework, he "beg[ins] even to cook his own supper so his wife could attend meetings – something unheard of in Long Bow" (29; 1.4.2). As she is supported at home, Hsueh-Chen is able to take an active

part in outside life in contrast to the other women whose marriages are arranged and who are not given a life outside their homes. Even after her husband leaves her for the sake of the Party ideals, Hsueh-Chen continues her activities in Long Bow for the Party in co-operation with T'ien-Ming and she "bec[omes] secretary of the Women's Association" (29; 1.4.2). Nonetheless, it is not clear in the play whether Hsueh-Chen has started her communist struggles after her husband's encouragements or for her own welfare, which Hare deliberately leaves ambiguous and open to criticism.

Another representative character of the women's improved place in society is Old Lady Wang, who is a member of the jury which is composed of poor peasants. In T'ao-Yuan's questioning part, the reader/audience witness her dialogues with T'ao-Yuan and with the other jury members, which shows how a woman can question a man for his treatments of his wife and of other women:

> OLD LADY WANG: Tell us what happened to your wife.
> T'AO-YUAN: (*To* HOU) Is this…
> HOU: Yes.
> T'AO-YUAN: Well… I began smoking heroin in the famine year and everything I had spent on heroin. So when I had nothing left I took my wife to Taiyuan. I was very lucky, I had managed to find a buyer quite quickly. He gave me six bags of millet, so that sealed the deal.
> OLD LADY WANG: And other people's wives, you sold them?
> T'AO-YUAN: I helped sell them, occasionally.
> OLD LADY WANG: And you got paid for this…
> T'AO-YUAN: I was usually given heroin.
> OLD LADY WANG: So your income came either from selling heroin or selling other people's wives…
> T'AO-YUAN: It's… one way of looking at it.
> OLD LADY WANG: He should be classed as a landlord's running dog. (*She sits*.)
> (Hare, *Fanshen* 44-45; 1.7.2)

With fanshen, a woman even from the very bottom of the social ladder is allowed to be able to question a man for his bad treatment of women. Old Lady Wang, unlike Hsueh-Chen, is not much interested in reputation or wealth and she is more concerned with the sufferings of other women. However, she, too, tends to be corrupted as she makes decisions at the court under the influence of her personal grudge towards men and her "judgments are based on moral grounds and inherent prejudices rather than on fact" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 57). She attempts to call T'ao-Yuan, for example, a rich

peasant so that he cannot get any share from the distribution. Her justification for such a treatment is T'ao-Yuan's past crimes, not his present state of poverty.

Other than these two portraits of women who are liberated from the constraints of the past but who also have a tendency to be corrupted and to abuse the newly gained rights, David Hare provides another woman character, Hsien-e, to illustrate the change in the living conditions of women with fanshen. Hu Hsueh-Chen and Old Lady Wang have been observed to have taken part actively in political activities, in the Women's Association and in the jury of the poor peasants, respectively. Although women have started to be a part of social activities outside their homes, their status has not improved yet as seen in the domestic violence scene Hsien-e experiences. One of the corrupt cadres, Yu-lai is observed to be constantly disturbing and striking Hsien-e, his daughter-in-law, and his son Wen-Te helps him with this brutal treatment:

> YU-LAI: Tell her we're hungry.
> WEN-TE: My father says we're hungry.
> HSIEN-E: There's corn.
> WEN-TE: She says there's corn.
> YU-LAI: Rabbit. In a stew. With garlic. And leeks. Pork. Shrimp. Onions. Tell her. Dumplings with herbs. Bean curd. Tell her. Tell her to ask her friends in the village, tell her to visit their homes, suggest … they give us … their food.
> (HSIEN-E *stares at* WEN-TE.)
> HSIEN-E: There's some corn.
> (WEN-TE *smashes* HSIEN-E *hard across the face*. *Then beats her*.) (Hare, *Fanshen* 63; 2.10.1)

By presenting this scene of violence, Hare aims to emphasise that the reforms in social life are not enough to "rectify all social abuses" and that the "[p]roblems continue to exist, despite initial spurts of progress" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 57). However, Hare makes sure that women will continue to seek their rights in the domestic sphere as well and Hsien-e will ask for a divorce from her husband.

Women's position at home and their rights in marriage are crucial matters for the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, too. One of the most important reasons for the birth of the movement was "women's oppression . . . within the family" (Perrigo 125). Although family was generally represented as a "harmon[ious]" place for women, "women (and children) are subjected to physical and mental cruelty and abuse" in this

same family, which the feminists of the 1970s raised their voice against and which led them to ask for their rights (126). In Britain, women were given certain rights related to divorce when "[i]n 1969 the Divorce Reform Act eased conditions for divorce" (Wandor, "The Personal" 50). This act was a great development for women despite people's beliefs related to marriage and despite the concept of "family understood both as an historically specific and economic institution and ideology" (Perrigo 125). Hsien-e, like the women in Britain, will be observed to be asking for her rights at home and in marriage. In order to get divorced from her husband, Hsien-e wants to get "the backing of the Women's Association" (Hare, *Fanshen* 66; 2.10.2). However, "[n]o one has ever been divorced in Long Bow" and it will be very hard because "the men [and the older women] will be against it" (66; 2.10.2). Although the work team in the play has communist views, it is difficult even for them to accept and to make the society accept changes related to such established traditions. Still, they support Hsien-e, and Ch'i-Yun says that "I say, come in, sleep here, never go home again. We will look after you. Plead your case to the Women's Association, then appear at the gate. I say that women … are half of China" (66; 2.10.2). Still, women's liberation is not complete in Long Bow in that although a woman can ask for divorce, she is not allowed to get it unless the husband, even one who beats his wife, consents to it:

> HSIEN-E: And will you grant me a divorce?
> (*He looks up at her. Then bursts into a fit, banging his head on the ground on each 'Never'.*)
> WEN-TE: Never. I will never agree to that until the last minute of my life. Never. Never. Never.
> . . .
> HSIEN-E: What if you beat me to death?
> WEN-TE: I take an oath before the people.
> HOU: (*Quiet*) That's enough, Hsien-e. He won't give you a divorce.
> HSIEN-E: But…
> HOU: We can't help.
> (*Silence*. *She sits down*.) (69; 2.10.3)

Hence, despite improvements in social life with respect to women, more improvement and more reforms are required and "there is a need for fanshen to extend to the 'private' as well as the 'public' sphere" (Megson 133) for women to have equal rights in marriage.

Aside from the political and social changes with their advantageous and disadvantageous aspects, what Hare is also concerned with in *Fanshen* is the relation between the leaders and the public as well as the issue of leadership. He approaches the political changes in Long Bow critically; although he reveals the improvements in people's lives and in the administration, he does not neglect to pinpoint what the new system lacks. According to Hare's understanding of politics, political changes have both positive and negative aspects. For him, revolution is more than these changes; it is, rather, respecting human rights and providing these rights to everyone in an equal way. With respect to the relation between the ruling and the ruled, he adopts a similar approach. The portraits of leaders he presents have both positive and negative characteristics; while some of them can be sympathised with, some others should be criticised. No matter what kind of people the leaders are, what the public demand from these leaders is justice.

The leaders Hare critically approaches are the corrupt cadres, who initiate the revolution but who establish their own hierarchical system according to which, instead of the landlords, they, as communist leaders, exploit the peasants. Although the peasants overthrew the landlords, the play "show[s], with cool irony, that under communism[, too, they are] still manipulated by external forces" and oppressed by the new communist leaders (Billington, "Fanshen at the ICA" 12). As it is observed in the play, the "bullies" of the new world created in Long Bow are Yu Lai and Wen Te, the very cadres who first challenged the landlords (Cave 190). Yu-lai, from the early scenes on, is observed to have a tendency towards corruption since the bribery in the new society starts with him. After a landlord Ch'ung-Wang is punished, there is seen another landlord on the stage, Ching-Ho, wandering in a sly manner. Ching-Ho takes a bag of flour as a bribe to Yu-Lai and then offers Yu-lai all his help as well as his daughter who will be ignored through the rest of the scene. Nevertheless, for Yu-Lai, the bribe he receives is very little and he claims that "I'm worth a thousand bags. I am a granary" (Hare, *Fanshen* 22; 1.3.1). Hence, although economic uprising starts in section three and although there is struggle on one side, bribery and corruption appear on the other. At the end of the scene, Ching-Ho speaks out of his character and informs the reader/audience of the fact that "Of the seven landlords in Long Bow, three died after being beaten to death by the

Peasants' Association. Two more died of starvation when they had been driven from their land. Shen Ching-ho was luckier: he ran away and became a teacher in a primary school" (23; 1.3.2). Here one wonders why Ching-Ho escaped death while the others died and whether it is the bribe he has given to Yu-lai that helped him to be exempt from the ends of the other landlords. This picture of the village shows that the peasants will need more and continuous refreshment, that is, fanshen in the system. Moreover, it implies that not only the landlords but no one who holds power in his hands should be trusted, which the peasants learn in time.

During their trial, the corrupt cadres reveal the crimes they committed. Cheng-K'uan is the first cadre who is questioned at the court composed of peasants; he confesses his wrongs and he mentions every expenditure he has incurred. First of all, he confesses that, as the leaders, they gained more than the other people during the distribution. He says that after he became a cadre "[he] was working very hard and [he] thought what's the point of working hard if [one doesn't] get a little extra and live better than other people? It was wrong. It was wrong thinking. [He's] done so much that was wrong" (Hare, *Fanshen* 48; 2.8.1). Moreover, although he came from the very bottom of the feudal system, he became one of the leaders who manipulated the system according to his own needs:

> CHENG-K'UAN: . . . I was a hired labourer. I took part in struggle meetings as you know. Because of them I became Chairman of the Peasants' Association. This made me arrogant. For instance, when we had to collect tax grain we never talked it over with the people, we just met among ourselves and decided what each should give, then ordered people to hand over. I think this was wrong, it was obviously unfair. Also, I hit Tui-Chin when he made a hurtful remark about my body, sheer bad temper and I have no excuse… (48; 2.8.1)

Cheng-K'uan here points out how a state or an administrative body may exploit people by taxation and how the political leaders determine the amount of the taxes as they wish and without asking the people's views on the matter. After Cheng-K'uan, Hu Hsueh-Chen is also questioned but she is not allowed by the peasants to defend herself. Then, Yu-lai and his son Wen-Te are put on trial and it is decided that they should be severely punished. However, the Party representatives, secretaries Ch'en and Liu, speak against any severe punishment to be implemented for all these cadres. Hence Cheng-K'uan and

Yu-lai escape the punishment only because they are cadres. In the following scenes, while Yu-lai is portrayed as a brutal character continuing his corrupt behaviours, Cheng-K'uan is observed to have recovered from his corruption and to be suffering, like all the other peasants, from poverty and lack of proper institutions in Long Bow. Hare provides the reader/audience with these two different portraits of the leaders and he expects the reader/audience to treat each of them in a different way. He has a balanced attitude towards the leaders; he neither condemns nor exalts them.

The fact that the Party members oppose the punishment of the cadres helps to present another issue related to the leaders. The hints of the favouritism practised by the Party are given, first of all, when Secretary Ch'en receives the work team coming from Long Bow in section nine. The scene of how they meet is described in the stage directions: "*The team are left standing.* CH'EN *shakes hands with* HOU" (Hare, *Fanshen* 55; 2.9.1). The team are standing when the secretary shakes hands only with the leader, which denotes the hierarchy among them. The fact that there are classes even among the members of the Party raises questions about the decisions to be made by them in the following sections. During their conversation, Ch'en questions Hou for arresting Yu-lai and his friends and claims that the work team is not right in judging the Party members, the cadres, without enough evidence although, as seen in the previous scenes, these cadres admitted their faults and crimes. Ch'en tells the work team that

> CH'EN: . . . Here is a report prepared by the third administrative district of the Taihang subregion. Your mistakes are already listed in that. You have sought support only from the poor peasants, thereby neglecting the middle peasants. You've treated Party members as if they were class enemies. Everything the poor peasants wanted you have believed and tried to give them. You have elevated their point of view to the status of a line. That line is in clear opposition to the official policy of the Party. (56-57; 2.9.1)

Although it is a controversial issue that the work team have heard only the poor peasants' accusations, it is expected from the Party, besides criticising the work team, to question the corrupt cadres as well and to establish justice for all. The Party is to make sure that the leaders should not be placed above the other peasants or made exempt from being questioned or punished since the legal system should work for all equally and some should not be more equal than others.

Another representative of the Party, Secretary Liu, too, is against the cadres being severely punished since he believes that the Party should not lose these cadres in spite of their corruption. Therefore, he wants to release Yu-lai without any punishment because, for Liu, a cadre with wrongs can be won by the Party through reformation and he can be lost to the Party if punished. Liu states that "Never, never let a man lose hope. It's waste, to the Party. To the people. It's easy, it's easy to stamp something out. It's what they do in every country in the world. They cure diseases by killing the patient. But we … are going to save the patient" (Hare, *Fanshen* 71; 2.10.4). Nevertheless, here appears a moral question, which is whether the Party should deal with its corrupt cadres through rehabilitation in order to win them back or it should cleanse itself by disposing of all these corrupt members. Hare reveals and problematises both of the views and then leaves it to the reader/audience to decide which way is the right one to follow. He may be also expecting to find a kind of balance between the two, which makes his play non-propagandistic and which is exemplified in the dialogues between Liu and Little Li:

> LITTLE LI: We proved today the Party is ready to purify its own ranks…
> LIU: No. You proved the Party could be brutal and wasteful. . .
> . . .
> LITTLE LI: I want justice.
> LIU: Well?
> HOU: The overall feeling of the team is strongly for reforming the man.
> LIU: Good.
> LITTLE LI: If men like Yu-lai can remain as Communists then what is the point of the campaign?
> LIU: . . . The Party needs Yu-lai because he is clever and strong, and reformed will be of more value to the people than if he had never been corrupted. We must save him. We can use him. He can be reformed. (72; 2.10.4)

The playwright gives both Liu and Little Li right causes to defend their opinions, suggesting a balance between them. The answer for the question is searched, whether Yu-lai can be more useful to the Party through being reformed or his presence in the Party is harmful. The characters discuss and, as a requirement of democracy, the decision of the majority is put into practice, according to which Yu-lai is released. As can be seen in the discussion between Liu and Little Li, Hare gives equal amount of dialogue to both of the characters and, through them, he reveals his own ideas. Hare,

like Liu, does not support the idea that Yu-lai should be severely punished; but, he also demands "justice" just like Little Li (72; 2.10.4).

Besides criticising the leaders as observed in his treatment of the corrupt cadres and the Party members, Hare also sympathises with the leading group as seen in his illustration of the work team. After Secretary Ch'en has blamed them for all their doings in Long Bow, the members of the work team immediately recollect what they did in the village to implement the Agrarian Law and how the peasants treated them meanwhile. This scene starts "the most effectively dramatic section in the play" (Homden 42). The stage direction describes the present scene as such: "*Among the ruins of a bell tower. Sitting by a ruined wall is* CH'I-YUN *cooking soup*" (Hare, *Fanshen* 57; 2.9.2). According to the communist ideals, everyone should gain an equal amount from the distribution. However, even after fanshen, the cadres are in a miserable state, cooking "among the ruins of a bell tower" implying the all that is "ruin"ed in terms of ideals (57; 2.9.2). So, in addition to illustrating the miseries of the peasants before and after fanshen, Hare does not neglect the leading class and he provides an insight into the miseries of the work team, too:

> CHANG CH'UER: Is there something to eat?
> CH'I-YUN: Not yet.
> CHANG CH'UER: I'm hungry. What were you talking about?
> LITTLE LI: The new classification.
> CHANG CH'UER: Ah yes. Classification.
> . . .
> CHANG CH'UER: I don't know why we always talk about the poor, the poor peasants. Here we are looking miserable as goats, and it's not because we're worried about the poor, it's because Secretary Ch'en has shat all over us.
> CH'I-YUN: (*Smiles*) Yes.
> CHANG CH'UER: Come on, cabbage. (*Pause.*) I really wouldn't mind being poor. It's a good life when you compare it with being a cadre. (57-58; 2.9.2)

Other than the conditions the leaders live in, Hare also for the first time in the play sheds light upon the inner thoughts of a character, the leader Hou, by making him talk about himself to his friends. Although characterisation is very weak in the play, the reader/audience can observe, through the dialogues between Hou and his questioning friends, the conflicts a character experiences in himself and with the others. In the previous scenes, too, the corrupt leaders were questioned and they spoke in order to

answer the people who demanded an explanation about corruption. However, in this present scene, a leader, Hou, is being questioned not at a court but at a meeting with his fellow friends in the work team. Moreover, he questions himself, his leadership and his faults:

> HOU: I'm not a good leader, I know that, I do try.
> CHANG CH'UER: Honest, we said, honest.
> HOU: I know I'm not clever…
> CHANG CH'UER: We said honest. Not humble. Humble isn't honest. Humble's humble. Humble's a way of not being criticized…
> . . .
> HOU: I lie awake at night…
> CH'I-YUN: That's just what's wrong, don't you see? It's useless lying awake at night. It's no help to anyone, it's subjective. Your work style is undemocratic.
> . . .
> HOU: . . . I thought I must be strong or they'll think ill of me. That's what leaders always think. That's what leaders are. Do this. Do that. And at the back of the head … what do they think of me? . . . (59-60; 2.9.2)

In the person of Hou, it is shown in the play that the leaders do not always have "a determined face" against "the apathy, selfishness and exhaustion," which the other cadres had in the other scenes (Rabey 170). By means of the creation of such a character as Hou, Hare also discloses his own ideas about European leaders. He believes that these leaders, just like Hou, should "be open to self-criticism in order to secure the trust of those they lead" and they should "subordinate [their] personal needs [as well as their pride] to collective needs" (Donesky 48).

As for the group who is led, the play does not provide one specific kind of portrayal of the peasants; just as there are advantages and disadvantages of the political changes as well as ideal and corrupt leaders, the peasants, too, have good and bad characteristics. While some of the cadres that help the revolution start end up in corruption, some of the peasants who have fanshened are later observed to be lacking motivation to adapt themselves to the reformations. The people in Long Bow are observed to be "bold in concept" at the beginning of the revolution but they turn out to be rather "gentle in execution" (Hare, *Fanshen* 77; 2.11.2). For instance, following the reforms with fanshen in Long Bow, the civil war is observed to be going on in section five after a short period of ceasefire with the Kuomintang (30; 1.5.1). It is understood in this period

that people's minds have not fanshened yet and they are ready to give back all the freedom they have only recently gained. Yu-lai reveals this fact related to the peasants: "The whole village is convinced the Kuomintang will return. The Catholics openly plot our assassination, peasants have begun to creep back in the night to return the goods that were seized from landlords, grenades go off in the hillside" (31; 1.5.1).

On the other hand, there are also peasants who are portrayed as conscious beings who have "discovered their rights as individuals within a community and discovered too the responsibilities that accompany such rights" following their achievement with the overthrow of the landlords (Cave 188). These peasants know that for their own benefit, they should maintain revolutionary changes and should never trust the leaders. It is "th[is] distrust between people and their bureaucracy" that makes the play "universal[ ]" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 53). As they do not trust the leaders, even revolutionary ones, the peasants question during the distribution how much the leaders of fanshen gain, which is a good sign of their having fanshened minds:

> CH'UNG-LAI'S WIFE: What do you get?
> CHENG-K'UAN: What?
> CH'UNG-LAI'S WIFE: The leaders, what do the leaders get? You, the Chairman of the Association. Yu-Lai over there, T'ien-ming, village head. What do you get?
> T'IEN-MING: The leaders get less.
> CH'UNG-LAI'S WIFE: They get some?
> T'IEN-MING: They get some but they get less. (Hare, *Fanshen* 25; 1.3.3)

The peasants are cautious against the corruption of the leaders and do not want the leaders to get more than the peasants. The peasants' demand for justice and need of justice appear in different parts of the text, especially in the scenes where distribution and the courts of corrupt leaders take place. It is because Hare believes "that people have a sense of justice, and that they need justice, and need to believe a society is just" ("Commanding" 119). In order to underline this idea, Hare even included a line in the play, "'people need justice like bread,'" while he was working on the television adaptation of the play for BBC (Hare qtd. in Reinelt, *After Brecht* 119). However, William Hinton did not accept it as he considered 'justice' a bourgeois concept and Hare had to leave it out (119). But, on the whole, it is asserted in *Fanshen* that the peasants seek justice as much as they seek land or any wealth.

Along with justice, what people are desperately in need of is certain institutions that will make the reforms durable. Hence, people should be provided by a local administration or a government with institutions like hospitals. Hare prescribes the necessity of such institutions for a revolution to be complete:

> LITTLE LI: . . . It's not land. There's enough land, one acre for every man, woman and child in Long Bow. It's resources. Animals, carts, implements, houses. That's what we need.
> . . .
> LITTLE LI: . . . I was at college, many years ago. People used to say China is poor, it's poor because it lacks fertilizer, it lacks machinery, it lacks insecticides, it lacks medical care. I used to say no, China is poor because it is unjust. (*Pause*. *Then he smiles*.)
> HOU: We must prove it, comrade.
> LITTLE LI: Yes. (Hare, *Fanshen* 46; 1.7.3)

Little Li smiles above as if he was not right when he was at college but he has understood it just now that what China needs is modern, civilised conditions for its people to live in and a system which will preserve their welfare not only in economic terms but also in all social matters like agriculture and medical care. One of the previous cadres who later became a suffering peasant, Cheng-K'uan is another character who voices the need of institutions for Long Bow. Cheng-K'uan is observed at the beginning of the section ten with a dead baby in a bucket. He complains about the inefficiency of the changes that have come along with fanshen so far and utters the requirement of establishing in the village social institutions like hospitals:

> CHENG-K'UAN: Our child was born in a wash-basin six days ago. None of us knew dirt was coming so it just fell into a dirty basin at my wife's feet. We had nothing to cut the cord. She was bent forward, the child was filthy, my wife couldn't move. At first I couldn't find the midwife. Then after an hour she came, with an old pair of scissors.
> . . .
> CHENG-K'UAN: How can we go on? I'm tired. Everyone says I've fanshened, but what's changed? Where are the doctors? How I long for money. Doctors. Scalpels. Clothes, clean clothes. (64-65; 2.10.1)

In this speech, the lack of a properly working health system in Long Bow is criticised; and, at the same time, the health system in Britain in the 1970s is possibly being criticised. In the 1960s and the 1970s, in spite of some improvements in British health

service, "[c]rude international comparisons show Britain spending a lower proportion of the National Income on health than other industrialized countries" (Marwick, *British Society* 192). Apart from this hint related to Britain, through Cheng-K'uan's experiences, it is also possible to see a kind of criticism of communist 'ideals' in practice. The necessity for the institutions to be built according to the communist ideals was already emphasised by the first cadre, T'ien-Ming in Act I. He believed that "[the Party] must educate, study, persuade, build up the People's organizations" (Hare, *Fanshen* 28; 1.4.1), a project which is not realised even in Act II. The communist system has changed a lot in the peasants' lives and saved them from the feudal system as well as from the oppression of the landlords. However, in order for people to live well within this system, the system is required to be equipped with certain institutions that will serve the public, such as the institutions of health and justice. The progress that started with the introduction of fanshen in people's lives is not complete yet and it needs to continue through new steps with the help of the peasants and the leaders as well as their fanshened minds. In this respect, what is implied in the play is the fact "that the questioning [of the peasants and the leaders] must go on and that failures must be recognised and, where necessary, new approaches adopted" (Peacock, *Radical Stages* 103).

*Fanshen* ends as it started, peasants are working on the land and the leaders are trying to gather a meeting to discuss new policies; although there occurred many changes and improvements in the peasants' lives, constant renewal is necessary in order to achieve an ideal state of administration. That is why the final scene is very like the beginnings of Act I and Act II: "*A single peasant. Hoeing in the field, as at the beginning.* HOU *boxes the compass from the tower: 'There will be a meeting'*" (Hare, *Fanshen* 77; 2.12.1). Besides, Carol Homden asserts that "the houselights" used during the performance for the end of the play propose not "a straight progressive line, but rather a cyclical repetition of the first scene" (53). Nevertheless, it is hard to say that the cyclicality in the play does not suggest progress because despite the fact that "there is much work to be done," "[t]he play ends optimistically" and in a progressive mode (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 58). Besides, this optimistic approach is "theatricalized

by music" that accompanies the action (58) and also supported by the poem at the very end:

> PEASANT:
> There is no Jade Emperor in heaven
> There is no Dragon King on earth
> I am the Jade Emperor
> I am the Dragon King
> Make way for me you hills and
> mountains
> I'm coming.
> (*He goes to the meeting. The banner round the theatre unfurls the words of the poem.*) (78; 2.12.2)

The peasant's voice in the poem is "resolute" and while he declares "a break with the past" of the feudal times, he also has "confidence in the future" (Peacock, *Radical Stages* 104). The peasants in Long Bow have already fanshened and many things in their lives and minds have changed along with fanshen. Their political thoughts, too, have fanshened: while the peasants could not believe in the necessity of the rebellion against the landlords, they have now overthrown all kinds of lords and put their own self-will above all. If the peasants' self-will is preserved, "person by person, fanshen can be accomplished" in its full sense because the poem "implies that the power of the individual is the strongest" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 58). These individuals are ready to construct their political views now; yet, just like the fanshen in previous matters, the fanshen in their political views will not come into being suddenly.

*Fanshen* stands out among Hare's early works in terms of its production, techniques and themes. The fact that *Fanshen* is an outcome of the workshops carried out by a fringe theatre group helps to denote the fringe roots of its playwright. The use of epic theatre techniques in the play makes it a representative play of Hare's early career. In thematic terms, *Fanshen* encompasses many issues which were observed in the Britain of the 1970s such as violence, the economy, women's rights and problems as well as the conflict between the different factions in a country. The play is also distinctive with its representation of a socialist revolution in the 1970s when political dramatists were still at the beginning of their careers and their dreams were fresh about social progress, rather, socialist progress. Even though Hare does not promote or ask for a socialist revolution in the play, he gladly portrays a society which shattered hierarchy by means

of a socialist revolution. However, in the 1980s, as a consequence of the political conditions of the decade, neither Hare nor the other political dramatists will have the urge to write about their socialist dreams in their political plays. But at the same time, they will continue reflecting upon the political and social conditions of their society as seen in Hare's *The Secret Rapture*.

# CHAPTER 2

# DAVID HARE'S POLITICAL DRAMA IN THE 1980S: REFLECTION OF BRITISH POLITICS THROUGH PRIVATE LIVES AS OBSERVED IN *THE SECRET RAPTURE*

"*No one is better prepared for death than those wedded to their ideals.*"
(Duncan Wu, *Six Contemporary Dramatists* 108)

Britain in the 1980s was heavily under the influence of the policies such as monetarism and privatisation that were introduced by Margaret Thatcher's government in relation to the economy. Since these policies infused into every corner of life, almost every individual turned out to be an investor or an entrepreneur by the end of the decade. Hence, political drama in this decade dealt with nothing other than money and the people's lives that money shaped. So, this chapter examines how Hare, along with his contemporary political dramatists, come to cope with Thatcher's policies that completely ended socialist dreams. In this way, the chapter aims to demonstrate how Hare's playwriting, in technical and thematic terms, changes under the influence of contemporary politics. Correspondingly, it analyses the effect of Thatcherite policies on people's private lives as observed in Hare's *The Secret Rapture* (1988). By means of this play, the chapter also illustrates how Hare, who was born in the fringe as a playwright, becomes an established dramatist at the National Theatre.

## 2.1. The Social and Political Context of the 1980s

"[T]here [was] something of a revolution in British politics in the 1980s" says Dennis Kavanagh referring to the changes in British political and social life that took place with Thatcher's rule (212). In the 1970s, the Conservative and the Labour governments were observed to be inefficient in conducting the state's economy mostly for the sake of putting into practice the economic programme for the welfare state. In 1979, Conservative Party came to power with Margaret Thatcher, the first woman Prime Minister in British history. Her name was associated with "a political doctrine – Thatcherism," the principles of which influenced particularly the economy in Britain (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 11). Thatcherism, which developed through the eleven

years of Thatcher's rule from 1979 till 1990, was established in complete opposition to the conception of the welfare state and "the socialist discourse of the previous decade" and aimed to "replace it with a discourse of their own" (6).

The New Right is the ideology that lies behind Thatcherism and it is the combination of "neo-liberalism (the individual; freedom of choice; laissez-faire; minimal government) with neo-conservatism (strong government; social authoritarianism; hierarchy and discipline; the nation)" (Heffernan 29). In other words, the New Right has certain principles which are based on both "a traditional liberal defence of the free economy [and] a traditional conservative defence of state authority" (Gamble 36). According to the New Right, "state involvement in the economy" should be opposed; otherwise, state authority could be shaken (35). Hence, it is not surprising that the governments who adopt the New Right ideology are observed to be the "advocates of national discipline and strong defence" (35). According to Thatcherism, which is mostly based on the principles of the New Right, the government should be authoritative and the economy should be based on a free-market system in order to recover from the hardships experienced in the previous decades. Correspondingly, Thatcherism introduced not only the free-market economy to British politics but also individual enterprise to British social life. According to Thatcherism, individual enterprise needed to be promoted, as a result of which poverty in the public became unacceptable. If the poor remained poor in a society with opportunities for enterprises, they would be called "either scroungers or the victims of their own moral inadequacies" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 15).

As for how Thatcherism was introduced in Britain, it came out as a "political necessity" after the inefficient political and economic practices of the Labour and the Conservative governments which were mainly caused by their ambition to implement the principles of the post-war consensus (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 11). Consensus politics was arranged by the Conservative and the Labour parties mutually, whose primary concerns were "(i) full employment; (ii) a high level of public spending on a wide range of 'universal' benefits and services, and (iii) the broad balance between the public and private sectors attained in the 'mixed economy' of 1950" (Coxall and Robins 530). However, with Thatcherism, the consensus principles became less and less valid.

Thatcher's government first attempted to bring an end to the welfare state since it was too expensive for the government "to pay for adequate comprehensive services and benefits" (Kavanagh 212). Thatcherism, instead of the welfare state, adopted and promoted the principle that "[p]eople should be encouraged to make provision for themselves and their families, and state support should provide a safety net for the very poor, without stifling private initiative and self-help" (212-213). As a result, the government abrogated some of the public spendings like "the earnings-related supplements to benefits for the unemployed, the sick, and widows, and maternity benefit and injury benefit" (214).

Another measure taken by the Thatcherite rule in order to free the economy from the consensus was privatisation. The process of privatisation included not only "denationalization (or the sale of assets and shares by the state)" but also "liberalization (or the relaxation or abolition of a service's statutory monopoly)" (Kavanagh 218). The government members put forward a number of reasons to justify their programme of privatisation. According to their arguments, first of all, "private enterprise was much more efficient than public enterprise" (Coxall and Robins 534). Besides, they asserted that privatisation would allow "economic freedom and, thereby, political freedom"; it would encourage "competition" as well as "commercial disciplines" to be established in industries; it would also contribute to the national economy because "nationalized industries" had very "poor performance" (Kavanagh 219-220). Consequently, by and by, state-owned industries were privatised. While "part of British Oil, Associated British Ports, Amersham International, shares in BP, and the NEB's shareholdings" were on sale by 1983; "Parliament, Sealink, Jaguar, British Telecom, British Gas, and British Airways" were given to private holders in the year 1983 (221). Privatisation went on in the years 1985 and 1986 when "the sale of the rest of British Oil, receipt of the second British Telecom payment, and the sale of British Airways" were executed in return for £2.5 billion (221). Privatisation, other than bringing money to the state treasury, had another aim which was shaped by "Thatcher's populist drive" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 24). Thatcher wanted to spread and managed to create throughout the nation a capitalist desire that urged the people to participate in the privatisation process by investing the publicly offered industries (24).

In addition to the plans to end the welfare system by cutting public spending and privatising public industries, Thatcher's government also resorted to some other economic methods like monetarism and deregulation in order to get the economy under control. The first one of them, monetarism is basically "the idea that price rises could be restrained by restricting the supply of money to the economy" (Pugh 303). Monetarism aimed to reduce government spending and to prevent any negotiation with the unions over the amount of the payments (Coxall and Robins 534). In accordance with this monetarist approach, Chancellor of Exchequer Geoffrey Howe introduced a programme which included "big tax increases and a reduction in the public sector borrowing requirement from £13.5 billion to £10.5 billion" (Pugh 304). However, this measure taken by Howe resulted in failure because it caused, in 1981, the economy to "suffer[ ] its worst depression since the 1930s, with unemployment reaching 2.7. million" (304). The other policy which was employed by Thatcher's government to improve the economy but which became insolvent was financial deregulation. It was based on the theory that a remarkable increase could be achieved in the economy "by building societies in the form of mortgages which often amounted to loans diverted into ordinary expenditure" (306). However, what was achieved with this theory was only "an artificially inflated debt which boosted the demand for consumer goods" (306). As a result of such economic theories which became unsuccessful, the British economy could not recover from the depressions it experienced. Therefore, when Margaret Thatcher resigned from her post, there was not a dramatic improvement in the economy; moreover, it was "demonstrably weaker than when she first took over" (307). As for the state of the British society, it was divided into "'two nations'" which were called "the 'haves'" and the "'have-nots'" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 22). While some people earned more and more under Thatcherite rule, some earned less and less.

Thatcher's government may not have been much successful in controlling the economy but they were successful in controlling the trade unions and in curtailing their power (Coxall and Robins 534). Before Thatcher's rule, unions were very powerful especially in the industries like railways, coal and power. However, when such powerful unions existed, it was difficult for the government to carry out "free collective bargaining and

incomes policies" (Kavanagh 219). Moreover, trade unions had already become notorious among the public for their strikes in the 1970s and "fuelled a public desire for action to curb their influence, action which Margaret Thatcher was only too willing to promise and, when in power, to deliver" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 19). Hence, when she came to power, Thatcher's government commenced a campaign against the unions with the aim of "taming" them (Pugh 304). Six Employment Acts passed in the Parliament between the years 1980-1993, according to which union actions were restricted. As a result of such measurements, even at the very beginning, from 1980 to 1983, union "membership fell from 13 to 10 million" and "in 1981 only 4.2 million working days were lost in strikes, compared with an average of 13 million during the 1970s" (304). Together with the employment acts, unemployment and economic depression also led to decrease in the numbers of union membership (304).

Apart from the New Right policies adopted by the government in the management of the economy, in social life, "Victorian values" were embraced by Margaret Thatcher and her government (Trussler 362; Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 25). Especially in terms of women's role in society, the Victorian values were imposed: a man was to be "[t]he entrepreneurial, bourgeois capitalist" while a woman was expected to be "the wife and mother who controls the domestic sphere" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 25). The policies adopted by the state had their effect on the private lives of the people:

> Something nasty has happened to British apathy. It used to be commonly assumed in Britain that politics have little or no effect on everyday life, let alone personal happiness and the arts. Now good old British apathy, with its loathing of the pretentious, seems in retrospect to have been a positively healthy attitude. Thatcherism did something very unBritish to Britain: it managed, in a baleful way, to politicise everything. (Brenton 77)

Thatcher, herself, had an image, which "was clearly female but not feminine" at all (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 17). Even if she was assumed to be a "feminist," her thoughts related to gender issues "were 'bourgeois' in that she was prepared to adopt male qualities and values in order to succeed in a male-dominated profession" (25). Women in her times were not that liberated as expected but they continued to take part in the outside world: they helped their husbands in miners' strikes, they participated in the campaign against nuclear arms, and they continued to work though "largely in part-

time work, particularly in the service industries" (25). According to the statistics, the rate of working women increased "from around 65 per cent in 1981 to 73 per cent in 1991" (Milling 4).

Margaret Thatcher, because of her authoritative rule and her policies in economic life that led to high unemployment, became less and less popular with the electorate before the elections in 1983. Also, a new party called the Social Democratic Party was founded in 1981 by the "[s]upporters of centrist politics within Labour Party" in order to divide the votes and, accordingly, to bring on Thatcher's failure (Marwick, *Culture in Britain* 138). However, this new party brought out nothing more than the "fragmentation of opposition" since it led to a decrease in the votes of Labour Party (Billington, *State of the Nation* 303). Moreover, the Falklands War broke out in 1982 and it "restored Mrs Thatcher's fortunes," which would bring her success in the elections of 1983 (Marwick, *Culture in Britain* 138). The media helped Thatcher and the war was happily received assuming that it "echoed earlier battles and Victorian imperial excursions" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 18).

In 1987, Thatcher again won the elections mostly as a result of the assumably inefficient election campaign conducted by Labour Party. In fact, after their loss in 1983 elections, Labour Party changed its leader and Neil Kinnock replaced Michael Foot. Kinnock prepared for the elections a new manifesto which had "a more centrist position" (Pugh 311). However, he could not increase the votes of the Labour to win the elections, and Thatcher's government came to power for the third time in 1987. This third victory meant "that Thatcherite values now had a firm grip on the country" (Marwick, *Culture in Britain* 140). But Thatcher's rule did not continue till the end of her third term since she resigned in 1990. What caused her resignation was "her [negative] attitude to the Common Market and the question of whether Britain should join the European Monetary Fund and agree to a single European currency" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 30). After her resignation, she was replaced by John Major as the Prime Minister and as the head of the Conservative Party.

## 2.2. British Political Drama of the 1980s

### 2.2.1. Issues Political Playwrights Dealt with in the 1980s

In the 1980s, political drama encountered two kinds of problems: one was the end of the socialist dreams that politically conscious playwrights had in the late 1960s and the other was the heavy imposition of right-wing values in all spheres of social, economic and political life (Milling 68). Following the economic problems and union strikes experienced by the Labour government in the 1970s, the public lost their hopes that these problems would be solved by a Labour government or with socialist principles. Thereupon, with the coming of Thatcher's government, right-wing values were introduced to all areas of life and the British political dramatists did not know how to respond to this. As argued above, political dramatists examined the state of the nation in their plays of the 1970s, by using domestic or foreign or historical setting. However, in the face of the groundbreaking changes introduced by Thatcher at the beginning of the 1980s, they did not know how to deal with Thatcher's Britain or "how to critique dramatically the values of the Thatcherite ideology" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 65). Moreover, at the beginning of the 1980s, their dramaturgy lacked a proper "theatrical discourse" which was "capable of effectively portraying that critique and engaging an audience that was becoming increasingly unsympathetic to socialist politics" (65). The audience in the 1980s, along with a right-wing government, became less and "less interested in 'committed dramas' than in theatrical spectacle" (L. Taylor 49).

Hence, at the turn of the decade, the political dramatists were "in a state of disconcerted confusion" about whether or how "to engage with the debates which were shaping the emergent Britain and its theatre culture" (L. Taylor 49). They were forced to decide "whether [or not] to abandon as obsolete a public, Marxist viewpoint and focus instead, like the majority of the mainstream theatre, on the private and personal" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 65). This state of uncertainty resulted in less plays by the political dramatists in the 1980s which directly dealt with the state of Britain. According to Michael Billington, the primary frustration with the 1980s' British theatre was its "failure . . . to respond to new political circumstances" (*State of the Nation* 304). This

meant, for Billington, the death of political drama, which was expected to respond to contemporary politics (304). However, the art of political drama did not come to an end in the 1980s (Milling 69) since, as Hare states, "'[i]t's an art form" and it could not end with the change of politics in the state organisation (*Obedience* 139). The debate whether political drama died or continued in the 1980s went on throughout the decade. Actually, during the 1980s, political drama remained in existence but its scope widened:

> Indeed the perception of the death of the political play during the 1980s is very closely related to a trammelled idea of an appropriate political stylistic, and a proscribed idea of what counts as political – one which chooses not to note the outdated gendered and racial limitations of many earlier plays dubbed state-of-the-nation. Such a limited perspective on the political serves neither the established playwrights, nor those who, during the 1980s, wrote explicitly political plays about the nation, the global, and the personal as interlocking. (Milling 70)

Milling explains that political drama was not limited to the state of the nation plays because the plays in the 1980s were "explicitly political," dealing with both national and global issues (70). Moreover, there were also plays by political dramatists which treated personal matters and which could be considered political taking into consideration the fact that the "personal is political" (70). These works were political since they proposed alternative views and ways of living to mainstream politics and social life. Besides, they represented the dissident voices of various political and social groups like those of women, gay/lesbian, Asian, Afro-Caribbean, black and black women.

Although Michael Billington claims that "the theatre . . . recovered its capacity for dissent" only in the second half of the 1980s (*State of the Nation* 283), political plays were written by both the established and the new playwrights of political drama from the very beginning of the 1980s, though less in number compared to the works in the late 1980s. As argued and shown below, in the 1980s "much art and literature was clearly critical of the kind of selfish, divided society, where money is god, associated with Thatcherism" (Marwick, *Culture in Britain* 141). For instance, Howard Brenton in collaboration with Tony Howard wrote *A Short Sharp Shock*, which was produced in 1980 at the Royal Court Theatre. The play criticises and "caricatur[ises]" how Thatcher's government disposed of the welfare state and put certain "monetarist

policies" (Milling 70). Brenton wrote another play in 1980, *The Romans in Britain*, which was first produced at the National Theatre. This play was also about the Thatcherite politics and it reflected especially "the moral bullying and feverish sanctimony that were a by-product of a market-driven decade [the 1980s]" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 305). In the face of the right-wing politics that changed people's lives deeply, some from the Left, supposedly, "lurch[ed] to the right" especially after "s[eeing] the Conservative government re-elected in 1983" (Milling 71). This is the exact story of David Edgar's *Maydays*, which was produced in 1983 by the Royal Shakespeare Company (71). Another important political play in the early 1980s is Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*, which is maybe the "only" play, according to Billington, that "seriously addressed the radically changed political landscape" (*State of the Nation* 307). The play was produced at the Royal Court Theatre in 1982 and it appeared to be "an instant success" (307). Churchill, by portraying in the play various female characters from different time periods, emphasises her point "that feminism has to be seen from a socialist perspective" (307). She not only criticises Prime Minister Thatcher for her "replication . . . of the ruthless male success ethic" but also the kind of feminism that is ignorant of sisterhood (307). Not only feminism but also ethnicity took its place in the political playwriting of the 1980s: Hanif Kureishi's *Borderline* was performed at the Royal Court Theatre in 1981 as a production of the Joint Stock Theatre Company (King 217). The play is an important one for its time in that it is accepted to be "the first play with Asian characters on a major stage by an author of part-Asian descent" and it revealed the direct "relationship between immigration policies and how Asians were treated" in British society (217). There were also issue-based political plays in the early 1980s such as John Burrows's *One Big Blow* (1980) about miners (Milling 75) and G. F. Newman's *Operation Bad Apple* (1981) about the Metropolitan Police Force (71).

In the second half of the Thatcherite decade, political playwrights became more responsive to Thatcher's politics. It was especially after Thatcher's second election victory in 1983 "that writers began to raise their heads above the parapet" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 309). For Dominic Shellard, it was with Jim Cartwright's *Road* (1986) that "the political commitment" of the 1980s' theatre was foregrounded (219). The play reveals "the contemporaneous social conditions of a decaying northern town,"

Lancashire, where mostly working-class people live, and it critically explores "the debilitating effect of unemployment" in Thatcher's Britain (219). Among the plays written in the second half of the 1980s, there are also David Hare and Howard Brenton's *Pravda* (1985) as well as Caryl Churchill's *Serious Money* (1987). These plays, according to Hare, deeply influenced the British theatre of the 1980s as plays portraying the "aversion in the '80s" to the hegemony of Thatcherism (Hare, "Dramatically"). As Hare asserts, these plays try to make a mutual point clear about Thatcherism, which is that "this is the force and the force is sweeping through the decade and nothing can stop it unless you bastards organize." *Pravda* was written by Hare and Brenton collaboratively and first produced at the National Theatre in 1985. In the play, Rupert Murdoch, the Australian tycoon, is satirised as a man who bought *The Times* and the *Sun*, which he made "a vulgar and hysterical propaganda sheet" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 310). *Pravda* critically questions the press in Britain which had a "creeping uniformity of tone" in supporting Thatcher's politics (310). Similarly, Churchill's *Serious Money*, which was put on stage by the Joint Stock Theatre Group at the Royal Court Theatre, is a play about one of the topics which belong to "[t]he vocabulary that Thatcherite rule left behind"; it is about "business and money" (Dorney 176). What the play makes use of in the background is privatisation since, by the time the play was staged, major public industries had been privatised in Britain, like British Telecom and British Gas; also, some others were for sale (Billington, *State of the Nation* 313).

David Hare, unlike his contemporaries Brenton in *Romans in Britain* and Churchill in *Top Girls*, did not write plays in the first half of the 1980s which directly deal with contemporary British politics. He treats global matters in faraway settings in plays like *A Map of the World* (1982), *The Bay at Nice* (1986) and *Wrecked Eggs* (1986). His first straightforward attack on contemporary politics is observed in his collaborative work, *Pravda*. It is his *The Secret Rapture* that closely examines the society in Thatcher's Britain. While criticising British contemporary politics in *Pravda* and in *The Secret Rapture*, Hare also reflects his own disillusionment with the socialist dreams having come to an end (Boon, "Keeping Turning Up" 32). Hence, in the 1980s, Hare is observed to have "softened his radical politics," which he subscribed to in the 1970s (32). John J. Su describes Hare's plays in the 1980s as works which reveal his "moral"

concerns because by this decade, for Hare, "[g]one are the wild days of the Portable Theatre, touring the country presenting plays concerned with the socialist message more than the drama itself" (24). However, Hare does not "abandon[ ]" reflecting his political views in his plays of the 1980s (Boon, "Keeping Turning Up" 32). He prefers to present them within the framework of domestic settings and through the private lives of his characters rather than in through social and political institutions he made use of in the 1970s.

### 2.2.2. Theatrical Venues Where Political Plays Were Staged in the 1980s

In April, 1981, the grants provided by the Arts Council for the theatre companies in the UK since 1946 were, "for the first time in its 35 year history," reduced "drastic[ally]" by Thatcher's government (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 36). There were two alleged reasons for the "drastic cuts" (36): one was the general economic measures taken by the Conservative government that came to power in the midst of various economic difficulties while the other was the "despis[ing]" attitude of the Tory government against the concept and practice of subsidy, which was introduced by the welfare state (Dorney 166-167). In fact, it was claimed by Margaret Thatcher and her government that the arts subsidies increased in accordance with inflation. However, when the statistics are evaluated, it is observed that the amounts given were sometimes "ahead of inflation" and sometimes "below it" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 44). Moreover, since theatre is a performing art, it is "highly labor-intensive" and it is under "additional inflationary pressures"; as a result, it can be observed that "the overall increase in the Grant-in-Aid is somewhat less than inflation and, therefore, in real terms, represents a cut" (44).

The Tory government, who was against the subsidies, was also "question[ing] the need for [the Arts Council's] existence"; although they could not abolish the Council totally, they attempted, at least, to manipulate the Council's spending and its decisions (Trussler 364). Hence, in the 1980s, "the Arts Council itself transformed from an independent funding body into a pliable instrument of government" (Billington, *State of the Nation* 322). To illustrate, the Arts Council reduced the amount of the grants given to the

smaller theatre companies while it continued to fund larger London theatres and especially "the four 'National' companies – the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Opera and Royal Ballet" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 37). The motivation behind the Arts Council's privileging the national theatres was that the national theatres were "national," which allowed them to be manipulated by mainstream politics (37). Moreover, if the big theatres were closed down for financial reasons, it would be hard for the government to explain it to the public (37).

As the subsidies of the Arts Council decreased, the government encouraged the local authorities to support the smaller theatre companies. Accordingly, "[b]etween 1980 and 1985 the expenditure of local authorities on the arts more than doubled to over £100 million" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 39). However, there was a problem with this funding since there was an upper limit imposed on the expenditures of the local authorities (39). Also, towards the end of the decade, with the introduction of the poll tax, local councils had to control their budgets more tightly (39). Moreover, just as mainstream theatres were manipulated by government politics since they needed to maintain their funding from the Arts Council, the small theatre companies, in need of funding, became open to manipulation by the local authorities as well. For instance, the authority that patronised the arts most was the Labour-run, Greater London Council (GLC) and it "consciously politicized the arts, employing them as a means of ideological resistance to current political and cultural policies" (40).

Besides the financial support provided by the Arts Council and by the local authorities, a new kind of income was introduced to the theatre world of the 1980s. It was private sponsorship or "commercial sponsorship," according to which the theatre companies were expected to find financial support from private authorities (Billington, *State of the Nation* 283; Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 56). This kind of funding was also problematic as far as the theatre companies were concerned since it "was transient and could as easily be withdrawn as awarded" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 56). Also, the sponsors did not guarantee the fund "far ahead," which prevented the theatre workers from planning the future of their companies (56). Moreover, the sponsors did not risk their investment so they "support[ed] the known and prestigious" companies (56). The

companies, in the face of this commercial fact, tended to choose and stage plays that would draw audiences and make money, which "affected their repertoire" (Dorney 167). The fact that commercial sponsorship had an influence on the works performed by the companies was a problem faced by all companies whether funded by a private or a public organisation. Hence it can be said that "[t]he Lord Chamberlain may have been sidelined but drama still faced the threat of censorship" as a result of "the unsatisfactory allocation of funding" (Shellard 186). It was not only lack of money but also certain government policies that helped to censor the works of the companies as seen in gay theatre companies which were under pressure because of the "Clause 28" of the Local Government Act, which states that homosexual relationships must not be promoted or shown as acceptable by the local authorities (186).

Evidently, in the 1980s, the theatre companies, whether national or regional, needed to find and gain financial support on their own, either from public or private institutions. For this aim, the companies had "to demonstrate [their] 'good housekeeping'" (Trussler 364). In other words, the performances staged by the companies had to be commercially successful and had to make money in order to be preferred and financially supported. As a consequence of this unwritten rule, "the criteria by which [a theatrical performance] was evaluated" were changed (Billington, *State of the Nation* 319) and the audiences were turned into customers (283). Theatrical works were supported no longer for "[their] spiritual nourishment, intellectual stimulus or communal pleasure" (284) or for "[their] inherent worth" but according to "[their] commercial potential" (319). As a result, in the theatre world of the 1980s, the subsidised companies especially the National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) as well as the regional companies chose to stage the kind of plays which would make money and "which could have extended runs and even West End transfers" (Dorney 167). These plays were generally from "popular classical revivals (Shakespeare and Chekhov), adaptations of novels (particularly Dickens), commissions from established and successful writers (notably Stoppard, Ayckbourn, Hare, Edgar and Russell) and an increasing number of musicals" (167). Especially musicals became so popular and profitable in the 1980s that the musical was considered "a permanent gold-mine" by the subsidised companies

(Billington, *State of the Nation* 285). That is why, the 1980s were called "the decade of the musical" (Trussler 362).

Political playwrights who started their careers in the fringe in the late 1960s or in the 1970s like David Hare, Howard Brenton, David Edgar, or Caryl Churchill had already transferred to the mainstream in the mid-1970s though they continued writing for the fringe as well. In the 1980s, although it is hard "to say that political theatre dominate[d] the major subsidised theatres, it [was] certainly a major presence (Bull 225). The works of political dramatists were among the ones that could make money so they took their part in the lists of plays which were put on stage in mainstream theatres by large companies. The transference of these playwrights to the mainstream was regarded by some critics as being "sold," just as it was claimed in the 1970s. In addition, in the 1980s, some believed that this move to mainstream theatres "[was] accompanied by a move towards the right in public political circles" (225-226). This fact brings to minds the question whether the political dramatists' plays produced in the mainstream came to mean a "penetration" or a "containment" (226). In other words, it is questionable whether the political dramatists penetrated into and took hold of the capitalistic domain of theatre or whether they lost touch with their own ideology and were absorbed by mainstream theatres. However, it is for sure that, though their plays were staged in mainstream theatres, political dramatists did not abandon defending their own political views in their plays and there was "no let-up in the[ir] struggle" (226).

### 2.2.3. Forms/Techniques Political Dramatists Used in the 1980s

Political dramatists in the 1980s wrote their plays in a number of forms and by using various staging techniques. It is hard to limit political drama in any age to a few specific techniques since, as Jane Milling says, political dramatists wrote their plays "in all kinds of dramaturgical form" (70). As stated, agit-prop theatre techniques were among the dramatic methods used by political dramatists in the 1970s. Although "[t]he conditions [under Thatcher's rule] would seem ripe for a revival of agit-prop theatre," agit-prop theatre did not flourish in the 1980s (Bull 199). After the Thatcherite government used "unemployment as a weapon against trade-union militancy," it became almost

impossible in the 1980s "to mobilise organised working-class opposition" (200). Under such circumstances, "agit-prop theatre ha[d] little to offer" (200). Hence, Howard Brenton refused to use agit-prop in his political play *Greenland* (1988) (Innes 191), which is a utopian play in which "[r]adical theatre (satirized in the kind of Agitprop troupe Brenton had long since distanced himself from) and socialist politicians are both rejected" (203). Michael Billington talks about "two particular forms [of drama that] dominated the Eighties: the musical and the epic" (*State of the Nation* 295-296). Epic theatre was the preferred form in politically conscious plays since "the epic 'events' were seen as obliquely political in their emphasis on hope and redemption" (296). Although epic theatre was not sufficient to battle with Thatcherism, it, at least, "provide[d] a pleasurable, and sometimes inspiring, alternative to the meanness of the times for middle-class audiences" (296). David Edgar's adaptation of *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* is an example of epic theatre written for the Royal Shakespeare Company and performed in 1980, while Brenton and Hare's *Pravda* also uses some epic theatre techniques.

In his plays of the 1980s, Hare put to use foreign and historical settings as observed in *A Map of the World* and in *The Bay at Nice* or only a foreign setting as seen in *Wrecked Eggs*, which takes place in modern times. Since, in the 1980s, the immediacy of the subject matter was not his concern, Hare worked more diligently on the form of his plays. He wrote his political play *The Secret Rapture* in the form of tragedy. Hare comments on this play as follows: "In *The Secret Rapture* I strained to write in what I felt was classical form. As disciplined a form as possible" (Hare, "An Interview" 172).

### 2.3. *The Secret Rapture*

*The Secret Rapture*, which was produced in 1988, is known to be "Hare's theatrical complement to an earlier film which portrays the destructiveness of a selfish pursuit of personal and political power – *Paris by Night*, shot in 1987" (Nothof 187). Although Hare wrote *Paris by Night* before *The Secret Rapture*, the production of the former took time and it was released only in 1989. What unites the two works are their female characters, Marion in *The Secret Rapture* and Clara in *Paris by Night*, both of whom are

the representatives of the Conservative government in the 1980s and neither of whom hesitates to destroy other people's lives for the sake of their own political and material benefits. *The Secret Rapture* is also one of the plays Hare wrote for his girlfriend Blair Brown to perform the protagonist; Hare believed that "Blair had a quality as an actress that would change the tone of [his] work" ("An Interview" 176).

As for its production, *The Secret Rapture* was first put on stage by the director Howard Davies and the first performance took place at the Lyttelton Theatre, London on 4th of October in 1988 (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 138). Hare, who had already started his National Theatre career in 1978 with *Plenty*, wrote *The Secret Rapture* as his "seventh for the National" (138). The play had a revival in 1989 and it was performed with a different cast ("David Hare" 211-212). Like many of Hare's plays, it was produced in the USA as well, at the Public Theatre in 1989 under the direction of the playwright himself (*Theatricalizing Politics* 138). *The Secret Rapture* was received in London as a successful play, though along with critical approaches; nevertheless, "the American premiere was marred by controversy and the production closed in less than a month" ("David Hare" 208). Frank Rich, the editor of *New York Times*, presented negative views on *The Secret Rapture* in his review entitled "Bad Sister vs. Good Sister In Hare's 'Secret Rapture'." Rich asserts that although the play is a criticism of capitalism, "Mr. Hare, serving as his play's director for its Broadway premiere at the Barrymore, [became] his own worst enemy." Throughout his article, Rich criticises many other issues related to the Broadway production of the play. He also dispraises the fact that Hare wrote the character Isobel for his girlfriend Blair Brown. To this review, David Hare responded with "a vehemently written letter" (Oliva "David Hare" 208). According to Hare, it is this letter and the attitude of *New York Times* after the letter that caused the "short run" of the play in New York because, as he states, "[y]ou can't get your audience to listen to the ideas in your play without overcoming the power of a monopoly newspaper" (Interview 225).

As for the play itself, David Hare describes *The Secret Rapture* as "a play about a man who shoots his girlfriend" in his interview with Judy Lee Oliva ("An Interview" 181). Hare, in this statement, reduces his play to a love story and obfuscates the features of

political drama which are observed to dominate his play. In the same interview, he also elaborates on the fact that *The Secret Rapture* is a tragedy and that this is what he had in mind while writing the play rather than any political concern: "politically is not how I wrote it. To me it is a tragedy. And I've conceived it as a tragedy" (168-169). According to Hare, it is not the responsibility of a playwright and it is not his aim in his plays "to put forward a sort of program of political change" ("An Interview" 181). That is why, it is claimed that, though a political dramatist, Hare has never written a political play "in a pedagogical or programmatic manner" and he has never been "a didactic dramatist" (Wade 65). While Hare describes the nature of his plays, he claims that they deal more with moral concerns than political ones. He attempts to convey in his plays "what [people] should do" and how things ought to be since he is writing "about moral issues" ("Dramatically"). As argued previously, Hare does not expect his reader/audience to make a revolution and he only wishes to portray the possibility of political change with emphasis on justice and human rights in his 1970s' play *Fanshen*. In the 1980s, too, he continues "to appeal to a sense of justice or appeal to a sense of humanity in the [reader/]audience about how things are" (Hare, "An Interview" 181). However, Hare never stops reflecting the politics of his time and, despite his claims, *The Secret Rapture* is one of the most important political plays of the 1980s. In fact, as L. Taylor states, it "is Hare's most direct theatrical response to Thatcherism to date" (57). Nevertheless, since Thatcherism infused into every corner of life in Britain, it made it hard for Hare to imagine a revolutionary political change. Hence, Hare does not refer to a revolution in his political plays of the 1980s, unlike what he does in *Fanshen*. Still, he makes use of "certain eighties attitudes" in the background of his plays, particularly in *The Secret Rapture* (Hare "An Interview" 181). As Hare states,

> . . . [*The Secret Rapture*] is political in the sense that it's set in the present day, and into the room, I hope, comes the atmosphere of what it is like to live in Britain at the moment. To me that has to be the political atmosphere, because one of the effects of Thatcherism has been to introduce politics into every aspect of people's lives. And I don't know how you can write truthfully about what it's like to be alive in Britain today without some reflection of what the political atmosphere is and how ethical attitudes, moral attitudes, and even, I would say, emotional attitudes have been changed by a very polarizing government. (Interview 224)

Hare's main target in *The Secret Rapture* is not to render the politics of the time but to explore the human condition within the context of British politics and to express his

moral concerns and arguments on the relation between public and politics. It can be said that *The Secret Rapture* reveals and illustrates the political by means of the personal in accordance with the motto 'the personal is the political' (Fitzpatrick 111; Billington "Welcome Hare" 19). In Billington's words, Hare has a "gift as a dramatist" that enables him to "relat[e] private despair to the public world" ("The Midas Touch" 25).

In accordance with the argument that Hare examines the human condition by reflecting upon British politics in the background, this chapter will reflect upon Hare's political drama in the 1980s by examining *The Secret Rapture* both within the context of British politics of the 1980s and by pinpointing the moral issues which are taken into consideration on a personal level and which are illustrated through the private lives of the characters. *The Secret Rapture* can be regarded as a play that illustrates "the prevailing zeitgeist of Britain in the late 1980s" (Fitzpatrick 114). At the same time, it is a play that explores "the effects of British politics on human lives" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 138). The social and the political background the play employs makes it a "topical[ ]" play but, for Fitzpatrick, the human condition it examines in relation with the politics makes it "universal[ ]" (Fitzpatrick 111).

The play concerns the protagonist Isobel's life both in business and in private and presents how her life ends because of the economic conditions and individualistic people of Thatcherite Britain. Isobel is portrayed as the ultimate representative of "goodness" (Donesky 114) and "decency," which are "Hare's core value[s]" (Homden 173). She is the only character in the play who is "capable of feeling guilt or of assuming responsibility" and she seems to belong to the previous decade, not to the Thatcherite Britain of the 1980s (Fitzpatrick 108). Her values do not have any place in the world of Marion, Tom, Katherine and Irwin, who are corrupted by the age and by Thatcherism (Hare, "Dramatically"). It is clear that David Hare, in *The Secret Rapture*, portrays the British society under the influence of Thatcherite politics by revealing the clashes in society which are not only between the characters, "sisters, lovers, and friends," but also "between ideas: social, political, and religious" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 138). The society in Thatcher's Britain, as presented through the characters' private lives in *The Secret Rapture*, falters between good and evil, past and present, Conservative and Labour; and in between, the play attempts to define the new decade

(138). Since *The Secret Rapture* is considered a play of clashes, critics such as Judy Lee Oliva and Anne Nothof claim that it can be called a "morality play" of modern times (*Theatricalizing Politics* 145; 190). However, *The Secret Rapture* is not an ordinary morality play but a very complex one for two reasons. First, the play sheds light on the contradictions observed in British people's lives in the 1980s (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 145). Second, the goodness in the play is a very problematic one because it varies in Thatcher's Britain according to people's interpretations (Nothof 190).

Marion, Isobel's sister in the play, is the most important representative of the corrupt characters that belong to the age. The first and the foremost clash of the play takes place between these sisters and their approach to life and politics. In fact, the clash between the sisters originates from the clash between the values of the past and those of the present as represented by their father and Marion, respectively. In *The Secret Rapture*, by means of the dead father, "nostalgia [is used] as an interpretive matrix," that is, the past is presented so that the present can be illustrated and interpreted as well as the contrast between them can be pointed out clearly (Su 27). The play starts with the death of Robert, Marion and Isobel's father, which represents the death of the values belonging to the previous generation and the start of a new decade. Robert was neither a rich man nor a religious person: he was only "[a] small-town bookseller" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 373; 1.1); "[h]e had no investments, he didn't approve of them" (406; 1.3), and he "never spoke to a priest in his life" (379; 1.2). Isobel, like her father, attaches little importance to money as seen in her satisfaction with her small business and she is not devoted to religion as implied in her dialogues with Tom on Jesus (376; 1.1; 419; 1.4; 460; 2.6). Marion, on the other hand, is fond of making money as a follower of the contemporary Conservative Party politics, and although her own religious views are not revealed, she has a harmonious relationship with her pious husband, Tom. In terms of political view, Robert never supported nuclear power and, further, he maintained a "forty years of opposition to nuclear armaments" (380; 1.2), which makes him again similar to Isobel, and different from Marion.

On the one hand, one of Robert's daughters, Isobel, resembles him in that she is unfit for the society she lives in. On the other hand, his other daughter Marion is so different

from him that she is an exact representative of the new age and its values. As Isobel does not belong to this new decade, she "can't . . . *live*, like other people" and she will die at the end of the play (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 461; 2.6). While the play starts with her father's death, it ends with Isobel's; in this way, "the play comes full circle" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 144). By means of the deaths of the father and the daughter, what the playwright illustrates is "not nostalgia for a class-ridden and bigoted England of *Pravda*, nor for an idyllic England of cricket and cream teas"; he does not dream about going back to the England of the previous decades but he only misses "a gentler, more caring society" existing at those times (L. Taylor 57). Hare, through Isobel and her father, depicts his longing for a decent society that was alive a generation before but is totally lost with their death (Hare, Interview 224).

Though dead, Robert continues to haunt the lives of the living characters, especially of his daughters; that is why, the five scenes out of eight take place in his house which the three women, two daughters and a wife, cannot leave after his death. With his death, Robert leaves his daughters with the responsibility of taking care of his young wife, Katherine, who has alcohol addiction and who is now without any economic support. The legacy of their father puts Isobel and Marion on a test, which helps to disclose the different characters of the sisters (Carney 41; Homden 172). On the one hand, Isobel is loyal to her father's memory and does her best to let him rest in peace by taking care of Katherine; on the other hand, Marion is torn between her own business life and her conscience constantly disturbed by her disregard for Katherine. Marion, as a woman of her time, seems to be too busy with her work to take care of Katherine. She is a member of Conservative Party, the major rule of which is "profitable achievement" and which "has no room for the Katherines of this world," who are nothing other than burden (Gindin 170). However, Isobel is too conscious and too responsible a person to neglect Katherine; that is why she ends up carrying the burden of Katherine.

In addition to their relationship with their father and step mother, there are other factors that denote the distinction between Marion and Isobel. Marion, for instance, is introduced in the stage direction as a woman "*in her late thirties, brisk, dark-haired, wearing a business suit*" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 367; 1.1). The reader/audience learn

from Katherine that she is "'Junior Minister at the Department of the Environment'" and modeled on Thatcher to a great extent (385; 1.2). Because she is a politician, she is always "[s]martly dressed and crisply efficient" and she must be almost always reachable by phone even on the day her father dies (Homden 172). Marion is unceasingly diligent in her work and earning money is at the centre of her life. She has arranged all her life according to her work; hence, "[she] has ruthlessly eliminated spirit, turned her generosity into cupidity, and restricted her politics to the mechanical form of attendance at her office every day" (Gindin 172). Isobel, in comparison to Marion, is described by the stage direction as "*younger than Marion and blonder. She is in her early thirties, and casually dressed in a shirt and blue jeans*" while Marion "*wear*[*s*] *a business suit*" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 367; 1.1). Isobel does not conform to the social norms as Marion, who wears a business suit at work and black at the funeral. Isobel prefers to wear her "*blue jeans and a red shirt*" (379; 1.2) even on the day of her father's funeral for she believes in integrity rather than appearance. Isobel has her own "values" not only in business but also in her private life ("Dramatically"). Money is not the determinant factor in her relationships with people nor is work her one and only concern in life.

Marion appears on stage at the beginning of the play as "*nervous, awed*" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 367; 1.1). It is supposed that she is in such a spirit because her father has just died and that she has missed his last minutes, which is true to a certain extent; however, what really makes her nervous is trying to retrieve the ring she has given to her father as a present and she asks questions about the ring not about her father:

> MARION: Did he …
> ISOBEL: What?
> . . .
> [then she changes the subject but after a while, she cannot resist her wonder]
> MARION: I was wondering …
> ISOBEL: What?
> MARION: No, it's just … no, it's nothing. It's silly. I gave him a little thing. Six months ago. When I … when you first told me he was ill. I was shocked. I bought him a present. (368-369; 1.1)

Then she learns from Isobel that the nurse and Isobel took it off from his finger and put it in the drawer where Marion immediately finds and takes it. However, after getting the

ring, a guilty conscience starts to haunt Marion and she attempts to make explanations for her behaviour. One of the two reasons she puts forward is that she wants to have the ring as "a sort of keepsake" (371; 1.1). The other reason is that she bought the ring for her father as "an expression of her love," that is why, it is a very expensive ring and she does not want Katherine, Robert's young wife, to have it and to spend on alcohol:

> MARION: . . . For God's sake, I mean, the ring is actually valuable. Actually no, that sounds horrid. I apologize. I'll tell you the truth. I thought when I bought it – I just walked into this very expensive shop and I thought, this is one of the few really decent things I've done in my life. And it's true. I spent, as it happens, a great deal of money, rather more … rather *more* than I had at the time. I went over the top. I wanted something to express my love for my father. Something adequate.
> *Marion has tears in her eyes. Isobel is very quiet*. (370; 1.1)

What is problematic in Marion's actions is that they are all motivated by material concerns. She bought the ring, first of all, for her father "out of guilt" because she had no time to visit him while he was ill (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 139):

> MARION: . . . I wouldn't have managed it. I know myself too well. The times I came down to see him … I'll say this to you … it made me uncomfortable. I couldn't be wholly at ease. I find it hard … I mean if someone's, you know, as he was … I find it hard to strike the right attitude. Don't you find that?
> ISOBEL: I don't know.
> *There's a moment's silence*. (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 369; 1.1)

Since it was to cover up her guilt and to express her love for her father, she bought an invaluable ring. It is her materialism that makes her "equate [and show] love with a valuable object" (Golomb 564). But, as the ring is an expensive one, she wishes to retrieve it when her father dies. Thus, again "[her] materialism and emotional shallowness" urges her to have the ring immediately after her father's death (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 85).

All of Marion's actions which lack emotion are governed by concerns for money and business. For her, family is one of the responsibilities a businessman or woman needs to deal with as scheduled in his/her weekly programme. She says, "[f]amily things actually belong at weekend. A drink on Sunday is lovely. Or lunch. Or walking after lunch. That's the right time for the family. It's crazy when it starts infecting your weekend" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 446; 2.6). For her, business affairs override familial relations:

when her husband is about to close down her sister Isobel's firm, she considers it "simply an administrative decision[, w]hich makes total economic sense" (446; 2.6). Or, when her sister is desperate after her failures in business and in love, what Marion proposes to her is that she should get "professional help" (451; 2.6). She reduces human psychology, more importantly her own sister's psychology, to something mechanical or material which can be repaired when it is damaged: "Get someone in who's experienced. These days there's no stigma attached. As far as I'm concerned, it's like fixing a car. If it breaks, just mend it. It's all avoidable. Nowadays they have brilliant people" (451; 2.6). Marion's statements and behaviours which lack emotion are the results of the social and economic conditions of the 1980s rather than Marion's own character. Through Marion, Hare illustrates the idea that there is not "a distinction between certain emotional styles and the ideology that encourages the accumulation of personal wealth" (Donesky 115).

It is an obvious fact in the play that "Marion is clearly uncomfortable when emotions take precedence in any situation" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 139). Hence, the explanations she makes for retrieving the ring are not enough to clear her conscience and she is still disturbed by the fact that she was absent during her father's death and that she got a man's ring while he was lying dead. Therefore, she tries to find an alternative way to deal with this stressful state of mind. Marion first attempts to find fault with Katherine and questions whether Katherine was drunk or not when Robert died, which "hardly matters . . . to Dad" according to Isobel (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 372; 1.1). Then Marion asks if Katherine helped Isobel after Robert died:

> MARION: Was Katherine much help?
> ISOBEL: What do you mean?
> MARION: Was she any help to you? When you were nursing Dad?
> ISOBEL: She was fine.
> MARION: I bet you had to do everything yourself.
> ISOBEL: No. Katherine helped.
> *Marion looks ironically at Tom*.
> MARION: Isobel can't resist being kind about people. (373; 1.1)

Marion herself was not there during or after her father's death but she wants to cover up this fact by such attacks. After the fault she finds with Katherine brings no result, Marion accuses Isobel of causing her to "feel awful" about the ring and to "feel as if

[she's] always in the wrong" (374; 1.1). Although Isobel did not criticise her about the ring, she says "will you please stop this endless criticism? Because I honestly think it's driving me mad" and leaves the room by "*cry*[*ing*] *uncontrollably*" (375; 1.1). Isobel, on the other hand, considers Marion's actions as "a way of coping" with her grief for her father's death (375; 1.1). Marion lacks emotions and certain sensibilities while Isobel is the embodiment of these; therefore, the contrast between the sisters is inevitable. Moreover, the opposing characters of the two sisters represent Thatcher's government and the others who do not agree with its ideology. In a way, it is indicated in the play "that the policies and behaviour of those in the Tory government in the 1980s [like those of Marion] were partly motivated by guilt-induced anger at the spiritually enlightened forces of the opposition [like Isobel]" (Donesky 114). While Marion represents the woman shaped by the values of her age and her political party, Isobel represents the dissident voice against these values with her "enlightened sensibilities" (112). Since Marion "feel[s] implicitly criticized" by the spiritually enlightened character, Isobel, the former attempts to ease her conscience by attacking and "oppress[ing]" the latter (112).

Marion is "emotionally repressed" not only on the day of her father's death but she is mostly observed "to be easily frustrated and angered" throughout the play (Carney 42). However, in her own daily life, she is expected to be at ease and to feel comfortable since, in Tom's words, "she's got everything she wants. Her party's in power. For ever. She's in office. She's an absolute cert for the Cabinet" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 375; 1.1). No matter how successful they are, the Conservatives of the Thatcherite times are observed to be very competitive, which brings out continuous tension. According to the philosophy of this period, the more people earn, the more they wish to earn. Hence, it is not surprising that the Conservative government in the 1980s is, as Marion boasts, "quite a different world [w]ith extremely high standards of intellect and conduct" where "[c]ivil servants have an extremely competitive and highly ordered career structure" (390; 1.2). It is their pride and materialism that not only makes them stressful but also brings them in opposition to the rest of the society. Hence, what causes Marion to be uncomfortable in the play is the voice and the existence of this other, this dissident part of the society, which is depicted through Isobel's goodness, in "[her] self-possession

and lack of interest in the ideology of the 1980s" (Carney 42). David Hare says that he is enchanted by this conflict between good and evil, the self and the other:

> . . . once I began to write, it was as if my whole spirit had been taken over. I knew I had stumbled on this magnificent theme: that good people bring out the worst in all of us. As I have said before, God does not have to *do* anything in *Paradise Lost*. It is his very existence which drives the Devil crazy. Once I had hit on this idea, I just couldn't get the words down fast enough. (Introduction xiv)

As a result of her constant displeasure with Isobel, Marion perpetually criticises Isobel in different parts of the play for the latter does not comply with the rules of the 1980s' Britain. Marion thinks that Isobel deserves to be maltreated in that Isobel has her own principles both in business and in her private life. For instance, Isobel is determined not to meet her boyfriend Irwin after his betrayal because, as Irwin guesses, "she's made some sort of vow" not to see him (*The Secret Rapture* 452; 2.6). However, making vows is unacceptable for Marion particularly in the business world: "I don't believe this. This is most peculiar. What is this? A *vow*? It's outrageous. People making *vows*. What are *vows*? Nobody made vows since the nineteenth century" (452; 2.6). Another fault Marion finds with Isobel is that Isobel is "feckless" and "irresponsible" because she does not give the highest value to her work and to making money (449; 2.6). For example, Marion cannot understand or accept how Isobel rejects without hesitation Tom's "decent offer" to found a new office after Isobel has lost her own firm (460; 2.6). As seen in these examples, Marion is disturbed by the fact that Isobel does not fit in the business world of the 1980s' Britain and that Isobel is too self-possessed to survive in this world.

Marion is angry with "the other" when she cannot beat or silence them but she is observed to be excited when she is victorious over them. She is so pleased in the fourth scene of Act I with the fact that she has beaten the "Green" people in a discussion. She is knowledgeable in the discussion matter put forward by the Greens and she has counter arguments to refute theirs, which makes her incredibly happy:

> MARION: I had to see a delegation. Those awful Greens. Green people. About radiation levels from nuclear power stations. A subject, I may say, about which I know a great deal more than they do.
> RHONDA: That was clear.

> MARION: They're always going on as if their case is moral. That's what annoys me. Ours is moral too. Nuclear power is a cheap and effective way to provide it. It gives a lot of ordinary, decent people a considerably improved standard of living. (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 413-414; 1.4)

The conflict between the nuclear energy plans of Thatcher's government and the Greens – the environmentalists – is one of the issues of the social and political life of Britain in the 1970s and 1980s (R. Taylor 160). The Green Movement was known in Britain by means of various organisations such as the National Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Ramblers Association, Friends of the Earth, and Greenpeace, which were supported by numerous members (Pugh 319). The environmentalist stand "was fundamentally antithetical to Thatcherite Conservatism because effective remedies for environmental problems required state intervention in the public interest to restrict the free operation of market sources," which was against Thatcher's economic policies (319). Martin Pugh states that it was "the nuclear power industry" that caused the most important environmental controversy in Thatcher's time because Thatcher, in spite of its dangers, supported the nuclear industry in order to end the dependence on coal for energy (320). As a government member in the play, Marion thinks that the threat of nuclear energy was a problem in the 1970s and it is no longer a concern for the people of Britain and "everyone hates Greens" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 415; 1.4). But, it is not surprising that people do not care about the campaigns of the Greens if the government persuade the public about the necessity of nuclear power by promoting it through all its organs just as Marion does. Marion, first of all, invites the delegates of the Greens to her father's house as it is in the countryside, by which "[she] want[s] to impress on them [she] ha[s] a country background" (414; 1.4). Secondly, she calls a journalist and manipulates what he will write on the topic: "His pencil went crazy. It's so easy. It's like throwing fish to seals. I was giving him the headline for his story. 'Minister Says Come Back When You Glow'" (415; 1.4). After her meeting with the Greens has ended in her success, Marion reveals her source of inspiration, that is, one of her government's principles followed in business and in political affairs. According to this principle, combatting and winning are essential conditions for the individuals' survival: "You blast them right out of the water. Hey, at this moment I could take them all on. The gloves are off. That's what's exciting. It's a new age. Fight to the death" (416; 1.4).

In Marion's world, people "fight to death" for their own benefit in business (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 416; 1.4), and in their relationship with other people their voices are always loud. In contrast, Isobel is mostly observed to be having her own "principles" (390; 1.2), which are unlike Marion's but most like her father's. Isobel does not fight loudly for her own interests; in her relationship with people, she is silent and patient but "[her] silence is constantly (mis)interpreted and her reluctance to judge others is perceived by Marion as disapproval" (Homden 172). For instance, Marion eased her guilty conscience, occasioned by retrieving the ring from the dead father, by attacking Isobel. However, Isobel is compassionate towards Marion and welcomes Marion's behaviours: "Marion's in grief. It's her way of grieving. She chooses to lash out at me" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 375; 1.1). Isobel approaches Katherine, too, with a similar warmness, which is admitted by Marion, who says "Isobel can't resist being kind about people" (373; 1.1).

The clash between the two sisters' characters is illustrated, once more, in their view of their father's marriage to a young woman. While Isobel, closing her eyes to certain realities, forces herself to think that this marriage is a result of "love," Marion is much more aware both of her father's and Katherine's intentions:

> ISOBEL: . . . Dad loved her. You must allow him that. He wouldn't have married unless he genuinely loved her.
> MARION: You know my views about that.
> ISOBEL: Yes, I do.
> MARION: An old man was taken for a ride.
> ISOBEL: I know you feel that. Honestly, I don't think it matters much. The great thing is to love. If you're loved back then it's a bonus.
> *Marion looks pityingly to Tom, as if this were too absurd for comment*. (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 373; 1.1)

Isobel chooses to consider the events from a very optimistic point of view and assumes that people around her are well-intentioned. As for her dealings in business, "Isobel's moral superiority is also apparent in her attitude to business" (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 85). She is perfectly honest, hardworking, and she can do with less but none of these qualities brings profit in Thatcher's Britain. When Katherine assumes that she can earn her living after Robert's death by working at Isobel's design office, Isobel explains

how little they earn and how they work in a small office and with a few people. These conditions do not allow one more personnel without any experience or knowledge to work there. Katherine does not want to accept Isobel's decision and protests it by drinking from the bottles she has hidden in the kitchen. In this event, Marion reprimands Isobel for being too honest and attacks her again for the sake of attacking without making any helpful suggestion:

> MARION: How can you have been so incredibly stupid?
> ISOBEL: What was I meant to do?
> MARION: I'd have thought it's fairly obvious. You have to pretend.
> ISOBEL: Pretend? Pretend what? That I have lots of money? That I don't have any partners? That we don't all have to work alongside each other, three to a rather small room?
> MARION: Why didn't you say, 'Well, I don't know yet. Come to London.'
> ISOBEL: That's exactly what I said.
> MARION: Keep her calm. String her along.
> ISOBEL: I tried.
> MARION: *Lie* to her. (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 389; 1.2)

However, at the end, Isobel's honesty and business mind is taken over by her good intentions and she accepts Katherine as staff member at her office. She, in a way, puts aside the business, what needs to be done in professional terms, and attempts "to do social work" as her partner Irwin says (399; 1.3)

Isobel's decision to work with Katherine is a turning point in her life as it is one of the two events that incite her ruin in business. In the face of the question who will take care of Katherine, "Marion and Tom [already] assume Isobel will take on [her], but it is when Isobel *chooses* to do so that her life is inexorably changed" (Homden 175). There are certain facts that prompt Isobel to make this decision which is rooted mostly in her character but to a certain extent in Katherine's character as well. Hence, it would be beneficial to analyse the contrasting points between Isobel and Katherine, another clash Isobel has with the outer world. Katherine appears to be a failure at school, in love, and generally in life as she herself states:

> KATHERINE: It's just for one reason or another I never had a chance. I left school so suddenly.
> . . .
> KATHERINE: I wasn't ready. I had this ridiculous relationship with drugs. Which, thank God, I got over. But while that was going on, it was fucking hard to hold

> down a job. Then I put on four stones. I couldn't concentrate. I was fat and spotty and all over the place. So I never got going. Before I met Robert. And then down here with him, what was there? I helped out in the shop. But that's not really work. (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 382-383; 1.2)

She was already an unhappy character before she met Robert; she was making love with men with the hope of bringing some meaning and happiness to her life. Robert was the first person who saved her from a desperate life in a motel situated in the Vale of Evesham:

> KATHERINE: . . . Then Robert came in. He said, 'I'll drive you to Gloucestershire. It will give you some peace.' He brought me here, to this house. He put fresh sheets in the spare room. Everything I did, before or since, he forgave. (*She sits, tears in her eyes, quiet now*.) People say I took advantage of his decency. But what are good people for? They're here to help the trashy people like me. (391-392; 1.2)

As she admits, Katherine believes that good people exist in order to make sacrifices for and to save the "trashy" people. She, in fact, makes use of her background to abuse people's good intentions and to force them to sympathise with her sufferings. As Isobel's partner Irwin states, "[Katherine]'s chronically dependent. Mostly on other people's good will" (408; 1.3). After Robert's death, she expects understanding and support from his daughters. For this aim, she chooses the most suitable one, Isobel, who favours the well-being of other people over her own. Hence, Katherine assumes that Isobel is ready to help her:

> KATHERINE: All right, look, I know, you all think I'm hopeless. I've had time to think. I do have a plan. I'm not going to stay in this house for the rest of my life. I decided. I'm going to work with Isobel.
> . . .
> KATHERINE: I want to sell up and, with the money I get, move to London. I think I've got a pretty good business head. (382; 1.2)

Katherine's plans are only the result of her own assumptions; she did not even ask Isobel for the position she wants to have in Isobel's office. When admitting this fact, she does not hesitate to play on Isobel's good intentions in order to prevent her from saying no: "All right, well fine, I didn't ask Isobel. No, I didn't. I assumed. That was wrong. I apologize. However, thank God Isobel is a generous person. I think she knows what I can contribute. She isn't going to say no" (384; 1.2).

Whenever Isobel attempts to say no to Katherine, the latter goes back to alcohol and, in a way, threatens the former, which Irwin warns Isobel against. Irwin believes that what Katherine does is a kind of "blackmail[ing]" and that alcoholics like Katherine threaten their friends by saying "'put up with everything I do, or else I'll drink again'" and they "just drain everyone around them" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 401; 1.3). Katherine is "[a]ddicted to the intoxication[ ] of . . . alcohol" and whenever drunk, she does not hesitate to "sh[oot] out the emotional realities of life – [her] own and others'" (Fitzpatrick 108). Another method Katherine employs against Isobel's reluctance to help her is to abuse Isobel's good intentions. Isobel, for instance, offers Katherine accommodation at her home in London but seems unwilling to give her a position in the office, which Katherine opposes in tears: "There's just one man who ever gave me a chance. The rest of you – well, yes, Isobel, in a way you're the worst. The other don't pretend. But you – it's all this kindness and tolerance and decency. Then just ask for something, some practical demonstration, just a small act of faith, then it's no" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 387; 1.2). It is Katherine who tries to exploit Isobel but it is again Katherine who accuses Isobel of being hypocritical. In this respect, Katherine, just like Marion, appears to have "a 'me first' attitude, a lack of compassion, and an inability to be grateful" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 141). In such situations, it is, in fact, Isobel's right to get angry with or to criticise them but she is attacked because "[they] see a given situation only from their own perspective and use events to suit their own purposes" (Fitzpatrick 110).

The reason for Marion's and Katherine's attacks is not only their self-centred attitudes but also the very "goodness" of Isobel. For Hare, the attacks she is exposed to "is the effect of good nowadays" ("Dramatically"). Isobel tolerates the people around her as best as she can and approaches them with good intentions no matter what they did to her. Other than criticising or screaming at Isobel, Katherine, in order to manipulate Isobel's decisions, also prefers some other cynical ways such as forcing Isobel to pity her referring either to her present desperate situation or to her miserable past. Carol Homden asserts that Katherine makes use of her own failures and weaknesses to abuse Isobel and she describes what Katherine does as "the tyranny of weakness" (175).

Katherine knows how to manipulate Isobel and Isobel's actions for her own benefit. Nevertheless, together with Katherine's tendency to abuse Isobel, what precipitates Isobel's ruin in business is the fact that Isobel willingly yields to Katherine. Although she knows very well that Katherine is a problematic character and "the trouble will start" with her just after Robert's death (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 388; 1.2), she forces herself to believe that Katherine can do something in life and in business and that "[s]he's not incompetent" (399; 1.3). Isobel insists on regarding "Katherine as the product of circumstance, who will change if circumstances do, which is a fatal flaw" (Homden 175). In addition to the trust Isobel places in Katherine, there are two other reasons for her letting other family members put the responsibility of Katherine on her shoulders. First of all, as a result of her own good intentions and of "[her] generosity of spirit," Isobel does not want to desert Katherine to her own miseries (175). She explains her thoughts about Katherine as such: "I just know that if I tried to get rid of her now, it would be disastrous for her self-confidence. She's just lost her husband. She couldn't face the future. She was frightened. She was lonely. If I hurt her now, it'll put her right back on the drink" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 400-401; 1.3). The second reason for Isobel's putting up with Katherine is her "some misplaced sense of duty to [her] father" as Irwin puts into words (407; 1.3). Isobel, too, reveals this sense of duty:

> ISOBEL: There was something there for Robert. I can't just abandon her. Think, there was this middle-aged man. Very idealistic. Living a life of ideas. 'Yes, I know,' he said, 'Katherine's impossible. But without her I'd have had a much less interesting life.' (*She smiles*.) 'I'm timid,' he said. 'My big fault is, I live in my shell. She gets me out of it. She's confrontational.' He loved that. . . . He didn't mind what people called her awfulness. Along came this girl who was prepared to say what she thought, especially to all those people he didn't dare to be rude himself. That's what he loved. She dared to say what he was only thinking. She wasn't dependent on anyone's opinion. (*She smiles*.) You know what it was? He thought she was free.
>
> *Irwin is bewildered, assertive*.
>
> IRWIN: But she isn't
>
> ISOBEL: Of course not. (407-408; 1.3)

Her father may have loved Katherine and may have been "happy" only because she was doing what he could not do throughout his life. However, her behaviour "is what more usually is called bad behaviour" and what she has been doing "won't make [Isobel] happy" as Irwin aptly states (408; 1.3). Despite Irwin's warnings and her own

awareness of Katherine's genuine character, Isobel insists on helping Katherine and says that "I want to bury my head in the sand" (409; 1.3). This statement summarises one of the causes of her catastrophe in business, her being too well-intentioned and too loyal to the memory of her father in spite of what her reason tells her to do. According to the Christian reading of the play, Isobel "forsake[s] her own well-being by taking upon herself a burden, a cross to bear: specifically a soul to save," Katherine (Golomb 565). However, she will save Katherine only in material terms, only by providing a house and a job for her but, in literal terms, she will not be able to save Katherine since the latter will continue using alcohol and behaving recklessly.

Other than the burden of Katherine, what drags Isobel to her disaster in business is Marion and Tom's plan to expand her design office. Tom is Marion's husband, an ideal partner for a Conservative government member. He is a businessman and another corrupt character of the age as opposed to Isobel. In contrast to Marion's stressful life, his is a very peaceful one because of his disinterest in politics and his attachment to religion. He does not care about Marion's continuously ringing phone which even rings at nights, he only says "[i]t's just part of Marion. She's just someone who permanently gives off a ringing tone. (*He smiles and shrugs*.)" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 385; 1.2). When asked the reason for his always being at ease, he answers that he does never feel angry "since [he] made Jesus [his] friend," who he believes makes things easier in his life (376; 1.1). He is a good Christian, more precisely, "a born-again Christian" of the 1980s (Homden 173). He comes forward in the play mostly with his devotion to Lord Jesus, "his God of commerce and coincidence" (Fitzpatrick 107). Tom believes that his life is encircled by the presence of Jesus, who amazingly helps Tom at times when the latter is desperately in need and who brings success to Tom in his business affairs.

Other than his putting up with his wife's difficult life, there is an important factor that brings Tom together with Marion, which is deliberately constructed by the playwright for a political implication. The husband and wife are presented as parts and servants of the same capitalistic world. Tom is both a businessman and a pious man; moreover, he successfully unites these two in his personality. Marion, before a business contract is signed, makes Tom's position known to Isobel in order to prove his trustworthiness in

business life: “Tom is President of Christians in Business,” which, for her, “makes it pretty clear he’s a man [Isobel] can trust” and also “[h]e’s a Chairman of his church’s Ethical Committee” (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 419; 1.4). Just as his beliefs intrude into his business affairs, his business and economic benefits also intrude into the religion he believes in and practices. In this respect, it can be considered that “Tom’s God is, to say the very least, distinctly modern – one driven by the profit motive” and this God is a component of the business world (Fitzpatrick 109). Hence, Tom’s God addresses a certain kind of society which is affluent; for instance, Tom and Marion build a swimming pool in their garden for “[Tom’s] conversions” but it will be used not for all the people Tom baptises since “the Lord expects a certain level of decency” (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 400; 1.3). The “level of decency” here is completely related to the “decent” material conditions, which means that people without a “decent” amount of wealth are denied the religious service provided by Tom. Tom’s religion alienates people who do not have any economic power while Marion’s politics alienates less successful people, especially in terms of making a profit. Their family, in fact, is a kind of representation of the family structure which is idealised in Thatcher’s Britain with its Victorian and capitalistic values. For Marion and Tom, not only is it necessary to be married and to have children but it is crucial to work hard, to earn much and to be pious.

As a businessman, Tom intends, together with Marion, to invest in and expand Isobel’s firm, a plan which is supported by Katherine and Isobel’s boyfriend Irwin. But Isobel does not want her business to be a part of a bigger company owned by Tom, neither does she want to be only a member on the new board. The way Isobel approaches the issue is considered a kind of “selfishness” by Tom, Marion, Katherine and Irwin, who assume “the utilitarian perspective of the altruistic Tory ego, which seeks to dictate the greatest god for the greatest number in the image of its own interests” (Carney 41-42). In the business world of Thatcher’s Britain, not only is Isobel regarded selfish but also the small enterprises Isobel embodies are thought to be doomed to mediocrity while expansion of the small firms is equalised with more profit. Nonetheless, Isobel’s idea of business is “based on mutual respect . . . and quiet job satisfaction rather than financial reward” (Homden 174). People of Thatcherite Britain who are full of “greed, intolerance and curious vanity” tend to regard “anyone who didn’t subscribe to the

prevailing ethos . . . as some kind of deviant" (Billington, "Welcome Hare" 19). Hence, Isobel, with her business ideals and thoughts, becomes an outfit once more, this time in the business world, which Katherine summarises as such: "Yes, it's something Robert said. He said, 'You must always remember Isobel is very *narrow*. She has no vision.' That's right" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 411; 1.3).

Although Isobel is an outcast, she is still aware of the fact that "the innocent commerce of a small business is corrupted when it is subjected to full capitalist expansion" (Carney 41). The corruption in the economic world has its repercussions in public life, too, and harms "the goodness inherent in individual acts of human exchange" (41). Accordingly, it is argued in *The Secret Rapture* that when small companies die, certain human values associated with them will be also lost. This loss is "the emotional and human cost of the way materialism dominated the age" (Homden 176). Other than small businesses and certain human values associated with these, a particular lifestyle, too, is threatened by powerful large companies in Thatcherite Britain. This lifestyle is represented in the play by Isobel and it implies "the humane and liberal tendencies of a bygone Britain" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 143). On the other hand, it is a controversial issue whether, in these monetary matters, Isobel embodies the values of a certain political faction or she appears with her own personal values. Carol Homden argues that, in spite of her dislike of the capitalistic world, "[Isobel] is not aligned with the Greens, the Left or nuclear disarmament" (173). For Lib Taylor, too, Isobel's goodness and morals have nothing to do with any religious or ideological form of thought (59). Finlay Donesky, similar to Homden and Taylor, asserts that Isobel represents goodness and her inherent goodness does not need any ideological basis to depend on (114). However, Donesky also adds that goodness without any ideological framework is not considered a value by the public since the Conservatives and the Labour may equally epitomise such personal goodness (114-115). Hence, it can be argued that Isobel, different from Hare's previous protagonists, does not give voice to certain political or ideological thoughts. In *The Secret Rapture*, economic and political matters are only tools for Hare in order to examine his characters and to provide insight into their inner worlds.

In the play's fourth scene, throughout a long conversation, Isobel is forced to abandon her small business which represents the values of the previous generation in contrast to those adopted in the 1980s by Thatcher's Britain. Marion, her assistant Rhonda, Tom, Katherine, and lastly Irwin constitute the group against which Isobel defends her decision to maintain her own business. When the group is ready, Tom brings the proposal for "[i]ncorporation[, t]ransfer of title," for Isobel to sign. This scene is described by the stage direction as follows: "*Isobel looks round. The whole room is suddenly waiting for her: Katherine in her chair, book on knee, Rhonda leaning against the bare wall, Irwin looking at his gumboots, Tom and Marion standing on opposite sides of the room*" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 417; 1.4). Everyone is waiting patiently and silently for her signature from which every one of them will benefit differently. Katherine appears to be relevantly silent and indifferent in this scene but she asserts at the very beginning that only by "expand[ing]" and "get[ting] some capital investment," it is so easy to "be making money like hay" (410; 1.3). As for Irwin, he has had a meeting with Marion and Tom secretly from Isobel and he "has already sold out, given the promise of a double salary" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 143); therefore, he turns his eyes away from her. Lastly, Marion and Tom, the agents of the expansion plan, stand on two sides of the room and play the role of officers who attempt to influence Isobel's decision. Among all these people, it is very clear that "Isobel has no allies" (143).

Marion attempts to persuade Isobel to sign the contract Tom has prepared, first of all, by referring to how powerful and trustworthy a businessman Tom is, a position he has gained with the help of his dominating role in the Christian business world:

> MARION: (*firmly)* Isobel, Tom is President of Christians in Business, I think that makes it pretty clear he's a man you can trust.
> *Isobel turns at once, upset*.
> ISOBEL: Oh, God, yes please, honestly, this mustn't be personal …
> TOM: (*shyly*) It isn't.
> MARION: He's a Chairman of his church's Ethical Committee.
> TOM: We meet six times a year. We try to do business the way Jesus would have done it.
> ISOBEL: You mean, had he come to earth in a polyester suit and with two propelling pencils in his top pocket? (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 419; 1.4)

As it is understood from her last statement above, the religious background of a businessman is not a criterion that Isobel takes into consideration in her business affairs. Hence she decides to explain herself more explicitly:

> ISOBEL: Of course. Tom's honesty is not at issue. (*She stops a moment, having trouble now. She tries to speak quietly*.) It's just I fear I'd be losing control.
> . . .
> ISOBEL: (*exasperated*) Perhaps I don't *want* to get bigger. (419-420; 1.4)

Nevertheless, her reluctance to expand her work can be conceived neither by Marion nor by Tom, who are fond of making money, as constructs of the Thatcherite period. While for Marion to make more money is a kind of "fun" which she needs to abstain from because of her position in the government, Tom asserts that to strive to earn more money is what God expects from people (420; 1.4). These justifications they put forward to conceal their hunger for money do not interest Isobel, which Marion realises. Then, she attacks Isobel by addressing her emotions:

> MARION: If you don't take the money, then you insult us.
> . . .
> MARION: It's like saying you don't trust us.
> . .
> MARION: I don't know how else to interpret a refusal. You're saying you don't think your brother-in-law will look after your best interests. (*Marion turns away, letting the accusation hang damagingly in the air*.) I don't know. Perhaps that's what you feel. (421-422; 1.4)

After this, Marion reveals Katherine's involvement in the business and says that "[o]ne of the reasons Tom is eager to put money in, is to help Katherine through this very difficult time" (422; 1.4). This last argument is a very strong one to persuade Isobel because she is so concerned for Katherine's well-being. Thus, her wish to support Katherine "overwhelm[s]" once more "[her] resistance to the grasping materialism of the 1980s in England" (Carney 41).

Another strong element that forces Isobel to be a part of this expansion plan and that leaves her weak against Tom and Marion is her boyfriend Irwin's taking side with them rather than with her. Irwin is the last person who joins the group and he is also the last one who speaks about the contract but the only one who frustrates Isobel. At the beginning of the conversation, Isobel thinks that she and Irwin share the same interests

and they have a mutual decision so she insistently wants to defend her small business with his help, which he rejects:

> ISOBEL: Well, I mean, you know I've already hinted, I don't mean to be difficult, it's just Irwin and I … (*She turns to him*.) Do you want to speak first?
> *Irwin shakes his head*.
> We both feel … I don't know how to say it … what you're suggesting is a very big step. (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 418; 1.4)

Not only is he the first person but also he is the last person Isobel turns to when the others, Marion, Tom and Katherine, are about to beat her resistance by means of their strong arguments. However, she is not aware of Irwin's real intentions and plans to earn more money:

> ISOBEL: That leaves only one person. Irwin?
> IRWIN: Yes?
> ISOBEL: What you were saying last night.
> *Irwin looks up mildly from his boots*.
> Irwin thinks it's folly to mix family and business.
> IRWIN: I do think that. Normally, yes.
> ISOBEL: What d'you mean, 'normally'?
> IRWIN: I don't know, I can see, I've been listening, it's all very tricky … (*He finally puts his boots decisively to one side*.) Let's face it, Isobel, we're a bit struck. We do need capital …
> ISOBEL: Irwin … (423; 1.4)

This scene is where Isobel is disillusioned by Irwin for the first time because the man she loves and plans to get married with is speaking in a way that conflicts with what they have decided previously. Furthermore, Irwin previously met Tom and Marion and accepted what they offered him in this new business plan, which is Isobel's second disillusionment with him. The moments of disillusionment with Irwin are the discovery scenes for the tragic heroine Isobel. She clearly sees that she has nobody to lean on in the capitalistic world she does not belong to and she realises that she has lost even the man she loves and trusts most:

> MARION: . . . we are proposing to double Irwin's salary.
> ISOBEL: Double it?
> MARION: Yes. We did tell Irwin that.
> ISOBEL: Irwin, is it true?
> *Irwin shrugs and smiles, boyishly.*
> IRWIN: They said it.
> TOM: We rate him very highly.

ISOBEL: Yes. So do I. (*Her voice is very faint now. She seems dazed.*) (425; 1.4)

Isobel really "rate[d]" Irwin "very highly" though it seems uncertain whether she will continue to do so. Isobel already knows what kind of people Marion, Tom and Katherine are; she has also clearly seen what kind of an idea of family they have especially when Marion comes in a hurry to retrieve the ring from her dead father and when Katherine sells her father's house just after his death. In short, as Irwin states, after "[Isobel's] father's dead," the idea of family is gone and "[t]here is no family" though Isobel is "the only person who's still hung up on it" (406-407; 1.3.). However, Irwin was the only one Isobel was sure that she could trust and cling to even when everybody spoke against her. Also, it was with Irwin she was planning, though without passion, to found a family and to have a child. However, Irwin has betrayed Isobel and left her by herself, which makes her an outcast once more not only in business but also in love.

In her relationship with Irwin, Isobel is again the embodiment of goodness, the value that David Hare consistently underlines in the play through her character. Anne Nothof claims that "love is an operative principle of goodness in the world, whether couched in secular or carnal terms" and the love in *The Secret Rapture* "finds its clearest manifestation in a woman," that is, Isobel (186). Hare puts Isobel's love, "as a political intervention," in opposition to the capitalistic hunger of the other characters who, according to the Thatcherite legacy, disclaim love and loss since, in their world, these two terms are almost the same (Carney 40). Hence, Irwin cannot take the risk of loss, the loss of money, but he prefers to lose Isobel's love to money. After she is informed about his secret dealings with Tom and Marion, Isobel's "respect goes and love dies" for Irwin (Homden 174). With Irwin's betrayal, Isobel no longer believes in any possibility of a union with him nor does she expect a good future for herself or for her business. Hence, she signs the contract at the end of the conversation since it is no longer meaningful to continue with a discussion related to business after she has lost a man she once loved so dearly.

Isobel's decision to have Katherine in the office and the project of expansion were the two causes of her ruin in business; however, it is the disillusionment with Irwin and

Irwin's obsessive love which brings on her catastrophe. In the fourth scene, while the conversation takes place related to the contract issue, Irwin joins the group as the last person. Upon his entrance, the sound of gunfire starts to be heard and it continues for the rest of the scene. The sound of gunfire is a kind of foreshadowing of Isobel's frustration with Irwin, of her ruin in business after the contract is signed, and also of her impending death. The blow that metaphorically kills Isobel in relation to the business contract comes from Irwin and it will be the bullet coming from Irwin's pistol that will literally kill Isobel. That is why, this particular scene with the gunfire sounds is a foreshadowing. The scene ends with Isobel, who desperately says that "[t]he guns are getting nearer. God, will nobody leave us in peace?" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 426; 1.4). The sound of gunfire, in fact, is not the only sign in Act I that foreshadows that Isobel will be murdered by Irwin. The gun that Irwin draws in one of his designs in the third scene is another foreshadowing of the murder, about which a strange kind of conversation takes place while Isobel is examining the drawing:

> ISOBEL: It's very good.
> IRWIN: I like the gun. I'm pleased with it.
> ISOBEL: I like the wound.
> IRWIN: Oh, really? (*He hands her a photo*.) I used Reagan's. I found it in a paper. I looked at Kennedy's. But it was too much. (395; 1.3)

The murderer likes the "gun" while the victim likes the "wound" in this scene; and in the seventh scene in Act II, Irwin will use the gun when he feels worthless without Isobel; and, Isobel will be wounded and killed when she is tired of living and suffering.

Before the analysis of the murder scene, it is of importance to deal with what happens between Isobel and Irwin following the contract related to the expansion. The contract is signed in the last scene of Act I, the fourth scene; its aftermath is depicted immediately in the following scene in Act II. What happens to Isobel after the expansion plan is executed is described in the stage directions: she appears on stage "*harassed, tired, carrying a soft overnight bag and a big design portfolio*" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 432; 2.5). She seems very exhausted because of working too much and doing many things at the same time. On the other hand, in spite of his insistence on the expansion plan, Irwin is observed to be doing nothing and to be sleeping around with a woman, Rhonda, which is his second betrayal of Isobel.

The action of Act II starts with the dialogues between Irwin and Rhonda, who have slept together and who are talking about their previous love affairs. It is mostly Rhonda who speaks about her affairs, especially the one with "a senior Tory politician" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 427; 2.5). Through her expressions about this man, the reader/audience is given a portrait of a Conservative male politician who betrays his wife, and, also the opinions of a working woman of men in general. Rhonda is experienced in the men's world as she has been working with politicians most of whom are men. She believes that the most striking characteristic of the politician she lies with or of any man is that he is after sexual desires and lacks certain qualities that make one human:

> RHONDA: It's the usual stuff. I don't know what he wants. Nor does he. He's like a man, that's all I can say. He's so out of touch with his feelings that he's like some great half-dead animal that lies there, just thrashing about.
> . . .
> RHONDA: It means men are cunt-struck. But they rarely know why. (430; 2.5)

Through Rhonda's depiction of a Tory politician, David Hare, in fact, criticises the male world more than the Conservative politics; and, rather than a Labour Party view, he adopts a feminist approach, which is also political. Rhonda is, in fact, a representative of Conservative Party politics, who has a lot in common with Marion, but here Rhonda is more in the foreground with her female attributes and with what she has experienced as a woman, especially in emotional terms. For Fitzpatrick, "Rhonda sees her sex as a weapon to be used against people" and she overwhelms her male partners with the help of her sexual power, different from Marion (111).

As for Irwin, he is not much different from the politician Rhonda has mentioned; just like him, Irwin makes love to Rhonda although he has a partner. When Isobel first sees him with Rhonda, she waits for a moment "*not moving*" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 432; 2.5). However, in the rest of the action, Isobel seems to be indifferent to them and makes herself busy with other things. With the urge of his guilty conscience, Irwin attempts, a couple of times, to draw Isobel's attention. Nevertheless, it is understood from their dialogues that it is not this latest betrayal Irwin commits but Isobel's first disillusionment in the contract issue that has primarily damaged their relationship. Irwin

knows this fact very well and shares it with Isobel saying that "It still annoys you, doesn't it? That I talked to Marion and agreed to the restructuring" (440; 2.5). He admits his "crime" but he objects to its being considered a "crime" so he attempts to underplay his betrayal saying that "It's all because I failed some stupid sort of test" (440; 2.5). However, this crime is exactly what has really hurt Isobel in the first place as she reveals: "Oh God, I can't explain. Don't you understand? It's why I never talk to you. It's why I never look at you. I can't find a way of describing what's happened, without seeming to be disgustingly cruel. . ." (440; 2.5).

Irwin uses every means possible to force Isobel to forgive him and one of these means is putting all the blame for the happenings on her. After the contract is signed in the fourth scene, Irwin defends himself by accusing Isobel of "bring[ing] in Katherine," which requires the office to be expanded: "Be fair, it was you. It changed the nature of the firm. For better or worse. But it's changed. And you did it. Not me." (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 426; 1.4). He also claims that Isobel is angry with him for his support of the expansion plan only because she wants him to earn little and to continue his life "under [her] patronage" and "[her] spell" (441; 2.5). Irwin charges Isobel with being a working woman, with earning money and with dominating men in the office, which is a very familiar accusation made against most working women. Another fault he finds with Isobel is that she "ha[s] this crazy idea of integrity," she is so devoted to the values of a generation before, especially of her father (442-443; 2.5). For Irwin, in accordance with this claim, Isobel appreciates people who do not attach importance to money and success in business and she cannot accept any modern man who is successful in business and who earns much. As he asserts, men who maintain an affluent life, different from her father, are "traitors" in Isobel's eyes (443; 2.5). Furthermore, for Irwin, it is because of this "crazy" adherence to her father that Isobel is forced to put up with Katherine and to "sacrifice [her] whole life for Katherine" (443; 2.5). Lastly, he accuses Isobel for not making love to him, which has resulted in his sleeping with another woman. Irwin does not have any other aim in his scene with Rhonda than accusing Isobel of her indifference. Isobel, conscious of Irwin's intentions reveals this: "There is no purpose to this except to make me feel awful. Because I'm the girl who can't be giving this man all the love he needs" (439; 2.5).

Other than accusing Isobel in various ways, another method Irwin uses to persuade her to forgive him is comparing his faults with those of Katherine, whom Isobel warmly welcomes and constantly forgives. He, rather, asks for Isobel's compassion and attempts to abuse Isobel's good intentions, just like Katherine:

> IRWIN: Why? (*He is suddenly passionate*.) All that time we were together, then once only, I do one thing which you think is wrong. That's it. I'm tipped out the window, like I'm rubbish. Because I've broken one rule. Katherine breaks a thousand rules. She breaks the rules all the time. All she does is betray you, day after day. . . Tell me, where is the justice in that? (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 470; 2.7)

However, for Isobel, the conditions Katherine is in are very different from those of Irwin; "[Katherine] has no resources" and she is in need of "[s]omeone . . . to take care of her," which is "just a fact" rather than "her fault" (470; 2.7). Moreover, the reason for Katherine's existence in Isobel's life is only "an accident" and Isobel will not neglect her since she has "made a commitment" (471; 2.7). On the other hand, she and Irwin loved each other and it was their own wish to come together both at work and at home. Moreover, Irwin is "an adult," a responsible adult in contrast to Katherine. And Isobel does not want to be with a man she "saves":

> ISOBEL: . . . And you have this idea that I can't accept.
> IRWIN: What's that?
> (*She looks hard at him a moment*.)
> ISOBEL You want to be saved through another person. (471; 2.7).

Isobel as well as Hare cannot consent to the idea that an individual is saved through another one's compassion, especially in love relationships (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 144). Isobel's resistance against Irwin's demand for love and compassion depicts her intention "to maintain her morality" not only in society but also in her private relationship (144).

Hence, Isobel wants to part with Irwin, to which Irwin replies only with the words, "I love you" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 441; 2.5). Irwin wants to be saved and he means to say "I love you and you should love me in response," which Isobel is aware of:

> ISOBEL: I know. I know you love me. God knows, you say it often enough. (*She stops him before he can protest*.) I don't say that to be cruel. But I never hear the words without sensing something being asked of me. The words drain me. From your lips they've become a kind of blackmail. They mean, I love you and *so* … *So* I am entitled to be endlessly comforted and supported and cheered … (*She smiles*.) Oh, yes, and I've been happy to do it. I comforted. I supported. I cheered. Because I got something back. But it's gone. . . . I'm strong. You sap my strength. Because you make me feel guilty. I can never love you as much as you need. Now I see that. So I've done a great deal of suffering. But that's over. I'm ready to move on. (441; 2.5)

Isobel is observant of the responsibilities Irwin's "I love you" puts on her shoulders but she no longer wants to live with such enforcements. That is why, she parts and "refuses to get angry and to play the parts written for her by other people, she refuses to provide that comfort for Irwin" (Homden 176). In contrast to Irwin's love that expects a response, Isobel does not think the lover should be rewarded by being loved back. For Isobel, "[t]he great thing is to love. If you're loved back then it's a bonus" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 373; 1.1). As seen, there is a huge contrast between Irwin's and Isobel's understandings of love. Therefore, Isobel explicitly says "I'm no longer in love with him" (461; 2.6) and she is decisive to leave him: "And so I decided, perhaps it's irrational, all my life I've got on with everyone. But this one time, all my instincts say, 'Do something decisive. Cut him off. Wake him up. Shock him. Make it final.' (*She turns, thoughtful now*.) 'Do what needs to be done'" (461; 2.6). But at the same time, she knows that it is not easy to cut the bonds between them immediately since "[h]e's in the grip of an obsession," which he can neither accept nor stop and which frightens Isobel (461; 2.6).

Isobel, fearful of Irwin's obsessive love and of what he might do, needs to take a leave so she goes to Lanzarote, the only place for which she can find a flight at the airport. The reason for her trip is to escape all her problems but it is of no avail; her sense of duty to her father and her honesty to Irwin forces her to return:

> ISOBEL: Paradise. I took all my clothes off and walked along the beach. Lanzarote was paradise. But unfortunately no use to me. (*She laughs*.) You can't get away. You think you can. You think you'll fly out. Just leave. Damn the lot of you, and go. Then you think, here I am, stark naked, sky-blue sea, miles of sand – I've done it! I'm free! Then you think, yes, just remind me, what am I meant to do now? (*She stands, a mile away in a world of her own*.) In my case there's only one answer. (*She looks absently at them, as if they were not even present*.) I must do what Dad

> would have wished. (*She turns, as if this were self-evident*.) That's it. (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 461-462; 2.6)

She understands that she could not escape the problems in her life and that she should do what her father would have wished her to do or expected from her, which is to face and, in a way, to deal with these problems. In Lanzarote, Isobel gets into a spiritual contact with her dead father; also, she experiences a "spiritual union with her own soul," which may be considered a kind of rapture (Donesky 112). She undergoes a kind of "mystical trance," after which she feels to having the "spiritual power within her" to combat all the problems in her life (112). When she returns, she is described as "*changed*" in stage directions and she is also said to be "*appear[ing*] *tense, thin, but also strangely cheerful*" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 454; 2.6). With the spiritual power she possesses, she is determined to make her own decisions rather than live according to what other people expect from her. After much suffering, Isobel is resolved to end her relationship with Irwin, to work no longer at her "expanded" office and to look after what her father left her, his house and his wife. In short, she has made up her mind "to cut through the complexities of feelings with which she cannot cope and adopt a more monastic way of life [only] with Katherine" (Nothof 190). Even when she learns that the expansion of her office is unprofitable and Tom, as the head of the firm, decides "to sell the firm" and to "sack all the staff" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 455; 2.6), Isobel readily and immediately accepts the decision he makes. Now that there is not an office she can work in, she is peaceful with no responsibility in any business matters as if she knows she has very little time to live and no need to work in order to survive.

Isobel's decisions after her trip to Lanzarote are very radical ones and they are in contrast to what is expected from her character portrayed at the beginning of the play. She decides to yield no longer to other people's enforcements, which means that her silent goodness will make itself more visible and assertive. She has made up her mind to devote herself to a dead father and to an alcoholic step-mother as well as to reject the love of an obsessive lover. If this trip is considered Isobel's "rapture," it also prognosticates her imminent death which is the inevitable element of the rapture. Hence, it is not a coincidence that the decisions she has made during this trip are the kind of decisions that will expedite her death. Isobel takes a risk and decides to put into practice

her own decisions, after which her fortune is reversed and she approaches step by step towards her end.

After her trip, Isobel is no longer fearful of Irwin who, in the seventh scene, appears at her door with a gun in his hand. He claims that he will kill himself with this gun because he feels worthless without Isobel; he is "unable to maintain a value to his existence" (Carney 42). To Irwin, Isobel's "good opinion . . . means everything" and he even draws, which is his profession, in order "[t]o please [Isobel]" and "[t]o earn [her] good opinion" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 434; 2.5). After their separation, Irwin is desperately in need of Isobel and her good opinion of him to feel worthful: "I have no worth. I can't feel my worth. When I was with you, it was there. Now it's as if you've withdrawn your approval" (470; 2.7). Therefore, he asks for her love and forgiveness using such expressions as "Come back to me" (470; 2.7), and "Make love to me," which Isobel determinedly refuses:

> ISOBEL: Force me. You can force me if you like. Why not? You can take me here. On the bed. On the floor. You can fuck me till the morning. You can fuck me all tomorrow. Then the whole week. At the end you can shoot me and hold my heart in your hand. You still won't have what you want. (*Her gaze does not wander*.) The bit that you want I'm not giving you. You can make me say or do anything you like. Sure, I'll do it. Sure, I'll say it. But you'll never have the bit that you need. It isn't yours. (469; 2.7)

Through Isobel's insistence on separation, Hare defends the rights of women to finish relationships and to resist abuse by male partners. In this respect, it can be said that "[a]s in [his] early plays, women's sexuality continues to represent valuable individual freedom and instinct" (Gindin 167). As for Irwin's love, it is, according to Judy Lee Oliva, an "unrequited" and "obsessive" love; as a result, Irwin wants to "destroy[ ] the relationship" killing either himself or his lover (*Theatricalizing Politics* 138). However, for Finlay Donesky, Irwin's murdering Isobel is "not out of unrequited love" because "he had by that time already demonstrated his inability to truly love" (113). He kills her, as Donesky claims, "because she comes to personify precisely what he had lost: soul" (113). It is very hard for Irwin to put up with Isobel's honest soul since he himself lacks one (112). On the other hand, although Irwin does not love Isobel obsessively, he obsessively asks for her love and approval. He is a character who cannot cope with any

kind of loss, whether it is the loss of Isobel's love or approval, the loss of his soul or ability to love or the loss of money. All these losses haunt his life after his separation from Isobel so he needed to end them by killing Isobel. That is why, after he kills Isobel, he says "It's over. Thank God" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 474; 2.7).

According to Liorah Anne Golomb, who reads *The Secret Rapture* as a Christian allegory, the cross and the ideal virtues associated with it are represented by Isobel (570). Irwin, on the other hand, is incapable of "bear[ing]" this cross, that is, of "liv[ing] up to Isobel's standards"; therefore, by killing Isobel, he disposes of the burden of the cross (570). In fact, since Irwin could not bear the responsibility of his relationship with Isobel, he betrayed her both in business and in love, which already killed her in a metaphorical sense. Therefore, it can be claimed that he never intended to bear that cross, which is the embodiment of Isobel's values. According to another Christian interpretation of Isobel's death, the fact that the murder, through which Isobel completes her rapture, is executed by her lover brings to minds the rapture of St. Teresa of Avila (Nothof 189). The secret rapture is a kind of "spiritual quest" and it is still pursued by the nuns of the Carmelite order among whom Teresa de Avila of Spain (1515-1582) is the most well-known (Donesky 112). That is why, the programme notes of the play's National Theatre production quote St. Teresa of Avila's detailed description of her own rapture (Nothof 189). St. Teresa's narration is commonly interpreted to be "bear[ing] many similarities to sexual orgasm, an interpretation which is also suggested by Bernini's statue of the ecstasy of St. Teresa" (189). Hence, it is not a coincidence in the play that it is her lover who kills Isobel upon her refusal of his demands in terms of love and sex.

Just after the murder scene, the playwright describes the following scene as he does at the end of every scene. The contrast between the atmospheres of these two scenes is remarkable:

> *There is a silence. Then the light begins to grow strongly from behind. The sound of high summer. Birds singing. Strong shafts of sunlight hitting the tall windows of Robert's living room and, in front of them, all his furniture as we left it at the end of the previous act, covered in white shrouds, and spaced about with packing cases. Katherine's flat moves away, and the next scene begins*. (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 474; 2.7)

After the darkness that falls onto the stage with Isobel's death, the next scene begins with strong light. Although this light is a disturbing one, it is still light and the precursor of a better life for the other characters. Isobel has died and led to other people's peace, now there seems to be a positive atmosphere; even her father's house will be restored to its earlier state. At the beginning of the eighth scene, Marion "*remov*[*es*] *the shrouds from each piece of furniture, uncovering them, one by one*" (474-475; 2.8). The house is changed to the state it was in at the beginning of the play, when neither Robert nor Isobel were dead. It is now as if both of them were alive and it is, in Tom's words, "[a] perfect imitation of life" (478; 2.8). Change is not only in the scenery; the characters who have expedited Isobel's murder, Tom and Marion, too, seem to have changed a lot after Isobel's death. When Rhonda informs Marion about a telephone call related to her job, Marion, in contrast to what she did during her father's funeral, refuses to speak with the person on the phone (475; 2.8). Instead of dealing with business, she prefers to mourn for her sister and she commemorates the days they were together: "We played over there. Under the piano. Isobel had a kind of magic world" (476; 2.8). As for Tom, he undergoes a similar change in that his devotion and references to Jesus become less since "[he's] slightly lost touch with the Lord Jesus" (478; 2.8). It is what Isobel has taught them through her life and death that changes Marion's and Tom's attitudes towards life. Isobel was good and her "goodness [was] not derived from God or from faith" or from any political association (Homden 173). Marion and Tom could not value her goodness when she was alive and it is only after her death that her virtues are recognised. Moreover, Isobel's death also brings "a sense of health, of well-being" to Marion and Tom's life (Golomb 571). In the passionate scene between the couple, "life" seems to have come into their relationship. Hence, it is implied in the play "that Isobel's death is a deliverance to be celebrated rather than mourned" (Wu 108).

Since Isobel's death has brought peace to Tom and Marion, Marion asks her sister to join them. She calls out to Isobel: "Isobel. We're just beginning. Isobel, where are you? (*She waits a moment*.) Isobel, why don't you come home?" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 479; 2.8). However, it is the very absence of Isobel that makes Marion miss and "trace" her sister (Carney 43). Marion, a very successful Conservative politician, experiences

"loss" for the first time with Isobel's death, which makes her vulnerable in emotional terms (41). Her grief and mourning allow her to be renovated spiritually (Donesky 113) and to be transformed phenomenologically (Carney 43). Marion, after Isobel's death, realises that she, like anybody else, can lose something or someone she loves dearly; in addition, she sees that she has emotions and is capable of mourning for one. Hence, though dead, Isobel brings salvation for Marion and provides the playwright as well as the reader/audience with "a positive model of hope" for the future (Nothof 192).

Interestingly, the self-awareness and rehabilitation is experienced in *The Secret Rapture* by a Tory politician whose Thatcherite politics Hare criticises throughout the play. Marion, the representative Tory politician, is shown in the play as "capable of redemption" (Billington, "Welcome Hare" 19). Hence, the reformation of a character modeled on Thatcher may be interpreted as a sign of the fact that *The Secret Rapture* is "less rueful about Thatcherism than one might expect" (Wu 109). Furthermore, as Homden asserts, Hare may be calling the reader/audience to participate in a kind of "reconciliation" with Thatcherite policies (180). However, this is, for David Hare, a technical issue because he says: "I don't like plays that have one central character where what happens to that one character is taken to be *typical* of what was therefore happening to all humanity . . . *But* I would like to show at the same time that a character like Marion in *The Secret Rapture*, through what happens to Isobel, grows a little" (Interview 223). Besides, it can be observed that what Hare reforms in Marion is her spiritual world and emotional relationships not the ideological world she belongs to since he consistently maintains his criticism of the ideology Marion is associated with in the play (Peacock, *Thatcher's Theatre* 86).

*The Secret Rapture* is composed of two acts each of which has four scenes that make eight in total. In these eight scenes, "[t]he narrative is controlled by Hare, much like the camera shots in his films," passing in a cinematographic manner from one scene to another (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 139). The ends of all the scenes are connected to the following ones by means of stage directions and music. At the end of each scene, the scenery of the next scene is given and so the scenes overlap with each other, a technique which allows Hare to support his thematic points. The play's theme of the

clash between good and bad as well as between past and present is supported by such transitions. This technique also helps to disclose "[t]he antitheses of dark and light, life and death, asceticism and materialism" (139). For instance, at the end of the third scene, in spite of the long discussion she had with her lover Irwin on Katherine, Isobel decides to let Katherine work in her small design office, which will become the reason for her fall in business. This scene ends with the description of the fourth one which reveals Marion's and her assistant Rhonda's "laughter[s]" as Marion has just defeated a group of environmentalists in a discussion (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 412; 1.3). The contrast between the lives of the sisters is implied with the help of the transition between the scenes. In other words, Hare "juxtaposes scenes so the contrast between one scene and the next helps to advance meaning" (Oliva, "David Hare" 213). During the transition, it is pinpointed that while Isobel loses in business only because of her good intentions and fondness for charity, Marion becomes successful in her work and feels victorious against the people she has defeated in a political discussion.

Another example of transition through which Hare lays bare the contrast between the characters as well as the situations is observed when the play passes from the seventh scene to the eight one. The seventh scene starts as such: "*There is no electricity, only candles. Katherine is in trousers and pullover, calling towards an unseen Isobel*" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 462; 2.6). The stage directions which denote no light other than that of "candles" imply the lack of "light" in Isobel's life and foretell her impending death. Immediately after Isobel is murdered at the end of the seventh scene, the stage direction of the next scene is given: "*There is a silence. Then the light begins to grow strongly from behind. The sound of high summer. Birds singing. Strong shafts of sunlight hitting the tall windows of Robert's living room*" (474; 2.7). While Isobel dies in one scene, there comes rebirth and salvation to Marion and Tom's life in the following scene.

The scenes are tied to each other sometimes in order to further the meaning or maintain the theme in the following scene. Throughout the first scene, for instance, the reader/audience is provided with information about the relationship between the two sisters Isobel and Marion and with how they behave during the funeral of their father, Robert. In the dialogues of the sisters, the character they refer to most is Katherine and

the biggest problem related to her is who will deal with her after Robert's death. With the help of the "overlapping scenes," the "themes" in the play are "interpenetrat[ed]" (Gindin 171); so, at the end of the scene in which Katherine is mentioned most, "[a]*t once we hear Katherine's voice*" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 378; 1.1). In the second scene, Marion and Isobel continue discussing what they will do with Katherine and who will take care of her. Marion insistently tries to make Isobel employ Katherine in her design office which is very small and which can allow only a limited number of people to make a living. Isobel, during the discussions with Marion, explains the conditions of her firm as well as how it will damage their work to employ one more person since they are already three, herself, Irwin and Gordon. Hence, as if to justify Isobel's points, the next scene is described before the present scene ends: the setting is Isobel's office, which is "*half office, half studio, in which there are three dominating draughtsmen's desks, each with its own stool*" (393; 1.2).

These interconnected scenes also help to keep the reader/audience's attention alive. While in the fifth scene, the reader/audience is given what happened to the relationship between Isobel and Irwin after the contract, the next scene presents the results of the contract both in Isobel's life and also in Marion and Tom's life. Hence, before the scene of Isobel and Irwin ends, the next scene is described and the readers/audience find themselves in "*Tom's office*" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 446; 2.6). This technique allows "the audience to remain engaged with the action while it moves from one location to the next" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 142).

Apart from these, the scenes are tied to each other in a cause and effect relationship; for instance, at the end of the fourth scene, Isobel signs a contract that will severely affect her life in business. The scenes in Act II reveal the aftermath of the contract and what kind of effect it has on different characters and on their relationships with each other. In this way, Hare "physically impl[ies] how the actions of one individual can affect the actions of many," what kind of results Tom and Marion's plan leads to in different people's lives (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 142). Accordingly, in Act II, the reader/audience is presented, first of all, Isobel's relationship with Irwin, then with Marion and Tom, lastly with Katherine. The first scene of Act II, the fifth scene of the

play, starts with the description of "*Isobel's new offices in the West End*" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 427; 2.5), which is in a very good condition after the contract in comparison to its previous state in Act I. The new office in Act II has

> [*t*]*he draughtsmen's desks* [which] *are noticeably newer and smarter than the old ones;* [moreover,] *there are more of them stretching away into the distance towards a back wall which is dominated by a large-scale, chic, designer motif. There are pools of light fashionably formed over each desk, but for the moment only one area is occupied.* (427; 2.5)

Although there seems to be the traces of affluence in Act II as seen in the stage direction, nobody appears to be working. There is only one desk which is occupied and it is by Irwin, who will be observed at the beginning of the act not while working but while lying with a woman, Rhonda.

"Tragedy" is the form that David Hare adopts in his "chamber play" *The Secret Rapture* ("An Interview" 168). According to Hare, a playwright who received classical education at Cambridge University, the first principle of a play to be a tragedy is that the protagonist must be doomed to die or to fall, which must be guessed from the moment the reader reads/the audience sees her/him ("Dramatically"). As for the second principle, it is the hamartia, the "fatal flaw" the tragic hero(in)e has because of which she/he dies or falls ("An Interview" 169). Since the aim of this study is not to examine *The Secret Rapture* as a tragedy, only the characteristics of tragedy that the playwright refers to, that is, the hamartia and the catastrophe will be touched upon.

Isobel is "Hare's first heroine to die" and the hamartia she seems to have is her "goodness" ("An Interview" 169). There is an "irony" in Isobel's flaw since it is goodness rather than any bad habit or quality of character that the tragic hero(in)es typically have (169). It is because of the times and the conditions in which the play is set that Isobel's goodness is considered to be a flaw leading to her downfall. Isobel has her own principles and values both in business and in her private life, which will turn out to be the very causes of her fall. Isobel does not want to accept, for instance, the expansion plan offered by Tom and Marion, which is in opposition to the widely accepted norms in the economic world of Thatcherite Britain. Hence, her "self-possession" is regarded to be "a perverse and stubborn weakness in Thatcherite times"

(Carney 42). Moreover, she has a "sense of duty to [her] father" because of which she takes care of her alcoholic and irresponsible step mother, Katherine (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 407; 1.3). She also has a sense of humanity which makes her believe that Katherine will recover and that she should devote herself to Katherine (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 141). However, because of these attributes, Isobel is considered to be "almost intolerably human" by the people around her (Carney 42). If goodness and humanity were effective in society, people's lives would improve in a direction which is more humane but less profitable. However, in order for the survival of Thatcherism, humanity should be "suppress[ed]" since these two work against each other (Carney 42). Hence, Isobel's goodness is "anachronistic" (L. Taylor 59) and unacceptable in Thatcher's Britain; so, it is a flaw and she is doomed to lose.

As for Isobel's tragic end, although it is because of her own goodness that her life ends and she loses both in business and in private life, her catastrophic end is precipitated by the people in her family. There are two reasons for her ruin in business, the first one of which is that Isobel's sister Marion and her brother-in-law Tom force Isobel to expand her business, which ends in failure. The second reason is that Isobel's step mother Katherine leans on Isobel for her survival, which harms Isobel's business and psychological state. As for Isobel's literal death, it is caused by her ex-boyfriend Irwin and by his obsessive love.

As for the title of the play, "the secret rapture," it is a term used in Catholic theology and it refers to "the moment when the nuns meet Christ" (Hare, "Dramatically"). It is, in fact, a kind of "spiritual union or marriage with Christ" that a Catholic nun experiences (Donesky 112). Sean Carney, in his explanation of the secret rapture, implies that, in order to experience this rapture, one does not have to be a nun since it has to do with "the *jouissance* of the Christian martyr" and it is "a moment of utter privacy and transport" through which one can get into contact with God (41). Besides, this contact or "reunion" with Christ can be achieved only through death so it is a kind of "martyrdom" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 138). That is why, "the secret rapture," according to Hare, "means death, or love of death, or death under life" ("Love, Death" 75).

As implied in the title, Hare associates Isobel's death with a spiritual union with Christ, which is an act of divine grace sought by nuns. He portrays the protagonist Isobel like a "martyr[ ]" (Oliva, *Theatricalizing Politics* 138; Nothof 188) or like "a saint" (188) or even like "Christ[ ]" (Fitzpatrick 114). Moreover, Isobel's name is "a variant of Elizabeth," one of whose meanings is being "consecrated to God" (Loughead qtd. in Golomb 563). Correspondingly, Isobel represents in the play goodness and she is observed to have saint-like and Christ-like attributes which are considered to be strange, to a certain extent, in the age she lives in. To illustrate these attributes, it can be said that she genuinely mourns for her dead father, Robert, in contrast to the characters who are more interested in what he left for them; she takes care of Robert's alcoholic wife Katherine only because Robert loved Katherine; she accepts Katherine as a personnel in her office at the cost of her downfall in business; she is always forgiving towards her sister Marion, who continuously aggravates Isobel in their material and familial relationship; she is betrayed by her lover Irwin only for the sake of money though she herself attaches very little importance to material things. Although she is associated with goodness, love and compassion, she is betrayed and she is killed, like Christ, by one she loves dearly, Irwin. Moreover, she does not judge or punish the people who hurt her, in a way, "she turns the other cheek" (Fitzpatrick 114). Besides, in the scene she dies, the stage direction says that she is in a blue raincoat "– blue being the iconographic colour for Hope and for the Virgin Mary" (Nothof 188). In the same scene of the play, it is also indicated that Isobel has no shoes on her feet, which brings to mind the widespread "belief that Jesus walked to his crucifixion without shoes, although not specified in the gospels" (Golomb 570). Furthermore, after her death, the other characters seem to have reformed and understood the true value of her goodness just as in the case of Christ's death.

Isobel's emulation of Christ is augmented by the director Howard Davies in its original production at the National Theatre. In this performance, after she is shot, Isobel is shown to have died with her "arms akimbo as if to confirm her secret rapture in death" (Fitzpatrick 114). Moreover, the director resurrects Hare's Christ-like heroine and at the end of the play, Marion and Isobel are presented as "hav[ing] their arms outstretched

and moving towards one another" (Golomb 572). In this way, the director intends to give the impression that Isobel has really experienced her secret rapture. This ending is in fact not Hare's idea and he was even "horrified by it" upon seeing it on stage (Hare, "An Interview" 168). However, when he learnt that people found it "effective," Hare decided to accept as it is (168).

In spite of the Christian association of the secret rapture with suffering and death, Isobel's sufferings in the play have nothing to do with any religious thought. She does not enjoy suffering or quest for death, unlike the nuns. Although James Gindin asserts that Isobel has an "impulse toward self-destruction" and she suffers deliberately (172), Homden and Carney draw attention to the fact that Isobel does not want to suffer for the other characters (178; 42). In the play, Isobel tells Irwin how she is tired of suffering: "I'm being turned into a person whose only function is to suffer. And believe me, it bores me just as much as it bores you" (Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 439; 2.5). Therefore, Isobel decides to end the sufferings she has undergone so far: "I've done a great deal of suffering. But that's over. I'm ready to move on" (441; 2.5). Although Isobel is a good person and she has saint-like attributes as observed in the play, her goodness is "stoic" rather than religious, by which she persistently clings to her ideals and her values (Carney 41; Hare, qtd. in Homden 178). Hence, Isobel's death is only an "escape from a world too brutal to tolerate her goodness" rather than a salvation (Fitzpatrick 105).

Besides an escape, Isobel's death may denote "liberation" as well, because "those cursed with a sense of justice are not properly of this world" (Wu 107-108). The character who cannot fit in the society and who dies at the end is no one other than Isobel, the ultimate representative of goodness in the play. This fact unites the end of the play with the epigraph by Rebecca West given at the beginning:

> Only half of us is sane: only part of us loves pleasure and the longer day of happiness, wants to live to our nineties and die in peace, in a house that we built, that shall shelter those who come after us. The other half of us is nearly mad. The other half of us is nearly mad. It prefers the disagreeable to the agreeable, loves pain and its darker night despair, and wants to die in a catastrophe that will set back life to its beginnings and leave nothing of our house save its blackened foundations. (qtd. in Hare, *The Secret Rapture* 366)

Actually, it does not matter who dies, it is the idea and the fact of "death" itself to which David Hare and the readers/audience reconcile themselves by means of Isobel's tragedy (Homden 180). David Hare wrote the tragedy of *The Secret Rapture* because he senses that death is near, he says that "when you get to the age I'm at, then you feel death not at the end of the road, but death all around you, in everything. Life is saturated with death. I feel death everywhere" (Hare, "Dramatically"). *The Secret Rapture*, besides depicting the politics of the time and in addition to being a tragedy or a Christian allegory, illustrates the inevitable and unchanging human reality, death.

In consequence, *The Secret Rapture*, which is endowed with such universal issues as death or goodness, is an explicit end product of the political and social conditions of the 1980s' Britain. The government's promotion of the free-market economy and of individual enterprise made many British people businessmen or businesswomen. The principal goal of the people in the business world of the 1980s was always to win just like the politicians of the decade who "f[ought] to death" in order to win. This society shaped by Conservative politics is contrasted in *The Secret Rapture* with the previous generation and their values such as goodness, honesty and decency. Although Hare favours the values represented by the previous generation, he is aware of the fact that those values are dead as represented through the deaths of Isobel and her father. On the other hand, he does not totally undermine the present society shaped by Conservative ideology and he gives them the chance to rehabilitate. Hare maintains this attitude in the following decade and he comes to defend the idea that the institutions which are heavily dominated by Conservative principles should be preserved only after they are reformed. In the 1990s, Hare depicts the influence of Conservative governments on institutions and reveals how they are indispensable as argued in *The Absence of War*.

# CHAPTER 3

# DAVID HARE'S POLITICAL DRAMA IN THE 1990S: REFLECTION OF BRITISH POLITICS THROUGH A POLITICAL PARTY AS OBSERVED IN *THE ABSENCE OF WAR*

"*It seems to me that while the politicians live on the differences and hostilities of mankind, the artists live on our common humanity, and that may be why, in the cause of peace, money spent on the theatre and on the arts is better spent than money spent on all the machines for mutual obliteration ever invented*."
(John Mortimer, *London Standard*, Drama Awards Ceremony, 1983,
qtd. in Philip Barnes, *A Companion to Post-War British Theatre* n.p.)

British political drama was extensively influenced by not only national politics but also by global politics and conflicts. The Conservative governance, though without Thatcher, continued in the 1990s and was followed by the Labour Party government, who came to power only after reforming their leftist principles. In the 1990s, the distinction between Right and Left began to become obscure not only in Britain but also around the world. So, political dramatists had no other choice but to present this ideological ambiguity prevalent in the decade. This chapter examines David Hare as a political dramatist with leftist views in a post-ideological era and shows how he reflects his times. For this aim, the chapter analyses *The Absence of War* (1993) to lay bare the change in Hare's approach to politics, political parties and institutions as well as to discuss how a leftist playwright came to explore "common good" in institutions governed by rightist values. The chapter also sheds light upon the new techniques and the theatrical venues Hare made use of in the 1990s.

## 3.1. The Social and Political Context of the 1990s

The principal attribute that characterises the world in the 1990s was the rising of the United States as the major power because the Cold War between the two poles of power had ended with the gradual collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. European Communism came to an end not only due to the Soviet's disintegrating into Russia along with smaller independent countries but also due to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. (Dorney 200; Sierz, *Modern British* 28-29) As a consequence of such "massive

changes in the geo-political system," a New World Order was established according to which the United States and capitalism took control (28). Other than the ending of the Cold War, there appeared in this decade a number of small wars around the world that costed many people their lives. These wars, which caused an atmosphere of violence and insecurity, were the first Gulf War in Kuwait occasioned by Saddam Hussein's invasion in 1991; the Bosnian civil war between 1992-1995 in what was previously known as Yugoslavia; two wars in Chechnya declared by those who demanded independence from Russia in 1994 and in 1999; "the genocidal conflict in Rwanda," Africa (29); and the Kosovo War between 1998-1999 (Dorney 200).

As for Britain, after eleven years of governance, Margaret Thatcher was replaced in 1990 by John Major both as the head of the Conservative Party and as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. When Major came to power, what the Conservatives and the public wondered was whether Major's policies would be different from or similar to those of Thatcher's in terms of ideology and the way of handling the economy. The Major government itself "was always torn between stressing its ideological links with Thatcherism and attempting to emphasise its distinctiveness" (Shellard 189). With Major's first election, the 1992 General Election, it was thought that the Thatcherite politics that haunted the country for more than a decade would come to an end. However, Major kept some Thatcherite policies, especially certain economic measures which could win the electorate's favour. But at the same time, he disposed the poll tax in 1991 and changed the government's policy related to Europe, which "established the necessary distance between himself and his predecessor" (Heffernan and Marqusee 302). Hence, in spite of the Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock's election campaign with a centrist approach rather than a strictly socialist one, the Conservatives were victorious in 1992, "w[inning] more votes than any other party in history and the biggest percentage lead since 1945" (Dorney 199). But in the 1997 General Election, Tony Blair, who replaced Kinnock, became the Prime Minister as a result of Labour Party's victory. Labour Party under Blair was branded as New Labour whose politics was in the middle ground between the Right and the Left. The Labour government under Blair endorsed "Third Way economic policies" by "marrying free-market economics and social liberalism" (Urban 40).

As for the Conservative state politics under the leadership of Major, he was seen to be following in the footsteps of Thatcher's rule particularly concerning privatisation and centralised power held by the government. The privatisation of public utilities was accomplished by selling off railways in 1993, and the centralised control by the government was established by making "[l]ocal government and agencies" ineffectual and by restraining the curriculum at schools (Dorney 199). Moreover, when Major was in power, many public services were commercialised and the people were turned into "customers" buying these services in that "healthcare provision" was remodelled on "performance management system"; even policemen were "measured" depending on their performance and "local services [were made] accountable to its 'customers' by means of 'Citizens Charter'" (199). As for Labour Party politics with Blair as the Prime Minister, they abandoned defending nationalisation in 1995 by abolishing "the historic Clause Four of the party's constitution" (Sierz, *Modern British* 30). But when their party was in power, they preferred to leave the control of the economy to the Bank of England rather than privatising public utilities (25).

In the case of Northern Ireland, the two governments of the decade worked in collaboration with each other. The turbulent relations with Northern Ireland seemed to be coming to an end with the onset of the Peace Process in 1993. First the Downing Street Agreement was signed in 1993 in relation to "the self-determination of Northern Ireland" (Sierz, *Modern British* 24). In the meantime, the IRA declared ceasefire and war alternately until 1998 when the Good Friday Agreement was signed in which there were "plans for a devolved assembly" in Northern Ireland (25). While these plans were made for Northern Ireland, similar kind of assemblies were already established in Scotland and Wales, which changed the administrative borders of the United Kingdom (Dorney 200).

As for foreign affairs, the Major government was, like that of Thatcher's, both criticised and applauded at the same time about its decisions especially in relation with Europe. When the Maastricht Treaty, "an agreement of European Union countries" was signed in 1991, the Major government was accused of surrendering to "greater political integration in Europe" by taking no notice of "national sovereignty" (Sierz, *Modern*

*British* 24). Furthermore, in 1992 Major, with his government, refrained from participating in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), which was also critically received by the public (24).

In the 1990s what predominated the cultural atmosphere and the youth activities in Britain was "Cool Britannia." Cool Britannia was thought to be a revival of "the swinging sixties in which Britain once again had a thriving arts scene and a young and (relatively) sexy Prime Minister" (Dorney 198-199). However, it was not principally Tony Blair who introduced or invented this culture because since 1994 the media had already been drawing the public's attention to "the sudden revitalization of British arts and culture" (Urban 39). But Blair took advantage of this novelty and the energy in the cultural scene and demonstrated that his New Labour should appear "synonymous" with Cool Britannia (40). This attempt by Blair provided him with the votes of the British youth and helped him to distinguish himself and his party from the former representatives of the Labour as well as from the Conservatives (40). The artistic activities that suffered from time to time when the Conservatives was in power were expected to thrive in the second half of the 1990s both with the support of the New Labour and also as part of the Cool Britannia culture. Along with Cool Britannia, the British were acquainted with new cultural brands such as Britpop and Brit film, which endowed "a sense of cultural confidence" (Sierz, *Modern British* 31).

Theatre became a component of the new cultural trend Cool Britannia after "publications such as *Newsweek*, *Le Monde* and the *London Evening Standard* hyped London as both the theatre capital of the world and Europe's coolest city" (Sierz, *Modern British* 35). Especially in 1997 when Tony Blair came to power with his newly-branded New Labour, Cool Britannia was in its heyday (D'Monté and Saunders 20-21). The phenomenon of Cool Britannia was in fact a kind of tool in the hands of the media and the New Labour to increase the marketability of London as a cool city in which theatre was only one of the goods on sale (Urban 40).

## 3.2. British Political Drama of the 1990s

### 3.2.1. Issues Political Dramatists Dealt with in the 1990s

Given that the New World Order was in tune with capitalist essentials after the fall of the Berlin Wall as well as the Soviet disintegration and that the order in Britain was heavily under the influence of Conservative politics even when a Labour government had come to power, it is not a coincidence that political drama, with its leftist tendencies, was widely thought to be dead. However, political drama maintained its existence with the contribution both of the established dramatists and of the newly-arising young playwrights. Also, the writings of the established political dramatists were "re-energized" so as "to create fresh sociopolitical critiques" of the social and political matters at home as well as in the world (Kritzer 26) with the works of the younger generation of playwrights (25).

To begin with, established political dramatists like David Hare, David Edgar, Caryl Churchill, Howard Brenton continued writing – still from a leftist point of view – socially and politically conscious plays which were held in high esteem both by the public and by mainstream theatres of Britain. Although the new generation of playwrights and critics like Alex Sierz assume that "forms of 1980s political drama such as the state-of-the-nation play" became out-dated in the 1990s (qtd. in D'Monté and Saunders 20), the political dramatists brought out "successful work based around these supposedly redundant forms throughout the 1990s and beyond into the millennial decade" (D'Monté and Saunders 20). However, before taking a close look at the kinds of plays by these playwrights, it is essential to point out what was disparate in their tone of voice. The 1990s were characterised by the distrust of ideologies which is a fact not only among the public but also among the political dramatists. Les Wade defines this new world as "a post-ideological" one in which "honouring the inviolability of the other, with no clear path or directive, comprises the core of ethical decision-making" (75). Hence, the approach adopted by the political dramatists was humanism rather than any political -ism (Kritzer 219).

With no surprise, in the 1990s, Labour Party took power as New Labour and "discard[ed] socialist goals and the grass-roots passion for political wrangling with which Labour had long been identified" (Kritzer 6). Hence, with the Labour's slide towards rightist politics, not only the leftist politics but also political drama "entered a less oppositional phase" (6). In political plays, there would no longer be "familiar oppositions" (7) since there was almost no distinction between the Left and the Right. However, it does not mean that in the 1990s political drama no longer took an interest in politics, or that the political dramatists relinquished their political opposition or the leftist point of view. Although the political dramatists were tired of not being taken seriously by the Conservative governments, they did not abandon writing politically; on the contrary, they were further encouraged and started to believe that social and political change is possible, to a certain extent, with the coming to power of a Labour government. For Amelia Kritzer, it was the result of this encouragement that the issue-based political plays re-emerged (154). In these plays, political dramatists revealed their political concerns but without "invok[ing] the rhetoric of socialism or other anti-capitalist movements" or any kind of political ideology (219).

The issues mostly dealt with in the plays by political dramatists in the 1990s were both domestically and globally oriented. While Northern Ireland, racism, and political leadership particularly with respect to Labour Party were among the domestic issues, wars, new borders, terrorism and business on a global scale were the worldwide matters that enticed political dramatists. As examples for plays dealing with domestic issues, the following can be stated: Jeanette Crowley in *Goodnight Siobhan* (1990) reflects upon the repercussions of the Northern Ireland conflict on personal relationships (Shellard 222); Richard Norton-Taylor's *The Colour of Justice* (1998) reveals the case related to a black young man Stephen Lawrence, who was attacked while waiting for a bus (Kritzer 155); David Hare's *The Absence of War* (1993) questions the essence of political leadership and analyses the requirements of being a leader in a world under the hegemony of the media and Conservative politics; Caryl Churchill disapprovingly refers to the politics of the New Labour in *This is a Chair* (1997) which has a scene entitled "'The Labour Party's Slide to the Right'" (qtd. in Sierz, *Modern British* 30). David Hare's trilogy *Racing Demon*, *Murmuring Judges* and *The Absence of War* stands out

among its contemporaries in that it is a rare example in the 1990s that scrutinises respectively the religious, legal and political institutions of Britain.

On the other hand, in comparison to the state of British politics and society, global matters were more influential on political playwriting of the 1990s. By providing transcripts and interviews with the armed forces of the Serbs and of the UN Nicholas Kent's *Srebrenica* (1996) reveals the war crimes committed by the Serbian army in 1995 (Kritzer 187); David Hare explores the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israeli in *Via Dolorosa* (1998) by conducting interviews with those people (188); while David Edgar handles the new borders in Europe in his *Pentecost* (1994), Michael Frayn focuses on German politics in the post-war period in his *Democracy* (2003) (D'Monté and Saunders 20). In addition, there are political plays that deal with the aftermath of the Soviet disintegration such as Tarıq Ali's *Moscow Gold* (1990), Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest* (1990) and David Edgar's *The Shape of the Table* (1990) (Sierz, *Modern British* 29). As for the plays dealing with global mercantilism, *Mules* (1996) by Winsome Pinnock is an important example in that it uncovers "the power of multinational enterprise" by depicting an illegal way of money making in global scale, drug-smuggling (Kritzer 207).

As for the young dramatists of the British theatre in the 1990s, they were the major components of the political and theatrical atmosphere from which the established political dramatists took their inspiration:

> The intergenerational dialogue seems to have captured the political mood of the time, as an older generation looks back at a collective desire for political transformation that remains unfulfilled, a younger generation looks ahead to a world that has been transformed in ways not envisioned by the previous one, and both generations explore their power in relation to each other. (Kritzer 67)

On the one hand, works by these young dramatists were regarded to be political in that these particular playwrights set out to give voice to the political issues which were taken into consideration neither by the political parties nor by the established political dramatists of the previous generation. In-yer-face theatre, represented by these young playwrights like Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill, Martin McDonagh, David Greig, Judy Upton, Jez Butterworth, Phyllis Nagy, Rebecca Prichard started not as a movement but

as an “aesthetic” (Urban 39), and “a network” formed among the playwrights who knew each other well (Sierz, “We All Need” 28). In-yer-face is considered to be “the third renaissance of British theatre,” which is foregrounded by its use of filthy language, overt representation of violence and sexuality on stage (Dorney 203). What makes in-yer-face theatre political is allegedly the fact that its plays reveal “the despair of contemporary urban life, shaped by global capitalism and cultural uniformity” (Urban 39). In-yer-face theatre also views, in critical appraisal, “capitalism, social inequality, sexual discrimination, violence and war,” with which the playwrights deal from the perspective of “the extreme left” (Sierz, “We All Need” 26). On the other hand, what sets the in-yer-face generation apart from the tradition of political playwriting of the previous generation is their lack of “purpose associated with social movements, and loss of the exhilarating experience of collective passion generated, at least for a time, by such movements” (Kritzer 24). They are mostly criticised for this lack which causes them to construct plays “without any moral framework or ideological certainty: no redemptive message, no socialist empowerment, no women running off to form a collective” (Urban 43). That is why, socialism and feminism are concepts hard to trace in in-yer-face plays, which is no surprise since the lack of ideology or the sense of anti-foundationalism is a phenomenon peculiar to the era that these youngsters live in.

### 3.2.2. Theatrical Venues Where Political Plays Were Staged in the 1990s

In 1992, for the first time in British political history, a ministry for culture and arts was founded by the John Major government, Department of National Heritage. This was “a cosy, patriotic idea of heritage and historical tradition” offered by a Conservative government (Sierz, *Modern British* 32). This ministry, however, was named as Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 1997 when Labour Party took power (34). As for the financial support provided by the governments for artistic activities, particularly for theatre, the Conservative and the Labour governments displayed different attitudes especially in terms of the Arts Council grants.

As the Minister for Arts Timothy Renton revealed in 1991, the Conservative government, in fact, intended to abrogate the Arts Council (Sierz, *Modern British* 32).

However, as part of their election campaign in 1992, the government decided to increase the subsidies by fourteen per cent, "a very welcome pre-election increase" (Shellard 189). However, when the grants were cut in the middle of the 1990s, theatres experienced a fierce financial crisis and they started to seek financial support from local authorities and private sponsors which was hard to achieve due to the economic recession. Apart from the cuts, Major's Conservative government also separated the Arts Council's offices: while the central office in London was called the Arts Council England, the responsibility of funding the Wales and Scotland Arts Councils was passed on to the Welsh and Scottish offices (Sierz, *Modern British* 33). As for the amount of the grants provided by Blair's Labour government, they asserted that they were "a greater believer in the importance of the arts in national life"; however, they could not realise the expected increase in the grants (Shellard 228). As a result,

> [b] the end of the decade . . . the entire theatre funding system had been thoroughly commercialised, so that even subsidised companies were under pressure to be successful businesses. The outward signs if this were everywhere: theatres rebranded themselves, acquired logos, learnt to use niche marketing, made sponsorship deals, redesigned their foyers and expanded their bar activities. Audiences became customers, and shows became product. The box office was king. (Sierz, *Modern British* 34)

The commercialised theatre industry was additionally supported by a new institution in the 1990s, the National Lottery. It was "a non-tax means of funding the arts and national heritage projects" and it was introduced by John Major government in 1995 (Kritzer 23). As the National Lottery distributed an important amount of its income to the arts – which was £250 million in 1996 – it made the greatest contribution to the arts since the 1960s (Shellard 189).

In the 1990s, most of the political plays were staged in mainstream theatres since the plays of political drama were commercially successful. David Hare's plays were all performed by mainstream theatres; for instance, his trilogy and *Amy's View* were put on stage at the National Theatre, *The Blue Room* was produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company and *Via Dolorosa* was premiered at the Royal Court Theatre. Following the Soviet disintegration and the fall of the Berlin at the turn of the decade, the artistic director of the Royal Court "Max Stafford-Clark reaffirmed the Royal Court's

commitment to political writing and new drama" (Shellard 222). In accordance with Stafford-Clark's decision, Royal Court playwrights were encouraged to critically appraise in dialogue form the political and social issue of the 1980s in their plays which were called as a whole *May Day Dialogues* (1990) (222). In this context, a number of issue-based plays were produced such as *Aids Memoir* (1990) by Nicholas Jongh on the immediacy of the AIDS problem, *The Wall-Dog* (1990) written by Manfred Karge and translated by Jane and Howard Brenton about "the imminence of unemployment for an East German border guard and his dog" as well as *Goodnight Siobhan* (1990) by Jeanette Cowley on the Northern Ireland conflict (222).

When Stephen Daldry became the artistic director of the Royal Court in 1994, his intention was to produce more international work that could draw audiences (Shellard 225). However, the Royal Court maintained its status as the promoter of new and avant-garde playwriting and it hosted a series of in-yer-face plays. These works "made up the 1994-95 season at the Royal Court" and constituted "the dominant zeitgeist" of the theatrical world in Britain (D'Monté and Saunders 19). For instance, Sarah Kane's illustration of the Bosnian War in *Blasted* (1995) was the most horrific portrayal of war on stage. Jez Butterworth's *Mojo* (1995) and Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) were "[e]qually shocking plays" presented on Royal Court stages (Urban 38). Also, Martin McDonagh made use of in-yer-face theatre in his plays that scrutinise "Irish ruralism" at the Royal Court as seen in "The Leenane Trilogy': *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), *A Skull in Connemara* (1997) and *The Lonesome West* (1997)" (Dorney 204).

In addition to the Royal Court, which supported political as well as avant-garde playwriting, "[s]maller and more narrowly focused theatres such as the Donmar Warehouse, the Hackney Empire, the Soho, the Bush, the Hampstead, the Almeida, the Tricycle, the Riverside Studios, and the Young Vic" also encouraged political plays to be staged (Kritzer 22). These fringe theatres in the 1990s no longer denoted "agitprop or political confrontation but implie[d] less commercially safe and slightly more daring work than certainly the West End and probably the Royal Court and the National produce[d]" (Shellard 227). The new and the political plays which the fringe staged

were later imported by the West End and the subsidised theatres. Towards the end of the decade, it became clear that "distinctions between the Fringe, the subsidised sector and the West End [began] to collapse" (227). In addition to the fringe theatres, touring companies were also active in the 1990s. The most known touring companies in this decade were "Out of Joint, Paines Plough, Hull Truck," the most popular one being Out of Joint in that it was directed by Max Stafford-Clark and it put on stage "a rich stream of political work" (Kritzer 24).

### 3.2.3. Forms/Techniques Political Dramatists Used in the 1990s

The 1990s' political drama engaged in search for novel artistic forms and methods that could treat contemporary social and political matters. As a consequence of this search, tribunal plays and verbatim plays emerged respectively in the 1990s and in the 2000s. Tribunal plays were staged especially in the first half of the 1990s and followed by the verbatim plays of the 2000s. The playwright of a tribunal play collects and puts on stage "the transcriptions" of some inquiries, trials, interviews conducted by others on certain political as well as social events and then "edit[s] them down to 'the goodbits'" to be presented as a whole by the actors (Haydon 41). This form was initiated by the director Nicholas Kent at the Tricycle Theatre while the first example was assumed to be Richard Norton-Taylor's *The Colour of Justice* (1999), which deals with a young black man Stephen Lawrence's murder (Kritzer 158). The tribunal plays supply the readers/audience with a direct contact with the cases that appear at the courts or in the papers and "give [them] the opportunity of judging the issue, thus providing an immediate form of political engagement" (223). As for the verbatim plays in the 2000s, the playwright stages the researches and the interviews that they themselves conduct rather than presenting what others do (Haydon 42). Even in the 1990s, the playwrights used a method similar to that of the verbatim plays by making their own inquiries and interviews before writing a play as illustrated by David Hare. Prior to the writing process of his trilogy *Racing Demon* (1990), *Murmuring Judges* (1991) and *The Absence of War* (1993), Hare collected information in major British institutions of religion, law and politics and made interviews with the staff there. Then he put his research together in *Asking Around* (1993) as a source book for *Racing Demon*,

*Murmuring Judges* and *The Absence of War*. However, what distinguishes Hare's works from the verbatim plays of the 2000s is the fact that Hare fictionalised in his trilogy the facts he found out rather than producing an unadulterated representation. Likewise, for *Via Dolorosa*, Hare conducted interviews with the people he met during his journey in Israel and Palestine and presented these interviews in the play by uniting them with his own thoughts.

In terms of techniques, political plays of the 1990s made use of those that could convey their subject matters immediately and efficiently. Political plays benefited from the episodic scenes of Brecht's epic theatre as seen in David Edgar's plays while absurdism was observed in Caryl Churchill's and Martin McDonagh's plays "to heighten the sense of isolation and estrangement that their characters experience in the contexts of the breakdown of family and social support and the oppressive environments created by corporate or governmental power" (Kritzer 223). Apart from these, political dramatists drew a lot from the other fields of art and they were particularly inspired by the techniques of cinema, which is illustrated by the cinematographic representations in their plays, for example, in David Hare's *Murmuring Judges* and *The Absence of War*. Hare also employed a novel technique for the performance of his *Via Dolorosa* and put it on stage in the form of monologue acted by himself.

### 3.3. *The Absence of War*

*The Absence of War* (1993) is the last piece of David Hare's trilogy that inspects the major institutions of Britain, religion, law and political parties. Engagement with institutions is not a novelty in Hare's drama since in his career, he was always "a passionate and unrelenting critic of the establishment and of what we may call 'the official culture'" (Boon, *About Hare* 1). Since it is Hare's aim as a political dramatist to lay bare the social and political matters of his time, the public institutions are issues he inevitably takes into consideration. He has a satirical approach to educational institutions in *Slag*; he reprehends the shortcomings and mistakes of the Labour movement in *A Great Exhibition*; he makes a critical analysis of the capitalist ideology penetrating into various institutions and private lives in *Knuckle*; he presents the

rock'n'roll movement in an unfavourable way and undermines an established institution, Cambridge University, in *Teeth 'n' Smiles*; he describes how to apply socialism properly in different institutions like law, police force, health, and education as seen in *Fanshen*; he criticises British bureaucracy in *Plenty*; and he, together with Howard Brenton, denounces the media industry in *Pravda*.

When dealing with the establishment in his plays, Hare portrays individuals who are constantly in contact with the institutions. In addition, what Hare has in his mind while playwriting is to portray the society as it is, as it is in relation with private and public embodiments. Hare believes that "if at least the *ambition* to be urgently contemporary goes out of our theatre, then we will have lost the thing which most distinguishes it and makes it valuable" (*Obedience* 105). As a result of this ambition, through his trilogy, Hare intends to provide for his audience "some of the problems facing people working in the law, the church and the Labour Party" so that they can find "any resonance with the experience of their own lives" (141). What Hare presents on stage is not only pure representation but a critical analysis because theatre is the "proper place" where the playwright is able "to tackle the major social and political issues of contemporary society" (Boon, "Keeping Turning up" 31).

The trilogy has a distinguished place among Hare's plays and it is different from his earlier plays that deal with social and political issues. The principally distinctive attribute of the trilogy is its approach to its material. The trilogy plays were written in "a post-ideological world" (Wade 75), when there was no ideology wholeheartedly embraced other than the Conservative, when there seemed no escape from the Conservative rule and when there was no way left for the playwrights to bring a solution to "the corrosive effects of a Conservative hegemony (and the failings of British institutions)" apart from embracing the Conservative ideology (65). Under the conditions that prevented any war against the "naturalised" institutions or against the Conservative discourse that "masquerade[d] as common sense," Hare, as a political dramatist, felt obliged to advocate the institutions on condition that they were reformed (Pattie 365-366). This is for Hare the "irony of Thatcherism" in that "[Thatcher] made conservatives of us all. We all found ourselves defending institutions which previously

we would have had no time for, because those institutions were better than barbarism" (*Asking Around* 228). Hence, Hare preferred to explore "the common good" for the people in his trilogy rather than to uphold a certain religious or political ideology (8). Since there seemed no escape from the institutions, he sought this common good within these institutions by renewing and reforming them (88).

Les Wade argues that as Hare does not underline a definite ideology in his trilogy, the plays "demonstrate a political agnosticism" (65). On the one hand, this is true because there is a protagonist in each play that represents goodness, decency and morality without depending on a spiritual, legal or political foundation. Lionel in *Racing Demon* works hard to help the poor and to raise consciousness about their living conditions with no or little reference to Christ or to what the Church of England requires him to do. Irina in *Murmuring Judges* strives to establish justice challenging the prejudiced judges and the legal constraints. George in *The Absence of War* represents decency as a politician in the midst of the cruel conditions of British politics and, even when he loses, he searches for new ways of serving the people. On the other hand, to seek and to provide the common good for the public who were heavily under the influence of the Conservative politics in the 1990s is not at odds with leftist ideology. As it is clear in *Asking Around*, a non-fictional work in which Hare collected his fieldwork at the three institutions before writing the trilogy, Hare wrote the plays "left-handed"ly as the title of one of his prose works, *Writing Left-Handed* (1991) indicates.

Another distinctive feature of the trilogy that differs them from Hare's previous engagements with social and political issues along with institutions is its being one of the precedents of verbatim theatre. Hare conducted research and interviews with lots of professionals during his fieldwork at the Church of England, at the Inns of Court, at prisons and with policemen, and lastly in the Conservative and Labour parties. This fieldwork not only made his plays initial examples of verbatim theatre but also "attempt[ed] to counter the influence of mass media, especially television, in the selection and viewpoint of material" since they depended upon the playwright's own "documentary-type reports on controversial events" (Kritzer 24). That is why Billington calls the last piece of the trilogy, *The Absence of War*, journalistic. However, he also

points out that "[the play] is both too journalistic and not journalistic enough" ("Labour's Hare"). Since the play is based on Hare's research and records, it may be regarded journalistic; on the other hand, as it is a dramatic work of art, it is relieved from the constraints of journalism and the playwright can treat his material however he likes, by adding fact or fiction to it.

The plays of the trilogy were produced as a result of six years' hard work including the time of research and the writing process (Boon, "Keeping Turning up" 31). *Racing Demon* was staged at the Cottesloe, *Murmuring Judges* and *The Absence of War* were produced at the Olivier, all by the National Theatre Company. The plays' premieres took place one after the other in different years but on the day *The Absence of War* was first staged, the two previous plays were also revived in 1993 again in the National Theatre. Hare advises his audience to see the plays together because although "[i]t was nice, of course, if anyone chose to see the plays individually, . . . the point of the enterprise was to put them together. The whole was far, far more than the parts" (Hare, *Obedience* 141). In addition to the revival of the trilogy in the 1990s, the plays "underwent a[nother] revival in a 2003 production at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, becoming a rare example of a new play from the 1990s enjoying a large-scale revival in the new millennium" (D'Monté and Saunders 20). However, the effect of this revival was not like that of the previous performances in that the trilogy is contextualised in the 1990s. As one of the theatre reviewers who attended the revival in 2003, Lyn Gardner posits, the experience "[was] like reading a 10-year-old newspaper, more of sociological than immediate interest" (18).

As for the writing process, following the first two pieces of the trilogy that deal with the two principal institutions of Britain, *Racing Demon* and *Murmuring Judges*, David Hare first considered writing a play on the army; for him, "the last trade union" (*Asking Around* 161). But later he resolved that what he would learn from the soldiers while asking around for this present play would not be much different from what the policemen told him while he was writing *Murmuring Judges*. Thus, Hare made his final choice and settled on the issue of political party politics to treat in the final piece of his trilogy. Hare says, "I set out to capture that strange moment at which a small part of the

State is compelled, for a few weeks at least, to offer itself up to the public's inspection" (161). Therefore, he preferred to focus on the time of the general election of 1992 in order to analyse how the country was being governed and what the political parties were doing at a time when the political parties disputed their policies in front of the public.

When Hare started his fieldwork for *The Absence of War*, it was the time for Britain's 1992 General Election, for which the political parties held numerous election planning meetings, strategy meetings, budget meetings, and press conferences, most of which Hare attended with the permission of the parties. However, because Labour Party opened its doors to the playwright more often than he expected, it was hard for Hare "to attend equally confidential meetings at Tory Party headquarters" (Hare, *Asking Around* 162). Even at the entrance of Conservative Party, he encountered a number of bureaucratic hindrances while there was almost none in Labour Party. It seemed more arduous to go in the offices of the Conservatives than those of the Labour because, as a Conservative woman states, "[n]obody wants to blow [the Labour] up" (175). As a consequence, the playwright got the chance during his fieldwork to scrutinise Labour Party and its plans more closely than those of the Conservatives. Accordingly, *The Absence of War* predominantly portrays Labour Party along with its members and especially its leader but at the same time it reveals a lot related to the Conservatives, the state and the media in the background. This study, therefore, will concentrate on Labour Party as depicted in *The Absence of War* after briefly introducing how the playwright deals with Conservative Party and the media in the play.

The party in the government, as far as it is revealed in *The Absence of War* and in *Asking Around*, is more advantageous while the preparations for the election are conducted. Conservative Party makes use of all the facilities which the state allows it to use such as "cars[,] [a]nd teams of civil servants[,] [r]esources[,] [b]uildings[,] [a]ccess to the facts" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 3; 1.2). It is power that makes the Conservatives charismatic in the eye of the electorate and that makes acceptable whatever they say or do. Since "[t]hese people dress in power," they seem to be "witty and confident" (*Asking Around* 178-179). Moreover, since there is no constitution in Britain, the Prime Minister in the play, Charles Kendrick, feels free to act in the way he

likes and do what he wants; for instance, he can determine the date of the election on his own. In addition to this advantage, the public trusts the Conservatives since they are assumed to have mastery of the economy and the Conservative discourse is promoted everyday by the media. Kendrick, in the play, also refers a lot in his speeches to the Gulf War mimicking the Prime Minister of Britain John Major, who intends through the Gulf War to achieve the popularity Thatcher achieved in the Falklands War (Heffernan and Marqusee 201). The Labour Party leader in the play, George Jones, calls attention to the fact that the phrase "'[m]assive troop movements'" is one of Kendrick's favourite expressions just as it was of Major's (Hare, *The Absence of War* 39; 1.8). Hare, too, in *Asking Around*, mentions a film produced to show John Major in the Gulf, where he addresses the soldiers: "'It's been an absolutely fabulous job you've done…" (215). However, after the war ended, since there was very little gained and too many questions left unanswered, Conservative Party could not benefit from the discourse of the Gulf War unlike Thatcher did in the Falklands War (Heffernan and Marqusee 201).

The media in the 1990s was heavily under the influence of the predominant discourse generated by the Conservative government. Apart from attending the meetings held by the political parties, Hare also made interviews with a number of politicians and journalists. As a result of these interviews, he deduced that the media was, on the one hand, constantly coerced by the government and felt obliged to support the government policies; or else, they were castigated. For instance, as Hare discloses in *Asking Around*, the "[Thames Television] [were] punished as a company for their journalists' brave investigation of the SAS killings in Gibraltar," and they were not accepted at the press conferences (174). During these conferences, other reporters and journalists were also not allowed to question freely the government or its ministers, especially the Prime Minister. In the press conferences, as narrated in *Asking Around*, there occurred certain discussions but most were left in the air without any challenge by the press since, in such meetings, only one question was allowed for each journalist so that "nobody comes back at the politicians' answers" (180).

On the other hand, most of the media "worshipp[ed] power" (Hare, *Asking Around* 210) and voluntarily promoted the interests of the government. Hare draws attention to the

language adopted by the newspapers which were programmed totally to glorify the government and its officers. Before the elections, the news related to John Major was reported by using "active" verbs to describe his actions such as "'Major attacks', 'Major commands', 'Major fights'" (181). On the other hand, what the Labour Party members did was narrated by means of "passive" verbs like "'Labour surrenders', 'Labour yields', 'Labour holds on'" (181). In *The Absence of War*, there are references to the manipulating force of the media. Particularly the Labour Party members in the play complain about the partiality of the media and they know that "[the people] certainly won't for [the Labour] if they read the newspapers" (61; 2.2). Moreover, they are fearful of the pro-Conservative media who overdraw any failing or blunder of the Labour in their headlines. So, the Labour Party members adjust their speeches and their election programme in a way that will not create a stir in the media. As Billington emphasises, "in a media-driven age, party leaders are programmed to stick unwaveringly to the prescribed hymn-sheet and are never permitted to show their feelings" (*State of the Nation* 333). The act of adapting their programme or speeches to the mainstream discourse is the very problem with Labour Party. As Kinnock sententiously states, "[t]he Labour movement has one basic fault. It denounces the capitalist press on the one hand and yet on the other it accepts what it reads in it" (235).

The Labour Party members, who are waiting impatiently to govern the country, conduct their election campaign under the guidance of a private office created by the fictional leader George Jones in *The Absence of War* and by the actual leader Neil Kinnock on which George is modeled. Both the fictional leader and the actual one have one reason for fashioning their private offices that will conduct the election campaign. They have these offices because they do not trust their party since the people in the party do not always support them wholeheartedly. George in the play discloses that he has founded his own office "because [he] needed some colleagues [he] could actually rely on" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 81; 2.6). Neil Kinnock's justification is revealed by one of his assistants, Neil Stewart, during his interview with Hare. He says that Kinnock needed such a private office to lead the campaign "[b]ecause things wouldn't get done. Because Neil [Kinnock]'s determination would get diluted" by his party (189).

As for the members of the leaders' offices, the fictional ones are modeled on the real ones but it is hard to trace one-to-one similarities among them. Hare, while creating one character, forms him/her after more than one real-life person. But at the same time, it is possible to identify some of the people in Kinnock's office as they appear in George's office mostly because of their positions. Gwenda is George's secretary and she may have been created after Patricia Hewitt, Kinnock's press secretary. George also has another woman officer in his office, Mary, who may be representing Julie Hall, Kinnock's press officer. However, these characters do not exactly represent their real-life models; for instance, while it is Mary who drafts George's speeches in the play, Patricia not Julie does this job for Kinnock. Another real-life character who is traceable in *The Absence of War* is the Chairman of the Campaign, Jack Cunningham. He is represented in the play by Bryden, who is, like his factual counterpart, aged and authoritative. Other than Cunningham, there is another man in Kinnock's office, Philip Gould, who undertakes a leading role in the campaign. As far as Hare is informed, Gould "not only controls the Labour Party's advertising, but also takes a strong directive role, commissioning and interpreting Labour's own private opinion polls" (Hare, *Asking Around* 166). He is represented in the play by the character Oliver, who is the most dominant officer in not only conducting the campaign but also directing George and his actions. Hare also derives from Robin Cook, a Labour Party MP, while creating Oliver in that both of them easily lose their nerves. The Shadow Chancellor Malcolm in the play must have been modeled on John Smith since the former will be the Labour leader after George while the latter will be the leader after Kinnock. In *Asking Around*, it is Hare himself as the researcher who evaluates from a distance what is going on in the political parties before the general election. Hare's counterpart in *The Absence of War* who can approach the matters impartially and critically as an outsider is Lindsay, who is from an advertising agency to help Labour Party's election campaign.

In *The Absence of War*, David Hare, as a political dramatist with leftist ideology, is observed to be critical more of Labour Party, its members and policies than of Conservative Party. *The Absence of War* is regarded to be one of the works which "directly confront the unpopularity of the left – in a manner that had many of the critics suggesting that the writer[ ] had actually decamped to the Conservatives" (Ansorge,

*From Liverpool* 48). In contrast to this suggestion, Hare sincerely criticises the shortcomings and the mistakes of the party as well as of its leader; meanwhile, he retains his leftist stance and continues to favour Labour Party as he implies in the play and explicitly states in *Asking Around* (242). The people in Labour Party as portrayed in *The Absence of War* seem to have created a closed society for themselves so they do not rely on anyone other than themselves. An important reason for this isolation has to do with the connections between some of the members that go back to the past. These Labour Party members, like Andrew and Oliver, went through, as far as they argue in the play, a number of troubled and painful times along with a certain number of people under the same roof with the Left and Labour Party: "[S]tudent politics" as well as "Students Unions" are the "solid" grounds on which they come together, Andrew claims (Hare, *The Absence of War* 16; 1.4). Due to this mutual past, Oliver and Andrew assert that they can endure any hardship or any "bad" event they may encounter as a Labour Party member. Not only these two members but almost all the people in George's office continuously underline the fact that they are leftists and dedicated to their party for ages. In order to show the outside world that they act together, they do not hesitate to repeat one another's expressions, even sometimes word for word: "This is the Labour Party. We all have to say the same thing" says Oliver (26; 1.6) while George tells that "[i]f Bryden or I use any different words then it's a hostage to fortune. The *Daily Express* says we're split" (27; 1.6). The idea that the Labour must use the same language and repeat each other even word for word is also given in Hare's research in Labour Party offices. The Labour leader Kinnock, just like George, emphasises how it is imperative for the Labour to parade their union, or else, "the press will say there's a split" (qtd. in Hare, *Asking Around* 170).

The Labour's mutual past makes them so loyal to each other that they become cynical towards any interference or criticism from the outside. However, such an obstinate adherence to the thought that they can trust only each other makes them distant from the modern world and deprived of its opportunities. For instance, Labour Party needs an agency for its election campaign but the members insist that "we're well on our planning. The Strategy Unit is already in place. We have a campaign. We've even fixed slogans" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 14; 1.4). The Labour Party members obstinately

believe that an advertising agency should help them only for the print and the posters not for the slogans or the political statements. The members, in their own way, distrust the "[p]rofessionals" of the post-Thatcherite Britain (17; 1.4) since, they believe, these professionals have too much "confidence" but little experience of struggling which is crucial in Labour Party. While the professionals of the Post-Thatcherite Britain under the Conservative rule have self-assurance which is untainted by any loss or failure, the Labour Party members have a feeling of weariness after successive Conservative victories in the elections and "thirteen years' powerless opposition" (*Asking Around* 213). As a result, Labour Party adopts a kind of stoicism and isolate itself from any new comer who is fresh, who has not experienced defeat, and who has newly learnt the Labour principles.

On the other hand, it is hard for Labour Party to survive the elections without getting assistance from outside of the party or to "fight an election without Professional help" when the Conservatives make use of all the facilities of the modern world (Hare, *The Absence of War* 6; 1.2). In isolation, Labour Party ends up distant from the public and ignorant of the main reasons that lie behind its past defeats in the elections and of the public opinion about their present politics. It has its own polls and surveys but these are not very helpful in providing a truthful analysis of the public opinion and they only cause Labour Party to change their policies "so often that no one quite knows where [the] Party stands" (67; 2.3). Furthermore, the Labour Party members are not aware of the fact that their cowardly slogans which are constructed for fear of aggravating the Conservative policies make them shift towards the right. Lindsay warns them about the facts she extracts from the opinion polls but the members, particularly Oliver, Andrew and Bryden, the closest ones to George, turn a deaf ear to what she says. According to the surveys, for instance, "[s]eventy per cent agree with this statement: 'The Labour Party no longer stands for anything distinctive'" (28; 1.6) because their policies are no longer distinguishable from those of Conservative Party.

Labour Party's agenda for the election is prepared in conformity with the discourse constructed by the Conservative governments. It is the Labour's lack of confidence that makes them "fight the election on grounds dictated by their enemies" (Wu 114). Even

the speeches of the Labour Party leader are worked out meticulously so that certain words favoured by the Conservatives are used such as "fairness," leaving aside one of the key words of socialism, "equality" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 43; 1.8). However, avoiding to assert their own ideas not only makes Labour Party inefficient in the eyes of the electorate but also distances them from their roots and ideals. Although conforming to the Conservative discourse means playing their cards safe, this state of safety, "no big punches, just slugging it out," makes both George and his party "very boring" (47; 1.8). Moreover, by submitting to the Conservative ideology, Labour Party relinquishes one of the fundamentals that underlie the socialist doctrine, which is "to disagree," as Vera also reveals (50; 1.9). Vera is a representative of the generation of the late 1960s who disagreed with the conventions of their time and who fought for their own ideals. Although Vera is called to Labour Party campaign headquarters "[a]s a symbol of roots [a]nd continuity," some members do not want her to speak since Labour Party has already distanced itself from its roots (51; 1.10). Therefore, it is not a surprise when the ones who have invited Vera leave her alone on stage immediately after the programme for the campaign starts while she asks miserably "When? Someone tell me. When do we start?" (56; 1.10). When the real-life Labour Party members maintain their campaign in Sheffield, they also invite a lifelong leftist, Barbara Castle, who can speak, contrary to Vera, and who likens the energy of the electorate to the one in 1945 (Hare, *Asking Around* 206). Labour Party needs to consult such figures from its history in order to prove that it is still loyal to its roots. However, since Hare believes that the party has distanced from its past and from its basic principles, he does not give voice to Vera in the play though Barbara speaks in the real-life election campaign.

Apart from making connection with figures from history, Labour Party prefers to work at present time with people who have a leftist background and who have struggled for the movement. However, its ends up supporting rightist politics, which is not a coincidence since the post-Thatcherite England is permeated with Conservative principles. While recruiting people, the Conservatives, in contrast to the Labour, are concerned, not with their ideology or their past relations with the Conservative movement. The Conservatives, as indicated in the play, employ people who attended good schools, who worked in certain banks, and who can sell their houses or shares for

the party. For George, the Conservatives give prominence to and glorify "[m]oney" and it is "a simple master" which can effortlessly bring varied people together and appeal to the electorate (Hare, *The Absence of War* 18; 1.4). The Conservatives work alongside and in harmony with the outside world with which they have the same concerns, that is money. Particularly in those Conservative years under Thatcher's rule, British politics was predominated by such money-centred terms as the free-market economy, monetarism and privatisation. Together with Thatcher's rule, "[t]he language of politics changed" and it became impossible "to cover politics properly if you weren't economically literate" (Gardam 209). Accordingly, throughout a decade, the political debates mainly focused on the economy which most of the people could not comprehend adequately (210). During these debates, it was always the Conservatives who were pointed out as the ones capable of handling the economy. After Thatcher, the John Major government, too, were intent to produce a softer approach to conservatism but as far as the experts pinpointed, it did not appeal to the electorate to be both "Capable" in the economy and "Caring" towards the people at the same time (Hare, *Asking Around* 202). Hence the Conservatives under Major followed Thatcher and accepted the superiority of mastering money over adopting a softer ideology.

The Labour, on the other hand, set out with the promise of providing both "justice and efficiency," which are, in other words, kindness/fairness and economic capability (Hare, *Asking Around* 202). However, their policies did not appeal to the electorate both because it was widely accepted that it was impossible to be both caring in the relations with the public and capable in terms of economy, and also because Labour Party was already accepted incompetent in affairs related to the economy. Moreover, as George asserts in the play, the "justice" that the Labour Party members consider superior is a problematic term since "no two people agree what it is" and

> [it] has no organizations. It has no schools. It did have once. They were called unions. But the communities that produced them have gone. The industries have gone. So now justice recruits from the great deracinated masses. The people from nowhere. Who have nothing in common. Except what they say they believe in. (*The Absence of War* 18; 1.4)

Justice, the term that David Hare fondly employs in his plays, appears in *The Absence of War* as an ideal which is sought by Labour Party but which has no power to bring together various groups of people each of whom have different perceptions of justice. Though the Labour Party members adopt justice as a master, justice is not capable of attracting the electorate on its own. Hence, while the Conservatives' master, money, brings victory, the Labour's master, justice, though dignified, brings loss.

The Conservatives' master attracts people so efficiently and the Conservatives' mastery of the economy is accepted so readily by the public that every political act of the Conservatives is assumed as a contribution to the economy. When John Major goes to a "microchip factory on a featureless industrial estate in mid-Glamorgan" as a part of his election programme, a journalist questions Major's going around in a factory to make a speech on the election and talks with one of Major's officers:

> Miner: . . . This is a place where modern technology is being developed.
> Journalist: What for?
> Minder: Helping the economy.
> Journalist: In what way?
> Minder: I don't know, but I'm sure it's helping the economy. (Hare, *Asking Around* 197)

Hence, the fear of disturbing the Conservative discourse which is steadily established as observed above makes the Labour conceal their own politics and plans related to the economy. For instance, there is an important matter in the economy that Labour Party intends to find a solution for in the play, which is mortgage tax relief. The people in the Labour see that it is "the propertied class" that benefit from this tax relief, which is "unearned" and "unequitable" (*The Absence of War* 45; 1.8). The Labour, as a party aching for "common fairness," want to abrogate it but it is for certain that this change will disturb the class with property (67; 2.3). Thus, the people in the Labour are determined to keep their plan about this change a secret as if they were not defenders of common property in opposition to private property.

Since the Conservatives are supposedly good at managing money, the Labour in the play surrender the economy to them without any hesitation. Not only the widely-assumed Conservative superiority in the economy but also the Labour's previous

failures in the economy make the latter refrain from matters related to the economy. Since the Labour governments could not be triumphant in resolving the economic problems in the 1970s, the public in the 1980s and in the early 1990s tended to distrust Labour Party's politics in relation to the economy. Moreover, before the election, Maurice Saatchi, an Iraqi-British businessman, put "'TAX BOMBSHELL' posters which convinced voters they would each be £1.000 worse off under Labour" (Hare, *Asking Around* 163). Since Labour Party could not respond to this challenge properly, it was widely accepted that "Labour had lost before they began" (163). As seen in the play, the assumption that Labour Party will fail in the economy is accepted even by the party themselves: "We have been through this many times. Finally the economy is always going to be a Tory issue. It's theirs. They own it" says Oliver, a Labour Party member in the play (*The Absence of War* 44; 1.8). Furthermore, Hare observes when he is among the party members that "Labour strategists regard tax and the economy as issues on which Labour simply *cannot* win" (*Asking Around* 183). However, according to the statistics, "Labour governments since the war have been at least as economically successful as Tory ones, if not more so" (212). In fact, the Labour, rather than being obsessed with their own failures, could focus on the inefficacy of the Conservatives in the economy such as "unemployment, worst recession since the war, the poll tax fiasco" as Neil Kinnock's secretary Julie Hall admits (227). Yet, Labour Party impulsively sees the economy as "a Tory issue," so its members in the play make the economy one of the taboo subjects that their leader George is to refrain from in his speeches. For Oliver, "George can speak all he likes on the caring issues. Health. Education. He plays to his pluses, that's fine. What he mustn't do is in any way remind people that when he's elected he's going to be in charge of their money. Because that's where people don't trust him at all" (*The Absence of War* 44; 1.8).

Thus, it is not a coincidence in the play that even the possibility of a Labour government according to a new opinion poll causes the pound to fall. It also leads to chaos and confusion both throughout Britain in general and particularly in Labour Party's offices. The Labour Party members along with their leader have already decided that "We must never seem to talk the pound down" and that they should "stop the pound falling. At all costs" since it would be "unpatriotic" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 27; 1.6). However, it

is not Labour Party's job to deal with an economic problem since the Conservatives are in the government at present. Hence, what Labour Party does is nothing other than "help[ing] the Tories" (27; 1.6). As Lindsay asserts, almost all of the deeds of Labour Party "seem to be backing the government" so much that "the public ends up thinking [they]'re weak" (28; 1.6). In fact, the urge that makes Labour Party strives for the pound is most probably because of its lack of confidence in the field of the economy. Since they were unsuccessful in managing the economy while in power, they attempt at least not to damage it while in opposition, which makes their deed "[ ]patriotic" as far as they suppose (27; 1.6). Although as patriotic members of the society the people in the Labour claim that they are worried about the economic concerns of the public, they are, in fact, fearful of any adverse effect this recent poll and the fall in the pound may have on the vote rates of their party in the election. As the statistics tell, "[o]nce it is understood that the Labour may win, there will undoubtedly be a shift back to the Conservatives" as known among the people (*Asking Around* 213). Hence, although as the surveys indicate Labour Party started its campaign for the 1992 General Election ahead of Conservative Party, it ended in unsuccess. As a direct result of the distrust in Labour Party in the field of the economy, "the number of people believing that a Labour government w[ould] mean higher taxes [grew] every day" (217). This prejudice was also advocated by the newspapers which worried about what would become of Britain when Kinnock came to power. What particularly astonished the Labour only one day before the election was the fact that "[t]he *Sun* ha[d] nine pages on what a nightmare it would be if Neil got in, similarly the *Express* and the *Mail*" (222).

The Conservatives in the play, on the other hand, do not hesitate to take advantage of the fall in the pound and they announce that "the uncertainty" related to a Labour government along with a worsening economy must end (Hare, *The Absence of War* 38; 1.7). This attack of the Conservatives brings them more points in the polls than the propaganda of their own policies does because "[y]ou will . . . have more success stopping people voting for your opponents than you will making people vote for you" (*Asking Around* 182). Without informing the opposition party leader George and by making use of the benefit of being in power, the Prime Minister Charles Kendrick goes to the Palace and obtains permission from the Queen for the elections to be held at an

earlier date, that is before Christmas. This is what Hare criticises not only in the play but in the real world as he discloses in *Asking Around*. Both in the play and in the research, what is primarily attacked by Hare is the lack of a constitution in Britain that can keep the Prime Minister within certain bounds. Kendrick, not restrained by any law, goes to the palace and appears to be "*not marked with self-doubt*" after his meeting with the Queen (*The Absence of War* 37; 1.7). He says that "[w]e cannot have prosperity, we cannot have sound financial practice until the danger – however remote – of a possible Labour government is removed from the back of people's minds" (37-38; 1.7). He talks as if the economy has worsened suddenly because of a poll, and as if it were not his own party that was ruling the country as well as the economy so far. It will be clear at the end of the play that his accusation of Labour Party for causing the fall in the pound is nothing other than a political tactic to demonstrate Conservative Party government as superior to the Labour and to cover up the Conservatives' failings in the management of the economy. After the election, although it is for certain that the Conservatives are to form the government and there is no hint of a Labour government, the economy is still not in a good state. Kendrick confesses after the election results are finalised: "I have to say news has only today reached me, informing of just how grave the economic situation is – perhaps graver than we have recently thought. That means we shall be busy even in what we now know may be difficult times ahead" (109; 2.12).

Just as the economy is the field the only master of which are the Conservatives as conceded by the Labour, there are some other issues which the Labour Party members believe they can talk about within the boundaries that the Conservative discourse allows them. In the nineth scene of Act II, the readers/audience witness the outburst of George when he reveals, in a state of delirium, a number of issues he is forbidden to talk about. One of these issues is the Northern Ireland problem: George is instructed by his team to assume that Northern Ireland is "above politics" and it is a matter "too important to be spoken of" so he had better not talk about it "publicly" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 98; 2.9). Another issue that George cannot make a political comment about is British history; he is not allowed by his party to state that "Britain happens to be trapped in historical decline" though he believes "it's true" (98; 2.9). British "[d]efence" is another forbidden subject matter to talk on although it is required to defend that "nuclear

weapons" are to be abandoned, which George would do if he could, if he was allowed to (98-99; 2.9). George is not permitted to criticise "the royal bloody family" and the "hereditary peerages" either (99; 2.9). It is a disillusionment for George not to be able to critically evaluate the state of Britain as he observes it is in: "We live in a country which is spavined with ancestorship. This country will never, *can* never prosper until it escapes from its past. (*He turns and addresses them all.*) Why can't I say that? You tell me. What is this? Is this my fault? Or is it the public's? (*He turns back away from them.*) Why can't I speak of what I believe?" (99; 2.9)

In *The Absence of War*, Hare is not only interested in Labour Party's shortcomings but also concerned with those of its leader, George. While Hare explores what a political party leader should be like in the person of George, he also questions inter-party politics by means of George's relationship with the people around him. George is confined within certain bounds not only by the taboo subjects imposed by his party but also by the direct oppression of his team members. Unlike his appearance that is impotent and powerless, George is in fact "impressive" and "authoritative (Hare, *The Absence of War* 4; 1.2), which is the irony in his character. Although he is furious and dominant inside, he forces himself to yield to the demands and repressive attitudes of the people around him. It is both the overpowering dominance of the people in his private office and his lack of self-esteem as well as of self-confidence that makes George adopt a submissive attitude. The less confidence his team places in him, the less self-confident he becomes; the less he relies on his own abilities, the more oppressively his team treats him. As a result, George is observed to be under constant pressure as if he is put "inside a corset" and forced to live there by his team members when they "are tightening the string" continually (47; 1.8). The "corset" is the very word Neil Kinnock uses in order to delineate the similar situation he himself is put in by his team during the election campaign: "I'm the only man wearing a bloody corset over his mouth" since he is also not allowed to speak as he likes (*Asking Around* 221). On the other hand, Hare is aware of what "a very passionate and interesting man" Kinnock is although he "hold[s] himself in" (227). Similarly, in the play, Lindsay draws attention to George's "passion" which is the thing that makes him a leader but that is restrained by the people around him (*The Absence of War* 92; 2.7).

In fact, the people in George's office sincerely love him and want to safeguard him for fear that the Conservatives or the media make fun of his possible blunders. But while they try to protect George, they cause him to lose the public favour since the people are aware of the fact that "he's been programmed" and what they see while watching George is only "six rolls of sticky tape wrapped round his mouth" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 91; 2.7). Contrary to George, "Kinnock saddles himself with the impossible task of writing all his own speeches" in order not to be like the man in the film *The Candidate* who speaks nothing other than what other people prepare for him (*Asking Around* 168). As given in *Asking Around*, the leader who "reads from a huge ring-bound folder answers which other people have prepared for him" is John Major, the Conservative Party leader (168). Hence, it can be argued that Hare criticises through George in *The Absence of War* an important shortcoming of the real-life Conservative Party leader, that is, being unable to talk in the public.

George was, in fact, a leader who could once make effective speeches: "My father… my own father taught me. He said to me: speak, just speak from the heart" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 93; 2.7). However, he made some mistakes in his previous speeches and these were hyperbolised and turned into "myth[s]" by the media (84; 2.6) while he was also punished by his own office. Accordingly, George is turned into a puppet leader that reads his political speeches from the lines prepared by his team. So, in his speeches there is left no trace of "wit," "gaiety," or "humour" all of which he in fact possesses (91; 2.7). As far as George's office people are concerned, what George has is "a political weakness," which is the fact that "he cannot in public always give [his political] ideas articulate expression" (31; 1.6). Hence, they deem it their duty to write down "[George's] worst failings" by putting each of them on a separately coloured card (32; 1.6). However, these people increase their control over George so much in time that they are not satisfied with the cards any more but they also demand George to speak directly from the prepared texts and to rehearse in collaboration with them before every speech. In time, George gets used to speaking in public by depending on these cards and he ends up as a politician who cannot construct a sentence on his own. When he attempts to do so, he disgraces himself and his party:

> GEORGE: . . .
> So…
> Now…
> Let me…
> Now…
> Let me continue. I have here the words.
> (*He reaches sweating profusely now and rather clumsily for some folded up pieces of paper from inside his jacket. He has a moment's panic as his hands shake unfolding them.*)
> In my pocket I have them.
> (*There is a silence. Then he steadies himself before he thunders out again, with absolute authority once more, from the safety of the notes.*)
> Let me read you the words I came here to say. (96; 2.8)

Hugo Young approaches this speech from a different perspective asserting that this is more "a paradigm of modern socialist emptiness" than the incapability of a politician in public speech (20). In fact, this scene may be referring to all the inefficient Labour policies which are put in the party's election programme but which fall short, just like George's speech, by providing the party with no victorious end.

If George was once a good speaker, why in the first place he surrendered to a life under pressure and lost his ability to speak for good is to be answered. The Labour are "fear[ful] of making a mistake" since any mistake will be considered a drawback and a hindrance on their way towards power both by the public and by the media (Hare, *Asking Around* 210). Hence George's office decide to protect both George and their party from any adverse effect that may be caused by their own mistakes; therefore, George should be programmed well. Apart from this, as implied in the play, every member in Labour Party has the courage to express themselves freely as well as the self-confidence to consider themselves a nominee for leadership. As Neil Stewart confesses in his talk with Hare, "[members of the Labour] are instinctively anti-leadership. Labour is the dissident party and the activists are the deviants within that" (230). Hence the people in George's office insistently discuss their beliefs about what to do for the party by keeping George under control.

As for George, he claims that when the benefits of his party are in question, he does not hesitate to push aside his self-indulgence and give up his own thoughts and expressions. According to Duncan Wu, since George "puts the good of the Party – and of the country

at large – before himself," he ends up as a "loser," which appears true to a certain extent (112). This is applicable to Kinnock as well because he conforms, for the benefit of his party, to the people's demands in his private office. As Kinnock's secretary Julie Hall indicates, "Neil [Kinnock], quite rightly, [is] always alert to his colleagues and their assessment of his performance" so (227). Nevertheless, George yields to his team and accepts to be under control because he thinks he needs to be supported and commended by them in order to prove his leadership. That is why he asks the only man who neglects to praise him, Malcolm, to exalt him and his position: "You must always talk the Leadership up" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 78; 2.6). Moreover, that the team praises George suits more his interests than those of the party in that after the Labour's secret about the mortgage tax relief is revealed, George is more interested in his own reputation: "if necessary we both stop campaigning. The issue is me. I'm now the issue. And Malcolm is the only man who can help" (76; 2.4). On the other hand, George's willingness to draw back is often criticised by the people in his office although it was they who initially enjoined George, his actions and his speech. The fact that George listens to and acts in conformity with the suggestions of his team is not considered to be "objectivity" particularly by Oliver (20; 1.4). It means, for Oliver, "to take one step back from things," not to act responsibly, which is George's "fatal weakness" that brings him failure at the end of his tragic story in the election (20; 1.4). Ironically, it is mostly Oliver who hinders George from acting on his own and who induces him to become more and more dependent on the support of his team.

George is to be constrained, as far as his team is concerned, not only in his public speeches but also in his attendance to the public meetings. In the second scene of Act I, for instance, his team members look for him impatiently when it is George's time to speak at the "Prime Minister's Question Time," a speech which is held in the House of Commons and in which George is expected to ask his questions related to the government and the Prime Minister. The people in George's office do not expect at all that George will appear before the time for his speech comes. In panic, they anticipate his coming; they get furious with George and they start rumours about whether he will come on time or late. It is because of this distrust that his team believe that George is to be kept under control. Hence, "[t]here's one rule with George. Never slacken the leash"

says Gwenda (Hare, *The Absence of War* 4; 1.2). Therefore, whenever George does not want to comply with their demands, or Lindsay wonders as an outsider why George conforms, the only answer by the team is "he has to [do it]" (23; 1.6) or "we need you to [do] it" (13; 1.4).

The fact that the people in his office distrust George is, in fact, not groundless since he sometimes abstracts himself so much that he lives in a world of his own, distant from political concerns. Just like the people's fluster in his absence is exaggerated before his speech at the Prime Minister's Question Time, his indifference towards a serious meeting and walking around in the park is also startling. When George comes, he speaks calmly to the people in his office who have been waiting for him uneasily:

> George: I was in the park. I went for a walk in the park.
> Andrew: How was it?
> George: Fine. It was like spring. I looked around. People were walking. And kissing. And talking. I thought, you lucky people… (*He pauses a second.*) You're free and I'm not. (Hare, *The Absence of War* 9; 1.2)

In this scene, on the one hand, George seems to be reckless, and indifferent towards his responsibilities. He even takes no notice of the people who were anxious about him since he believes that "You [the people around him]'re the maids. And you're all of a tizz. And – as in Moliére – you're all of a tizz in order that I may be calm" (13; 1.4). George is fond of attending the theatre and here, he makes an explanation about his team in theatrical terms. While they are his maids who are expected to get excited for their lady's affairs, he is the lady who appears later in a relaxed mood. However, being a protagonist in a play requires more than employing maids or servants in that the protagonists are the characters who "act" in the leading role. George, in this scene, refrains deliberately from acting as a conscientious political leader and walks around in the park carelessly as he already has maids being anxious for, or instead of him. Another instance in which George approaches his work carelessly is when the Prime Minister calls for an election at an earlier date than is expected, which is followed by a speech George is expected to make in order to start the election campaign immediately. The issue in question is the election but how George receives the news is as such: "I'd booked for *Hamlet* this evening. (*He hits the edge of the desk in frustration.*) Oh bugger Kendrick, I really wanted to go" and "I'd been looking forward to it all week" (36; 1.6).

Here, George is again beheld to be living in a distant world from politics as well as finding a way to escape from the heavy responsibilities accompanied by this news. There is a correlation between George's attitude in such serious matters and what Hare observed about Neil Kinnock during his research. For Hare, Kinnock like George, concerns himself with inessential things. When Hare poses him a question related to the polls and Labour Party's chance winning the election, Kinnock responds to his question by explaining the Kellner curve, which Hare receives critically. For Hare, "the leader must have better things to do with his time than explaining the Kellner curve to me" (*Asking Around* 169).

It is clear in the play that Hare is convinced that George is not a man of politics. He may be a man of love or a man of theatre or of literature but he is not a suitable man for politics, at least under the circumstances he lives in. The political world George belongs to is ruthless in that it hosts only the winners, casting the losers aside and it gives no room for the ones who combat fairly. When the secret related to the mortgage tax relief is revealed, George cannot deny it or tell a lie about it and lets his own and his party's reputation be ruined by the world of politics as well as of the media. Another feature that characterises the political world in the play is "snobbery" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 82; 2.6). Even in Labour Party, which is supposed to be "[t]he people's Party" and expected to approach people equally, there are members who belittle their leader only because he had not got a formal degree (82; 2.6). George reveals it as such: "One of my backbenchers said to me, 'this absurd love of the theatre you fake'. Fake? *Fake?* 'Of course,' he said. 'You can't hope to understand Shakespeare when you don't have the tools…'" (82; 2.6). One more characteristic of the political world is its claim that the leaders and the members of political parties are always in control. Since no matter what happens, "[the politicians] pretend it's what [they] foresaw," George considers politics "undignified" (39; 1.8). However, politicians are expected to be in control whatever happens; therefore, it is left uncertain whether George attempts to cover up his own weakness, his inability to control the events or whether he criticises the hypocrisy of the politicians who appear to be vigilant in every case although they are not.

In the midst of the rigid conditions of the political world, George appears to be too humanistic and too good-natured in his personal and political affairs. For example, when people promise to vote for him and then they vote against him, George celebrates their freedom of choice and says that "[i]t's their right. It's the only right they've got" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 15; 1.4). George also cherishes personal relationships more than political strategies while doing his work. Hence he relies on the cordiality of both the public and his colleagues: "People look me in the eye. I must say that is reassuring. They shake my hand and they look me in the eye" (62; 2.2). Since people look in his eyes, George assumes that they will not betray him, which is a misinterpretation of people's motives. Most of the people really love George because he is different from many of the ministers who "treat you like dirt" (57; 2.1). George approaches people genially; he asks, for example, their opinion about a play while in the theatre, which makes him "popular" (57; 2.1). But his popularity does not make him successful in the election since the people vote for the policies of a party as well as for the powerful stance of a leader rather than for a man's gentle manners. In fact, it is this very kindness of George's together with his "great understanding and humanity" that hinder him from being victorious in politics (Ansorge, *From Liverpool* 38), since these attributes make a good man but not a good politician.

George's strivings and all the efforts he makes for the party do not bring him victory, either. Although George is a temperate man, he fought against, as he claims, the negative attitudes of certain people in his party and introduced radical changes to remove these negativities (Hare, *The Absence of War* 47-48; 1.8). When George started his career as the Labour Party leader, the party was "torn, disfigured, unelectable with a matchless capacity for meaningless squabbles and fights" (48; 1.8). That is, the reasons for its being unelectable stems directly from its being "torn" as a result of the fights between its members who need "to speak with one voice" (48; 1.8). However, although it is worthy of commendation to unite the fragmented entities, it is an intrinsic feature of the Left to welcome distinctive voices under the same roof. Hence, George's strivings for the party to have one voice might have contributed to its being electable but it is controversial whether his work helped to reinforce the party's commitment to leftist principles. George already criticises the "fine old heroes of the Left" who "speak[ ] so

well," who "[are] so wise" and whose "life is spent doing good," which is "easy" for him (84; 2.6). In contrast to these heroes, George reckons "[t]he world needs people who'll fight evil as well," which is what he does for the party (84; 2.6). His approach in this matter is reasonable in that the Labour Party in the 1980s and in the early 1990s may still have wise leftists who spoke and who did well, but the party suffered from inefficient policies which did not enable them to come to power by defeating the Conservatives. If the Labour have no power in the government, it is hard to expect from them to execute their policies. Therefore, it was a heavy "burden" for George when he came to office to make the party electable, which he considers a "[p]ilgrim[age]" (47; 1.8). Nevertheless, he worked more "to make this Party respectable" than to bring it to power, which he also admits (48; 1.8). To make the party respectable does not seem to be among the priorities of the political world since "respectability . . . belongs somewhere in the fourth division of political virtues" (Kinnock 234). Therefore, it is hard to trust the leadership of a leader who works for respectability rather than for victory.

Not only his office but also his party do not believe that George will be victorious in the election. But Malcolm asserts that although the party understands that George has no belief in himself or in the party and although he has rejected to work in collaboration with them, they "still love [him], even while they despair of [him]" because they think "George deserves this" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 85; 2.6). In spite of the party members' recognition that they are losing, they do not discard their leader, which is what distinguishes them from Conservative Party: "The Tories get rid of their leaders when it's clear they might not win. But we hold on to ours. (*[*MALCOLM*]* *pauses.*) I call that decency" (85-86; 2.6). "Decency" is one of the words David Hare exalts in his plays and he attributes it in *The Absence of War* to the personal relationships within Labour Party. However, the claim that the party is loyal to the leader is ironically uttered by Malcolm, who has never been loyal to the leader, George. Hence, although Hare glorifies the genuine decency and sincerity in personal relationships, he, at the same time questions the existence of such relationships in the party and adopts a critical stance towards them. Hare sheds light on the essence of the relationships in Labour Party in *Asking Around*. On the one hand, the leader Neil Kinnock is left on his own, as

he admits: “I was never sure the whole party was with me. I was always dragging it inch by inch, advancing a little, fighting more, advancing” (236). On the other hand, as far as the people in the Labour observe, the party members play a game in which they indicate that “[they] won’t get rid of him [the leader] but [they] won’t support him,” and they did not support him either before or after the election (243).

No matter how much the party members appear to support George, one of the most important failures that help to ruin his reputation is caused by a party member, Malcolm. George calls the conflict between Malcolm and himself a kind of “friendly fire” (Hare, *The Absence of War* 84; 2.6). Malcolm tells the broadcaster Linus Frank one of the crucial secrets belonging to Labour Party related to the mortgage tax relief. During an interview on television, Linus asks George whether Labour Party intends to abolish the mortgage tax relief or not. As far as Linus is informed, the party plans to abrogate it when in power but they do not mention it among their statements. Upon the question, George does not know how to deny this claim, then he is trapped and ends up defeated:

> GEORGE: This proposal was never to appear in the final manifesto.
> LINUS: Ah good, yes, now, *now* we’re making some headway, so now you admit it was there for a time.
> GEORGE: Well…
> LINUS: So who took it out? That is my question. Did you or did you not take it out?
> GEORGE: I did not.
> LINUS: Really? *Really?* That’s not what I’ve been told. (70-71; 2.3.)

“This is suicide” both for George and for the party, as Andrew states after the interview (74; 2.4). This instance of leak given in the play refers to the leak Labour Party experienced in relation to a broadcast prepared by the party on how some young girls in Britain who had suffered from waiting for a glue-ear operation in hospitals (*Asking Around* 182). Although the people who were involved in this case did not want their names to be publicised, it was claimed that Labour Party intentionally gave their names. This assertion was denied by Neil Kinnock but, as the case appeared in the media, it harmed the Labour’s election campaign. Later, it was understood that one of the Labour members had leaked the information about the broadcast just as Malcolm does in the play.

In the play, George and his private office have always suspected Malcolm's cynical attitude and his secret plans to be the leader of the party. Nevertheless, George does not allow his team to talk behind Malcolm's back, that is, to caution him against Malcolm's possible plans: "I won't hear a word against Malcolm. Is that understood? Not a word. Malcolm's all right" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 19; 1.4). George, in fact, has his own doubts related to Malcolm and in order to examine his doubts, as a lover of tragedy, he takes the example of the leaders in tragedies, specifically that of Brutus. Accordingly, he experiences "a quiet crisis" reconsidering his doubts (18; 1.4) and he "murder[s] [them]" just like many leaders in tragedies (19; 1.4). But at the same time, by doing so, he paves the way for his tragic end just as in tragedies. For example, after his quiet crisis, what comes is "Brutus' defeat, his encounter with Caesar's ghost, or his part in Caesar's murder" (Wu 112). George is defeated in the battle of the election like Brutus and one of the reasons for his defeat is his being betrayed by one of his closest friends (112). Although *The Absence of War* is not a tragedy nor is George a tragic hero, George's fault, which is turning a blind eye to the threat by Malcolm, contributes to his failures and to the deterioration of his reputation.

It is implied in the play that when the so-called loyal relationships between the members cause the party to lose, this loyalty should be renounced and the unhelpful members should be dismissed from their positions. This is also what Hare deduces from his research in Labour Party in that "Labour's problems seemed to lie not with Labour's enemies, but with its own credulity" (*Asking Around* 240). However, the Labour, including their leader, stubbornly and obsessively refuse to act in any way that will suggest that there is dissensus within Labour Party:

> GEORGE: . . . I believe in the Party. I'm not sentimental. The Party is not my whole life. But it's all we have. It's the only practical instrument that exists in this country for changing people's lives for the good. Yes. And if I'd followed my quarrel, if I'd pursued my enemy right to the end, split the party in two, had screaming headlines – LABOUR'S LEADING FIGURES FALL OUT – my God, what vanity! . . . (*The Absence of War* 104-105; 2.11)

Malcolm should be dismissed as a member who distorts the unity of the party by making fun of and belittling the leader as well as by leaking the secrets of the party to

the media. However, ironically, George keeps him in the party in order to renovate its unity since for George, to discharge Malcolm means to "hand[ ] him a weapon" (103; 2.11) as well as to give the newspapers their headlines that say Labour Party is divided. Therefore, Malcolm remains in the party as the previous Shadow Chancellor who helped the party to lose the recent election but, at the same time, as their new leader who is expected to forward the party in the next elections. However, it is a kind of delusion when George tries to justify his ignoring Malcolm's betrayal. Although George's decisions affect many people in and out of the party since he is a leader, he claims that it is only himself who will suffer the results of his decision related to Malcolm. He says: "That's been my diet. I've bitten back the tongue in my mouth. I've done it consciously. Knowing just what I was doing. And knowing what the price was as well. (*His gaze is steady.*) It's been my decision. I'll live with it. . ." (105; 2.11).

Another delusion George has in Malcolm's case is his belief that "a politician can only deal with his inheritance" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 48; 1.8). George inherited the party when it was divided and for him, he will have done his job after "hand[ing] [Malcolm] the Party in good order" (103; 2.11). George is completely mistaken in his understanding of leadership in that he overlooks the basic requirement of a leader, which is to put the party in power so that the ones who are voted and who vote for them are all pleased and the party carries out its policies. As a result of his shortcomings and failures as a leader, George is unable to comprehend why the Conservatives won the elections successively while Labour Party is still far from getting power. So he sarcastically suggests his team to be a part of Conservative Party if they want to do something for the people:

> GEORGE: You know what I think? I think, let's all just be Tories. After all, they always win. So what's the point of having other parties? Given that they never get in? (*There are some nervous smiles from the group, not knowing quite how seriously to take him.*) Whereas, you know, if we join the try Party, we could do something. I'm beginning to think it's our best chance. Why not? (*He smiles and suddenly turns, reaching out his arms to them.*) Let's join the Tory Party. And the let's all fuck it up. (108; 2.11)

This is a kind of surrender which is openly declared by the very leader of the Labour Party. The election was expressed in the play through the metaphor of war commanded

by George, who was fond of wars. However, while George loves wars because they unite people with an ultimate purpose, his team supposes that George admires wars since the army in the wars "g[e]t the job done" (105; 2.11). Correspondingly, during the campaigns for the election, while his team expected George to be victorious in one way or another, George was more interested in the struggle itself than actually coming to power. George, as a leader, never considered it his duty to put his party in power so it is easy for him to yield to the inevitable Conservative victory as seen above. However, at the end of the play, he most probably comes to realise how his understanding of leadership is wrong and questions himself: "Could we have done more? Was it possible?" (110; 2.13).

At the end of the play, as Les Wade asserts, "George serves as the personification of the Labour Party and all its troubles" (Wade 74). Therefore, his overthrow as well as his remorse enounces "more than a personal disappointment" since his defeat as a leader "signifies a historical marking point – the death of a viable socialist alternative" (74). On the other hand, Duncan Wu argues that although *The Absence of War* has a tragic tone because of George's failure at the end, "it refuses to submit to despair" in that "George may lose the election, but over the long term his 'historical legacy' is assured – the Party will survive" (116). Although there are a number of correlations between George's character and the state of Labour Party such as lack of self-confidence and interest in respectability rather than victory, and although both are defeated because of their shortcomings as Wade claims, it is necessary to differentiate the state of the leader from that of the party in terms of future prospects, as Wu implies. It is indicated in the play that this defeat is George's "personal tragedy" though it brings along the failure of the party in the election (Hare, *The Absence of War* 109; 2.12). However, neither the play nor the protagonist allows any despair for the future because as George and many people in the Labour believe "[t]he Party is not [their] whole life. But it's all [they] have. It's the only practical instrument that exists in this country for changing people's lives for the good" (104; 2.11). George believes that he did as a leader what he could and he will continue to be a follower and a servant of the party since there is no other "instrument" that is able to realise his dreams.

George's feelings about his party illustrate, in a way, David Hare's thoughts about political drama and Labour Party. Just as George and many people in the Labour Party, Hare, as a political dramatist, "ha[s] been saturated, soused, drowned in failure. Failure's [become their] element" because not only the party but also "[t]heatre has changed as little as society" (Hare, *Obedience* 142). However, like George, Hare does not give way to despair since he, along with the other people in the Labour and political dramatists, are "braced by the beauty of what [they]'re attempting, in art as much as in politics. [They] are sustained by the thing itself, its superb difficulty" (142-143). Although George is criticised, to some extent, for not bringing victory to the party, he is not condemned but even praised for his contributions to the party. Likewise, although Hare does not exalt what he did as a political dramatist, he does not regret, either, how he struggled. What George and Hare did for their political goals can be summarised in Hare's words: "even if it has been a lifetime of failure, it has not been a lifetime of waste" (143).

Hare employs, in *The Absence of War*, techniques that contribute to the thematic concerns of the play in their own way. Some of these techniques are special video screens on stage as well as transitional devices between the scenes, both of which create a cinematic atmosphere. Hare also employs "inventive devices of direct address" articulated by certain characters who are part of the large cast (Wade 67). The video screen, first of all, is a cinematic tool that supplies the playwright with the chance to present what he cannot represent on stage. It is particularly employed when the playwright requires representing the politicians together with the public and analysing the kind of relationship between them. To illustrate, the Labour Party representatives including George, Malcolm, Oliver, Andrew are shown on video when they salute the people at the very beginning of their election campaign (Hare, *The Absence of War* 56; 1.10). Similarly, George is depicted on a video screen when he shakes hands with the people one by one although it is a time when his reputation has worsened because of an interview made by Linus Frank (77; 2.5). By means of such scenes, the reader/audience is able to see the dichotomy between how the public receive the politicians during the election campaigns and how the election is concluded. Hence, this technique underlines a significant political issue which is that people may wear a political party's T-shirt

during an election campaign but later they may vote against this party, which is what Labour Party experiences in the play.

As for the transitions between the scenes, the ending of certain scenes overlap with the beginning of the following ones; and, in this way, they provide a smooth and cinematic transition. The fact that the play illustrates an election campaign and that the offices in which the political parties work are all in the same building leads the playwright to construct cinematic transitions. For instance, Andrew leads the reader/audience from the Cenotaph in the first scene of Act I to the scenery of the second scene in the Lobby of the House of Commons. Hence, he is the last one who speaks in the first scene while the first one in the second scene. The transition from a scene for the martyrs, Cenotaph, to a scene for the modern politicians, the House of Commons, helps to juxtapose the generation of war and the modern men in the absence of war. As for another instance of transition, when George's speech at the "Prime Minister's Question Time" takes place in the House of Commons and is presented in the third scene of Act I, the ensuing scene starts with George's coming down and entering the room for the leader of the opposition, which is again in the House of Commons. The scenes of the House of Commons show the various activities of the politicians while the transitions between these scenes indicate how each of the political activities is interrelated with each other, how one mistake by a politician in a scene influences the political affairs in another scene, and how the politicians get stuck in overwork in these ensuing scenes.

In *The Absence of War*, while some part of the election campaign is maintained in the House of Commons, some other part of it is carried out through demonstrations via the media. Hence, the initial five scenes of Act II are set around a television studio and the transitions between the scenes resemble the ones in the House of Commons. While Trevor in the first scene of Act II is outside a television studio, he joins George at the beginning of the second scene when the latter enters the studio. Then in the subsequent scenes, the stage is prepared for the interview with George, later the interview is held, and after the interview ends in failure on the part of George, his discussion with his team starts in the waiting area. The successive scenes that take place in the television studio disclose the fact that politicians must work for their public image created by the

media as hard as they work on their policies in their offices in the House of Commons. By revealing what kind of effects a political party leader's image on television may have on the election results, these scenes denote the power of the media and its close relation with politics.

As the play deals with the activities of a political party while preparing for the election, the playwright reserves certain scenes for the direct address of the party leaders as if they were delivering public talk on television or directly addressing the electorate. Other than the speeches of the leaders, some other characters directly address the reader/audience in order to shed light upon the change in people's approach to ideologies and to the ideals associated with them. In the ninth scene of Act I, it is Vera who soliloquises and her monologue denotes a distinction between the British Left in the 1960s and the Labour Party in the 1990s. This scene underlines the theme that Labour Party has moved away from its past and its fundamental principles. The scenes reserved for a particular character's direct address to the readers/audience also allow these characters to comment on the events that have occurred, or to disclose the ones that will occur. In such two scenes, the reader/audience is provided with two kinds of evaluation of a political party leader, George. Trevor in the first scene of Act II is in front of a television studio and in his speech he both praises George and hints at how there will be clashes between George and the people around him in the following scenes. Through the succeeding three scenes, George is shown in conflict with a character or a group of characters, first with a dissident outsider Linus Frank, then with the people from his own private office and lastly with the Shadow Chancellor Malcolm, the traitor within the party. In the fifth scene of the same act, the play is still in the studio and Mary criticises in her monologue what George did in the previous scene. He first attacked Oliver and then he behaved "as if nothing had happened at all" by leaving the stage without any apology (Hare, *The Absence of War* 76; 2.5). Although both Trevor and Mary are members of the party, the former praises George as an ordinary citizen, and as a politician while the latter critically evaluates George's behaviours.

*The Absence of War* ends where it started with the image of the Cenotaph Memorial around which the politicians appear in order to commemorate the British and the

Commonwealth soldiers who died in the world wars. The martyrs at the Cenotaph are enshrined since they fought for their nation and paid "the price of freedom" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 2; 1.1). While their ancestors are honoured and remembered for their great sacrifice in wars, modern British men seek a sense of worth and self-satisfaction by means of working hard in the absence of war. This is disclosed through Andrew's thesis: "I have a theory. People of my age, we did not fight in a war. If you fight in a war, you have some sense of personal worth. So now we seek it by keeping busy. We work and hope we feel we do good" (2; 1.1). Within this theory, he encapsulates how the British men of politics consider their work in "the absence of war." Andrew, here, is the mouthpiece of Hare since it is in fact Hare who believes that the election has become "a substitute for war" (*Asking Around* 188). For John Louis Digaetani, the fact that in order to feel worthy of esteem, the politicians work hard instead of fighting in a war and consider their busy lives a substitute for wars is a kind of "transference" (134). Transference means that certain feelings are redirected from where they inherently belong to a different area where they can be expressed more comfortably (130). Digaetani, who provides a moral perspective to examine *The Absence of War*, denotes that "[t]he moral issues brought up during a war get transferred into issues that are really non-issues" (134). He advocates that too much work occupying the politicians can be regarded as "non-issue" because what politicians do is only a "game of how the candidate appears on television and how the polls tell the politicians what the people want them to say" (134). Digaetani's psychological explanation about the politicians' state of mind is justifiable because, as it is implied by Andrew in *The Absence of War*, the men in politics work hard and consider their work a substitute for war in order to feel worthy of esteem and to have a sense of personal value.

There were no wars but elections in the 1990s' Britain for the British politicians to fight for. The people in the Labour called the notebook in which they noted down, "mapped out, charted and cross-indexed" all their arrangements as "[t]he war book" (Hare, *The Absence of War* 42; 1.8). According to Oliver and Andrew, an election is not "debating" but it is "waging war" so it should be kept "tight" "focused" and "on track," it should be hit "hard" and "constantly" by giving the opposition "a good pounding" (46; 1.8). However, the people's strategies in the Labour became ineffectual and they lost this

war. But at the same time, fighting to win the election really kept the people in the Labour busy and allowed them to feel worthy of esteem just as in Andrew's thesis. When there is no war, there are elections to strive for during which especially the opposition party members feel they "exist" at least for a certain period of time (49; 1.8). When there is no election, one party rules the country with their own policies while the opposition party can "do precisely nothing" (49; 1.8). That is why *The Absence of War* deals with what particularly the opposition party does in the absence of war, in preparation for the general election, the only time they are allowed to give voice to their policies so that they can attain a sense of personal value and a feeling of existence.

All in all, *The Absence of War*, a piece of Hare's state of the nation trilogy, was a significant political play in the 1990s concerned with a British political party when a great number of political plays appeared to be focusing on global issues. The fact that Hare dramatised his first-hand research in the play and published his research in a separate background source *Asking Around* authorised him to offer an alternative kind of journalism. Thematically, *The Absence of War* is a significant representation of the core idea that dominated the 1990s, which was the collapsing distinction between the Right and the Left, as well as of the phenomena of the rising of capitalism and the retreating of communism. What Hare is concerned with in *The Absence of War* is more than the political institutions; it is the afflictive fact that the Left retreated when people needed it most. Even the leftist politicians lost their belief in their own ideology and came to speak within the limitations of the rightist discourse, which Hare critically treats in the play. Political and ideological agnosticism that permeates the play is not what Hare endorses but what the conditions of the age bring about. However, as George states in the play, "[t]he Party is not [their] whole life. But it's all [they] have." (Hare, *The Absence of War* 104; 2.11). Hare, in a decade when the binaries between the ideologies are obscured, writes "left-handed"ly in *The Absence of War*. Taking into account Hare's leftist perspective he honestly provides in the play, it is not a coincidence that *The Absence of War* is a key work of Hare's which establishes him as a central figure of British political drama in the 1990s, a decade when it was widely posited that political drama was dead and that the established political dramatists were writing on a centrist strand.

# CONCLUSION

*"One of the great pleasures of writing for the theatre in this country is that the ideas you express can be taken so seriously and enter so smoothly into the currency of political discussion."*
(David Hare, *Writing Left-Handed* xi)

As argued earlier, British political drama was born in the late 1960s not as a movement but as a widespread theatrical practice among the leftist playwrights who came to write politically in an explicit manner. These playwrights including Howard Brenton, David Hare, Howard Barker, Caryl Churchill, David Edgar set out to bring in social and political change as well as social progress by means of their dramatic works because they were notably unhappy with the present state of the global and the domestic politics. The disillusionment with the student uprisings in Paris, with Soviet politics and with the Vietnam War around the world as well as with Labour Party politics at home urged these leftist playwrights to seek alternative politics and to free themselves from the boundaries of the parliamentary politics. This incitement to write politically was encouraged by certain developments such as the introduction of liberating acts like the Sexual Offences Act in 1967 and the abolition of the Lord's Chamberlain's Office in 1968. As a result, British political dramatists started to write on politics liberally and had their plays performed both in fringe and mainstream theatres.

Political drama, in fact, started in the fringe and the forerunning political plays were put on stage in the late 1960s and in the 1970s by fringe theatre companies which were characterised by a number of political concerns such as socialist politics held by the Red Ladder, women's issues and problems demonstrated by the Monstrous Regiment and by the Women's Theatre Group, problems related to ethnicity manifested by the Black Theatre Co-Operative and by the Tara Arts, and gay issues deliberated by the Gay Sweatshop. These groups were mostly touring and they principally aimed to take theatre to the people who neither had the money nor the time to see plays in the cities as well as to raise political consciousness by performing plays in pubs, working places or any place the public met. As for the techniques, in order to convey their political message as quickly as possible, political dramatists utilised a variety of techniques and forms

ranging from agit-prop, epic theatre techniques to naturalist and social realist techniques.

British political drama did not remain within the limits of the fringe, and in the following decades it was welcomed by mainstream theatres as well. In the 1970s, the political theatre companies in the fringe flourished inside and outside of London; but many of the political plays were produced not only by these small companies but also by the large theatre companies in London like Royal Shakespeare Company. Not only in the 1970s but also in the 1980s and in the 1990s, plays by the political dramatists were put on stage at the Royal Court Theatre, at the National Theatre, and at the theatres of the West End.

Moreover, the political matters political dramatists treated in their plays and the way they approached politics as well as the techniques and the forms they used changed in time, took shape under the influence of contemporary politics. For instance, the issues handled by the political drama of the 1970s were mostly concerned with violence, economic problems and particularly unemployment, Northern Ireland and women's rights in the domestic and the public spheres since the 1970s were characterised by such social and political challenges as workers' strikes, problems between the governments and the trade unions, conflicts with Northern Ireland and the Women's Liberation Movement. The political dramatists in the 1970s continued to use similar techniques they used at the beginning of their careers in the late 1960s, especially epic theatre and agit-prop techniques.

The political drama of the 1980s was heavily under the influence of Margaret Thatcher's government and the New Right policies that were introduced to the economy and that diffused into every domain of public life. In the first half of the decade, there were a few plays that directly dealt with the state of British politics and society since the political dramatists were unable to conceive how to respond to the Thatcherite politics. Nevertheless, in the second half of the decade, the political plays proliferated that displayed the effect of Thatcher's government not only on the state institutions but also on the private lives of the people. Some of the political dramatists went on using epic

theatre techniques while some others employed techniques borrowed from cinema. In their depiction of Britain, they applied some methods different from those in the 1970s in that they depicted the state of Britain by means of utopias and dystopias or by using classical forms of drama like tragedy to reflect upon the extensions of the public policies on private experience.

In the 1990s, it is observed that political drama was concerned more with the global issues than with the state of the nation. The repercussions of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the disintegration of the Soviet states as well as the rise of the United States as the ultimate world power were widely handled in the political plays of the 1990s. In addition, the political conflicts and the wars that afflicted almost the whole world were extensively dealt with by the political dramatists. In order to examine the new political issues of this new decade, the playwrights introduced novel ways in their plays; they made use of factual documents on stage as observed in tribunal plays and verbatim theatre. They also continued to employ the techniques which were exported from cinema and the epic theatre techniques came to be scarcely used.

One of the forerunning and prolific British political dramatists, David Hare (1947- ) and his certain works are extensively analysed in this dissertation. Attention is drawn particularly to the distinctive thematic and technical attributes that appear in Hare's plays *Fanshen* (1975), *The Secret Rapture* (1988) and *The Absence of War* (1993), which are written in different periods of his dramatic career. Accordingly, it is exposed how his political drama evolves throughout the three decades, the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s. It is targeted in the dissertation to show how Hare's plays are transferred from the fringe to the mainstream and how his treatment of his material changes under the influence of the political atmosphere of each decade. Correspondingly, it is questioned how throughout these three decades Hare's approach to his political material as well as his dramatic forms and techniques change during both the Labour and the Conservative governments.

In this respect, it is designated in this dissertation that throughout the three decades in question David Hare's plays are staged in various theatres from the fringe to the

mainstream. It is pointed out that although in the early stages of his career Hare writes plays for the small political theatre companies he has co-founded such as the Portable and the Joint Stock, he also has his plays performed in mainstream theatres which allow him to reach a wide range of audiences at the Royal Court, at the National Theatre and at the theatres of the West End.

In terms of techniques, it is shown in the dissertation that Hare uses epic theatre techniques in most of his plays in the 1970s and in the best representative way in *Fanshen*. He applies in *Fanshen* episodic scenes every one of which is with a social message, direct address to the reader/audience that alienates them from the fictionality of the play, factual documents presented on stage, bare staging, disturbingly use of light, music that contributes to the meaning, simultaneous action that encourages dialectic, slogans and historical setting. In the ensuing decade, that is in the 1980s, Hare explores new ways to write his political drama; as a result, he not only borrows certain techniques from cinema but also uses classical forms like tragedy as illustrated in *The Secret Rapture*. He no longer uses episodic scenes and between the scenes he constructs cinematographic transitions. He makes use of music in *The Secret Rapture* in order to create a smooth transition between the overlapping scenes. Hare does not use slogans or bare staging in his plays after *Fanshen* but he applies historical or foreign settings from time to time in the 1980s, though not in *The Secret Rapture*. In the 1990s, Hare continues to employ overlapping scenes and cinematic transitions between them but he also utilises novel forms like the variant of verbatim theatre as observed in *The Absence of War*. Although in this play he makes use of the facts he gathered during his fieldwork, this play is different from the factual documents introduced in *Fanshen*. By fictionalising the facts, Hare produces with *The Absence of War* an early example of verbatim theatre. In this play, Hare also gives place to the characters' direct addresses to the reader/audience, which is constructed not for the aim of alienation but to allow the characters to comment on the events or to narrate what happens between the scenes.

In addition to the technical changes in Hare's political playwriting throughout the three decades, the focus of this dissertation is particularly on how the issues and the themes in Hare's plays as well as his approach to his material evolve within the time span of the

three specific decades and in the context of contemporary politics. The evolution in Hare's dramatic career from *Fanshen*, through *The Secret Rapture* to *The Absence of War* is illustrated by such underlying issues and thematic concerns as the relation between contemporary politics and his plays, his variable approach to institutions, his discussion of economic matters, his expectations from a leader and his understanding of leadership, and lastly his engagement with gender politics in terms of women's issues. To begin with, Hare conceives that theatre should deal with politics but "[t]he job of the theatre is not to trap the audience in a stale political rhetoric which will be dead in ten days" (Hare, *Left-Handed* 55). His playwriting is influenced by the general mood of the time it is written in but he does not write in response to every political event simply "because that is not what he believes political theatre – or at least, his brand of political theatre – is *for*" (Boon, *About Hare* 4). Hare reflects in his plays of each decade his own perception and experience of contemporary politics which is peculiar to that decade. At the beginning of Hare's political playwriting, in the 1970s, the Labour and the Conservative governments govern the country alternately. In this decade, although Hare does not believe that a socialist revolution will take place in Britain, he still has an urge to propose socialist politics in his plays. Hence it is not a surprise that he writes in this decade his only play, *Fanshen*, in which a positive model of society and politics is given by means of a socialist revolution. In the 1980s, when Margaret Thatcher comes to power with her heavily rightist politics that infuses into every aspect of British social life, Hare looks back on his dramaturgy and revises it in tune with the requirements of this new decade. Therefore, in *The Secret Rapture*, he dwells upon politics as insinuated into private lives rather than directly criticising state politics. He particularly represents in this play "how political ideology infects personal morality" (L. Taylor 49). This attempt is not a retreat of a political dramatist into the private sphere but the reflection of the conditions that is, of the rightist politics, which the contemporary society experiences in the 1980s. Although the Conservative government continues for seven years more in the 1990s, this time Hare takes a different way to cope with the dominance of the right in society and in the institutions of Britain. Unlike his engagement with the relation between the private lives and the state politics in *The Secret Rapture*, Hare in *The Absence of War* directly enters the space of the politicians and criticises the institutions from within. In the play, he approaches critically not only

the institutions tainted by the Conservative discourse but also Labour Party politics and politicians. While Hare is exploring the possibilities of a socialist state in *Fanshen*, he comes to ask the party which is known to be leftist, Labour Party, whether it is still tied to its socialist roots in *The Absence of War*.

David Hare's search as a political dramatist for progress in politics and society entails engagement with institutions as observed in *Fanshen*, *The Secret Rapture* and *The Absence of War*. While reflecting upon institutions, Hare endorses the idea that these foundations are indispensably required for the well-being of the public but these institutions, at the same time, need reforming if the established forms of knowledge, beliefs and values embraced by them are corrupt. In *Fanshen*, the institutions constructed under socialist principles are shown as the essential component of the social life. Hare in this play posits that social facilities such as hospitals, schools, courts are as essential as political change and as necessary as the overthrow of the landlords. On the other hand, the institutions shaped under the Conservative hegemony for long years during Thatcher's governments are shown as equally corrupt in *The Secret Rapture*. Politics, religion and marriage – as represented in the private sphere – are the principal institutions that Hare cynically approaches and subtly undermines in this play. Since these institutions are associated with the Conservative ideology in the play, Hare first creates a prevalent distrust of these three institutions and lets them fail at the end. As observed, Hare's judgement related to the institutions in the first two decades of his career and his belief whether the institutions are required or not for the public benefit differ according to the ideology that dominates these institutions. If the institutions are under socialist rule as in *Fanshen*, they are considered to be essential; on the other hand, the institutions of a Conservative government are portrayed as corrupt and in need of reconstruction as shown in *The Secret Rapture*. However, in the 1990s, Hare develops a midway approach to the institutions which are governed by the Conservative politics; correspondingly, he both criticises and suggests preserving them at the same time. In *The Absence of War*, the term of institution is associated with the institutionalised power of Conservative Party and with the Conservative ideology that prevails in every institution, especially the state and the media. Unlike in *The Secret Rapture*, Hare does not suggest an escape from the institutions in *The Absence of War* for he believes,

though they are mostly corrupt, the institutions are the only means to achieve social and political progress so they should be reformed and then preserved for "the common good" of the people (Hare, *Asking Around* 8).

Besides the institutions, Hare's political playwriting encompasses the treatment of economic matters as observed in his plays of these three decades. In economic terms, Hare divides the society in his plays into two: on the one hand, private ownership and mastery of the economy is associated with the rulers, the money holders and the Conservatives while on the other hand, the rest of the public are identified with socialist revolution and leftist views. Contrary to what is expected from a leftist playwright, Hare neither condemns the owners of money nor worships the ones who lack it. He criticises in *Fanshen* not only the landlords who hold the economic power in their hands but also the peasants who employ violence against them during the uprising as well as the corrupt leaders of the revolution. Hare glorifies in *Fanshen* the overthrow of the feudal system but he also rejects to promote collective ownership, which comes along with the revolution, by drawing attention to the violence and corruption that appear in its implementation. *The Secret Rapture*, by means of the private lives of the characters, displays the contradiction between the values held by the business world which is supported by the Conservative government policies and the virtues like honesty and self-sufficiency embraced by the individuals and by the small companies. Hare criticises but not decries the members of the business world or of the Conservative government in *The Secret Rapture*. As for *The Absence of War*, the economy is dealt with in his play as a component of the administrative body, and the Conservatives' command of the economy is contrasted with the Labour's shortcomings in coping with economic problems. Hare dispraises Labour Party's lack of self-confidence in the field of the economy more than he reprimands Conservative Party's self-assertion and overconfidence. Hare posits that although for ages, the Left was thought to be inefficient in mastering money, Labour Party is expected now to adapt its policies to the modern requirements in the economy. Unlike in *The Secret Rapture* where the Conservative business world conforms to the morals of the small companies or in *Fanshen* where the landlords submit to the socialist change brought by the peasants, it is

the people in the Labour in *The Absence of War* whom Hare suggests should reconcile with their own leftist principles in the economy.

David Hare, along with political issues, explores the essential attributes of a political leader in his political drama and requires a leader to be able to self-question, to be open to criticism, to avoid extreme authority, and to respond to the needs of the public as well as to hear the opinions of the officials while making policies. However, Hare's leaders who have these qualities lack one crucial attribute, which is to be a leader; therefore, he expects a political leader, above all, to have the characteristic of self-determination together with the above-mentioned qualities. Although Hou in *Fanshen* and George in *The Absence of War* embrace all those qualities, they cannot act as proper leaders because they are totally susceptible to the thoughts, criticisms and expectations of the people around them. Hence, they are good human beings but not good leaders. Unlike these two political leaders, the politician in *The Secret Rapture*, Marion, who is modeled on the Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher, is a real leader. She undertakes the task of leadership and all that comes along with it successfully but she lacks what Hou and George have, such as self-criticism, toleration of people's faults, answering people's needs in making policies. As deduced from all the three examples, the qualities that Hare upholds and the quality of being a leader do not go hand in hand in his plays. Hare expects a certain pattern of behaviour from the leaders but he is aware of the fact that if a particular character is open to criticism, moderately authoritative or considerate of the public's needs, that person cannot be a leader; if s/he is a leader, then s/he can no longer assume these attributes. In this way, Hare criticises real-life leaders who have managed to be leaders but who lack all those qualities they are expected to have.

Hare refers to gender politics as well in his plays and inspects women's issues, women's rights and women's place in the domestic as well as public spheres as depicted in these plays of the 1970s, 1980s, and the 1990s. Though he portrays women as members of the institutions dominated by men, Hare heartily believes in and asserts the idea that women have an undeniably important place in the political, business and professional world as well as in the families of Britain; accordingly, in any struggle for a social or political

change, women should always have a say in order to achieve a complete progress. *Fanshen* is the most exemplary work that reflects the women's contribution in a movement for social and political progress. Women characters in *Fanshen* take active part in the revolution as a result of which they get the opportunity to work in the outside world and to ask for their rights not only in business but also in marriage. In *The Secret Rapture*, women characters are the professional working women of the political and the business world. Although the protagonist, Isobel appears to be prominent with her self-determination and self-reliance in business, Hare puts more emphasis on her autonomy in the private domain. Hare, through the character of Isobel, rejects the ultimate superiority of men in starting and ending relationships and reprobates the conventional requirement of marriage for women against their will. In the political world of *The Absence of War* which is mostly occupied by men, women have mostly secretary-like positions. However, Hare creates a woman character in the play, Lindsay, as his mouth-piece and attributes her one of the key roles in the election campaign. Lindsay, who is responsible for Labour Party's advertisement campaign, is the very character that attempts to bring together the requirements of the modern world and the established principles of the party. Lindsay, going beyond Hare's portrayal of working women with their self-will, assumes the role of a decision-maker, even of a policy-maker in the state administration. It is hinted that if the party had complied with all her decisions, they would have probably won the election.

Throughout his career in the 1970s, in the 1980s, in the 1990s, and even after, David Hare, as a political dramatist, portrays in his plays the state of the British society and the politics of his time. Hare continues writing after the 1990s; besides, he is still engaged with political matters in his plays such as the privatisation of the railways in *The Permanent Way* (2003), the Iraq War in *Stuff Happens* (2004) and the criticism of the New Labour in *Gethsemane* (2008). In his plays, Hare does not attempt to offer a solution for every particular event that occurs in public life but he always comes up with an idea to cope with the social and political conditions that the society is in. Hare, in fact, reflects in his drama how he himself strives to survive in a world whose politics infuses sometimes even into the private relationships of the people. Although he is a leftist playwright and he writes his plays with leftist concerns, his political drama is

never propagandistic or worshipper of an ideology or a political view. What changes in time is the political issues Hare deals with in each decade as well as the way he deals with them as argued in this dissertation by means of the three distinctive plays from the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s. The different phases of Hare's political drama are examined and it is demonstrated that his political drama evolves from *Fanshen*, which discusses socialist politics with the illustration of a socialist revolution, through *The Secret Rapture*, in which the private lives are heavily under the influence of the rightist politics to *The Absence of War*, which reflects the shortcomings as well as the pluses of a political party as an institution dominated by a rightist discourse.

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# EK 1: ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

**HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ**
**SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**
**YÜKSEK LİSANS/DOKTORA TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU**

**HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ**
**SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**
**İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA**

Tarih: 03/07/2017

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: The Evolution of David Hare's Political Drama as Observed in *Fanshen*, *The Secret Rapture* and *The Absence of War*

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 218 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 03/07/2017 tarihinde şahsım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 5 'tir.

Uygulanan filtrelemeler:
1- Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç,
2- Kaynakça hariç
3- Alıntılar hariç
4- 5 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

03.07.2017

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adı Soyadı:** | Tuba Ağkaş Özcan |
| **Öğrenci No:** | N10144083 |
| **Anabilim Dalı:** | İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı |
| **Programı:** | Doktora |
| **Statüsü:** | ☐ Y.Lisans ☒ Doktora ☐ Bütünleşik Dr. |

**DANIŞMAN ONAYI**

UYGUNDUR.

Prof. Dr. A. Deniz Bozer

# EK 2: ETİK KURUL İZNİ MUAFİYET FORMU

**HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ**
**SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**
**TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ETİK KURUL İZİN MUAFİYETİ FORMU**

**HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ**
**SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**
**İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA**

Tarih: 03/07/2017

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: The Evolution of David Hare's Political Drama as Observed in *Fanshen*, *The Secret Rapture* and *The Absence of War*

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmam:

1. İnsan ve hayvan üzerinde deney niteliği taşımamaktadır,
2. Biyolojik materyal (kan, idrar vb. biyolojik sıvılar ve numuneler) kullanılmasını gerektirmemektedir.
3. Beden bütünlüğüne müdahale içermemektedir.
4. Gözlemsel ve betimsel araştırma (anket, ölçek/skala çalışmaları, dosya taramaları, veri kaynakları taraması, sistem-model geliştirme çalışmaları) niteliğinde değildir.

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Etik Kurullar ve Komisyonlarının Yönergelerini inceledim ve bunlara göre tez çalışmamın yürütülebilmesi için herhangi bir Etik Kuruldan izin alınmasına gerek olmadığını; aksi durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

03.07.2017

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| **Adı Soyadı:** | Tuba Ağkaş Özcan |
| **Öğrenci No:** | N10144083 |
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