

**A NEW HISTORICIST APPROACH TO  
JONATHAN SWIFT’S “A MODEST PROPOSAL”  
AND *A TALE OF A TUB***

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Hüseyin KURT tarafından hazırlanan “Jonathan Swift’in ‘Mütevazi bir Öneri’ ve *Bir Fıçı Öyküsü* İsimli Eserlerine Yeni Tarihselci bir Yaklaşım - A New Historical Approach to Jonathan Swift’s ‘A Modest Proposal’ and *A Tale of a Tub*” konulu YÜKSEK LİSANS Tezinin Sınavı, Tekirdağ Namık Kemal Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Öğretim Yönetmeliği uyarınca 30/07/2019 günü saat 14:30’da yapılmış olup, tezin kabulüne OYBİRLİĞİ / OYÇOKLUĞU ile karar verilmiştir.

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## ABSTRACT

Institution, Institute, : Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University, Institute of Social Sciences,  
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Proposal” and *A Tale of a Tub*  
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The purpose of this thesis is to discuss how the British society and political approach of the kingdom in the course of eighteenth-century is criticized by Jonathan Swift employing the genre satire. The thesis is aimed at explaining his critical perspective by means of providing pertinent background information and carrying out new historicist analysis of “A Modest Proposal” and *A Tale of a Tub*. The reader is provided with information about some fractions of the author’s life and the eighteenth-century as well as the genre satire and the works of Jonathan Swift. It has been discussed that Swift criticizes the mentality of the society of his age and major political doctrines of the era making extensive use of the satire genre. In *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift underlines the political, social, religious, and economic subjugation England exercised over Ireland in the last decades of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. Swift, in “A Modest Proposal”, points out the colonial practices of England on Ireland. He lays emphasis on the indifference of the people in ruling and upper-class Ireland regarding the colonial practices of England. By suggesting cannibalism as an alternative solution to Ireland’s monetary problems, he chooses to reflect his concern ironically in his pamphlet using literary techniques such as irony, parody, and allegory. On a larger scale, Jonathan Swift aims at attacking the universally-shared human emotions and aspirations like arrogance and greediness. It has been observed that even though his original purpose is to berate and reform the people of his age, Jonathan Swift proves himself to be an influential writer in any age through the use of satire.

**Key Words:** Social Criticism, Jonathan Swift, New Historicism, Satire, Ireland, English Society, Colonialism

## ÖZET

Kurum, Enstitü, ABD	: Tekirdağ Namık Kemal Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı
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Bu tezin amacı, İngiliz toplumunun ve on sekizinci yüzyıl boyunca krallığın siyasal yaklaşımının hiciv türünü kullanan Jonathan Swift tarafından nasıl eleştirildiğini tartışmaktır. Tez, önemli bir arka plan bilgisi sağlamak ve "Mütevazı Bir Öneri" ve *Bir Küvet Hikayesi*'nin Yeni Tarihselci analizini yapmak yoluyla kritik perspektifini açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Okuyucuya yazarın hayatının ve on sekizinci yüzyılın bazı kesimlerinin yanı sıra hiciv türü ve Jonathan Swift'in eserleri hakkında bilgi verilmektedir. Swift'in, çağdaki toplumun zihniyetini ve dönemin ana politik doktrinlerini, hiciv türünden geniş bir şekilde faydalanarak eleştirdiği tartışılmıştır. *Bir Küvet Hikayesi*'nde Swift, İngiltere'nin on yedinci yüzyılın sonları ve on sekizinci yüzyılın başlarında İrlanda'da uyguladığı siyasi, sosyal, dini ve ekonomik baskının altını çiziyor. Swift, "Mütevazı Bir Öneri" de, İngiltere'nin İrlanda'da sömürge uygulamalarına dikkat çekiyor. Yönetici ve üst sınıf İrlanda'daki insanların İngiltere'nin sömürge uygulamaları konusundaki kayıtsızlığına dikkat çekiyor. Yamyamlığı İrlanda'nın parasal sorunlarına alternatif bir çözüm olarak önererek, endişesini ironi, parodi ve alegori gibi edebi teknikler kullanarak makalesine ironik bir şekilde yansıtmayı seçiyor. Jonathan Swift, daha geniş bir ölçekte, evrensel olarak paylaşılan insan duygularına ve kibir ve açgözlülük gibi özlemlerine saldırılmayı amaçlamaktadır. Asıl amacının, çağdaki insanlara ihanet etmek ve reform yapmak olmasına rağmen, Jonathan Swift, hiciv kullanımıyla her çağdaki etkili bir yazar olduğunu kanıtlıyor.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal Eleştiri, Yeni Tarihselcilik, Hiciv, İrlanda, İngiliz Toplumunu, Sömürgecilik

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## INTRODUCTION

Along with a few other names, Jonathan Swift is one of the most widely celebrated figures in English Literature. He was born in Dublin on November 30, 1667. His father passed away before Jonathan Swift came into the world. His uncle took care of him until he graduated from Trinity College and started working as an assistant of a statesman. In 1713, he became dean of Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin and served until his death on October 19, 1745.

Swift was an undeniably gifted author who strived hard to put an end to social injustice and unfair impositions upon the citizens in Ireland. His works has been enjoyed by people from all ages, which reflects the supremacy of his writing skills. He produced works both in prose and verse. Among the most famous works of Jonathan Swift are *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), *The Battle of the Books* (1704), *An Argument against Abolishing Christianity in England* (1708), *A famous Prediction of Merlin, the British Wizard* (1709), *A Project for the Advancement of Religion, and the Reformation of Manners* (1709), *A Meditation upon a Broom-Stick* (1710), *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* (1712), *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufactures* (1720), *A Letter of Advice to a Young Poet* (1721), *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), *A Short View of the State of Ireland* (1727), "A Modest Proposal for preventing the Children of Poor People from being a Burthen to Their Parents or Country, and for making them Beneficial to the Publick" (1729), *Drapier's Letters* (1734), *Directions to Servants* (1745), and *A Journal to Stella* (1766). He published all his works under pseudonyms or anonymously. Swift was also a pamphlet writer and produced a number of political pamphlets and contributed a great many articles to the *Tatler*, the *Examiner*, and the *Spectator*.

Jonathan Swift has always been able to attract researchers' attention as a political and Irish writer. He seems to be an extraordinary example as an Irish writer with his ambiguous relationship with Ireland in an Irish context, arousing interest in the aspect as an author which has been escalating in fame since the middle of the twentieth century (Larsen, 2005, p. 7).

"A Modest Proposal" and *A Tale of a Tub* have been analyzed from various points of views but they have not been interpreted thoroughly from a new historicist

perspective. Consequently, the present thesis could be argued to analyze these works of literature from a new historicist point of view. As a result, the purpose of the present thesis is to study how these works were informed by the conditions of the period and how they informed the social context in which they were produced following a new historicist approach by taking into consideration of literary and non-literary texts regarding the English-Irish context at the turn of the 18th century.

*A Tale of a Tub* is regarded as the first influential work by Jonathan Swift. He wrote the *Tale* between 1694 and 1697 but it was not published until 1704. The *Tale* is considered to be one of the most difficult satires to interpret since it appears to attack a number of things simultaneously. It can be considered to be a criticism against contemporary book trade and false scholarship as well as proving itself as a religious allegory. When it was published, politics and religion were closely linked to one another. Therefore, it may be challenging to separate the political and religious facets of the *Tale*.

“A Modest Proposal for preventing the Children of Poor People from being a Burthen to Their Parents or Country, and for making them Beneficial to the Publick”, commonly known as “A Modest Proposal”, is a satirical prose which was written in 1729. It was published anonymously, which was the case for several works by Swift. The essay can be regarded as a satire against unfeeling attitude towards the Irish poor and the policy of the British government towards Ireland in general. The Proposal argues that the troubles experienced by the impoverished Irish may come to a solution if their children are sold as food to the tables of wealthy people.

New Historicism seems to have started in the early 1980s and furnished literary critics with a new perspective to interpret the works of literature when a number of essays were promulgated by Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Dollimore, and Lois Montrose. New Historicism appeared with the influence of various thinkers like Michel Foucault, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, and Jacques Derrida. Even though new historicist scholars share similar concerns, they do not have a definite specific theory, which makes it difficult to define and describe new historicist criticism. One should also note that New Historicism is such an inadequately theorized literary practice that the editorial board “*Representations*”, which can be considered to be the

journal of New Historicism, have not been able to come up with an editorial statement for their journal.

Brannigan (1998) states that no literary theory has standard, inflexible, and fixed rules that enable their practitioners to make simple applications. New Historicism is certainly one of the best examples of those theories since it does not enjoy one true application, nor there is an agreement as to its practice among scholars (p. 11-12). He also notes that it should be kept in mind that a number of different attitudes exist among new historicist critics since there is not a principle or theory that can be practiced basically and irrefutably (1998, p. 79-80). There are not simple methodologies, techniques or rules that they can follow in order to use when they are dealing with a text according to a new historicist point of view (1998, p. 132).

Also, New Historicism is hard to define since it benefits from a variety of writings ranging from history to ethnography and anthropology, which constitute an important area of interest for new historicists who declare to be independent of one another (Veeser, 1989, p.1). Thus, one ponders what principles and guidelines hold new historicists together. Regarding the matter in question, Myers lists four pieces of principles:

1. Literature is historical, which means (in this exhibition) that a literary work is not primarily the record of one mind's attempt to solve certain formal questions and the need to find something to say; it is a social and cultural construct shaped by more than one consciousness. The proper way to understand it, therefore, is through the culture and society that produced it. (Or through the episteme. of each period.)
2. Literature is not a distinct category of human activity. It must be assimilated to history. Louis Montrose describes the New Historicism as "a reciprocal concern with the historicity of the texts and the textuality of history."
3. Like works of literature, man himself is a social construct; the sloppy composition of social and political forces—there is no such thing as a human nature that transcends history. Renaissance man belongs inescapably and irretrievably to the Renaissance. There is continuity between him and us; history is a series of ruptures between ages and man. "According to New Historicists the humanistic concept of an essential human nature that is shared by the author of a literary work, and the audience the author writes for is another of the widely held ideological illusions that were generated primarily by a capitalist culture" (Abrams, 1987 p. 250).
4. As a consequence, the historian/critic is trapped in his own historicity. No one can rise above his own social formations, his own ideological upbringing, in order to understand the past on its terms. A modern reader can never experience a text as its contemporaries experienced it. New Historicists acknowledge that they themselves, like all authors, are influenced by the circumstances and discourses of their era. (1989, p. 28).

By considering these principles, one can summarize the four key terms of New Historicism as: textuality, intertextuality, historicity, and contextualization.

New historicism is a literary approach that celebrates various kinds of literary and historical analysis and it is concerned with diverse subjects in the literary and non-literary texts. Largely, it focuses on the topics that happen to be overlooked and ignored by the preceding literary modes of criticism. New historicists tend to analyze the oppressed, the marginal, and the subjects that have never been dealt with by the earlier critics.

It is a method of literary criticism which assigns equal importance to literary and non-literary texts and they are employed in criticism not only to justify but also to question each other. Therefore, New Historicism posits that literary texts are far from being superior over non-literary texts. On the contrary, it approaches literary texts as only one of the numerous sources that can be used in literary criticism. According to new historicist scholars, culture not only forms every cultural element but is formed by every cultural component. As a result, a literary text can be argued to come into existence with the involvement of all the elements in the culture and it has a significant impact on those constituents, which renders equal-weighting unavoidable for new historicist scholars.

According to new historicist approach, literature is merely another kind of social construct that not only is a product of a given society but also plays an active role in restructuring the culture of that particular society. As a consequence, there is mutual interaction in a society between its literary texts and its political, social, economic, and religious condition. New historicism argues that a literary text can gain meaning when it is read along with the non-literary text because a work of literature is not autonomous and should be situated in the social and political context of its origin.

It is postulated in New historicism that the ultimate truth of history is impossible to access, reach, or determine; which means that any scholarly effort is inclined to be flawed about reproducing reality in history. It is argued that critics' background plays a significant role in determining their attitude towards the truth since it is shaped by critics' individual experience. As critics can never get rid of their present point of view and their prejudices of a contemporary scholar about history, they may never be able to create a complete representation of a historical time period.

No matter how hard they try to be objective, critics' reflection of the past is certain to be biased and partial in the sense that it can encapsulate just some specific features of the time period. An accurate reality about the past is impossible to access because according to new historicist point of view history is text and text is history, which renders objective history as something not feasible. Namely, New Historicism regards literary texts not merely as a player in the process of historical change but also as a crucial component of that historical change (Abrams, 1999, p. 183).

New Historicism proves itself to be a mode of critical analysis which has the potential of being a fruitful and valid practice in not only literary, cultural, and historical text interpretations but also in figuring out the present through the different possible elucidations of the histories. New historicism is a very important critical practice in the sense that it refuses to view a text with a fixed meaning and history is not regarded as a solitary and coherent line of progress. New historicist critics also acknowledge the continuous contact between history and text in addition to the constant relation between a particular text and other texts in the culture of its dissemination.

By assuming a new historicist approach, we may be able to reveal not exclusively the social atmosphere of a given literary text but the present-day social world as well. Similar to history itself, our interaction with any given text is an ongoing, unending, and dynamic process that will always remain unfinished.

There are three chapters in the present thesis. In the first chapter, theoretical information is provided regarding New Historicism and satire. Various definitions, key terms, key principles, and important names of New Historicism are presented in the first part of the first chapter. In the second part of the first chapter, characteristics, types, functions, and various devices of satire are provided in order to inform the audience about the details of the approach and satire. In the second chapter of the thesis, the historical and social context of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is included so that we can get information about what events in the period informed the *Tale* and the Proposal. The third chapter of this thesis aims to provide a new historicist reading of *A Tale of a Tub* and "A Modest Proposal" by placing them under the lenses of non-literary texts of the period. In the last part of the thesis, a brief and overall summary is provided regarding the significance of approaching these works through new historicist reading.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1. NEW HISTORICISM AND SATIRE: THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

One of the most conspicuous writers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was Jonathan Swift. He reflects the significant details and historical events of his century in his works, but he reflects them in a mocking way at times. Although most of his works and ideas have been meticulously studied, some of his works still have not been thoroughly examined by the literary spheres. Therefore, in order to better analyze his works, it would be beneficial to discuss the main historical events of his era in England and Ireland and apply New historicism to his works in order to reflect his main arguments. While doing this, one could also show how he reflects them and how he mocks some events at particular times.

#### **1.1. New Historicism**

##### *1.1.1. Definitions of New Historicism*

It can be argued that New Historicism is a relatively new strategy of interpretation. Although Jonathan Swift is an 18th century writer, his works have not been interpreted much in terms of New Historicism which is defined as “a method of cultural analysis which studies the ways in which a cultural artefact (especially a literary text) intermingles with and participates in its historical context, especially with reference to the power relations operating within the society of its time” in Oxford Online Dictionary (2011). It emerged as a mode of cultural analysis that would change the course of literary theory in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Bressler maintains that New Historicism is still in the process of becoming and the theory is constantly reforming its philosophy, aim, and practices (2003, p. 184).

According to Peter Barry’s definition, New Historicism can be considered as “a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period” (1995, p.171). He maintains that New Historicism involves a method of study in which literary and non-literary texts are paid equal attention and weight. According to Barry’s understanding of New Historicism, literary and non-literary texts ceaselessly inform and question one another. It can be concluded from Barry’s elucidations that privilege is provided to neither literary nor non-literary texts

in a new historicist study. Literary texts constitute merely another source available to the critic (1995, p. 172-173).

Another definition of New Historicism can be included which also underlines the equal significance of literary and non-literary texts. American critic Louis Montrose outlines New Historicism as a collective interest in “the textuality of history, the historicity of texts” (1989, p. 20). He goes on to explain that by “the historicity of texts”, he means the cultural specificity, the societal embedment of all modes of writing – not merely texts critics study but the texts in which we study them as well. It can be readily argued that his historicizing the text and textualizing history eventually became a standard principle in New Historicism, which can be seen as a consequence of its return to history.

### *1.1.2. Key Terms of New Historicism*

There are a number of terms that frequently appear in works related to New Historicism or employed by new historicist scholars. One of these terms is *discourse* which signifies a set of vocabulary associated with a specific group of people who have a shared knowledge. From a new historicist standpoint, the discourse determines what is socially acceptable and what is reprehensible through that vocabulary. In that sense, discourse can be regarded as potential hegemony. The term *episteme* is also employed by new historicists to indicate a particular group of knowledges and discourses that operate as dominant discourses in a specific period of history.

*Text* is a significant term in New Historicism, which can be described as a site where cultural interpretations and meanings become available to the reader. It is one of the many kinds of cultural meanings. From a new historicist perspective, a literary text is not necessarily a mirror of society from its production to its dissemination. Instead, literature is a battleground for various definitions of the culture in a particular society. Co-text is a non-literary text written in the same period with the literary text and close reading of co-texts enables the critic to better understand the canonical text or vice versa. In New Historicism, canonical texts are approached with suspicion regarding the reasons why they became part of the canon.

Another essential term to be covered is *power*, which can be considered as a means of subjugation of individuals by the social order in which they live. New historicist practice considers power as a social construct rather than a reality, and

power is connected with knowledge. It does not reside within institutions or persons but instead follows a principle of circulation, whereby every member of the society contributes to the continuance of prevailing power structures. On the one hand, if you happen to possess knowledge, it means that you can exercise power over others as well. On the other hand; if you possess power, you can have the authority to decide whether something is acceptable or not. New historicist critics believe that truth is a construct endorsed by power. For new historicist critics, the Other or the marginalized are controlled through power, which they strive to obtain.

One of the leading terms for New Historicism is *ideology*. Althusser asserts that literature contributes to making state power and ideology known and acceptable to its subjects and reproduces the norms, customs, and values of the predominant interests in the society (1984, p. 1-6). The Marxist idea that ideology is a part of a superstructure forms the basis for his concept of ideology, which he links to Freudian and Lacanian concept of unconscious. Therefore, according to Althusser, ideology is a structure operating unconsciously. He argues that similar to language, it is a system that gives us the feeling that we are in control and that we have the opportunity to choose whatever we would like to choose while actually it is ideology that speaks to us and exerts control over us. New historicists employ Althusser's understanding of ideology. For them, ideology exists in a material mode through organizations such as the school, the church, the university, the theatre, and so on. Brannigan states that culture is a field of ideological competition and contradiction outside which no cultural artifact can exist (1984, p. 12).

*Containment* is an important term for New Historicism. It was introduced by Stephen Greenblatt in his "Invisible Bullets" and it signifies the ways hegemonic forces consolidate the status quo. New historicist critics search for moments of disagreement in order that they can scrutinize how forces of rebellion can still be co-opted by power. Inspired by Michel Foucault, new historicist scholars deal with power relations in a society. They approach history with a keen eye to the relations of power within that society and how power is circulated and contained in the social order of a given culture.

Another term that is significant for New Historicism is *representations*, which are verbal formations that are ideological and signify the opposition to reality. New



Historicism prefers to use the term representations instead of reality since it calls the nature of reality into question in the sense that reality is generally determined by the authorities. Neither historical nor literary texts are closer to the truth of history. Texts both represent a society's behavior patterns and shape or alter that culture's dominant codes. As a result, representations are reflective as well as productive of power. The term representation represents the impossibility for history to claim the truth because there are a great number of representations by people from varied times and backgrounds. New Historicism seems to refuse to view history as objective and permanent because New Historicism regards historical information as products of specific elements of the period such as literary texts. According to Cox and Reynolds, new historicists regard not only literary but also non-literary texts as events and objects in the world, as parts of society, human life, and historical entities of authority and power (1993, p. 3).

The final term to be taken into consideration is *self-positioning*, which refers to the unreliability of the intellectuals who can never keep themselves outside history while evaluating literary and non-literary paraphernalia. New Historicism makes use of the term *self-positioning* in order to indicate the unavoidable subjectivity that is always present in all human inquiry and endeavor.

### *1.1.3. Fundamental Principles of New Historicism*

In New Historicism, literary texts are regarded as aspects of culture in lieu of something that is connected to culture. New historicist scholars view cultures as texts, practices, persons, and rituals. Therefore, a text is not a reflection or an expression of its world; a work of literature actively contributes to acting and producing within that world. New Historicism deals with literary texts as an agent inseparable from social and historical components instead of treating them as an end product of historical events. According to new historicist point of view, works of literature do not attempt to imitate life but mediate human action. In that sense, literary works can be thought to be both producers and products of history. According to Louis Montrose, New Historicism does not attempt to distinguish between text and its context or between literature and history. He also states that New Historicism does not grant privilege or preference to a particular work, author, or individual. He directly opposes the idea that history may be considered to be of inferior importance compared to works of literature

(1989, p. 18). Greenblatt states that New Historicism is “the study of the collective making of distinct cultural practices and inquiry into the relations among these practices” (1988, p. 5). With his principle of historicity and textuality, Montrose attempts to indicate the connection between text and history as follows:

By the historicity of texts, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing—not only the texts that critics study but also the texts in which we study them. By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question—traces whose survival we cannot assume to be merely contingent but must rather presume to be at least partially consequent upon complex and sub the social processes of preservation and effacement; and secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as the ‘documents’ upon which historians ground their own texts, called ‘histories’. (1989, p. 20).

New Historicism aspires to work out belief systems available when a literary work was brought out. It seeks not only to come up with an answer regarding the content of a work but attempts to find out what societal contexts contributed to the writing of that particular work as well. Therefore, related texts from the same period of time are also considered in an effort to carry out a new historical analysis. Booker maintains that there would be no point in trying to separate literary texts from their contexts since they are shaped and woven together (1996, p. 138).

New historicists benefit from a number of different institutions and activities of life such as formalities, dances, symbols, items of clothing, popular stories while they embark on analyzing a work of literature. In order to attempt to show that social and cultural events have a mutual effect on one another, they refer to those mechanisms previously thought to be independent and unconnected. Hereby, they have the right to maintain that new historicists have established a novel way of studying history and an awareness about how culture and history delineate each other. Brook Thomas lays emphasis on the revolutionary aspect of New Historicism by stating that it is an approach which attempts to show the newness of the past while postmodernism tries to establish the pastness of the new (1991, p.25).

According to Bressler, New Historicism makes use of three areas of concern in order to reveal and appreciate meaning which are the life of the writer, the rules and precepts present in the text, and a reflection of a literary work’s historical situation as

shown in the text. These areas are crucial because there arises the risk of rebounding to old historicism which does not see a text as a production of the whole society if any of them is ignored or left out (2003, p. 187-189).

New historicists acknowledge that it is impossible to study a work of literature impartially in the sense that they are totally aware of the fact that human inquiry is unavoidably governed by human passions and emotions. As a result, new historicists approach literary works as a kind of cultural reproduction, as a political instrument, and as an outcome of power. Rather than addressing a work of literature irrespective of the conditions that it is produced in; New Historicism places the work in its context so as to better understand what the work is about. Since a work cannot be stripped from the cultural contexts of its origins, new historicists posit that the work is liable to the sources of power structures within that society. According to new historicist point of view, it can be argued that what is considered to be true ultimately builds on who or what is in power because truths are not facts but social constructs. The fact that texts are studied along with the non-literary texts of their time period is what sets this school of criticism apart from earlier approaches to literary criticism. Before New Historicism, a separation was made in accordance with rank, between the work of literature and its historical background. Bressler states that by intermingling the boundaries of one discipline on top of another, new historicist practitioners examine all discourses that may have an influence on the text under scrutiny (2003, p. 187-189). New historicist critics want to hear all the voices including the marginalized as well as the ones maintaining power. As a result, they pay close attention to discourses digressing from norm and what is acceptable because they may have been unnoticed or suppressed so as not to threaten the standards adopted by a culture and the supremacy of the powerful.

John Brannigan, in his book, points out that New Historicism is positioned in a close relation with history considering texts as not only products but also functional components of political and social formations. Before New Historicism, literary approaches tended to presume that works of literature had comprehensive importance but they did not believe that literary texts had historical truth to reveal. However, new historicist scholars claim that literary works are material creations of specific historical conditions. Brannigan avows that new historicist scholars refuse to scrutinize a literary

text against a dominant historical background or to view history as a group of facts independent of the literary text (1998, p. 3). New historicist critics believe that history cannot be adopted to explain a literary text in the sense that all history is subjective. According to Brannigan, New Historicism considers neither the text and the context nor literature and history as the object of study. New Historicism considers literature in history as the object to be studied. He concludes that New Historicism views literature as a constitutive and undetachable component of history in the making, which makes literature replete with creative energy, disturbances, and inconsistencies of history (1998, p. 3-4). Brannigan mentions that new historicist scholars do not intend to make purposes and meanings of a work of literature clearer. Instead; he argues that by making use of texts of many different discourses and genres, New Historicism attempts not only to expose concealed histories but also to understand how they became veiled and what kind of dominance helps expose or hide them in the present (1998, p. 35). According to new historicist critics do not considers historical periods as unified entities. They argue that there cannot be a single history but contradictory and fragmented histories. New historicism states that the concept of harmonious and uniform culture is evidently a myth proliferated by the ruling elite for their own benefit and imposed on history.

New historicist criticism revolts against the idea that historians can provide contemporary individuals with reliable and unflinching understanding of any society or any time period. According to New Historicism, history is represented by persons whose prejudices lay considerable effect on their writing of history. Consequently, New Historicism announces that history is just one of many discourses, or ways of seeing and understanding the world. In her article, Judith L. Newton touches upon the new historicist postulation by mentioning that people are subjective by virtue of cultural codes, that there is no room for objectivity in our world, and that the way we represent our world and the way we read texts and the past are influenced by our historical position apart from the politics and values surrounding us (1989, p. 152). New Historicism assumes that history is but a narrative that is subjectively produced and shaped by the cultural context of the narrator. Literature can be argued to be the scapegoat of artistic production in the sense that literary texts are incriminated of providing wrong information about historical events and authors are labelled as

immoral or atheist as though the act of writing has something to do with morality or theism.

History is accused of leaving the anecdotes of the powerless untold on account of the fact that it is usually written by a powerful individual. According to Greenblatt, the authority is everywhere and omnipotent so the official power cannot be swept aside when a text is in the process of being written. As a result, any attempt to takeover authority is vulnerable to falling prey to the benefit of official power. In addition to reading Shakespeare's text carefully, Greenblatt also pays close attention to marginalized texts of the period like church records, diaries, and chronicles so that the reader can gain a deeper insight regarding the plays by Shakespeare. Oppermann posits that Greenblatt underlines how the other is marginalized and suppressed in the works of Shakespeare and how his works facilitated the colonialist policies of the Western powers (2006, p. 19).

History generally focuses on what great men achieved during their life time and how they affected empires or kingdoms. However, we miss one important point, which is the fact that those great men made up only a small percentage of the whole population. On the whole, history books fail to furnish sufficient information about crucial aspects of daily life. In history books, one may come across chapters entitled "Social and Family Life in the Late 17th & Early 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries", "Social and Domestic Life in the Victorian Era", or "Social life in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Britain" but they take up merely a marginal space in books of history.

Peter Barry focuses on New Historicism's attention to and acknowledgement of all kinds of divergence and eccentricity. He states that new historicist critics are completely in favor of the liberal philosophies of personal freedom at all times in the sense that New Historicism is intentionally anti-system by nature (1995, p. 175). Therefore, new historicist scholars never neglect what has been marginalized and they attempt to show that the marginalized cultures also have a significant influence and are valuable to the society by paying close attention to the groups that are not part of the dominant parties and those who challenge the supremacy of the powerful. Denying that there can be a unified single worldview, New Historicism attempts to seek out previously unnoticed or ignored resources, marginalized spheres of the society, and eccentric materials. New Historicism attaches great importance to others, those who

are reflected as foreign and troublesome unlike us. Even though they are silenced, overlooked, or disapproved, they exist. New historicists pay attention to stories about the colonized, women, the insane, namely the oppressed and the marginalized. Therefore, new historicist scholars assert that one must be aware of others in order to better understand the power structure itself.

Barry summarizes some of the stages that new historicist critics follow:

1. They juxtapose literary and non-literary texts, reading the former in the light of the latter.
2. They try thereby to “defamiliarize” the canonical literary text, detaching it from the accumulated weight of previous literary scholarship and seeing it as if new.
3. They focus attention (within both text and co-text) on issues of State power and how it is maintained, on patriarchal structures and their perpetuation, and on the process of colonization, with its accompanying “mind-set”.
4. They make use, in doing so, of aspects of the post-structuralist outlook, especially Derrida’s notion that every facet of reality is textualized, and Foucault’s idea of social structures as determined by dominant “discursive practices”. (1995, p. 179).

#### *1.1.4. New Historicism as a Reaction and Continuation of Its Contemporary and Preexisting Methodologies*

The word “new” may encourage the idea that “older” approaches to works of literature have become obsolete and have been substituted by New Historicism. Nevertheless, this idea is completely groundless in the sense that many conventional approaches to literary criticism are in operation to this day. New Historicism breaks away from “historicism”. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during which more literary theories emerged than any other century, nearly each decade witnessed a novel literary movement emerging as a reaction to the existing movement of the previous decade. What should be understood from its title is that New Historicism is a return to history emphasizing the gravity of the historical setting to appreciate literary works, which was omitted or overlooked in literary criticism. According to new historicist point of view, literature is rooted in the cultural and authorial context of its production. It is imperative to recognize how different methodologies and approaches to literary analysis diverge so that one can get a stronger grasp about the way in which New Historicism differ from its contemporaries and predecessors. With the advent of new historicist approach, critics began to make use of history once again in a conscious, enlightened, and laborious mode, which made New Historicism a completely different mode of analysis.

New Historicism may be said to have appeared as an adversary of the old historicism; it attempts to disprove the analyses and conclusions of old historicism. The idea that history and literature is closely related did not appear with New Historicism. Instead, numerous forms of historical approach tended to play a central role in literary analysis.

Traditional historical analysis urges critics to study the author's life, the society, and the dominant ideas of the time. Historical texts accommodate secondary background data while historical critics attach priority to the literary text. The work of literature is provided with averment of its validity via historical piece of information as long as its content is supported with historical data. New Historicism also differs from historical research in that historical researchers pay close attention to facts and believe in the prevalence of a specific belief system within a particular period while new historicists tend to bring the imperfection of grand schematics to light as opposed to creating such systematizations. New Historicism does not grant privilege to either literary or historical text. On the contrary, new historicist practitioners dwell upon cross-reading in which literary and historical texts are read in order to encourage a better understanding of the other. New Historicism differs from traditional historical research in the sense that it prefers to pay attention to minute texts and details rather than to grand narratives. It tends to draw partial conclusions instead of asserting all-encompassing resolutions.

Moreover, traditional historians restrict their study area within their own field and refrain from collaborating with other fields of study. Unlike them, new historicist scholars tend to work in collaboration with other disciplines such as economy, sociology, theology, anthropology, and psychology. The scope of traditional history is national and international instead of local whereas New Historicism attempts to pay closer attention to every sphere of life and every subject enters the scope of New Historicism.

New Historicism may be said to emerge as a reaction against formalist criticism which is generally known as Russian Formalism and New Criticism focus on the form of the literary text. In the first half of the twentieth century, new critics studied texts in isolation without paying attention to historical contexts of their dissemination. From a new criticist standpoint, texts were considered as self-sufficient and self-

contained objects with their own form and meaning. Namely, new criticism approached the literary text with regard to its own form and neglected referring to other texts, philosophy, history, or its readers. Unlike formalist approach to literary criticism, New Historicism elaborates on all kinds of contexts in which a literary work is produced. It refuses to make a distinction between a literary and a non-literary text, which appears to be its most fundamental reaction to formalist school of criticism. According to New Criticism, a work of literature is said to exist independent of its time, culture, and author. The principal objective of the upholders of new criticism was to accomplish scientific basis for the study of literature. However, it appears to have disregarded and not to have attached value to the fact that any certain text is produced in a historical context. What matters, in new critical analysis, is the text itself and the historical context of its production is not taken into consideration. Thus, new criticism can be argued to have ignored the historical facet of literature (Bressler, 2003, p. 181).

New critics state that studying a poem with its effects is called Affective Fallacy, and trying to uncover the intention in a literary text is called Intentional Fallacy. Instead, they encouraged close reading and detailed textual analysis (Cuddon, 1991, p. 582). However, New Historicism opposes this *art for art's sake* approach which detaches literary artefacts from the societal contexts of their formation. Stephen Greenblatt believes that history plays a central role in shaping literary works; thus, the role history plays should neither be overlooked nor weakened. From a new historicist point of view, textual analysis can provide assistance in understanding the social construction of truth rather than revealing the truths of a society or an era. New Historicism maintain that a literary work can be understood on condition that it is considered in the framework of ideas when it was composed. New Historicism also challenges biographical criticism which associates the life experiences and ideology of the author with the literary work. New Historicism refuses to see the life of authors and their work the same and not to go any further. This does not mean that new historicist critics do not pay attention to the life of the author because the real-life experiences of an author are what are represented in the form of reflections or collocations in the literary work. For example, in a new historicist approach to a literary work, an author who has received a disciplined education on religion is expected to persistently mention religious motives in the literary work. In that sense,



New Historicism can be regarded as a late reaction against New Criticism's authority and dominance over literary criticism and its deficient response to the questions about the nature, the definition as well as the function of literature itself. For instance, it is easily expected from an author having received a strict religious education to pervasively state religious motives in his/her work.

Catherine Belsey posits that readings and meanings of every text are plural. She states that as well as the premeditated and implied meanings of the author, there are the meanings forced on the author by the social conditions. Besides, there are meanings readers collect from the text (New Historicism: Reader, p. 216). As a result, a text can be considered as a battlefield of opposing ideas among the writer, society, institutions, and social practices.

Marxist literary criticism maintains that people's profession, which class they belong to, and how they make money have a significant effect on the way they think. This idea was a revolt against traditional historicism which suppose that scholars can write about history accurately and objectively about any given time period and situation. Marxist scholars such as Walter Benjamin and Raymond Williams affirmed that critics ought to accept their personal biases and should not abstain from declaring it. Like Marxist critics, new historicist scholars also recognize their biases and subjectivity. Unlike traditional historians, new historicists lay emphasis on self-positioning, which can be summarized as the act of admitting personal philosophical and political leanings.

Bressler states that Marxist critics deem a literary text as a representative and a part of culture, which led them to conclude that a work of literature is closely linked to any sort of social event (2003, p. 181). New historicist scholars learned from Marxist scholars about the fact that whatever people do has a determining power over history and that history is shaped by what people do. According to Hayden White, this interconnectedness of literary works and their social and cultural contexts is what initially sparked an interest and generated a radical reconsideration of works of literature, their socio-cultural contexts, the affiliations between them, and history itself (1989, p. 294). Considering history and literary texts Marxist criticism lays emphasis on social class and economics, and how these matters influence the power balance in a literary text. Like Marxist literary criticism, New Historicism also highlights the

exercise of power. Nonetheless, New Historicism differs greatly in the sense that it focuses on marginalized groups, social matters, and institutions that hold power in the period of time the text is produced. According to Raymond Williams, New Historicism rejects “base and superstructure in Marxist cultural theory” due to its economic nature and unilinear elucidation of historical determinations (1980, p. 40).

Marxism’s effect on New Historicism is palpable in the sense that the theory speculates that history ought to be re-examined and re-evaluated with an eye to the society. Although New Historicism was influenced conspicuously by Marxism, there is a substantial difference. While Marxism is partly attentive to the necessity of consistency, Gallagher maintains that New Historicism is limited by no enclosing principles in the action of evaluating the past:

The new historicist, unlike the Marxist, is under no nominal compulsion to achieve consistency. S/he may even insist that historical curiosity can develop independently of political concerns; there may be no political impulse whatsoever behind her desire to historicize literature. This is not to claim that the desire for historical knowledge is itself historically unplaced or “objective”; it is, rather, to insist that the impulses, norms and standards of a discipline called history, which has achieved a high level of autonomy in the late twentieth century, are profound part of the subjectivity of some scholars and do not in all case require political ignition (1989, p. 46).

New Historicism seems to have benefited from deconstructionist and post-structuralist criticism since it focuses on the problems of representation, pays attention to textuality and deconstruction of the individual and the self. New historicism appears to affirm the deconstructionist idea that “there is nothing outside the text” which was postulated by Jacques Derrida. The efforts of New Historicism to integrate literary texts into history have been fueled by the post-structuralist principle of textuality, which announces that texts of literature are not indifferent to their surrounding contexts. Instead, there is a juxtaposition and interaction between the text and what may be considered as outside the text. However, New Historicism supports the idea in a different way in the sense that new historicist critics believe that every piece of information about the past can be obtained only in a textualized mode. Therefore, the text also contains history and new historicist scholars opine that the past can never be recovered and there are no historical facts but merely the text. Greenblatt acknowledges the noteworthy impact of post-structuralism as follows:

One of the principal achievements of post-structuralism has been to problematize the distinction between literary and non-literary texts, to challenge the stable difference between the fictive and the actual, to look at discourse not as a transparent glass through which we glimpse reality but as the creator of what Barthes called “reality effect”. (1990, p 14).

New historicist scholars make use of Derrida’s concept of literature as a text made up of an infinite number of postponed connections between the signified and signifier. As a result, they interpret literary and non-literary texts bearing in mind that literature, history, and culture are texts with no particular fixed meaning.

According to Peter Barry, everything is textualized first through the ideology of its time, then through ideology of our time, and eventually through distorting aspect of language itself (1995, p. 175). Derrida insists on the significance of the marginal and the other similar to New Historicism.

While a literary text is under consideration along with a specific chosen document, new historicist criticism aims at generating a different reconstruction and remaking in addition to a combination of the past events. Over the matter, an objection is raised from some scholars arguing that the document chosen are not exactly related to the work of literature under scrutiny. Nevertheless, according to Peter Barry, it ought to be kept in mind that New Historicism does not purport to represent the past objectively as it actually was. Instead, it sets out to represent a different version of reality by re-situating the past (1995, p. 175). Likewise, deconstruction or postmodernism underlines the impossibility of objective reality contrary to modernism which aims at finding a universal truth. According to deconstructionists, all descriptions of truth are bound to be subjective because of the fact that the effect of society and culture pervades over everything. The plurality of reality stems from the fact that every individual interprets the social and cultural situation from their own unique point of view. New Historicism also attaches great significance to the various interpretations by diverse readers of the same society.

#### *1.1.5. Seminal Figures of New Historicism*

The academicians who adopted new historicist approach gave it various names some of which are “cultural poetics”, “historical materialist criticism”, or “critical historicism”. No matter how the theory is labelled, it is apparent that New Historicism lays emphasis on the close relationship between history and cultural texts.

The critics of this mode of literary interpretation mention the year 1980 as the emergence of New Historicism since in that year, Stephen Greenblatt published his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, in which he declared the main characteristics of new historicist approach. Greenblatt acknowledges that it is challenging to describe the theory and states that New Historicism is a literary practice more than a literary doctrine. He proposed to use the name Cultural Poetics for the literary criticism. However, New Historicism thrived and turned out to be preferred in the literary world. The name given to the theory is Cultural Materialism in the United Kingdom. In today's world, the name New Historicism seems to involve all these versions.

No theory can claim to exist on its own without any reference to earlier theories. Therefore, during the process of formation and development of New Historicism, there were a number of influential philosophers and contributions from various philosophical approaches. It has been developed thanks to such miscellaneous figures as Michel Foucault, Clifford Geertz, Raymond Williams, Louis Althusser, and Antonio Gramsci who started their practices before its emergence. Their ideas contributed to the emergence and development of New Historicism to a considerable extent. The fact that each theory is nourished by others is true especially for New Historicism, which benefited from a number of scholars and approaches. As a result, it is appropriate to include a section about the predecessors of the theory.

When you probe into the origins of New Historicism, you are bound to come across Stephen Greenblatt. Even though there are a number of other scholars whose invaluable ideas played an active role in the development of the theory including Clifford Geertz, Louis Montrose, Catherine Gallagher, and Louis Althusser, Stephen Greenblatt is commonly regarded as the founder of New Historicism.

In his revolutionary work *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, Greenblatt states that he began with the desire to speak to the dead (1988, p. 1). When he aimed to explore the past via its documents, Greenblatt was very well-aware of the fact that such an exploration could not be managed merely by reason which would enable academic objectivity. He also posits that in order to describe the relation between a literary work and the historical incidents about which it speaks, some terms are employed by literary criticism. He goes on to

list these terms as “allusion, symbolization, allegorization, representation, and mimesis”. Greenblatt is of the opinion that the aforementioned terms are summarizing and rich with regard to meaning so critics should make use of non-literary texts like official documents, newspaper clippings, and private papers in order to develop these terms (1989, p. 11). New historicists blur the difference between a literary text and other kinds of social production since a text is viewed as culture in action. For instance, they want the reader to see that “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift is a political as much as a literary endeavor (Bressler, 2003, p. 130).

Greenblatt holds the opinion that people are constrained by rules and the expectations their class, gender, national identity, and religion have on them. He argues that all of these have an essential effect on the changes taking place in the course of history and these changes are not unalterable or inflexible (1996, p. 55). Society employs a number of means like police reports, rumors, and accusations which serve the welfare of the social order. According to Dollimore, religion also appears to assist a given society as an ideological device. He argues that religion should be considered as an ideological practice and it is a cardinal argument that is aimed at legitimating the system of authority (2004, p. 12-14).

Greenblatt holds the opinion that people’s ideas of selfhood are shaped by the power relations that are present in social discourse. Even though people embark on fashioning themselves, they are actually being fashioned by societal institutions like state, family, and religion. He explains that in all the documents and texts he studied, identity formation process appeared to be a cultural artifact and a product of power relations in the particular society instead of a freely chosen identity even though it seemed like an autonomous self-fashioning (2005, p.256). He concludes that self-fashioning turns into shaping oneself so as to conform to an existing authoritative social power rather than an act of autonomous self-realization. From a new historicist point of view, the concept of subjectivity grows to be a kind of performance aimed at complying with the apparatuses of social discipline which contribute to dominant cultural needs of the society. Similar to many other approaches like Marxism, psychoanalysis, and feminism; New Historicism also tends to define the individual as a creation of political, ideological, social, and historical forces. As a result, New Historicism posits that the individual is subject to aforementioned forces, maintaining

that the self is produced in relation to the society of its origin and it is fashioned by social norms and self-invention (Brannigan, 1998, p. 118).

According to Greenblatt, the tenets that new historicists are supposed to be aware of are:

1. There can be no appeals to genius as the sole origin of the energies of great art.
2. There can be no motiveless creation.
3. There can be no transcendent or timeless or unchanging representation.
4. There can be no autonomous artifacts.
5. There can be no expression without an origin and an object, a from and a for.
6. There can be no art without social energy.
7. There can be no spontaneous generation of social energy (Bressler, 2003, p. 141).

In contrast to the philosophies of Marxists, who maintain that the individual is alienated from society through modernity, Greenblatt opines that there exists a complicated relation between power and the formation of the self. According to him, the human self is formed in society, and the culture of a particular society is determined by the political and social power within that society. As a result, what shapes the self is the political and social power. Greenblatt maintains that the means of individuality operates with reference to the Other:

Self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile. This threatening Other -heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor, Antichrist- must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed. (1980, p. 9).

Greenblatt maintains that individuals define their identities in relation to what they are not, and as a consequence what they are not must be objectified and diabolized as some kind of “other”.

Another major figure for New Historicism is the French philosopher, anthropologist, and historian Michel Foucault, who assisted New Historicism to formulate a systematic body of assumptions. Foucault’s ideas were under great influence of important names like Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s opinions about history, power, and the nature of human beings are typically discernable in New Historicism and Foucault. Foucault argues that history does not move linearly and it does not have a fixed beginning and an end. In addition, he argues that history is not teleological or goal oriented, which means that it does not progress towards some

known outcome. In his opinion, history is comprised of many interconnected discourses and various ways in addition to what individuals talk and think about their world. Each of these discourses influences one each other and they appear not to act randomly in their historical period. Therefore, historians are supposed to benefit from a number of discourses and their connections in order to reach an agreeable conclusion. According to Booker, Foucault regards the society as the product of an intricate network of interrelating discourses and he posits that the events of history are determined by interrelationships too complex to be explained from the point of straightforward cause-effect sequences (1996, p. 137).

When considered from this point of view, history can be considered an appearance of power. Foucault believes that history positions itself considering the power that was predominant during a time period. Power is so important for Foucault that it could be argued that it is his new god which can be everywhere and control every aspect of life. New Historicism was theoretically influenced by Foucault's interest in the way power operates in society. When diverse texts are examined, the degree of influence power relations have over organization and promotion of accepted social behaviors and thought through the traditional and dominant way of thought accepted in a society at a particular period of time (discourse) can be revealed. According to new historicist point of view, dominant discourses shape society in such a way that any revolt against recognized patterns of thought are made to appear aberrant. Nietzsche's effect on New Historicism can be observed on this matter. Nietzsche rejected absolute truth and proclaimed that what is believed to be the truth is what bears resemblance to what has already been labelled as truth by the authority in power. The ones in authority tend to shape the truth for their own benefit so that it suits their wishes. According to Makaryk, Foucault believes that the link between power and knowledge characterizes the disciplinary nature of all modern institutions (1993, p. 318).

Regarding the issue of exercising power within the society, Foucault bases his line of thought on the Panopticon, a building design which was introduced by Jeremy Bentham in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a means of maintaining command in prisons and other institutions. Foucault criticizes the Panopticon as it represented a form of subjugation that could also be observed in other parts of the society. He concluded that

the Panopticon leads to deindividualization of power and that the universal norm is nothing but a tool of subjugation employed by those in power (1975, p. 201-202). Also, according to Makaryk, Foucault posits that power is a network of connections that incorporates not only rulers but also the ruled in a web of disconnected, local conflicts. He concludes that there can be no one outside the power because of the fact that power does not reside in the hands of a few (1975, p. 319). Foucault believes that power is visible in all levels of society because it originates from everywhere. Foucault's ideas related to power lead new historicist critics to study history searching for forms of oppression due to which members of the society are compelled to behave according to an ideology irrespective of their acceptance or rejection. Stephen Greenblatt affirms Foucault's insistence that power functions not only through direct pressure and actions of the government but also more importantly through language and daily routines (1982, p. 2250).

In his book, Foucault introduced the term *episteme* which signifies the rules and limitations outside of which people are not supposed to speak or think without facing up to being silenced or excluded (1989, p. xxvi). Like Foucault, new historicists look for topics that are not valued and those who are not permitted to speak. According to Richter, from Foucault, new historicist scholars developed the idea that literary texts of a specific time period are connected by a wide-ranging totalizing social formation which is the episteme (2007, p. 1322).

Another intellectual who had a substantial influence over New Historicism is Mikhail Bakhtin who postulated an alternative mode of thinking about the marginalized and silenced through the theory of *carnavalesque*. For Bakhtin, the *carnival* is an event in which all rules, regulations, and restrictions are suspended from controlling the course of daily life. The *carnival* is also a marginalized culture that overthrows authority and resists accepted social behaviour by putting the privileged symbols into common experience or by turning them upside down (1984, p.10). In a carnivalesque work of literature, what is socially not accepted is also celebrated similar to New Historicism's addressing of the marginalized. The scholars identified with New Historicism acknowledge their debt to Bakhtin. Pelagia Goulimari maintains that Bakhtin helped New Historicism differentiate itself from old historicism in the sense that it views texts as composed of contradictory and dissimilar parts whereas old



historicism asserted that texts have an unchanging core denotation. New Historicism is quite Bakhtinian by adopting a dialogical point of view while old historicism is monological (2015, p. 163).

Bakhtin also contributed to New Historicism with his perspective that all kinds of texts are cultural and social artifacts with no constant meaning. He goes on to describe discourse as unresolved and open-ended as a result of a combination of voices, social values and attitudes it consists (2006, p. 60).

New Historicism refuses the idea that the author is the sole authority over the text and maintains that the text is a product of a number of elements intermingled and working together. This new historicist perspective draws upon Roland Barthes's well-known announcement that the author is dead, which plainly detaches the text from any authorial authority and attempts to overthrow the hegemony of the author. He posits that the author is a limitation on the text and leads to interpretive tyranny (1977, p. 143). Similarly, Foucault explicitly declares the author's disappearance in "What is an Author" (1980, p. 117). In his essay entitled "The Death of the Author", Roland Barthes states that:

A text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture [...] the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. (1977, p. 146)

Barthes repudiates the rationality of the role and function given to a completely individual author who is perceived as the source of all knowledge, as the planner, determiner and creator of the meanings and form of a literary text. Likewise, new historicist scholars tend to decenter the author as a determinative, coherent, and resolute human subject. Instead, in New Historicism; the individual is regarded as a disunified self that is constructed by culture, and subjected to the overwhelming workings of unconscious forces.

Cultural anthropology has an undeniable effect over New Historicism. For New Historicism, one of the foremost influential cultural anthropologists is Clifford Geertz. His concept of culture in which culture is viewed as something to be read and

interpreted is employed by new historicists who see social actions as texts to be studied. He announces that there cannot be human nature independent of culture because we cannot discuss culture unless men exist. Similarly, we cannot talk about man unless we have culture (1973, p. 49). According to Makaryk, Geertz's notion of culture is dialectical. He argues that culture is not merely a product but a determinant of social interaction as well (1993, p. 331).

Geertz also came up with the term 'thick description' in his book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, which is a method employed in new historicist literary analysis. He underlines the importance of paying attention to difference and detail in the examination of cultural symbols and forms, by respecting the diversity in cultural systems, and rejecting generalizing labels. Brannigan states as follows:

We must descend into detail, past the misleading tags, past the metaphysical types, past the empty similarities to grasp firmly the essential character of not only the various cultures but [also] the various sorts of individuals within each culture, if we wish to encounter humanity face to face. In this area, the road to the general, to the revelatory simplicities of science, lies through a concern with the particular, the circumstantial, [and] the concrete (1998, p. 34).

He explains thick description with an illustration of two boys winking. A thin description of the boys' behaviour provides not an interpretation but a factual account, which considers the boys' behaviour a twitch of the eye. However, a thick description suggests that the wink could be a deliberate action sending a message that could be understood by the boys (1998, p. 6). In this respect, New Historicism attempts to reveal the meaning of the wink with contextual analysis and a close examination in order to create a thick description which includes an interpretation and commentary of the action and power relations behind it.

Thick description is also what sets New Historicism apart from formalism because it locates meaning of a text neither merely in the text nor in a kind of already existing general background. By making use of thick description, new historicist scholars attempt to look into the cultural and social processes through which some parts of society are marginalized and ignored (Brannigan, 1998, p. 35). Veenser argues that Geertzian thick description enables new Historicists to develop a mode of describing culture in action in the sense that with the help of thick description, they can interpret an anecdote or event and reread it in a different way so that they can

reveal the logics, behavioral codes, and motive forces that control the entire society through the interpretation of tiny particulars (1998, p. xi).

Culture is defined by Geertz as “a set of control mechanism – plans, recipes, rules, instructions for the governing of behavior” (1973, p. 44). He is of the opinion that culture pertains to every part of human nature and each individual sees society from a unique point of view in the sense that there appears to be an information gap between what the person thinks and what the person has to know so as to fit into the social order. As a result, Geertz maintains that every individual who lives in a given society ought to be considered as a cultural artifact (1973, p. 51). Parallel with Foucault’s understanding, Geertz places great emphasis on the relationship between society and literature; namely, he considers works of literature as products of intertextual relationships rather than as an individual creation of a particular author.

According to Booker, Geertz believes that culture is a system of signs and codes that regulate behaviour and allow individuals to communicate with one another (1973, p. 137). Considering this understanding of culture, Geertz may be argued to be in the search for a general outline of culture. However, Geertz does not intend to produce an overall idea:

Paying close and careful attention to specific cultural practices but refusing to draw general conclusions about a culture from these specific studies. Instead, Geertz seeks to find individual events, performances or practices that he can interpret in great detail, developing ‘local knowledge’ of the specific phenomenon rather than the ‘global knowledge’ of the culture as a whole (Booker, 1996, p. 137).

Another important figure for New Historicism is Harold Aram Veenser. In his book about New Historicism, Veenser maintains that scholars can engage themselves in various disciplines like history, literature, politics, economics, art, and anthropology thanks to New Historicism (1989, p. ix). In addition, New Historicism paved the way for humanists to go into the matters of politics and power. It can be argued that New Historicism is totally aware that any subject may have an impact on people’s way of life. Veenser claims that New Historicism holds together literature, art, history, ethnography, anthropology, and other disciplines showing that all these various fields are inter-related to each other (1989, p. x).

Veeseer makes a list of the key assumptions of New Historicism that keep appearing and bracket together new historicist critics and practitioners. Some of these assumptions are provided below:

1. that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices;
2. that every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes;
3. that literary and non-literary “texts” circulate inseparably;
4. that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature;
5. that a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe (1989, p. xi).

After Barry took those rules and assumptions into consideration, he points out a few important steps that new historicist scholars need to be mindful of:

1. They juxtapose literary and non-literary texts, reading the former in the light of the latter.
2. They try thereby to ‘defamiliarize’ the canonical literary text, detaching it from the accumulated weight of previous literary scholarship and seeing it as if new.
3. They focus attention (within both text and co-text) on issues of State power and how it is maintained, on patriarchal structures and their perpetuation, and on the process of colonization, with its accompanying ‘mind-set’.
4. They make use, in doing so, of aspects of the post-structuralist outlook, especially Derrida’s notion that every facet of reality is textualized, and Foucault’s idea of social structures as determined by dominant ‘discursive practices’. (1995, p. 179).

Jacques Lacan also contributed to the formulation of New Historicism. His psychoanalytic approach to power structures resembles the new historicist approach to power relations. While New Historicism addresses power structures in a cultural context, Lacan’s theory deals with power structures with a person attempting to reveal the inner self and its mechanism. Lacanian approach to literature study the inner workings of both language and mind. His approach owes a lot to Freud who sees literature as a means of gratifying socially unacceptable desires that have been suppressed into the unconscious. Lacan argues that a literary text can be argued to be the expression of the writer’s unconscious mind. Another significant influence by Lacan on New Historicism is the concept of self and the other. Lacan argues that the individual socializes after going through three stages of Oedipal complex. The first one is seduction stage in which the subject is attracted to the desired object or mother.

In the second one which is the primal stage, the subject regards mother as having intercourse with the father. In the castration stage, the subject is prohibited from sexual access to mother who is deemed the other owing to a deflection of desire. According to Lacan, the other exists in the subject's unconsciousness rather than being a physical object (2001, p. 149-150). The difference between Freud and Lacan is that the former considers Oedipal complex on a biological level while Lacan sees it on the level of language. According to Makaryk, Lacan relates the three stages of Oedipal complex to three psychic register or levels:

- (1) the 'imaginary' (which has nothing to do with the imagination per se) corresponds to variations in the unconscious initiated by the formation of the ego, the result of the mirror encounter;
- (2) the 'symbolic' (which has little to do with symbolism as we generally understand it) corresponds to the metonymic substitutions of the conscious mind; the symbolic register serves an organizing function, particularly on a linguistic level, and thus provides a means by which the subject can enter society through language; and
- (3) the 'real' (which has nothing to do with reality, objectivity or empiricism) which serves a function of constancy and is beyond the realm of speech; it can be thought of as the ineffable world of objects and experiences, or as that which is lacking in the symbolic order and which may be approached but never grasped (1993, p. 397).

In Lacan's opinion, the Freudian Oedipus complex points the effort that children make to situate themselves according to the three dimensions of Otherness. He believes that the paternal and the maternal Oedipal roles can be socio-cultural roles that may be performed by various possible persons or even institutions. Lacan's appropriation of Freudian Oedipus complex into the social realm paves the way for the new historicist scholars to make use of the theory in order to explain how the ones in power define others.

Lacan made a contribution to New Historicism with his ideas on the real and his mirror stage approach. He states that in the development of identity called the mirror stage, what you think of as your own identity is actually imaginary and a construct behind which the real persona exists. He calls this identity *the small object* which is formed from *the big other* that can be the laws, the language, or social norms. Lacan also states that the mirror state is a perpetual part of human psychology and after the advent of the mirror stage, the authenticity and the reality of being a whole subject is lost forever causing the split between the conscious and unconscious (2001, p. 3-4).

According to the binary of self and other introduced by Lacan, individuals produce a concept of self through juxtaposition and realization of other. According to Lodge, Lacan posits that the self is constructed through language, which is not one's own, but another's already in use at all times (2001, p. 62). New historicist academicians have employed Lacan's idea of unconsciousness structured like human language and they seem to have acknowledged that the self is formed by cultural codes surrounding the individual.

Antonio Gramsci contributed to the emergence and development of New Historicism with his ideas on hegemony, which can be described as the system through which a dominant class exercises control over other social groups by making use of values, assumptions, and meanings to impose economic or political pressures. Hegemony is able to shape the way things seem, what they signify, and what reality is for the greater part of a society within a particular culture (Murfin, p. 303). According to him, hegemony is flexible and dynamic; it may change through time in order that it can accommodate itself to new material certainties and reconcile contradictions (1971, p. 181-182). Gramsci argues that hegemony exists in every culture but it is maintained by subordinate groups of the society. Raymond Williams also underlines the significance of hegemony in literary analysis because he believes that literature is valuable due to its ability to disrupt the existing hegemony. He maintains that hegemony can be viewed as an internalized kind of social control making some viewpoints look natural or invisible. Therefore, ideological power is of ultimately greater importance than material power (1971, p. 51-79).

According to Richter, New Historicism owes a great deal to Hayden White, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michel de Certeau. New historical practice borrowed from the philosopher of history Hayden White the notion that the figures of speech and the tropes employed by an author can hold hints to the way historians' representations are filtered and shifted via the language of history. Moreover; from Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau New Historicism borrowed theories of intellectual practice which are aimed at figuring out how the structure of the scholarly professions changes the way power and knowledge are originated and distributed (2007, p. 1322).

Works of literature are one of the most significant historical documents in the sense that the reader has an understanding of the period they were brought out. The

authors have an opportunity to comment and reflect upon the important events of the particular time they live in. Thus, literary productions, especially political pamphlets, prove to assist historians when they engage in writing history of a particular time and place. Jonathan Swift was a prominent political writer of Irish affairs because not only did he deal with important events of the eighteenth century, but he also had an undeniable influence on his contemporaries (Larsen, 2005, p. 21).

## **1.2. Satire**

Satire can be regarded as a form of literature that has existed in various periods of history ranging from the early Roman period until the 21st century. The origins and primordial examples of satires can be traced back to the Roman period. The pioneers of the form in ancient Roman were Ennius, Lucilius, Persius, Juvenal, and Horace who made use of satire in their works written in verse form. Aristophanes was the Roman author who adopted satire in his theatrical plays. The examples from the Middle Ages include *Canterbury Tales* and *Piers Plowman* by Chaucer and Langland. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the most influential satirists were John Donne and Andrew Marvell. An early literary work that shed light on the way for following works and deserves mentioning is *Don Quixote* by Cervantes in Spanish literature. Highet states that the Greek are thought to enjoy condescending laughter and to be good haters, so satire constitutes a central part of their lives even if there does not exist a Greek term for satire (1962, p. 25). Namely, Greek literature also has satiric stance.

Even though great examples of satire are scattered in various time periods, satire is thought to have received its peak from the last decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century through the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century with great satirists, some of whom are as Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, John Dryden, Robert Burns, Daniel Defoe, and Joseph Addison. What contributed to the excellence of satire in England within the aforementioned time interval is the political and social conditions of the country that can be described as turbulent and hectic. The most appropriate atmosphere for satire to flourish is one in which the writers experience social, political, and philosophical tumult. The period was one of the most tumultuous in the history of the country. There were a number of changes that contributed to the advancement of satire but three of them can be considered to have made a great contribution. One of them was the abolishment of the

Commonwealth of England in which England was ruled in the form of a republic. Following the Commonwealth, the country was transformed back into a monarchy. The second significant change was in the field of religion. Charles II, who possessed Catholic predisposition, ruled over England, and Tory and Whig parties were constituted during the reign of James II. The last major change was the adoption of prime ministerial government. Therefore, it can be argued that great pens produce literary works in order to criticize nonconforming or defend their own philosophies. In the midst of traumatizing events of the period, the major satirists created some of the finest satirical works of all time.

In order to better understand the characteristics of a satirical work of literature, one must be able to make a decision whether satire is a literary device employed by the author or a genre by itself. While attempting to form a decision, the aim of the writer is substantially important. The literary work under discussion may be regarded as a satire when the author aims at correcting the corruptions and follies of the society. Nevertheless, the literary work may not be approached as a satire if the characters and plot are central and form the main frame. In that case, satire can be regarded as a literary device or mode employed by the author in certain parts of that particular literary work (Ogborn and Buckroyd, 2001, p. 15). As a result, it can be argued that one must pay attention to the purpose of the literary work and the management of the material in the work while trying to decide whether the literary work under discussion is a satire or satire is a literary device adopted by the author in the work.

Highet also writes about how to decide whether a work is a satire or not. According to Highet, the techniques and devices used in a literary work play an important role in checking if it is a satire. When a writer makes use of a considerable number of satirical devices and techniques such as irony, exaggeration, violence, and paradox, the reader is presumably dealing with a satire. (1937, p. 19). Highet proposed another method of checking for satire, in which attention is paid to an author's feeling. He believes that a satirist is generally entertained and critical simultaneously, and similar emotions are evoked in the reader (1937, p. 21).



### 1.2.1. Characteristics of Satire

It is formidable to define satire in the sense that its formal characteristics and its purpose may take many different forms. When one embarks on defining satire, the question to be asked is not what satire is, but what satire does. In order to provide a better definition of the literary form, one should combine literary method in which it is performed and its corrective purpose. Satire covers such an incredible diversity of literary texts that any definition of satire needs to be too broad. However, Cambridge dictionary covers the better part of the term regarding how Swift makes use of it in his masterworks. According to the worldwide renowned dictionary, satire is “a way of criticizing people or ideas in a humorous way, especially in order to make a political point, or a piece of writing that uses this style.”

Also, Holman has provided a very practical definition in which he describes satire as a “a literary manner which blends a critical attitude with humor and wit to the end that human institutions or humanity may be improved. The true satirist is conscious of the frailty of institutions of man's devising and attempts through laughter not so much to tear them down as to inspire a remodeling” (1972, p. 473).

In her book entitled *Essential Literary Terms*, Hamilton states that satire is a genre of comedy which aims at ridiculing people's faults and immoralities like greed, vanity, stupidity, and hypocrisy. Although she resembles satire to comedy, Hamilton underlines the fact that satire needs to be set apart from comedy in the sense that the primary objective of satire is not to stimulate laughter but to reveal and correct such misconducts (2007, p. 21). Similarly, Barton and Hudson define satire as a literary work which aims at criticizing and correcting humans' behavior patterns and sometimes institutions through ridicule, with, and humor (2004, p. 199).

With regard to the distinction between comedy and satire, Abrams defines satire as:

the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation. It differs from the comic in that comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire derides; that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt that exists outside the work itself (1999, p. 275).

Although satire and comedy are likened to one another, Elkin clearly states that the reader may laugh freely at comedy, but the reader laughs judicially at a satirical work of literature.

Jonathan Swift's remarks in *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift* on the term *satire* may be provided as the final definition of satire. He states:

Perhaps I may allow, the Dean  
Had too much satire in his vein;  
And seem'd determin'd not to starve it,  
Because no age could more deserve it.  
Yet malice never was his aim;  
He lash'd the vice, but spar'd the name;  
No individual could resent,  
Where thousands equally were meant.  
His satire points at no defect,  
But what all mortals may correct;  
For he abhorr'd that senseless tribe  
Who call it humour when they gibe.  
He spar'd a hump, or crooked nose,  
Whose owners set not up for beaux.  
True genuine dulness mov'd his pity,  
Unless it offer'd to be witty.  
Those who their ignorance confess'd  
He ne'er offended with a jest;  
But laugh'd to hear an idiot quote  
A verse from Horace, learn'd by rote (1739, p. 11).

Swift lays emphasis on the role of satire as remodeling the society and correcting people's behaviors. Swift's ideas regarding satire can also be found in the Preface part of *The Battle of the Books*. He states that satire is a kind of mirror of the society, and people who glance into the looking glass see others rather than themselves. Another precise definition can be that satire is a literary form which reflects the critical attitude of the writers to the problematic issues in their societies by the use of a variety of literary devices in their works that are produced in different genres.

Satire in literature has been employed throughout the history to ridicule governmental actions, contemporary societal values, a particular person, or another literary work. In a satirical literary work of literature; the author focuses on the shortcomings of societies, institutions, or people so that those shortcomings are emphasized enough to be corrected. Consequently, it can be argued that satire happens to be an incorporation of criticism and humor. In that sense, a satirist may undertake a dirty business that most people would refrain from addressing. The primary objective

of satire is to abash an institution or a person into a more correct kind of behavior. However, the underlying intention of satire appears to create a shock of recognition so that the person or institution ridiculed can be emancipated from the vice in question rather than solely poking into holes to harm or cause damage.

David Nokes claims that satirical works have two modes in that they are both sweet and sour being able to serve as a weapon or a toy. According to him, satire can lead to the discomfort of public ridicule and embarrassment of individuals vices of whom it reveals when it is used like a literary weapon. On the other hand, it is capable of entertaining, diverting, and stimulating its audience through its daring, parodies and art (1987, p. 17). According to Frye, satire is interested in everything that humans do. As a result, there is a constant relationship between satire and people and societal institutions (1990, p. 229).

It can be argued that satire is the weapon of the threatened, the alienated, and the indignant in the sense that the people exercising power do not need to hide themselves behind camouflages of satire. Nevertheless, satire could achieve the desired influence over people as long as it is supported by authority. In addition, satire attempts to reveal what readers are not knowledgeable about and even what they refuse to know. Upon reading and contemplating about a satirical text, readers find it difficult if not impossible to return to their existing perception and consciousness. Edward and Lilian Bloom maintain that no matter what kind of tone they may employ, satirists have a tendency to attempt to make their readers a better person upon reading their works which help them enlarge their vision and deepen their insight (1979, p. 68).

In his book named *The Anatomy of Satire*, Gilbert Highet mentions the basic characteristics of a satirical work. He states that satire is topical and realistic even though the subject matter is generally distorted and farfetched. He believes that a satire is shocking and funny even though it is funny in an absurd and uncomfortable manner (1962, p. 5). Entertainment is a shared characteristic of literary satire. Therefore; for a text to qualify as a satire, a certain level of humor is constantly present. Otherwise, providing the audience with moral teachings and complaints alone does not make a text a satire. Besides attempting to influence and correct people and institutions, satire is also supposed to entertain its audience. According to Hodgart, entertainment in a satire mainly results from the pleasure of receiving a whimsical reversal of the real-

world events (1969, p. 20). On the other hand, having humor alone is not sufficient for a text to be considered a satire. Comedy writer also pay close attention to inadequacies and vices of humans but they do not assign importance to correcting them. Instead, comedy writers demonstrate a certain level of tolerance rather than criticizing them. In a satirical work of literature, the author neither accepts nor tolerates such kind of behaviour and corruption. On the contrary, a satirist draws attention to any kind of deviation from truth, morality, and righteousness (Sutherland, 1962, p. 4). In addition, the writer also attempts to convince the reader to think and behave similarly in a satire. However, an author of comedy is basically content with the amusement in the literary work.

Another typical feature of satire is its ambivalent conclusion. This may stem from the fact that the author is still angry at wrongdoings of people and corruption in the society. Bakhtin indicates that satire is a carnivalesque mode of literature and the nature of carnivalesque is opposed to a definite ending and conclusion because all finales are actually new beginnings (1984, p. 165).

In today's world, contemporary critics discuss the ambivalence and difficulty of describing satire in general and they prefer to study a specific author's satirical works. However, the scholars who conducted studies in the 1960s provided general framework about the essence of satire. According to that traditional theory of satire, the author produces a world with straightforward standards. This conventional understanding of satire is based on framing satire incorporating disapproval of deviation from ethical values and appraisal of conforming to those standards. The satirists could be regarded as a speaker or a clergyman whose words help people figure out and comprehend a true value of a virtuous behaviour. Nevertheless, talking about a world with such apparent boundaries is not really possible in the contemporary state of the world. Guilhamet argues that satire appears to be the most appropriate form of literature in order to represent the corruption and chaos in the contemporary world and human nature (1987, p. 164).

Feinberg argues that due to some of its characteristics, satire as a genre has certain limitations. To begin with, satire appeals to human mind rather than to human sentiments. As a result, the audience of a satirical work is limited and it does not provide emotional fulfilment, which leads to a small catharsis (1967, p. 264). The

second limitation is also related to satire's emphasis on human intellect. A satirical work is generally confusing which makes it difficult for people to infer a consistent meaning (1967, p. 265). Another limitation of satire is that it exposes distressing and difficult to accept truths, which makes it hard for the readers to keep focused and pay attention (1967, p. 266). Another disadvantage of satire is that due to its accentuation on criticism rather than constructive answers, satire is generally negative and painful (1967, p. 267). Finally, Feinberg is of the opinion that satire has a limitation in the sense that it is able to offer neither a catharsis similar to that of tragedy or escapism of romantic works of literature (1967, p. 272).

### *1.2.2. Types of Satire*

Satire appeared in England during the twelfth century. At the end of seventeenth and the beginning of eighteenth centuries, satire later became a central literary form in Europe with Swift, Pope, and Dryden in England besides Voltaire and Moliere in France. It is well known that satire has been around since the Middle Ages. For example, "The Miller's Tale" in *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer aims at making fun of and correcting mankind's impiety and conceit. However; with above-mentioned figures, satire was able to find its greatest expression.

Satire can be divided into two main types. The first kind of satire is Horatian satire, in which the author tends to treat the subjects sympathetically, gently, and in a constructive manner so as to direct them into the right path of behavior. In this kind of satire, the author adopts a mild tone and creates a work that is secure, comfortable but harsh if needed while criticizing the society. Moreover, Horatian type of satire presents mild attitude, polite guidance, acceptance of imperfection instead of attacking in a direct manner (Weinbrot, p. 129). In this type of satire, the writer is like a kind philosopher who is interested in seeing the irrationalities of humans.

On the other hand, Juvenalian satire is basically more merciless, biting, angry, and hateful and it intends to steer towards a better line of behavior by making them feel ashamed. The main characteristic of Juvenalian satire is its angry tone. It is generally direct and straightforward about criticizing humans. According to Gilbert Highet, the readers of a Juvenalian satire hear the writer's harsh voice while reading the satirical work (1937, p. 482). Swift is an excellent example of Juvenalian satirists. The major satirists in English literature such as Swift, Dryden, and Pope were

successors of the Roman poets Juvenal and Horace. In a satirical work of literature, no matter how harsh or kind the satire may be, a certain level of humor is constantly present.

Satire can also be categorized as formal verse satire and Menippean satire. In direct or formal satire, the author usually speaks in the first person to the reader or a character in order to bring up his agenda directly. In formal verse satire, a specific folly is attacked while the satirist offers an opposite merit in the course of the dialogue. Hodgart states that the content of formal verse satire is daily life rather than heroic deeds, and the style is not elevated but similar to daily speech (1969, p. 132). The roots of formal verse satire date back to Ennius who compiled verses on various topics in a book he called it “saturate”. He became the first person to use the term “satura” for a compilation of verse. Another important figure for formal verse satire is Lucilius who dedicated his life to describing the most fundamental characteristics of the genre. He tended to include the names of the people being criticized in his poems, which led to a great deal of discomfort among them (Coffey, 1976, p. 35). After Lucilius comes another important figure who is Horace. Even though Horace maintained that he followed the footsteps of Lucilius, his satirical works were sophisticated and gentle. In his satire, characters are expected to speak freely, and the audience laugh at their own vices. He tended to expose the bitter truth along with entertainment. The final significant figure for formal verse satire is Juvenal who generally criticized the deceased in order to provide an ethical message for the living. He was distinguished from his predecessors with regard to the language of his works. According to Coffey, He tended to employ a great number of colloquial expressions and borrow Greek vocabulary in his criticism (1976, p. 124).

As opposed to formal verse satire, there is Menippean satire which is characterized by the compilation of poetry and prose. Its name comes from the Greek figure Menippus. Unfortunately, just a small part of his writings exists today, but he is generally regarded as the source of inspiration for the Menippean satire (Relihan, 1993, p. 39). Relihan claims that Menippus appears to have rejected all kinds of dogmas and absolutes, but he did not bother to offer any satisfactory answers to the problems his satire exposed (1993, p. 44). Frye believes that Menippean satire deals with intellectual themes and attitudes instead of people themselves. In that sense, Menippean satire can

be argued to be concerned with abstract philosophies and make use of people as a representative of those ideas (1990, p. 309). In addition, a Menippean satire lacks a conclusive closure and the reader is left questioning. The narrator in Menippean texts is undependable, which brings about annihilation of narrative authority of the writer. This feature seems to be in compliance with the genre's rejection of any absolute reality and disbelief in language.

In informal or indirect satire, the characters end up being satirized as a result of what they do or say. Instead of a third person to tell the reader about the vices of the characters; their own actions, speech, or even thoughts reveal that the characters of the narrative are foolish or flawed in an informal satire.

### *1.2.3. Functions of satire*

Generally, the objective element in definitions of satire is related to a kind of moral intent and wish to reform. Satirists write satires in an attempt to criticize and ridicule evils and corruptions of a particular society that may suffer as a result of those vices. Satirists undertake the responsibility of revealing those evils in the name of advancement and improvement of humanity and civilization. As a result, it can be argued that the sole role of satire is not to make the reader or the audience laugh and be entertained by the ideas and persons in a satirical work. As a matter of fact, a significant function of satirical work is to inform and alert the society so that their ideas regarding the conditions and dominating corruption in the country can be changed.

As for the function of satire, the present-day Australian poet Alex D. Hope holds similar ideas to those by Pope:

Satire has a social function that places it on a level with Religion, Law, and Government. Though its tone may be light, its function is wholly serious; and as for passion, it is actuated by a fierce and strenuous moral and intellectual enthusiasm, the passion for order, justice, and beauty. It keeps the public conscience alert; it exposes absurdity for what it is and makes those inclined to adopt foolish or tasteless fashions aware that they show vice its own feature and makes it odious to others (q.t.d in Landow p. 66-67).

Therefore, it may be claimed that satire is an exceptionally social genre in the sense that it needs a real person or object of criticism. Satire tends to exist within a critical connection with the society of its origin, which makes it attain its full meaning thanks

to its connection with external meanings. As a result, Nokes argues that satire is not ontological but teleological (1987, p. 2).

According to Sharon Hamilton, the target at the pointed end of a satirical work may show variety. While some satires aim at a given individual or others attack a particular institution. Some satirical works of literature may even round on humanity in general (2007, p. 21). An example for the last group could be *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. Even though a satirist may ridicule or rail at a person or institution, the society as a whole is the principal subject of the satirical work.

In his book *The Intelligencer*, Swift talks about the reasons why authors write their satires. He states that there could be two motives for the writer. The satirist seeks satisfaction and pleasure for himself or writes with a view to inspiring people to correct the malfeasance in the country (1730, p. 19). He maintains that satirists have no less right to write a satirical work than those who appear nonsensical and malicious in the text. Swift refers to sharing satiric works with colleagues during meetings in the Scriblerus Club, saying that it is an activity which is akin to "laughing with a few friends in a corner".

#### *1.2.4. Satirical Devices and Techniques*

Satire employs a number of techniques and devices to achieve the desired effect on the reader. Irony, sarcasm, hyperbole, contrast, and other language of humor are the foremost techniques in a satirical work.

One must be knowledgeable about the devices of satire before undertaking an in-depth analysis of a satirical work. First of all, irony aims at connoting the opposite meaning of the text. The intent is conveyed through words with opposite meaning. An irony can take several forms such as verbal irony, dramatic irony, situational irony, and Socratic irony. In a satirical work, irony is employed so as to create ambivalence. When readers are unable to comprehend the satirist's attitude or form an attitude for themselves, there appears irony, which is used to amplify the desired effect of a satirical literary work.

Another device employed in satire is sarcasm which is meant to scorn a person or some sections of society while amusing at the same time. One of the commonly used devices in satire is hyperbole. It may be defined as a way of speaking or writing that makes someone or something sound much bigger, better, smaller,



worse, or more unusual than they are. Satirists may benefit from contrast in their works in order to emphasize differences. Oxymoron is a figure of speech used to create contrast in which two seemingly words or expressions are used together. Another figure of speech to produce contrast is paradox, which can be defined as “an apparently self-contradictory (even absurd) statement which, on closer inspection, is found to contain a truth reconciling the conflicting opposites” (Cuddon, 2000, p. 634). Juxtaposition is also used to form contrast by placing two or more images next to one another generally to underline their differences. Satirists may use other language of humor such as wits, puns, malapropism, metaphor, simile, onomatopoeia, allegory, and analogy so that they can keep the reader alert and maintain their maximum attention.

Satire makes use of several devices so as to bring institutional or human follies and corruptions. It exploits some kind of sarcasm or irony in order to level off a kind of human attitude or behavior. Satirists tend to attack greediness, arrogance, ambition, hypocrisy, and religiousness in their literary works. According to many satirists, they intend to reveal and correct human and institutional shortcomings like corruption and ostentation. Notwithstanding, some of them may solely gain pleasure mocking human behaviors or conduct. Satirists refrain from cooperating with perpetrator or approving perpetration, which makes most people terrified of them. A worldwide renowned satirist Alexander Pope states that he is proud to see that some men who are not afraid of God are terrified of him (1835, p.117).

It may be argued that satire has two levels in the sense that satirists make use of various techniques and devices like irony, sarcasm, parody, and contrast rather than criticizing straightly. One of these levels is the surface and the other level contains the message that the writer is actually trying to convey. As a result of this multi-leveled nature of satires, readers should be careful about the message that the text attempts to give in a deeper level. In this respect, satire is considered “playfully critical distortion of the familiar” by Feinberg (1967, p. 19). According to him; thanks to the devices and techniques aforementioned, satire enables writers to reflect the corruptions and follies that people experience in a distorted manner.

## **CHAPTER 2.**

### **2. SOCIAL SATIRE IN 18TH CENTURY IRISH LITERATURE: HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

According to Burns, as a result of knowledge upsurge in the fields of science and philosophy, eighteenth-century is considered and known as “age of reason” or “age of enlightenment” (2010, p. 138). The century is characterized by many scientific and social elements, many of which emerged in England such as restrictions on monarchy, John Locke’s epistemological and political approach as well as Newton’s groundbreaking ideas in the field of physics (Burns, 2010, p.138). According to Peter Borsay, improvement and enlightenment turned out to be not merely cultural but also political and social strategies. Enlightenment assumed a civilizing colonial aspect in the sense that it was considered as a tool to keep the peripheries under the control of the center (2002, p, 206). The century can be regarded as a century of development and improvement for many of the societies in the world but for Ireland, eighteenth century would prove itself as an age of suffering and political crisis. Parmele expressed her thought on the subject:

For a whole century we are to hear of no more revolts, risings, or rebellions. There was nothing left to revolt. Nothing left to rise! The bone and sinew of the nation had gone to fight under strange banners upon foreign battlefields, so there was left a nation of non-combatants, with spirit broken and hope extinguished ... (1900, p. 204-205).

On top of the adverse developments in the seventeenth century, the advent of the eighteenth century brought various adverse advancements with it. George O’Brien states in his book that old balance of things was destroyed upon the beginning of the century; there was an attack on Irish commerce and the existing land system was eventually eradicated, making the living conditions of Irish people similar to slavery. Namely the old economic state, as we know it, had disappeared leading to a new inferior system which did not emerge overnight since the seeds of malfunctioning structure of the country were planted in the latter part of the seventeenth century (1977, p. 3).

The economic situation of Ireland in the beginning of the eighteenth century was severe. When the century started, Ireland was extremely poor. There was no economic progress of any kind in the country for the greater part of the following

period. Only the last quarter of the century was marked by the search for economic growth. O'Brien maintains that Ireland could have developed into a rich and prosperous nation if her independence had not been extinguished (1977, p. 7).

O'Brien summarizes the economic conditions of the country as follows:

Ireland at the dawn of the eighteenth century was economically in a very bad state. The land was in the hands of strangers, and the old proprietors were sunk in abject poverty; the mass of the people was beginning to feel the burden of an oppressive penal code; and Irish trade was tottering after repeated blows (1977, p. 6).

In Ireland, poverty had reached such a level that many were suffering from famine due to shortage of food and clothes. In order to emphasize the distress of each and every person in the country of the time, Murray quotes the very words of King in 1720 to Archbishop of Canterbury: "Those that are here cannot get their rents from their tenants, the merchants have no trade, shopkeepers need charity, and the cry of the whole people is loud for bread. God knows what the consequence will be; many are starved, and I am afraid many more will" (1903, p 71).

In 1698, the English parliament prohibited the Irish producers from shipping their woolen products to any part of the world by passing "an Act to prevent the Exportation of Wool out of the Kingdoms of Ireland and England into Foreign parts and for the Encouragement of the Woolen Manufactures in the Kingdom of England". To make things worse, many landlords converted their land to pasture which led to an unbearable shortage of corn and high grain prices (Larsen, 2005, p. 28). As a result, the poor who were already having difficulties had to go through the worsened economic conditions that were insufferable.

The uninterrupted crop failures during the 1720s are of importance in the context of Swift's "A Modest Proposal" because of the fact that the famine was the immediate background of the literary work. According to William Gibson, about one in every four harvests failed or was unsatisfactory, which resulted in famines across the country (2011, p.26). Conditions were so critical that various groups of people considered rioting so as to get hold of imported grain by the time it was distributed among the community. The Proposal can be regarded as an outcry of disappointment resulting from the accumulation of setbacks for a decade. It is considered to be the

pinnacle of Swift's anger against the two countries responsible for the conditions at hand.

Ireland was politically dominated by England in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Throughout the years of "Protestant Ascendancy", the parliament in Ireland was merely made up of Protestants. It was the period in which the country was ruled by a minority of great landowners, Protestant clergy, and members of the professions excluding primarily Roman Catholics.

In the last decade of the seventeenth century, Penal Laws were put into effect in order to consolidate the Church of England against Protestant nonconformists and Catholicism. They led to distinction and hostility between classes (O'Brien, 1977, p.81). According to Werner "[those laws were] an attempt to convert many of the religious groups to an Anglican faith similar to that established by the Church of England" (2013, p. 18). In 1800, England and Ireland were politically unified and the Irish parliament came to an end with the Act of Union. There is no doubt that the act arose hatred among the citizens of the country which would force Catholics to give up their land and leave their homes (Parmele, 1900, p. 218). With the introduction of the Declaratory Act in 1720, the British parliament held the right to legislate on behalf of Ireland and the power of a supreme court in Irish law cases were transferred to the British House of Lords. The Declaratory Act of 1720 can be regarded as a precedent for the Declaratory Act of 1766 in the sense that the legislative authority of the English parliament was first checked in Ireland before it was enacted on behalf of American colonies.

The relations between England and Ireland appear to have been complicated for the greater part of the human history. England exercised some kind of dominance over Ireland which dates back to the late twelfth century (Werner, 2013, p. 17). However, significant colonial agenda began to appear with the beginning of the Stuart reign in 1603 under James I and English Law was put into effect within the territories of Ireland.

Colonialism is defined as "the policy or practice of acquiring political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically" (Stevenson & Waite, 2011, p. 283). Considering this definition of the term, Ireland can easily be argued to have been an English colony. Its economy was exploited and

there was certain amount of political control by England over Ireland. Nevertheless, Ireland is hardly brought up in postcolonial studies. One of the possible reasons for the attitude is the fact that the common relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is of a European and an African country (Larsen, 2005, p. 27).

The interference of England with Ireland was not limited to political arena. It included trade as well. Before 1782, England controlled Irish trade in two ways: direct and indirect. English parliament directly passed laws to restrain Irish commerce. Indirectly, Irish parliament was influenced by the English Government in its lawmaking process due to Poyning's Act (MacNeill, 1886, p. 13). It is incontestable that the purpose behind those acts were to attack the Irish industrialists and they were clear violations of Irish political independence. MacNeill stated that England exercised direct legislative control in her parliament over Ireland and no Irish bills could be passed without the authorization of the English Privy Council (1886, p. 16).

Around three decades after the Declaratory Act of 1689, another act with the same name was passed in 1720 which gave rise to substantial reaction of Irish people causing the relationship between the two countries to deteriorate. Although Ireland was an independent country thirty years earlier, it turned into a colony without the ability to make its own laws (Larsen, 2005, p. 24).

England tried to limit Ireland's opportunities for overseas trade in the sense that she did not want her neighboring country to pose competition to her trade investments. Although Ireland had a decent coastline, Navigation Acts were passed to restrict Irish trade (Larsen, 2005, p. 25). Apart from trade, England placed restrictions on some other markets. The lands of Ireland were suitable to raise cattle but Cattle Act was passed in 1663 to ban any kind of export of live animals to England. As a consequence, the Irish were involuntarily heavily dependent on land. Larsen posits that the main reason for these kinds of restrictions by England was to maintain control over Ireland (2005, p. 24). As the country did not have any chances of trading with any other country, Irish economy was defenseless and there was a high level of poverty.

According to Larsen, Jonathan Swift demonstrated himself as a political writer and was able to give an account of the economic and political situation of Ireland in the early 1720s thanks to his brilliant use of irony (2005, p. 41). Unlike

Molyneux who offered straightforward comments on the relationship between England and Ireland, Swift chose to hide his comments behind implications or ironies. What makes Swift's Irish tracts different is his literary prominence and it creates an interest to have a closer look at him as a political commentator (Larsen, 2005, p. 21).

Jonathan Swift and his relation to Ireland have been interpreted from different perspectives. Although it is obvious that Swift wrote in defense of the Irish, his motives for doing so have been probed into. Parmele argued that Swift did not care much about his native country or his fellow people. What caused him to express his wrath most is that fact that he hated inequality and totalitarianism (1900, p. 211). Larsen argued that Swift had an interest in the affairs of the country in order to get back at Whigs that he was disappointed with and to get vengeance for the position he did not get in England. What is interesting is that he displayed his interest in Irish economy and living conditions after he expressed his dislike for Ireland (Larsen, 2005, p. 9).

A different point of view is that Jonathan Swift could not help but reflect the social and political corruptions of his age to make his readers react against those injustices and the grim realities of their lives (Leventli, 2010, p. 1). Larsen suggests that Swift considered the Irish economy a perfect topic to write about as he was able to make use of his talent as a political writer and gain a great deal of support debating about a topic so provocative (2005, p. 37). He participated in the social environment of the community via his post as a religious official and political writer. As a result, special attention to context of his writings assists the reader in understanding his works of literature. Leventli states that Swift's works including *Gulliver's Travels* and "A Modest Proposal" aim at reflecting human nature in general thorough his gift for satire and wit instead of just mirroring and reforming his society (2010, p. 65).

Although Jonathan Swift vehemently defended Irish causes, whether he is truly Irish or not is still open to debate. In his article named "Irishness", Conor C. O'Brien gives the definition of the word as follows which promotes Swift as definitely Irish:

Irishness is not primarily a question of birth or blood or language: it is the condition of being involved in the Irish situation, and usually of being mauled by it. On that definition Swift is more Irish than Goldsmith or Sheridan,

although by the usual tests [defining an Irish poet by his birth, descent or adoption] they are Irish and he is pure English (1976, p. 134).

Since the eighteenth century in which Jonathan Swift lived, there has been discussions about his Irish identity. Larsen states that his intentions have been brought up for discussion even in Ireland although he has been regarded as a popular patriot and a literary figure. One allegation is that his heart belonged to England though he was born and lived most of his life in Ireland (2005, p. 20).

Swift is criticized on grounds that he was associated with Jacobites and that he stopped identifying himself with England during the 1720s to start speaking for the benefit of Irish people (Werner, 2013, p. 99). Werner argues that Swift prefers to do things always at a proper time and for a particular reason. He becomes a man of many masks (2013, p. 34).

Works by Jonathan Swift seem to be in line with the general predisposition of writers in the eighteenth century. Larsen states that it is impossible to imagine a literary text irrespective of the society it is brought out in. Eighteenth century literary pieces also reflected the close relationship among literature, politics, and culture (2005, p.10).

Jonathan Swift prove himself both as a national hero and one of the greatest English satirists of all times. *Gulliver's Travels* won him public prominence that he had desired. It was an immediate success (Werner, 2013, p. 15). His Irish tracts have historical significance in the sense that they are a kind of commentary on the important events of the country. Larsen argues that Swift intentionally chose to write them at a particular time and for a specific purpose (2005, p. 11). Tamura promotes Swift as the greatest English satirist of the eighteenth century who felt the repulsion towards the way things were in the society and among people (2003, p. 135).

The last decade of the seventeenth century started with the Treaty of Limerick after Battle of the Boyne whose effects on the subsequent century are noteworthy. According to Paddy McNally, William's conquest in the battle meant the victory of Protestantism over Catholicism for Ireland where a struggle for power had been maintained since the 16<sup>th</sup> century unsuccessful Reformation attempt (2002, p. 404). Although the battle is sometimes mentioned as a religious war, there were Catholic and Protestant troops in both armies (Gibson, 2011, p.43). The treaty was signed on 3 October 1691 and supposedly offered Irish Catholics to exercise their religion.

However, its civil terms were grossly violated and the treaty has always been a matter of controversy. The first violation of the treaty was observed the next year when an act was passed excluding Roman Catholics from the parliament. The “papists”, which were the legal and official title given to Roman Catholic citizens of his Majesty, were disarmed and were not permitted to own a horse that is more valuable than five pounds. The inhabitants who were allowed to carry arms for hunting or self-defense were only those protected by the treaty. Consequently, the majority of Ireland ended up being deprived of arms for about a hundred years until they were re-armed by a foreign authority. Irish Catholics were also prohibited from seeking education in a foreign country or providing education through home-schooling (Curtis, 2002, p. 241). A similar penal code was passed in England simultaneously by which a considerably small minority of the society was affected. However; it must be kept in mind that in the case of Ireland, a small minority in the society directed these laws against the overwhelming majority of the nation. In order to emphasize the importance of Roman Catholicism for the Irish, Paul State mentions that the intellectuals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries created the identity of the nation that came to be equated to the Catholic faith. In the period after the Treaty of Limerick when Protestantism became dominant, they strictly adhered to the Roman Catholic faith (2009, p. 126). In that sense, Daniel Szechi states that in 18<sup>th</sup> century Ireland, there was an alienated majority instead of an alienated minority (2002, 89).

Following the treaty, the Irish parliament turned into a protestant organization due to an act which was passed by the Westminster parliament in 1691. Unless they made a declaration against the Mass, Transubstantiation, and a number of other Roman principles, and a vow denying the divine authority of the Pope, the act allowed no Irish inhabitants to have a seat in the Irish parliament until it was repealed in 1829 (Curtis, 2002, p. 237). The result of the act was the exclusion of scrupulous citizens and a number of Catholic peers that offered their service. Curtis expounds that the Irish parliament consisted of Williamite and Cromwellian members who were of practically pure English origins that came to possess all the presumptuousness of invaders (2002, p. 239). As a result of numerous acts, known as Penal Laws, Catholics’ right to vote for members of parliament was taken away in 1727. In order to keep Catholics under control and uphold Protestant authority, the Protestant members of the Irish parliament



passed a chain of Penal Laws which left out Catholic members of the society from taking part in most public affairs (State, 2009, p. 131).

As well as Irish Catholics, Curtis states in his book that the Protestant Dissenters who are also manufacturers, farmers, and weavers did not enjoy enough representation within ruling or landlord classes. They suffered from economic and religious hardships, which might not have been as severe as Catholic citizens but still unpalatable enough (2002, p. 247).

Another religious segment of the society that did not have the same ideas on religion with the dominant authority was the Presbyterians who were detested by the Church of Ireland due to their prevalent influence especially in the northern part of the country. Even though Jonathan Swift portrays Presbyterians as totally annihilated, harmless people and approaches them tolerantly, he thinks that their religion will eventually die out due to its superstitious nature (Curtis, 2002, p. 253).

The penal laws were in effect for about seventy years without any kind of bending and they were finally revoked in 1829. The laws consisted of the penal measures that positively disciplined individuals because of their religion. Also, there were disabling measures that forbade Catholics from civil employment or holding positions in the army and the office. The penal measures were readily abolished as the liberal point of view grew, but the latter kind of measures were maintained and justified by a number of great men in the sense that disabling measures were regarded as a way of sustaining ascendancy of Protestants and good rapport with England. As a result, it was the Irish nation that had to endure these penal laws, due to which they were precluded from all the fundamental human rights they could have enjoyed even in a despotic type of regime. The Irish people were impeded from any kind of self-development and personal ambitions (Curtis 2002, p. 246). The laws proved themselves to be so various and severe as a form of anti-Catholic campaign that several historians refer to the eighteenth century as 'the penal era' (Connolly, 2002, p. 276). McNally also states that a number of academicians regard the penal laws akin to the apartheid legislation in South Africa and pointed to the resemblance between the situation of Irish Catholics in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and native populations in colonial territories (2002, p. 407).

Ireland was governed by the extremely unconcerned government controlled by the English parliament according to which it was sufficient to have an assembly of the Irish parliament biennially so as to rule the country. As a matter of fact, Westminster parliament had no authority in the management of Ireland since it was a possession of the crown. However, it was not clear where the authority of the English parliament ended after 1688. The members tended to regard Ireland more as a colony than as a part of the kingdom, which meant that they rejected the principle of equality between the parliaments in Dublin and London (McNally, 2002, p. 406). The Viceroy in Ireland had the authority to extend or abrogate it without any objection since there was not an established limit to the duration of the parliament (Curtis, 2002, p. 240). Following the end of the Stuart dynasty in 1714 when Queen Anne died with no heir, England became a crowned republic with George's accession to the throne from the House of Hannover. In order to emphasize the fact that Ireland's fate deteriorated with this accession, Curtis quotes from Machiavelli 'of all forms of servitude, servitude under a republic is the worst' (2002, p. 240). In 1698, William Molyneux published a book entitled *The Case of Ireland's being bound by acts of Parliament in England, stated* in which he stressed that the subjugation of the Irish parliament to its counterpart in England could be held responsible for the trouble. It was a fact that would be acknowledged the majority of the ascendancy about fifty years later (Curtis, 2002, p. 243). According to McNally, Molyneux believed that Irish people were not represented at the parliament in London, which meant that the parliament did not have the right to legislate for Ireland (2002, p.406). Paul State also stresses that the Molyneux's arguments would be cited both by Irish reformists and North Americans in the next century in order to protest England parliament's right to legislate for Ireland although the book was initially denounced by the House of Commons (2009, p. 144). McNally proposes two solutions to the issue of England's jurisdiction in Ireland. The first solution is England's acknowledgement of the fact that it had no right to legislate for Ireland while the other solution could be a union between the two kingdoms in terms of legislation. Many Irish patriots such as Jonathan Swift and Molyneux would rather the latter option and a petition for a union was filed by the Irish House of Commons in 1703 (2002, p. 407).

With the Bill of Rights towards the end of the seventeenth century, the parliament's authority upon the king of England had already been established. Burns

states that the parliaments were gradually gaining ground in terms of exercising power even though monarchs maintained a considerable deal of influence in 18<sup>th</sup> century (2010, p. 128). The weight of the political parties, namely Tories and Whigs, was diminishing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century partly due to Hanoverian succession which can be regarded as a victory of Whigs. The reigns of George I and George II are occasionally mentioned as Whigs ascendancy. Two years after George I ascended to the throne, Septennial Act was passed in 1716, which resulted in infrequent elections as the parliament was permitted to sit for seven years. Consequently, people did not seem very interested in political organizations (Burns, 2010, p. 129-130).

The act passed by the English parliament also prevented Roman Catholics in Ireland from buying lands that were more than two acres because of the fact that the Protestant dominance wanted to keep the landowning of the Catholic community as little as possible. By the turn of the eighteenth century, around 15% of the country was estimated to belong to the Roman Catholics in Ireland. However; Curtis states that this percentage was greatly scaled down within the next three decades due to freeholders who decided to conform to the Established Church voluntarily or compulsorily as a result of the pressure of the Penal laws (2002, p. 238). Those who did not conform and belong to the established church in Ireland were required to pay taxes to the church, which resulted to a great deal of animosity among the members of the society.

In 1704, an act, known as the Popery Act or the Gavelkind Act, was passed according to which Roman Catholics were able to inherit lands and estates only from each other. The act, which was aimed at stopping the growth of Popery, dictated that Protestants' possessions should not fall into Catholic hands and Catholic inhabitants were forbidden to buy land or lend money on mortgages, or rent for more than thirty-one years (Curtis, 2002, p. 245). Curtis argues that this act aimed at either boosting landownership of the Protestants in the country or make Catholic landowners reduced to a poverty-stricken class. The act successfully contributed to lessening the number of the Romanist nobility (Curtis, 2002, p. 245). State expounds that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a small group of Protestant landowners prevailed at the pinnacle of Irish society. In the latter part of the century, they started investing expanding their lands and estates (2009, p. 137).

Although Protestants were dominant in the industry and trade of Ireland, England did not intend to let her prosper. According to Curtis, William III and parliament of England attempted to impede the trade of Ireland for the sake of promoting English trade (2002, p. 243). The exports of Scotland and Ireland to England were regarded as property of England in overseas trade in the sense that neither country had contributed to occupy or found the West Indian or American possessions. English parliament passed an act in 1696 that prohibited direct exportation of goods from plantations to Ireland. Three years later, another act was passed which allowed Irish woolen produce to be exported to nowhere except England (Curtis, 2002, p. 243).

With the death of Queen Anne in 1714, the Stuart line of accession came to an end. Since the queen did not have an heir to the throne, George I from the Hanoverian Dynasty acceded to the throne. As a result of his accession, the Whigs came gloriously into power in England and maintained their authority unwaveringly for about half a century. In terms of the interests of the Irish nation that was already subjugated to a colonial authority, the accession of a German prince meant the loss of all hopes for another century. The civil and political liberty of the society, the religion of the common people, and their racial identities had to be cast aside in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Hanoverian dynasty proved itself to be indifferent to the fate of Irish nation and the situation of its Catholic people (Curtis, 2002, p. 250).

During the first half of the eighteenth century, there was no political progress in Ireland. The Protestant domination was complete in the parliament, industry and law. The country can be considered as a copy of England; however, it must be kept in mind that the Anglican aristocracy in England represented the majority while in Ireland the Church and the sovereign authority represent a small part of the society (Curtis, 2002, p. 252). Furthermore, the developments in England such as the Bill of Rights and the Septennial Bill determining the duration of the parliament were not applied to Ireland. Curtis states that the advantages enjoyed in England thanks to the Glorious revolution were ingloriously not endowed to Ireland (2002, p. 254).

The Declaratory Act passed in 1719 can be considered as an amendment of the Poynings' Law and as the obvious declaration of the English parliament's authority to make a law on behalf of Ireland. According to the act, it was impossible for the Irish parliament to legislate without the government's approval. The English parliament had

the right to accept, reject, or modify any measure to be passed by the parliament in Ireland (Curtis, 2002, p. 254). As a result of the act, the parliament in Ireland became subordinate to the parliament in England. The country was ruled in Dublin but it was controlled from Westminster, which took an interest in Protestant ascendancy at home and prioritized English benefits on a global scale (Curtis, 2002, p. 253). Curtis states that the prevailing understanding for Walpole and the English parliament was a policy of peace and “letting sleeping dogs lie”. The period till 1740 was a time in which a corrupt political despotism that stood between the people and the king (2002, p. 253).

As it had the right to make a legislation for Ireland, the British government made the parliament of Ireland pass a toleration act, according to which dissenters were permitted to worship freely and were excused from participation at church on condition that they declare against popish principles and take an oath of civil commitment. It remained this way until the Catholic Emancipation in 1829 (Curtis, 2002, p. 253).

Curtis regarded Jonathan Swift as a writer who had the capacity to present the difficulties of life people had to endure in the eighteenth-century Ireland:

If a man filled with a burning sense of injustice turned his eyes away from this unedifying picture, he could behold far worse things in Ireland, the shocking poverty and ill-treatment of the lower classes, the callousness of the rich, the unemployment and decay due to the Restrictive acts of England, the lack of a currency to stimulate trade and the vast sums which went every year over to England as rents to great Absentees who under the recent confiscations had received large grants of Irish land. Such a man was found in Jonathan Swift, dean of St. Patrick’s from 1713 to 1745. (2002, p. 255).

Due to his interest in the state of Ireland and his excellent proficiency in writing, Swift appears to be the most discussed and quoted name of his contemporaries. Swift always shared his ideas and despise on the injustices vested upon the society. Among his target of criticism was the policy of England which enabled people with no merit or principles to hold positions in the government and church. Also, he criticized the corruptions of the parliamentary system and represented the poverty of the citizens in Ireland (Curtis, 2002, p. 256). However, Swift’s anger is primarily directed at human injustices, harsh wrongdoings of the social order, and follies of human nature rather than legal or political discriminations. Therefore, Curtis maintains that not only Ireland but also humanity have a lot to learn from this significant literary figure (2002, p. 257). State also mentions Swift as an Irish patriot whose numerous works support Irish

causes. He states that Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* and other early works display a humorous and mocking style as well as critical and enlightening that can be observed in his later writings as well (2009, p. 145).

Arthur Young was a British agriculturalist who visited Ireland between the years of 1776 and 1779. In the following excerpt from his book *A Tour in Ireland 1776-1779*, he underlines the dire state of Roman Catholics in the country in the last quarter of 18<sup>th</sup> century during which the situation may be considered to have improved:

A landlord in Ireland can scarcely invent an order which a servant, laborer, or cottar dare to refuse to execute. Nothing satisfies him but an unlimited submission. Disrespect, or anything tending towards sauciness, he may punish with his cane or his horsewhip with the most perfect security; a poor man would have his bones broke if he offered to lift his hands in his own defense. Knocking-down is spoken of in the country in a manner that makes an Englishman stare. (1897, p.167).

As one can easily understand, the majority of the people in Ireland in the late-17th and 18<sup>th</sup> century lived in terrible conditions. Even though African and American colonies are the primary points of reference when it comes to slave trade and poverty, Irish people could not lead a much better life in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## **CHAPTER 3.**

### **3. A NEW HISTORICIST APPROACH TO JONATHAN SWIFT'S "A MODEST PROPOSAL" AND A TALE OF A TUB**

The current chapter of the thesis attempts to read *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) and "A Modest Proposal" (1729) together with Jonathan Swift's biography in order to manifest the relation between the texts and his life. Also, this chapter attempts to approach the texts in consideration of the colonial environment in which the texts were brought out. Legal documents written in the same period and historical accounts have been employed in order to carry out a new historicist reading, which embarks on discussing the texts in the discourse of English colonialism.

#### **3.1. A New Historicist Reading of *A Tale of a Tub***

It has been stated in the second chapter of the present thesis that literary texts are regarded as an inseparable element of the culture and society. Consequently, in line with Geertz's understanding of culture, literary texts and the writers can be considered as both products and producers of culture. New historicists hold the opinion that a literary text and its writer's life may be studied simultaneously in the sense that the writer is not the sole authority over text. Culture and society play a significant role in shaping the literary text and its author. As a result, it can be maintained that taking its author's life into consideration is important in a new historicist analysis of a work of literature so as to highlight the fact that the text is a cultural creation as well as being a work of a particular writer who is affected by the existing cultural elements of the society. In the preface part of *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift himself underlines the importance of carrying out an approach similar to that of New Historicism as follows:

... I hold fit to lay down this general maxim: whatever reader desires to have a thorough comprehension of an author's thoughts, cannot take a better method, than by putting himself into the circumstances and postures of life that the writer was in, upon every important passage, as it flowed from his pen: for this will introduce a parity, and strict correspondence of ideas, between the reader and the author (Swift, 1909, p. 35).

*A Tale of a Tub* is considered to be the first major work by Swift. It was written between 1694 and 1697 but it was not to be published until 1704. Jonathan Swift was ordained an Anglican prebendary in Dublin when he was 27 years old and

he was expecting a significant advancement regarding his position. During these years in Ireland, he penned the satire. The text is challenging to analyze because of the fact that it seems to attack a number of things simultaneously. It can be regarded as criticism against contemporary book trade and false scholarship as well as proving itself as a religious allegory.

Jonathan Swift published *A Tale of a Tub* anonymously and refrained from acknowledging the work to be his. This situation might have applied to other works such as “A Modest Proposal” and *Gulliver’s Travels*; however, Swift never accepted to be the author of the *Tale* in his lifetime. It may be argued that he abstained from accepting the authorship of the work because it was severely criticized when it was first published. Although he was looking forward to getting substantial promotion within the church of England thanks to *A Tale of a Tub*, he was debarred from one because Queen Anne was furious with him because of the work. Foucault’s ideas regarding power is based on the Panopticon which is employed to keep prisons under control. According to Foucault, power presents a kind of oppression in every aspect of the society. Looking through a new historicist perspective and following Foucault’s ideas on power as a means of subjugation used by those in power, Swift’s reluctance in accepting the work to be his is of significance. The power structure in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries did not allow the opposing views to express themselves. Although the Treaty of Limerick assured to let Irish citizens to maintain their social and religious activities, an act was passed by the English parliament to impose restrictions upon Catholics’ rights to sit in the parliament as they were considered as enemies with the country. As a result, Swift was not very eager to assume the ownership of the *Tale* in such an atmosphere so as not to compromise his future opportunities.

When readers open the 1710 edition of the *Tale*, there are several parts before they can get to dealing with the first section of the text. First, readers are provided with an apology that attempts to illuminate any redundant misunderstandings that led to public and royal upheaval. However, the apology does not even express who the author of the *Tale* is let alone clarifying possible misinterpretations. On the contrary, the writer of the apology rebukes those who would like to know the identity of the author as follows:



He thinks it no fair proceeding, that any person should offer determinately to fix a name upon the author of this discourse, who has all along concealed himself from most of his nearest friends: yet several have gone a farther step, and pronounced another book to have been the work of the same hand with this; which the author directly affirms to be a thorough mistake (Swift, 1909, p. 13).

Rather than revealing the identity of its author, the apology persists in keeping the name of the author secret. Swift in the apology seems to aspire to reveal that he is the author of this excellent piece of writing but at the same time by disowning the text, he does not want to face up to the negative outcomes it might entail.

Following the apology of the author, the *Tale* proceeds with several parts like The Bookseller to the Reader, The Epistle Dedicatory to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity, a preface, and an introduction prior to the main text. In consideration of Geertz's emphasis upon the relationship between a literary work and the culture of its origin, new historicist scholars posit that literary works are constructions of intertextual relationships rather than a creation of a sole author. Swift appears to be criticizing the literary narcissism of the literary figures of the period. He parodies the excessive amount of preliminary materials in their works by including these parts in the *Tale*.

The *Tale* can be regarded as an attack against the changes in the contemporary bookselling. Swift criticizes the commercialization of the literary market and the hybrid forms of history and scholarship. In the apology part of the text, he satirizes those who follow this trend as follows:

... as wit is the noblest and most useful gift of human nature, so humor is the most agreeable; and where these two enter far into the composition of any work, they will render it always acceptable to the world. Now, the great part of those who have no share or taste of either, but by their pride, pedantry, and ill manners, lay themselves bare to the lashes of both, think the blow is weak, because they are insensible; and, where wit has any mixture of raillery, it is but calling it 'banter', and the work is done (Swift, 1909, p. 21).

Swift has a tendency to make use of the characteristic in his writing so as to amplify the desired effect on his satirical targets. In that sense, *A Tale of a Tub* can be considered as a hybrid form of writing in which the reader encounters the digressions that make up a satire upon print culture and modern learning of the age in addition to the story of three brothers. In order to satirize the obsession of contemporary writers

with being innovative and original, Swift attacks not only literary but also scientific figures of the period in the sixth section of the *Tale* as follows:

... the severe reader may justly tax me as a writer of short memory, a deficiency to which a true modern cannot but, of necessity, be a little subject. Because memory, being an employment of the mind upon things past, is a faculty for which the learned in our illustrious age have no manner of occasion, who deal entirely with invention, and strike all things out of themselves, or at least by collision from each other... (Swift, 1909, p. 88).

In a new historicist reading of a literary work, the literary and non-literary texts are assigned equal importance. Neither literary nor nonliterary texts are superior in terms of value attached to them. In *A Tale of a Tub*, readers have a story of three brothers whose names are Jack, Martin, and Peter. Swift employs the analogy of these brothers to represent Dissenters, the Church of England, and the Catholic Church respectively. Even though Swift aspired to criticize the incorrect understanding of the scripture, his satire was not very welcomed. Instead, the *Tale* was regarded as an attack on religion as a whole due to subversion and confusion its narrator caused. Among those who misconceived the work was Queen Anne herself. Swift became notorious in the political and religious spheres. Since religion and politics were closely interwoven in the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> century in England, the religious and political facets of the *Tale* cannot be handled separately. The close relationship can easily be observed in Curtis's book, in which he underlines that Catholic Irish citizens were not permitted to hold a position in the parliament as follows:

An act of the English parliament passed in 1691 was now extended to Ireland by which members of both Houses were required to take an oath of allegiance, a declaration against the Mass, Transubstantiation, and other Roman doctrines, and an oath abjuring the spiritual supremacy of the Pope (Curtis, 2002, p. 237).

In the apology part of the *Tale*, Swift attempts to explain the way in which it operates as follows:

...he thought the numerous and gross corruptions in religion and learning might furnish matter for a satire, that would be useful and diverting. He resolved to proceed in a manner that should be altogether new, the world having been already too long nauseated with endless repetitions upon every subject. The abuses in religion, he proposed to set forth in the allegory of the coats and the three brothers; which was to make up the body of the discourse; those in learning he chose to introduce by way of digressions (Swift, 1909, p. 11).

The excerpt clearly manifests the interrelatedness of political and religious matters in the work, which informs the reader that the two aspects of life were related to one another in Britain at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The poverty experienced by the Irish appears to be an issue that reveals itself in *A Tale of a Tub*. The Irish are economically subjugated which leads to terrible life conditions that they have to endure. In the Epistle Dedicatory to His Royal Highness Prince Posterity, Swift seems to hold England responsible for the dreadful conditions that Irish citizens have to endure which are summarized as follows:

... who is to be the author of this universal ruin, I beseech you to observe that large and terrible scythe which your governor affects to bear continually about him. ... It were endless to recount the several methods of tyranny and destruction, which your governor is pleased to practise upon this occasion. His inveterate malice is such to the writings of our age, that of several thousands produced yearly from this renowned city, before the next revolution of the sun, there is not one to be heard of: unhappy infants, many of them barbarously destroyed, before they have so much as learnt their mother-tongue to beg for pity. Some he stifles in their cradles, others he frights into convulsions, whereof they suddenly die; some he flays alive, others he tears limb from limb. Great numbers are offered to Moloch, and the rest, tainted by his breath, die of a languishing consumption (Swift, 1909, p. 30).

Another issue that is satirized in the *Tale* is the false scholarship that is prevalent in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Swift criticizes the low quality of the works although the quantity of works is considerably high. In his criticism of the scholarship, Swift makes use of precise numbers, which gives the impression that he is sharing the results of a scientific study. The criticism is directed in the preface as follows:

It is intended that a large Academy be erected, capable of containing nine thousand seven hundred forty and three persons; which by modest computation is reckoned to be pretty near the current number of wits in this island. These are to be disposed into the several schools of this academy, and there pursue those studies to which their genius most inclines them. The undertaker himself will publish his proposals with all convenient speed, to which I shall refer the curious reader for a more particular account, mentioning at present only a few of the principal schools. There is first a large Paederastic School, with French and Italian masters. There is also the Spelling School, a very spacious building: the School of Looking glasses: the School of Swearing: the School of Critics: the School of Salvation: the School of Hobby-horses: the School of Poetry: the School of Tops (Swift, 1909, p. 34).

Swift seems to mock the vast quantity of mediocre publications when he suggests founding a number of schools that are aimed at nothing such as the School of Salivation and the School of Hobby-horses. Curtis emphasizes the indifference of the England to the conditions of Irish people in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Curtis maintains that the political liberty and civil rights of the people were not considered to be issues that need to be attended (Curtis, 2002, p. 250).

In order to emphasize the authority England exercised over Ireland, Swift benefits from the analogy of three brothers. In the second section of the *Tale* which marks the beginning of the story about the brothers, Swift does not differentiate among them and they are represented as equals until one of them starts to name himself. Peter tells his brothers to call him as follows:

He told his brothers, he would have them to know that he was their elder, and consequently his father's sole heir; nay, a while after, he would not allow them to call him brother, but Mr. PETER; and then he must be styled Father PETER; and sometimes, My Lord PETER (Swift, 1909, p. 71).

This excerpt from the *Tale* affirms Foucault's ideas regarding epistemes that determine the way individuals are allowed to think, speak, and behave. New historicists also tend to pay attention to the periphery which is not valued or allowed to express itself. In the text, Peter introduces a kind of formality between his brothers and himself and renders himself superior to his brothers. At first, he wants his brother to call him mister, then father, and finally my lord. With each title, he seems to create a barrier of formality and increase his supremacy over the other brothers.

In the fourth section of the *Tale*, Jack and Martin decide to keep quiet in order not to aggravate their current relation with Peter, who has been acting contemptuously after he ordered to be called my lord. Swift show their disinclination to express themselves as such:

The two brothers, after having performed the usual office in such delicate conjunctures, of staring a sufficient period at Lord Peter and each other, and finding how matters were like to go, resolved not to enter on a new dispute, but let him carry the point as he pleased; for he was now got into one of his mad fits, and to argue or expostulate further, would only serve to render him a hundred times more intractable (Swift, 1909, p. 79).

Swift here seems to reflect the general policy of England towards Ireland within these lines. Curtis maintains that Ireland was controlled from Westminster by paying close

attention to the benefits of Protestants and prioritizing English interests. The dominant approach of the English parliament was to “let sleeping dogs lie” (Curtis, 2002, p. 253). In this way, the Irish were silenced under the hegemony of the dominant power structure.

Swift appears to criticize the corruptions in religious institutions. In the allegory of three brothers, their father’s will is misinterpreted and abused in order to furnish the brothers’ personal benefits. The brothers deliberately undermine the terms of the will. Their abuse of the will provides an allegory which reflects the misinterpretation of the Bible. In the *Tale*, the hypocrisy of the religious institutions is reflected as follows:

there can be no dispute; but examine even the acquirements of his mind, you will find them all contribute in their order towards furnishing out an exact dress. To instance no more: is not religion a cloak; honesty a pair of shoes worn out in the dirt; self-love a surtout; vanity a shirt; and conscience a pair of breeches; which, though a cover for lewdness as well as nastiness, is easily slipt down for the service of both? (Swift, 1909, p. 56).

The *Tale* provides an example of how ideology operates through the texts. New historicists adopt Althusser’s understanding of ideology. For them, ideology exists in a material mode through organizations such as school, church, university, theatre, and so on. According to Althusser ideology can be regarded as a structure that functions unconsciously. It shows the readers that the dominant ideology has control over people even though it gives us the feeling that we are in control and we can choose whatever we would like to choose. Brannigan states that culture is a field of ideological competition and contradiction outside which no cultural artifact can exist (1984, p. 12).

When the brothers failed to find sentences and words that they wished to encounter in their father’s will, they started to look for particular syllables and letters in order that they could come up with an interpretation that suited their expectations. The search for reasonable justification for “shoulder knots” is addressed in the *Tale* as follows:

they went immediately to consult their father's will, read it over and over, but not a word of the shoulder-knot. What should they do? What temper should they find? Obedience was absolutely necessary, and yet shoulder-knots appeared extremely requisite. After much thought, one of the brothers who happened to be more book-learned than the other two, said, he had found an

expedient. 'Tis true,' said he, 'there is nothing here in this will, *totidem verbis*, making mention of shoulder-knots, but I dare conjecture we may find them inclusive, or *totidem syllabis*.' This distinction was immediately approved by all; and so they fell again to examine the will. But their evil star had so directed the matter, that the first syllable was not to be found in the whole writing. Upon which disappointment, he who found the former evasion, took heart and said, 'Brothers, there is yet hopes; for though we cannot find them *totidem verbis*, nor *totidem syllabis*, I dare engage we shall make them out, *tertio modo*, or *totidem literis*.' (Swift, 1909, p. 58).

This excerpt clearly manifests how people in various institutions make use of authoritative ideologies and texts in order to find rationale for their behaviours even though those actions may go against the common sense of the people. The following excerpt shows that corrupted individuals know no boundaries when it comes to their interests, which is reflected as follows:

This discovery was also highly commended, upon which they fell once more to the scrutiny, and soon picked out S, H, O, U, L, D, E, R; when the same planet, enemy to their repose, had wonderfully contrived, that a K was not to be found. Here was a weighty difficulty! But the distinguishing brother now his hand was in, proved by a very good argument, that K was a modern illegitimate letter, unknown to the learned ages, nor anywhere to be found in ancient manuscripts. (Swift, 1909, p. 59).

New historicist analysis urges scholars to make use of *thick description* proposed by Geertz. While an analysis of cultural symbols and forms is carried out, it is important to pay attention to the difference and detail rather than accepting generalizing characterizations. It is plainly demonstrated with this passage that institutions and people can be so self-centered that they can even attempt to undermine the established principles and ideologies in their own favour.

In the fourth section of *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift utilizes the allegory of three brothers in order to criticize several institutions of the church. As soon as Swift has highlighted the authority England enjoyed over Ireland, he moves onto emphasizing the means of *containment* church wielded over the citizens of the country. Peter introduces a number of his projects and inventions in the aforementioned section as follows:

The first undertaking of Lord Peter, was to purchase a large continent... The second project I shall mention, was his sovereign remedy for the worms... A third invention was the erecting of a whispering-office... Another very beneficial project of Lord Peter's was an office of insurance... Lord Peter was also held the original author of puppets and raree-shows... another discovery for which he was

much renowned was his famous universal pickle... But of all Peter's rarities, he most valued a certain set of bulls... (Swift, 1909, p. 72-74).

Stephen Greenblatt introduced *containment* in his "Invisible Bullets", which is an important term in terms of new historicist analysis. *Containment* indicates the ways hegemonic forces maintain the status quo. In the text, new historicist scholars search for moments of disagreement in order that they can scrutinize how forces of rebellion can still be co-opted by power.

With the first undertaking by Lord Peter, Swift criticizes the purgatory doctrine of the Catholic church thanks to which the public is forced to keep quiet and behave the way the church commands them to. Swift reflects the fact that the minority cannot express themselves even though the society actually makes up the majority in this situation. Lord Peter's second and third projects are his remedy for worms and foundation of whispering-office. They seem to signify the penance and confession principles of the church. Through penance, Swift satirizes the injustice between the poor and the wealthy in the sense that the wealthy has the opportunity to pay for the fallacies he has committed. The office of insurance seems to signify the abuses and indulgences that lead to the corruptions in the institution of church. Lord Peter is acknowledged as the discoverer of puppet shows that represent ridiculous church rituals and processions. The final undertaking by Peter was a certain set of bulls which signify official documents and letters issued by the pope. Swift mocks the treatment towards him as if he could be regarded as god on earth. He appears to criticize the fact that those holding powerful positions appear to wield control over the minorities and marginals.

Swift introduces a digression after he presents the intricate relationship between the brothers and how one of them aspires to exert authority over the other brothers in the fourth section of the *Tale*. The reader is shocked to come across a long digression concerning the excellent quality of this work. Nothing can be considered more inappropriate than a huge digression while presenting such a critical point of narration. Swift obviously attempts to criticize his contemporary authors' tendency to elaborate upon their own merits and findings in order to satirize the ancient period of authors. From a new historicist point of view, those authors appear to neglect the unreliability of themselves because they cannot keep themselves outside history while

they attempt to evaluate literary and non-literary paraphernalia. New Historicism makes use of the term *self-positioning* in order to indicate the unavoidable subjectivity that is always present in all human inquiry and endeavor.

With regard to providing digressions in a literary work, Swift goes a step further than just criticizing the excess materials in the text. As well as including several digressions on a number of subjects in the *Tale*, Swift incorporates a digression in order to eulogize digressions. In the digression containing praise of digressions, Swift approximates them to troops in a country as follows:

They tell us that the fashion of jumbling fifty things together in a dish, was at first introduced in compliance to a depraved and debauched appetite, as well as to a crazy constitution... Farther, they affirm, that digressions in a book are like foreign troops in a state, which argue the nation to want a heart and hands of its own, and often either subdue the relatives, or drive them into the most unfruitful corners. (Swift, 1909, p. 93).

In the excerpt above, Swift parallels digressions in a book to a group of troops in a foreign country. The subjugation that armed forces bring into action is similar to digressions taking control of a literary work. Because of the huge number of digressions in the *Tale*, the story of three brothers, which appears to be the overarching narrative of the *Tale*, is dominated and marginalized. New Historicism aspires to understand the existing belief systems when a work of literature was published. Rather than just coming with an interpretation of the content of a literary work, new historicist scholars attempt to find out what contexts informed the particular literary work as well. In that sense, Swift appears to present the oppression of the marginalized and deprivation of the right to express themselves.

Swift appears to have pledged himself to speak on behalf of the voiceless. Towards the end of eighth section, he underlines the fact that the right of expressing oneself is taken away from a group of individuals as follows:

I have long sought after this opportunity of doing justice to a society of men for whom I have a peculiar honour, and whose opinions, as well as practices, have been extremely misrepresented and traduced by the malice or ignorance of their adversaries. For I think it one of the greatest and best of human actions, to remove prejudices, and place things in their truest and fairest light: which I therefore boldly undertake, without any regards of my own, beside the conscience, the honour, and the thanks. (Swift, 1909, p. 103).



New Historicism substantially benefited from Bakhtin's theory of *carnavalesque* which can be approached as a mode of thinking about the marginalized and silenced. Bakhtin states that during the *carnival*, all rules, regulations, and restriction are suspended from controlling the course of daily life. In a carnivalesque work of literature, what is socially not accepted is also celebrated similar to New Historicism's addressing of the marginalized. In the excerpt above, Swift clearly attempts to "let the subaltern speak" since he provides voice for the silenced.

In the fifth section of the *Tale*, Swift underlines that fact that contemporary authors have neglected the fundamental "utile et dulce" principle of a literary work, which can be translated as to "teach and delight". He criticizes the general ignorance of his fellow writers as follows:

However, in compliance with a lesson of great age and authority, I have attempted carrying the point in all its heights; and accordingly throughout this divine treatise, have skillfully kneaded up both together with a layer of *utile*, and a layer of *dulce*. (Swift, 1909, p. 82).

In this excerpt, the author employs an all-knowing attitude which Swift utilizes to make fun of the arrogance and self-admiration of the contemporary authors who in fact fail to produce a noteworthy work of literature. In the following part from the *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift explicitly ridicules the mentality of his contemporary authors as follows:

I cannot deny, that whatever I have said upon this occasion, had been more proper in a preface, and more agreeable to the mode which usually directs it there. But I here think fit to lay hold on that great and honourable privilege of being the last writer. I claim an absolute authority in right, as the freshest modern, which gives me a despotic power over all authors before me. (Swift, 1909, p. 85).

The author of the *Tale* feels the authority to maintain that he/she can employ a totalitarian attitude towards all other writers of the age. *Discourse* is a significant term for new historicist analysis. From a new historicist standpoint, it determines what is socially acceptable and what is wrong through vocabulary. In that sense, *discourse* can be considered as potential hegemony. The term *episteme* is also employed by new historicists to indicate a particular group of knowledges and discourses that operate as dominant discourses in a specific period of history.

Another important characteristic of new historicist analysis is the view that objective history is not achievable since new historicist scholars believe that history is text and text is history. Abrams states that literary texts are regarded as an essential element of historical progress in *New Historicism* (1999, p. 183). In the *Tale*, Swift makes use of a storyteller, which leads to the pattern of unreliable narrator. The narrator's position may be in conflict with Swift and this makes the reader try to mediate between the two. Swift seems to place religious history on shaky ground so as to undermine the possibility of historical objectivity. It can be readily understood that Swift's meaning does not necessarily reveal itself in the text. It may be read between the lines or behind the text itself instead of existing in the printed material.

### **3.2. A New Historicist Reading of "A Modest Proposal"**

In the second part of this chapter, Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" will be analyzed from a new historicist point of view. Swift starts the Proposal by introducing the dreadful life conditions in Dublin, which is as follows:

It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads and cabin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms (Swift, 2008, p. 5).

The satire starts with these conditions because Swift attempts to stimulate sentiments in his readers. He makes the reader sympathize with the poor in Ireland. Swift seems to have a sort of organization constructed in his mind before he engages in the writing process. The setting he picks for his pamphlet is noteworthy in the sense that Dublin is the center of Ireland in terms of economy, social, and cultural life. While English readers regard Dublin as the center of their political mechanism over the colony, Irish readers consider it as the center of their national culture (Werner, 2013, p. 48).

The reader's expectation of a sentimental essay is crushed after the first paragraph. The essay is rife with expressions such as "I think it is agreed by all parties that". Rather than appealing to the hearts of the audience, Swift attempts to make the audience listen to their reason. Burns maintains that 18<sup>th</sup> century can be regarded as "age of reason and enlightenment" due to the increasing attention to the fields of philosophy and science (Burns, 2010, p. 138). The Proposal appears to be based on human reasoning rather than human sympathy. Werner points out that Swift attentively

puts down on paper “A Modest Proposal” by using his argumentative strength so that he can express himself about Irish independence and economic autonomy. Also, he criticizes the ethics, tenets, and beliefs of an entire empire with a special emphasis on the Anglo-Irish landowners and members of the Parliament (Werner, 2013, p. 50). Swift tries to support his proposal with logical evidence in order to rationalize what he has to say.

As for “A Modest Proposal”, there is much to be mentioned with regard to his renowned aptitude of conveying his message in an original way. Greenblatt and Abrams state that it is a perfect example of his favorite satiric devices that he uses with superb effect. They emphasize Swift’s success with their utterances “The whole is an elaboration of a rather trite metaphor: ‘The English are devouring the Irish.’ But there is nothing trite about the pamphlet” (2006, p. 2462).

In order to highlight and draw attention of the reader, Swift comes up with an inhumane solution to the problems of the Irish society. He promotes fetal cannibalism as a means of overcoming the drawbacks of the period. However, one might argue that the writer attacks at universal greed of people through commodification and harvesting of children. Swift also tests the moral and ethical limits of his audience when the proposer suggests “buying the children alive, and dressing them hot from the Knife, as we do roasting Pigs” (Werner, 2013, p. 66).

By drawing on people’s attention to human reasoning, Swift states what benefit his proposal is expected to bring. He provides a framework of the benefits for the Irish society as follows: ... my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars: it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age... (Swift, 2008, p. 5).

The Proposal is proven not to be for the good of a small minority. Instead, it is noteworthy for every sphere of the society. This underlines the fact that Swift’s proposal really matters.

Werner explains why Jonathan Swift chooses to let a dependable proposer speak on behalf of him:

Swift needs to manipulate, and essentially take advantage of, his readers in order for the ideas and arguments within A Modest Proposal to be widely disseminated, and the only way to do that is to mask his true intentions behind

the guide of a trustworthy, and seemingly logical, proposer (Werner, 2013, p. 50).

Speaking behind a satiric mask, Swift sets out to condemn the ideologies of both English and Irish parliaments without restrictions. He prefers to speak through the proposer in “A Modest Proposal” as a part Irish voice since he lives among the oppressed. However, readers may associate themselves with either Irish or English side in accordance with their point of view (Werner, 2013, p. 98). Swift is able to make his reader believe in anything thanks to his proficiency in argumentation, logic, ambivalence. He manipulates the proposer so that he can outline and explain why he came up with such a seemingly unreasonable proposal. Although it looks extremely irrational, the proposer gains readers’ trust and it becomes difficult to continue a sound logic (Werner, 2013, p. 53).

Throughout the essay, Swift maintains his appeal to reason. He includes precise numbers so as to give his proposal a scientific outlook:

The number of souls in this kingdom being usually reckoned one million and a half, of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand couple whose wives are breeders; from which number I subtract thirty thousand couple, who are able to maintain their own children, (although I apprehend there cannot be so many, under the present distresses of the kingdom) but this being granted, there will remain an hundred and seventy thousand breeders. I again subtract fifty thousand, for those women who miscarry, or whose children die by accident or disease within the year. There only remain a hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents annually born (Swift, 2008, p. 6).

The figures employed in the excerpt above make the reader approach the proposal as a scientifically well-founded idea. The numbers lead the audience to believe that they are dealing with facts rather than a proposal by a subjective individual. These calculations are presented as facts in order that he appears systematic and thorough in the eyes of the readers. Swift forces the readers into accepting the rationality of his *Proposal*.

The author makes use of his mastery in language in order to provide his proposer with authority over the readers which started as a modest proposer. Werner argues that the author enabled the proposer to manipulate readers into believing that there is not another plausible solution alternative to the omniscient proposer (Werner, 2013, p. 59).

Swift effectively makes use of numbers in the satire. It sounds like the voice of an accountant who step-by-step proves that it is foolish to treat people as if they were animals. Meanwhile, he attempts to plant rebelliousness in their hearts so that they do not hesitate to fight back against a foreign aggressor (Werner, 2013, p. 75). The reader may hear Swift's own voice in the text as he makes use of italicized words and phrases that assists him overriding the voice of the persona in the pamphlet.

In the begging part of the Proposal, Swift exposes and criticizes how Irish people are approached. He satirizes the fact that they are considered more like animals rather than human beings as follows:

It is true, a child just drop from its dam, may be supported by her milk... two hundred thousand couple whose wives are breeders ... I rather recommend buying the children alive, and dressing them hot from the knife, as we do roasting pigs... of the hundred and twenty thousand children, already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one fourth part to be males; which is more than we allow to sheep, black cattle, or swine... (Swift, 2008, p. 6).

It can easily be seen that the children and mothers in Ireland are reduced to the level of domesticated animals that are reared for their milk and meat. In the eyes of the authority, there seems to be no difference between the two groups. The ones exercising power obviously undervalue the lives of the poor in Ireland.

As well as appealing to the reasoning of the audience, Swift also makes use of moral consideration in the Proposal. He draws attention to the abortions carried out by the poor as follows:

There is likewise another great advantage in my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children, alas! too frequent among us, sacrificing the poor innocent babes, I doubt, more to avoid the expence than the shame, which would move tears and pity in the most savage and inhuman breast (Swift, 2008, p. 6).

The proposer seems to be a person of moral values. He argues that the Proposal will put an end to this heartbreaking act on behalf of the mothers. Also, it is expected to terminate the violation of moral principles.

The subjugation of Ireland appears to be one of the primary areas of concern in the Proposal. The situation is reflected in the essay as follows:

... although I apprehend there cannot be so many, under the present distresses of the kingdom... under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed. For we can neither employ them in

handicraft or agriculture; they neither build houses, (I mean in the country) nor cultivate land: they can very seldom pick up a livelihood by stealing... (Swift, 2008, p. 6).

Within these lines, Swift appears to underline the condition of the poor once again. He states that they cannot be expected to live a decent life unless a novel method of improvement is exercised. He makes reference to the Penal Laws by mentioning what the poor are not allowed to do. Several scholars compare these acts of the English parliament to the apartheid legislation in South Africa and they highlighted the similarities between the conditions of the Irish and native peoples in the colonies (McNally, 2002, p. 407).

Arguing that the Proposal is beneficial for the wealthy, Swift draws attention to the advantages for the landlords. He lays emphasis on their gains as follows:

... the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in sale to the persons of quality and fortune, through the kingdom... I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children... the squire will learn to be a good landlord, and grow popular among his tenants... (Swift, 2008, p. 7).

Note that Swift regards landowners as cannibals already, they seem to have the right to devour the children as well as their parents. He criticizes the fact that landlords exploit the poor in Ireland in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He underlines the indifference of the wealthy to the conditions Irish people lived in. The cruelty and unfeeling nature of the wealth towards the poor is reflected in the Proposal as follows:

Some persons of a desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people, who are aged, diseased, or maimed; and I have been desired to employ my thoughts what course may be taken, to ease the nation of so grievous an incumbrance. But I am not in the least pain upon that matter, because it is very well known, that they are every day dying, and rotting, by cold and famine, and filth, and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected. (Swift, 2008, p. 9).

Swift seems to pay no attention to the aged, diseased and maimed poor, which mirrors the overall tendency of ignoring the poor in Ireland. He criticizes the affluent people in the country for not being attentive to the hardships that the poor go through.

Considering the little resources that the poor in Ireland have, Swift proposes not to waste any part of the children. He comes up with ways of utilizing even their skin as follows: "Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require) may

flea the carcass; the skin of which, artificially dressed, will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen.” (Swift, 2008, p. 8). The poor have no option but being thrifty so they need to benefit from whatever they come to possess even if it is their children’s body. They cannot spend when they do not have any.

In the Proposal, Swift utilizes opinions of experts in order to consolidate the effect of what is proposed. He makes several references to authoritative people as follows:

As I have been informed by a principal gentleman in the county of Cavan... I am assured by our merchants... I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London... A very worthy person, a true lover of his country, and whose virtues I highly esteem... for we are told by a grave author, an eminent French physician... (Swift, 2008, p. 6-7-8).

By providing a number of experts’ opinions upon the subject, Swift makes sure that his proposal does not fall on stony ground. At the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the dominant authority did not care about the marginals most of whom consisted of the Irish people. Making powerful people support the Proposal augments its credibility. He satirizes the fact that the speaker is considered more important than what is being said and he underlines the fact that the problem needs to be addressed regardless of private interests, religion, and politics. Thanks to these worthy people, the voice of the marginalized can be heard. Swift tries to make his argument as persuasive as possible by encouraging doing what is beneficial for Ireland.

Swift needs to earn his readers’ confidence in order that they support the message of the satire. He tries to promote his friend as a decent and sophisticated person. By hosting various characters, Swift manages to lay out a group of people who are both sufferers of the problem and the ones who strive to solve it (Werner, 2013, p. 80).

Thanks to the Proposal, Swift has an opportunity to criticize the religious oppression the Irish suffered in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He states that it will assist the English government in their effort to decrease the number of Catholics as follows:

there are more children born in Roman Catholick countries about nine months after Lent, the markets will be more glutted than usual, because the number of Popish infants, is at least three to one in this kingdom, and therefore it will have one other collateral advantage, by lessening the number of Papists among us (Swift, 2008, p. 8).

Clearly, the Proposal can be approached as a strategy to lessen the number of Popish people in Ireland. Swift makes use of the term *papists* to appeal to anti-Catholic position of the English parliament and to reveal their mindset regarding Irish Catholics of the period. The religious oppression on the Catholics can be regarded as a means of colonization since they do not have the freedom to live by the articles of their faith or express religious ideas openly due to a number of laws enforced by the English government.

New Historicism attaches great weight to Lacanian binary of self and other. According to Lacan, individuals form a concept of self by means of juxtaposition and realization of other. Lacan elucidates that the image of self is created through language that is never one's own (Lacan, 2001, p. 62). The concept of self is formed in the Proposal through England's treatment of the Irish as inferior human being and savages which is manifested in the essay as follows: "my reason is, that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages" (Swift, 2008, p. 7).

The England government wields totalitarian authority over Ireland which enables them to treat the population in Ireland as savages that need to be civilized through an English control over the country. According to Lacan, the image of self may exist in the individual's unconsciousness instead of existing as a material object (Lacan, 2001, p. 149-150). Therefore, it can be argued that in the eyes of the English, Irish people signifies the barbarity whereby the English feel themselves empowered to employ the civilizing role over the other.

Swift makes use of digressions in both the *Tale* and the Proposal. Before he mentions the advantages that his plan will yield, Swift states "I have too long digressed, and therefore shall return to my subject." Unlike the digression in the *Tale*, this digression does not drift apart from the main issue of the Proposal.

After he shares his scheme with the readers, Swift attempts to prove that it has a great number of advantages some of which he states explicitly in the text. With the first benefit, he mentions that the scheme is effective in sustaining protestant supremacy over the Catholics as follows:



... as I have already observed, it would greatly lessen the number of Papists, with whom we are yearly over-run, being the principal breeders of the nation, as well as our most dangerous enemies, and who stay at home on purpose with a design to deliver the kingdom to the Pretender, hoping to take their advantage by the absence of so many good Protestants ... (Swift, 2008, p. 10).

Even though the Protestant population was in minority in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Ireland was controlled by the English parliament, which favored the Protestant interests over the interests of Catholic majority.

In the second, third, and fourth advantages of the Proposal, Swift turns his attention to economic benefits that the poor, the landlords, and the country can gain. Since the poor have nothing valuable left apart from their bodies thanks to the landlords' control over the agriculture and livestock in Ireland, the plan endows them with a valuable commodity that landowners can tax. Also, the country can benefit from this plan as it will get rid of maintaining of a hundred thousand poor children. The parents of those children will be rid of bringing them up after the first year as well as making a small amount of money.

The last two advantages of the Proposal speak of stimulating social activities and encouraging family formation in the country. Thanks to this food, a great custom will be brought to the taverns in which the fine people of Ireland can enjoy good eating. Also, this plan will encourage couples to get married and have stronger family ties between the parents themselves and their children. It is argued that the husbands will be more devoted to their wives while the mothers will show more tenderness and care towards their children.

After providing the reader with all the possible benefits of his plan, Swift drops the tone of the humble proposer and adopts the tone of authority. In the beginning of the Proposal, the narrator searched for support for his idea. However, Swift seems to have gained confidence in his plan which is manifest as follows:

I can think of no one objection, that will possibly be raised against this proposal... that I calculate my remedy for this one individual Kingdom of Ireland, and for no other that ever was, is, or, I think, ever can be upon Earth. Therefore, let no man talk to me of other expedients... let no man talk to me of these and the like expedients, 'till he hath at least some glimpse of hope, that there will ever be some hearty and sincere attempt to put them into practice (Swift, 2008, p. 12).

Ireland appears to be suffering the worst in the hands of England. Even though he sometimes blames the Irish for the problems in Ireland, Swift believes that England is responsible for destroying the economy and culture of the country.

Swift strongly argues that there is not any other solution left to this problem. He urges anyone to come up with a better plan since it would only do good for the country. He states his encouragement as follows: "After all, I am not so violently bent upon my own opinion, as to reject any offer, proposed by wise men, which shall be found equally innocent, cheap, easy, and effectual." (Swift, 2008, p. 12). Even though he appears to encourage others to find a better way of dealing with the problem, Swift implies the perfection of his argument and satirizes the wealthy men who have a bias towards maintaining status quo.

In the last decades, cannibalism is a recurring theme in popular culture and numerous references have been made to cannibalism in a range of media that includes music, film, literature, and television. Since cannibalism can be used as a strong metaphor, the media has taken advantage of its power when dealing with issues such as colonialism, human appetite, overpopulation, consumerism, madness, sexuality, and power relations. This indicates that our culture is not only obsessive with it but also takes pleasure hearing, watching and fantasizing about it (Brown, 2012, p. 2).

To be able to come up with an explanation why cannibalism is widespread in popular culture, Brown also maintains that it is necessary to take into consideration the importance of eating in our modern world in the sense that cannibalism is after all about eating (Brown, 2012, p. 2). However, cannibalism has been referred to for many different motives in mind some of which include as a means of survival by sufferers of starvation, as a cultural norm, as inspired by real-life cases of cannibal murderers, and as an unconscious act. For example, in the motion picture "Van Diemen's Land" (2009) Robert Greenhill decides to murder one of his friends and eat the meat from his corpse to stay alive. Some depictions of cannibalism in popular culture contain characters who are unaware of their act. For instance, "Hannibal" (2001) is a movie adaptation of Thomas Harris' novel with the same name in which Krendler doesn't know that the meat he is tasting is a part of his own brain.

Cannibalism in literature is not something that is uncommon. It has been observed in texts dating back to Old English and has been consulted by various writers.

Some of the oldest texts with cannibalism include *Beowulf*, *Wonders of the East*, and *Andreas*. Cannibalism is used to define the alien in the texts mentioned. In *Beowulf*, for example, Grendel and his mother are cannibalistic creatures which makes the reader consider them monsters. Cannibalism is consulted in recent works of literature as well. The novel *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy is about the story of a father and his son's journey after most of the civilization and landscape has been destroyed by an unmentioned disaster. Some of the humans who survived the disaster have had to employ cannibalism (Brown, 2012, p. 230).

The inclusion of cannibalism in the text as a solution to the problem of poverty is the most striking aspect of the Proposal. Jennifer Brown places the cannibal amidst the colonizer and the colonized, and it leads to the prevalent connotation between savagery and cannibalism. She states that the image of cannibalism is often related to the failure of communication between people that start to bite one another when they fail to talk to each other (Brown, 2012, p. 68).

In the traditional approach to cannibalism, the cannibalistic person is represented as someone to be tamed and civilized. Dominy underlined the fact that various writers utilized cannibalism in their works in order to satirize consumer culture and capitalism besides to distinguish between right and wrong, uncivilized and civilized (Dominy, 2015, p. 145). However, Swift subverts this expectation in the Proposal by projecting the cannibal as a person who has the right to consume the poor. The consumption of other human beings does not stem from inevitable necessity but rather seems to represent their control and superiority over the savages. Cannibalism in the Proposal provides an important metaphorical resource to criticize the economic system by labeling it figuratively cannibalistic. Brown argues that eating does not only serve to nourish our bodies but also to alter and represent ourselves in a different way (Brown, 2012, p. 2). She states that Roland Barthes considers food as a method of communication which provides us with images about the usage in different situations. Therefore, food consumption can be considered to serve as a social in addition to a biological purpose. It can lead to inclusion in or exclusion from national, religious, social, and familial groups (Brown, 2012, p. 3). Brown also maintains that cannibalism is not just about food consumption. Instead, it contains messages to the reader

regarding formation and maintenance of the cultural order among the parties of a group (Brown, 2012, p. 6).

Cannibalism can be employed to warn readers about the savages, namely the other. However, Swift reverses this as well in the Proposal. He attempts to make use of cannibalism in order to warn readers against themselves. He invites readers to hold a mirror and see themselves as the cannibal. This clearly show how there has been an alteration in the way the concept of cannibalism functions. Brown states that Marx considered capitalism as a form of cannibalism in order to accentuate the illogicality of a structure that devours itself (Brown, 2012, p. 7). In real life, comments are made about the way the killers look and how they do not fit to the description of a criminal and a cannibal as they seem polite and educated. What is terrifying about these trials is that they force us to stare back at ourselves. Cannibalism seems to blur the difference between what is familiar and unfamiliar as it collapses the boundaries between them. Brown reveals her opinion on the function of cannibalism as follows:

The heart of darkness is no longer on the other, unexplored side of the world, but is within the disturbed psyche of modern Western man. Former boundaries between the familiar and strange, the home and the exotic, have become flexible and porous. Thus divisions between 'us' and 'them' have become flawed and indistinct as the Other/cannibal holds no firm place, or rather, holds all places. (Brown, 2012, p. 213).

It can be argued that the cannibal does not signify a savage or other any longer. Actually, Swift also made use of cannibalism in order to reveal that cannibal is never exclusively the Other and to show that the cannibal figure pertains to everyone. Henderson states in her article that one is what one eats, but eating humans does not make a person human (Henderson, 2013, p. 831).

## CONCLUSION

New Historicism seems to elaborate on the topics ignored or neglected by the already existing modes of literary criticism since it pays close attention to different kinds of literary and historical analysis in addition to dealing with subjects in the literary and non-literary texts. In that sense, it can be argued that new historicist scholars attempt to analyze the marginal, the oppressed, and the subjects that have never been dealt with by the earlier critics.

New Historicism stands out as it assigns equal importance to literary and non-literary texts and they are employed in criticism not only to justify but also to question each other. Adherents of New Historicism maintain that literary texts are far from being superior over non-literary texts. On the contrary, they approach literary texts as only one of the numerous sources that can be used in literary criticism. It is argued in New Historicism that a literary text can gain meaning when it is read along with the non-literary text because a work of literature is not autonomous and should be situated in the social and political context of its origin.

It is suggested in New Historicism that the ultimate truth of history is impossible to access, grasp, or reveal; which means that any scholarly effort is inclined to be flawed about reproducing reality in history. It is maintained that critics' background plays a significant role in determining their attitude towards the truth since it is fashioned by critics' individual experience. As critics can never get rid of their present point of view and their prejudices of a contemporary scholar about history, they may never be able to create a complete representation of a historical time period. No matter how hard they try to be objective, critics' reflection of the past is certain to be biased and partial in the sense that it can incapsulate just some specific features of the time period.

New Historicism proves itself to be a mode of critical analysis which has the potential of being a fruitful and valid practice in not only literary, cultural, and historical text interpretations but also in figuring out the present through the different possible elucidations of the histories. New historicism is a very important critical practice in the sense that it refuses to view a text with a fixed meaning and history is not regarded as a solitary and coherent line of progress. New historicist critics also acknowledge the continuous contact between history and text in addition to the

constant relation between a particular text and other texts in the culture of its dissemination. By assuming a new historicist approach, we may be able to reveal not exclusively the social atmosphere of a given literary text but the present-day social world as well. Similar to history itself, our interaction with any given text is an ongoing, unending, and dynamic process that will always remain unfinished.

Authors write satires when they wish to criticize, attack or mock something. Satire can be regarded as a way of approaching societies, institutions, and people by paying close attention to their deficiencies so as to help them overcome those shortcomings. Satire as a form of literature has existed in various periods of history ranging from the early Roman period until the 21st century. The origins and ancient examples of satire can be dated back to the Roman period.

Although countless examples of satire can be found in different time periods, one could argue that satire received its greatest achievement from the last decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century through the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century with important figures of satire, some of whom can be listed as Jonathan Swift, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, and Daniel Defoe. The excellence of satire in England within this particular time period may be considered to result from the social and political situation of the country that can be designated as turbulent and chaotic.

There were a number of changes in people's life in the beginning of eighteenth century that played an important role in the advancement of satire. Nevertheless, three of them can be argued to have made the greatest contribution. The first change was the abolishment of the Commonwealth of England as a result of which the country was transformed back into a monarchy. The second momentous change was in the field of religion. Charles II, who possessed Catholic predisposition, ruled over England, and Tory and Whig parties were constituted during the reign of James II. With the accession of William III, England started to be ruled by a Protestant ascendancy. The last major change was the adoption of prime ministerial government. As a result of these changes in different spheres of life, people had difficulty in adapting to new rules of the game leading to hectic and unmanageable conditions.

Swift was an author who spent his life criticizing the absurdities and vanities in the world around him. Many scholars regard *A Tale of a Tub* as one of the finest satires in English literature. However, *The Tale* received harsh criticism by the

contemporary critics of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Queen Anne was among those who abominated the literary work, leading her to preclude Swift from advancing in the Church of England. The tale contains a story of three brothers which can be regarded as a parable to the history of church. The father of the brothers, whose names are Peter, Martin, and Jack, leaves jackets to them and in his will, tells them never to make changes on the jackets. The brothers appear to respectively represent Catholic, Anglican, and Puritan churches. In the *Tale*, unconventional digressions accompany the allegory of the three brothers.

In *A Tale of a Tub*, the primary object that Swift seems to criticize is the numerous corruptions in learning, politics, and religion. He points the finger at self-centered critics, mediocre scholars, and fanatic dissenters in religion. According to him, the society suffers in the hands of these kinds of people. On the surface level Swift may seem to encourage people to be governed by institutions such as the church of England because human reason is relatively feeble. However, the narrator in the *Tale* undermines the possibility of order by revealing how defenseless the mysteries of religion are to skeptical examination. Swift appears to leave religious history on shaky ground in order to highlight the improbability of historical objectivity. It can be readily understood that Swift's meaning does not necessarily reveal itself in the text. It may be read between the lines or behind the text itself instead of existing in the printed material.

The poverty experienced in Ireland is an issue that appears in *A Tale of a Tub*. The Irish population is economically dominated which results in dreadful life conditions that they suffer from. Swift seems to believe that England is responsible for the dreadful conditions that Irish citizens have to endure.

"A Modest Proposal" is regarded as one of the greatest satires in world literature. It was written as a pamphlet maintaining that Irish people's poverty problem may be solved by means of selling their children to the affluent individuals. This scheme is an obvious reflection of the author's anger towards Irish and English governments since he believes that their political, economic, and social policies are outrageous and indifferent to the citizens of Ireland. Swift makes use of a spate of details, metaphors and various ironic devices and techniques to increase the rather disturbing effect of the text. *The Proposal* has been considered to encompass an

unparalleled brilliance of rhetoric and it remains to attract new audience as well as critical examination in the twenty-first century.

In “A Modest Proposal”, Jonathan Swift makes it clear that people are so carried away by economic arguments that they cannot even realize the barbarity of cannibalism. It may be argued that the colossally significant satire may be interpreted in a great number of ways instead of just being an attack on colonial agenda of the bordering nation. Swift seems to be content with his proposal even if he has no individual benefit. The reader feels captivated while reading his solution to such an intricate problem of the country: Irish people are advised to devour their newborns when the infants become one-year-old.

He argues that the solution is case specific; but after calculating the input and output once again in the context of the today’s world, one may come up with a similar brilliant solution to the problem of exploitation and abuse that is present not only on an international scale but also on a national scale, as well. In the case of health care system, a similar irony hits the mind: just kill the injured, the old, and the weak. It may also be argued that Swift also mocks the attitude of the majority of the people in the contemporary world who come up with one basic solution for complex problems and believe that they have the ability to overcome any kind of deterrent in their way.



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