

MENIPPEAN SATIRE REVISITED: THE RULING CLASS¹

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to study Peter Barnes' play, *The Ruling Class* (1968) as an example of modern Menippean satire. Menippean satire is difficult to define because of its protean structure. Menippean satire is a mingling of prose and poetry in its simplest sense. In addition, it always desires to reject any sort of absolutes regarding norms, cultural, religious or philosophical dogmas by creating a carnivalesque atmosphere. In order to oppose absolutes, Menippean satire makes use of parody, irony, intertextuality, juxtapositions of normally incompatible things, any sort of psychological abnormalities such as madness and daydreaming, all of which enhance the carnivalesque quality of the plays. Menippean satire does not offer a resolution at the end of the works because the genre does not favor any ideology over another but shows all of them as faulty and corrupted. Because the *Ruling Class* includes above-mentioned features of Menippean satire, which will be discussed in the rest of the paper, it will be concluded that the play may be considered as an example of modern Menippean satire.

Keywords: Menippean satire, Peter Barnes, Carnavalesque, *The Ruling Class*.

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MENİPPOS HİCVİ ÖRNEĞİ OLARAK THE RULING CLASS OYUNU

Öz

Bu makalenin amacı Peter Barnes'ın *The Ruling Class* (1968) adlı oyununu modern Menippos hicvi örneği olarak incelemektir. Menippos hicvinin tanımı değişken yapısından dolayı zordur. En basit tanımıyla, Menippos hicvi düz yazı ve nazmın karışımıdır. Ayrıca, bu tür hiciv karnavalesk bir atmosfer yaratarak normlarla, kültürel, dini ya da felsefik doktrinlerle ilgili kesin yargıları reddeder. Bu kesin yargıları reddederken Menippos hicvi parodi, ironi, metinlararasılık, normalde bir arada olamayacak şeylerin yan yana getirilmesi gibi teknikleri ayrıca delilik ve düş kurma gibi her türlü psikolojik anormallikleri içeren durumları kullanır ve tüm bu teknikler aynı zamanda oyunların karnavalesk niteliklerini artırır. Menippos hicvi eserlerin sonunda herhangi bir çözüm önermez çünkü herhangi bir ideolojiyi diğerine üstün göstermek yerine tüm ideolojilerin yanlış ve uygulamalarının bozuk olduğunu gösterir. Menippos hicvinin tüm özellikleri Barnes'ın adı geçen oyununda bulunmaktadır. Böylece makale *the Ruling Class* adlı oyunun Menippos hicvinin bir örneği olarak sınıflandırılabilirliğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Menippos hicvi, Peter Barnes, Karnavalesk, *The Ruling Class*.

1. Introduction

There are two important characteristics of Menippean satire in *The Ruling Class*: it is cynical in theme and it is carnivalesque in form. *The Ruling Class* may be considered as cynical in its theme because Barnes deals with everything in a questioning manner in the play. Barnes cynically questions the concept of normalcy in the ruling class, the function of organized religion, and the so-called English tradition of servility. He also exposes the absurdity of the class-based society, the preference of human beings for vengeance instead of love, and the malignity of power and authority. While dealing with these themes, Barnes rejects any sort of absolutes regarding norms as well as cultural, religious and philosophical dogmas by showing them to be ridiculous through parody, irony, and sarcasm. The play is highly comical and political as it attacks the existing order even in its most absurd moments as an example of Menippean satire. When Barnes is asked whether the satire behind the play *The Ruling Class* is understood or not he responds by saying: "You can work in a comedic vein, and be intensely serious, which I am" (Hennessy, 1970, p. 120). As he says, he employs "wit, pathos, exciting melodrama, brilliant satire, double-edged philosophy, horror, cynicism, and sentiment, all combined in a perfect unity" in his theatrical world of "extraordinary and idiosyncratic creation" (Barnes, 1996, p. 3). Barnes' attitude is just like that of Menippus whose writings are described as "jocular, either lacking seriousness altogether or expressing serious ideas in mocking or humorous manner" (Kirk, 1980, p. 4). The play has a typical Menippean ending that has no didactic aim as the aim of it is to deflate any sort of absolutes regarding norms and social, political and religious dogmas. As a result, the audience is left with question marks in their minds about the things shown them on the stage.

2. Menippean Satire Revisited: *The Ruling Class*

The play starts with a prologue which is followed by two acts and an epilogue. In the prologue, the 13th Earl of Gurney makes a speech which is a parody of John of Gaunt's speech in "Richard II":

The aim of the society of St George
Is to keep Green the memory of England
And what England means to her sons and daughters.
I say the fabric holds, though families fly apart.
Once the rulers of the greatest Empire
The World has ever known,
Ruled not by superior force or skill
But by sheer presence.
This teeming womb of privilege, this feudal state,
Whose shores beat back the turbulent sea of foreign anarchy.
This ancient fortress, still commanded by the noblest
Of our royal blood; this ancient land of ritual.
This precious stone set in a silver sea. (Barnes, 1996, p. 7)

As it is seen, the last five lines of this speech parody John of Gaunt's speech:

This royal throne of kings, this scept'red isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm,
This England. (Shakespeare, 1960, p. 454)

Barnes parodies, misquotes and mixes up the order of the speech. John of Gaunt's speech is a famous and frequently quoted speech intended to invoke English patriotism since it was written. Some phrases like "this scepter'd isle," "this happy breed of men, this little world," "this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England" (Shakespeare, 1960, p. 454) have become overused. It praises England while the speech of the 13th Earl condemns the basis of English society unintentionally. For instance, the 13th Earl says 'teeming womb of privilege' instead of 'royal kings' and 'whose shores protect it from the turbulence of 'foreign anarchy' not 'of envious siege'. John of Gaunt makes a long speech, claiming that England cannot be harmed by other countries unless it is conquered by internal conflicts and corruption. It is not surprising to see that a playwright who is writing in the late 1960s parodies this speech because England is not safe from the outside world in the second half of the twentieth century as a result of having shrunk to become an island nation instead of being an empire. Gaunt

finishes his speech in a sad tone regretting what has happened to England. The 13th Earl, on the other hand, happily announces that her situation as the greatest empire in the world has not changed. This demonstrates the Earl's superiority complex.

Furthermore, the speech of the 13th Earl parodies such values as patriotism and duty. For instance, the 13th Earl explains that the function of the St. George Society is to keep a green memory of England by promoting the English way of life, but the values like patriotism, duty, and honor have already lost their significance in the sixties. Young people especially start to question all these established values instead of taking them for granted. However, the speech of the 13th Earl is intended to reinforce the existing order of the ruling class as he emphasizes "the royal blood," "the feudal state," and "this teeming womb of privilege" while the speech of John of Gaunt embraces the whole nation by saying "this happy breed of men." The 13th Earl considers England as a feudal state and praises aristocracy; that is why, when Tucker asks about the outcome of his speech, the Earl claims, "Englishmen like to hear the truth about themselves" (Barnes, 1996, p. 8). Therefore, through parodying Shakespeare's Richard II speech, Barnes ridicules English patriotism and the upper class who consider themselves privileged and superior. This is one of the features that make the play a Menippean satire. Menippean satire parodies serious works of actual figures, pretentious philosophers, religions, myths or science, historical documents, literary conventions, and so on in order to deflate them.

After he has finished the speech, the 13th Earl is preoccupied with having an heir. He has lost four sons and the only one left is insane. While recalling his past, the 13th Earl gives a detailed picture of an aristocratic life-style. Displaying a contrast to his aristocratic background, the 13th Earl takes off his clothes, puts on a ballet skirt, a three-cornered hat, and long underwear and holds a sword, in order to relax. This is an important contrast because these clothes create a grotesque appearance while, normally, people respect him as an Earl and as a judge because of the clothes he wears and the titles he bears. When he takes off his normal clothes and wears these odd clothes, his real nature is displayed in a ridiculous way; thus, changing clothes may provide a fresh perspective of the aristocracy. This indicates that aristocracy is in the clothes and appearance not in essence. Next, the memory of an aristocratic breakfast scene is followed by another one in which the 13th Earl climbs up and down some steps which lead to a mechanism from which he hangs himself for relaxation. He imagines six vestal virgins smoking and, while drawing his sword, the 13th Earl alludes to a Sudanese uprising against the British in the mid-1880s: "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, play the man...Form squares men! Smash the Mahdi, and Binnie Barnes!" (Barnes, 1996, p. 11). The Earl is obviously fighting for the Empire of which he is an emblem. The Earl in his ballet skirt, three-cornered hat with his sword is a ridiculous symbol for the mighty British Empire. The empire is shown as ridiculous and in this way its importance is subverted. Then the Earl puts his feet back on the top of the steps. After swinging for a few seconds, he begins to twitch and to jump.

The sword the 13th Earl carries may be considered as a phallic image. When the Earl imagines these virgins, his language becomes obscene and vulgar, which crumbles the existing hierarchies between the aristocracy, or what stands for the empire, and the lower classes. For instance, he lists, "Juicy breasts, white thighs, red hair colour of

rust...” (Barnes, 1996, p. 10). Although the Earl is fighting for the Empire against an uprising, his obscene language and absurd clothes reduce him to a ridiculous clown, and the 13th Earl, a noble person appears as an embodiment of baseness and vulgarity in its most extreme form through his obscene language, absurd clothes and grotesque behavior on the step. This medley of the high and the low in order to break the hierarchy between them, the inappropriate speech and performance, eccentric behavior, deviations from conventional norms of behavior, manners of speech, and etiquette are all an exemplification of a Menippean satire (Bakhtin, 1999, p. 127). That is why the Lord Chamberlain requested this scene to be deleted because he opined: “That strangulation (at least as far as hanging is concerned) is accompanied by spasmodic erection (sic) and emission...the entire death scene involving the Earl of Gurney should be deleted” (Nicholson, 2014, p. 252).

While the Earl is hanging himself, he says “Be of good cheer, Nicholas Ridley, play the man” (Barnes, 1996, p. 11). With these words, he refers to an *auto-da-fe* in which Protestant Master Ridley and Hugh Latimer were burnt alive at stakes in 1555 in Oxford by the order of Mary I of England. When Nicholas Ridley is scared, Latimer makes this famous speech by saying to Ridley to play the man because they would light a candle and it would never be put out. As Latimer utters this sentence to give courage to Ridley, the 13th Earl repeats this sentence to himself when he is practising his auto-erotic ritual in his ridiculous costume. In this way, Barnes equates martyrdom with the ridiculous death of the Earl. Besides, Master Ridley, the Mahdi and Binnie Barnes, an American actress, are used in the same context both to have fun through the parody of an auto-da-fe, and to break up any hierarchy among these people. Apparently, none of these human beings is superior to the others. Thus, as a Menippean satire the play uses different sources and refers to various religious, cultural or political events, parodies and ridicules them by undermining the hierarchies among them.

After stepping once more the Earl knocks over the steps. He swings for a few seconds and drops the sword while trying to tear the noose free but he cannot. Then, his body goes limp and sways gently at the end of the rope. Tucker comes and finds the dead body of the Earl. Therefore, the serious and the frivolous are combined in order to deflate the idea of superiority of the aristocracy and the rationality of the law, both of which are represented by the 13th Earl. The Earl’s death by accidentally hanging himself is both comic and tragic, serious and frivolous, and entertaining and disturbing at the same time, which makes the play a Menippean satire. By mixing the low (the Earl turning himself into a clown with the ballet skirt and the long underwear), and the high (the Earl as a noble judge) the predetermined conceptions about aristocracy are broken down, for the judge is reduced to a fool for hanging himself accidentally. Barnes degrades the aristocracy, the judicial body and the empire, as he thinks that they are overrated and do not deserve as much respect as they ask. In addition, as a judge, the 13th Earl makes the law. If he is mad and acts irrationally his law-making and his justice should be questionable. As an example of Menippean satire which questions absolutes in a cynical way, the play problematizes all types of absolutes through these ridiculous characters and their absurd actions. This is what menippean satire does and, that is why, whilst defining Menippean satire

it is helpful to ask what Menippean satire 'does' instead of what Menippean satire 'is' (Milowicki and Wilson, 2002, p. 292). As important institutions governing society are in the monopoly of this class, these institutions may be seen as questionable. Claire's brother is a bishop, her son Dinsdale will have a seat in the House of Commons, Sir Charles rules the business world and Jack will have his place in the House of Lords. Tucker summarizes the situation: "The family. I've seen 'em at work a'fore. They got the power and they made the rules" (Barnes, 1996, p. 30). Thus, the family is like a political unit and what gives them this position is the power coming from their noble blood as mentioned by the 13th Earl. They put down the rules and make the law, they decide whether something is rational or irrational, or a crime or not and this suggests that nothing is certain and absolute but all is questionable. A cynical questioning of these institutions through parody, ridicule and irony without offering any alternative for these institutions is the most important feature that makes the play an example of the tradition of Menippean satire.

Moreover, after the funeral, the will of the late Earl is read by a solicitor. The late Earl leaves the estate to his son Jack. With the coming of Jack, Tucker becomes outspoken as he behaves as an equal of Jack, and this being quite different from traditional butlers, he creates comicality to provoke the other characters or the ideas represented by them. This is achieved with the Menippean carnivalesque quality of the play, which has a dialogic structure allowing Tucker to share his ideas openly. Thus, the distance between people disappears and a free and familiar contact emerges. The scenes in which Tucker appears are comic and also important because his actions challenge the hierarchy between the ruling class and the ruled one. Moreover, Tucker is shown as a hypocrite if he works for the Gurney family but is actually a Communist agent spitting in the family's soup and urinating on their Wedgwood dinner plates. Tucker considers himself as working for the Revolution by urinating on the plates, as these plates are expensive and used by the ruling-class families. Barnes satirizes the ruling class by the ridiculous and irrational actions of the 13th Earl in the Prologue and he satirizes the working-class people by the ridiculous and hypocritical actions of Tucker. Therefore, it may be claimed that the working class and upper class-ideologies are questioned and ridiculed but they are not replaced by any alternative ideology in the play. Barnes takes the prevailing ideologies and crushes them as a Menippean satirist as Menippean satire does not offer any solutions for the problems.

After the death of 13th Earl, his son Jack becomes the new Earl. However, he claims that he is the God of Love. For instance, in Scene Four, Act One, when Jack talks to the family members, he says Lord Jesus is within himself to cure the sick. When Claire asks how he knows he is God, Jack answers: "When I pray to Him I find I'm talking to myself" (Barnes, 1996, p. 26). This answer is both comic and political at the same time because it defies the authority, that is, God, as an example of Menippean satire. Next, Claire wants to know how this was revealed to him. Jack answers as follows: "Like every prophet I saw visions, heard voices. I ran but the voices of St. Francis, Socrates, General Gordon, and Tim O'Leary the Jewish Buddha all told me I was God. Pretty reliable witnesses" (Barnes, 1996, p. 26). Jack creates an absurd and comic scene by naming these famous people as witnesses to his being God. In a sense, he brings these people to the same level with himself. In addition, it is implied that

not everything suggested or uttered by these famous people is true. Instead of taking what they uttered and did for granted they might be questionable. The play refers to religious and literary figures in a comic way because, as a Menippean satire, it takes a cynical approach to them. Jack continues his explanation: "I heard with my outward ear a terrible thunder clap and I saw a great body of light like the light from the sun and red as fire, in the form of a drum...I cried out, Lord what will you do?... And I saw the distinction, diversity, variety, all clearly rolled up into the unity of Universal Love...All this happened outside the public urinal" (Barnes, 1996, p. 26). Jack declares himself God because he realizes that he is talking to himself when he cries out, "Lord what will you do". He actually seems to be rational in his inference, which shows that rationality may not be considered as a criterion for sanity. There is a specific concept of sanity in the ruling class. The ruling class determines that one is sane or insane according to the extent one can fit to the norms of the ruling class.

Another interesting thing about Jack's explanation is the place where his being God is revealed to him. It is outside the public urinal, which creates comedy, created by the medley of sacred and profane. Profanity is used in order to degrade the idea of a miraculous revelation. Carnivalizing a text in this way is another feature which makes the play an example of Menippean satire, thus, creates a text without hierarchies. Therefore, the high, the revelation that Jack is God, and the low, outside a public urinal, is used side by side so that the hierarchy between the spiritual and the profane is wiped out. Claire then asks what it feels like to be God. Jack responds: "Like a river flowing over everything. I pick up a newspaper and I'm everywhere, conducting a Summit Conference, dying of hunger in a Peruvian gutter, accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature, raping a nun in Sumatra" (Barnes, 1996, p. 26). This quotation reflects the spirit of the 1960s because art and politics were at their pinnacles in that period as art took the place of religion. With the decline of the importance of religion in society and with the release of the arts from moral austerity and secularisation, the importance of the arts increased, and new artistic forms and challenges to censorship and traditional values were achieved with experimentation in the arts (Bartie, 2013, p. 3). In terms of politics, the 1960s were very problematic with rebellion in the form of opposition to the Vietnam War, the Prague Spring, and fierce battles during the Democratic Convention in Chicago, student revolts, and student protests and sit-ins in a number of British universities, such as Leeds, the LSE and Sussex. As God, Jack should help the poor who are dying of hunger in a Peruvian gutter. However, he rapes a nun who worships him and, with this act, Jack defiles religion and Barnes shows the corruption in religion. Barnes reflects the concerns of the day when he applies the Menippean tradition to the ideological concerns of the day.

Furthermore, when Jack insists that he is not Jack and he is the God of Love, Dinsdale asks him to show his Godhead. Jack immediately starts to unzip his flies. Then, Dinsdale explains that he means a miracle. Jack shows his hand and says that that is a miracle. However, Dinsdale does not accept this and so Jack states: "You see ten billion million miracles a day, yet you want your conjuring tricks, your pretty filmflams, from the incense burners. I can't raise Lazarus again, he's decomposed, so bring me that table" (Barnes, 1996, p. 43). Jack says he cannot raise Lazarus because he is decomposed, as it has been centuries after Lazarus died. He implies in

a comic way that his power as God is limited, and here there might be a criticism of people's superstitions about religions. Except for Tucker, nobody sees that table is raised. Tucker says "Ahhh! Look, I see it! Up there! (He lurches forward, grasping a half-empty whisky decanter.) Sh-miracle, sh-miracle, hallelujah sh-miracle. Praise the Lord and pass t' ammunition" (Barnes, 1996, p. 43). This miracle is disputable because only Tucker claims that the table is raised. Yet, everything is possible in Jack's carnivalesque world because every rule of ordinary serious life is suspended. Because Jack cannot find equality in this classconscious society he creates an alternative world in which the laws, prohibitions, and restrictions determining the structure and order of the ordinary world are suspended.

In Act one, Scene Six, two women named Mrs. Treadwell and Mrs. Piggot-Jones visit Jack. They want him to make a speech about England. Upon this, he says: "Britain is an imaginary island off the continent of Europe, covering 93,982 square miles, with a population of over 52 million, lying in a westerly wind belt. A fly-blown speck in the North Sea, a country of cosmic unimportance in my sight" (Barnes, 1996, p. 36). In contrast to his father the 13th Earl, England does not mean 'a precious stone set in a silver sea' to Jack who sees everybody as equal and England as an ordinary state in the world. Then, Jack sings to the two women: "...You can pass many a class whether you're dumb or wise. If you all answer the call, when your professor cries..." (Barnes, 1996, p. 34). Suddenly, the two women and Tucker join Jack and they sing and dance: "Everybody down on the heels, up on the toes, stay after school, learn how it goes: Everybody do the Varsity...Everybody do the Varsity..." (Barnes, 1996, p. 35). They finish in a line downstage, arms outstretched to the audience, puzzled. In the serious atmosphere, they suddenly start to dance, a meddling of narrative styles which enhances the carnivalesque quality of the play. The lyrics of the song also support the thematic lines. The lyrics emphasize the obedience to authority as it says that one can pass the exams if she/he answers the professor's call to go down on her/his heels, up on her/his toes, and so forth.

After the two women leave, Sir Charles wants Jack to marry and have an heir so that Sir Charles can certify Jack as mad and Sir Charles can run the estate. However, Sir Charles is surprised when Jack says that he cannot marry for a second time. Jack continues by saying that he married a woman on August 28th in 1961, and her name was Marguerite Gautier in fact, she is the main character in *The Lady of the Camellias* (1848) by Alexander Dumas. According to Dr. Herder, because she is a martyr to love, Marguerite is the only person Jack relies on (Barnes, 1996, p. 40). Dinsdale brings the book *The Lady of the Camellias* and explains "But I've shown you it's in here. *The Lady of Camellias* by Alexander Dumas. Camille. The opera by Verdi *La Traviata*. Same woman. A figure of romance" (Barnes, 1996, p. 41). Dinsdale tries to prove that Marguerite is a fictional character, not as real as himself. Claire also says "No wife. She does not exist. She's fiction. Part of a play. She's not flesh and blood. Not real" (Barnes, 1996, p. 44). This may be considered as an example of self-parody because Claire does not exist and is a character in this play by Barnes. Neither she nor Marguerite are real. Barnes makes a self-parody by implying that all the characters in this play are fictional. He ridicules himself by implying that all he is writing is fiction that is not real. By undermining the characters in the play as fictional, he also

undermines what they have mentioned so far. Self-parody is employed as one of the characteristics of Menippean satire in the play in order to break the hierarchy between real and fiction. This also enhances the carnivalesque quality of the play as there is no border between real and fictional in a carnivalesque scene.

As his family cannot persuade Jack that Marguerite does not exist, Sir Charles prepares Grace, his mistress, as Marguerite. While the family members are discussing how Marguerite is fictional, there comes the sound of a woman singing “go diam fie— gaca-e-ra-pi-do-e il gan dio dell ‘a-mo-re...” (Barnes, 1996, p. 44). They look towards the doorway and see *The Lady of the Camellias* standing upstage centre singing the ‘Drinking Song’ from *La Traviata*: “Eun fior che na-sce e muo-re, ne, piu si puv goder-Go-diam c-In-vi-ta, c’in-vi-taun, fervi do-ae-cen-to-la-sin-gheer...” (Barnes, 1996, p. 44). Jack cries ‘Marguerite’. This scene is a typical Menippean scene in which there is a mingling of fact and fiction; of two languages, Italian and English; and, of two narrative styles, prose and poem. According to Weinbrot, “in its properly unsentimental mode Menippean satire mingles at least two genres, languages, voices, or even historical periods to resist a dangerously threatening false orthodoxy. It can proceed in a severe form that sees little hope for improvement and scoffs at presumed human achievement” (Weinbrot, 1965, p. 110). There is also intertextuality, with references to *The Lady of the Camellias* and to *La Traviata*. In addition, Sir Charles states: “I phoned Grace and explained the position. She got dressed up in some theatrical togs and came down. Put me on a first-rate show, I thought” (Barnes, 1996, p. 45). Grace as a character in the play by Barnes performs another fictional character on the stage, which can be considered as an example of metatheatre. Therefore, Barnes creates a playful narrative style as a result of having a carnivalesque atmosphere in the play through making use of medley, intertextuality, and metatheatre as an example of Menippean satire. Another interesting feature of this scene is that while the characters are discussing the fact that Marguerite does not exist, she suddenly appears in front of them, as Menippean satire uses “abrupt transitions and shifts, ups and downs, rises and falls, unexpected comings together of distant and disunited things, mésalliances of all sorts” (Bakhtin, 1999, p. 117). Moreover, parody, another Menippean feature, is employed in this scene. Although Marguerite sacrifices herself for her love, Grace is not interested in love in her marriage with Jack. She does not devote herself to love at all as she is only interested in acquiring the Gurney name. At the end, she and Marguerite both die. Marguerite dies because she is sick, Grace is killed by Jack. Thus, the love story of Marguerite which is full of sacrifices is parodied in the play, in order to show that there is no room for love in this society as Grace is shown as being incapable of loving.

In the garden, Grace asks for a white wedding and Jack agrees at once. Upon this, Grace says he deserves a big kiss but Jack opposes this by stating: “Not here in the garden. Last time I was kissed in a garden it turned out rather awkward” (Barnes, 1996, p. 49). When Grace says that Judas was a man, Jack nods and tells her it was a strange business. Judas is known as a betrayer and infamous for his kiss. According to the Synoptic Gospels, Judas tells the soldiers: “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard” (Mark 14:44). One of the possible motivations of Judas for betraying his master is greed. It is written that: “Then one

of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I betray him to you?' They paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him" (Matthew 26: 14-16). John Ruskin, a Victorian art critic, writes about Judas as follows: "We do great injustice to Iscariot, in thinking him wicked above all common wickedness. He was only a common moneylover, and, like all money-lovers, did not understand Christ, could not make out the worth of Him, or meaning of Him...Judas was a common, selfish, muddle-headed, pilfering fellow; his hand always in the bag of the poor, not caring for them" (Ruskin, 1907, p. 44). Although Judas witnesses the miracles of Jesus he still betrays him for money. In this sense, there is a similarity between him and Grace, because Grace is greedy and only interested in material things. For instance, she says that she will go to shopping centers after marrying with Jack. Therefore, Barnes takes this religious story about one of the disciples of Jesus Christ and equates him with a prostitute. Barnes may imply that both Judas and Grace are greedy and their greedy natures lead them to act in an irrational and absurd way.

When Grace leaves the garden, Dinsdale comes to warn Jack about Grace by saying that she is not Marguerite but a close friend of his father. Jack gets angry with Dinsdale and replies, bending at his knees, "Stop! You're making me a crippled dwarf, a deformed midget, a crippled newt!" (Barnes, 1996, p. 50). His actions become absurd and irrational and his speech turns meaningless. For instance, he says that Dinsdale's negative 'insinuendo' reduces him to half-size. He explains 'insinuendo' as 'insinuation towards innuendo', caused because of increased negativism. He continues to act absurdly by breaking his glasses and putting half the frame over one eye. As a Menippean satire, the play makes use of grotesque elements in this scene. Jack's body is shown as grotesque, that is, 'unfinished' and 'deformed', in order to break the idealized notions of aesthetic and beauty. Beside grotesque bodily features, Jack's actions are also grotesque, both of which undermine the classical concepts of beauty and normalcy constructed by the ruling class. Thus, the narrative structure of the play may be claimed to be loosely organized, in the sense that it becomes often absurd and unpredictable without having a strict sense of causality and linearity. This is another feature that makes the play an example of Menippean satire.

Before his son's birth, Jack is cured by Dr. Herder. Dr. Herder aims to make Jack adjust to the society in which they live and, by doing that, Dr. Herder unknowingly serves the interests of the ruling class. His first attempt to cure Jack with a lie-detector is a failure. Dr. Herder asks Jack if he is God, he grins, says he is not and the machine says he is lying. Science is ridiculed with this experiment as it is shown as ineffective and unreliable. After some other experiments are finished, Jack gives a deep-throated cry and shakes with the force of the imaginary electrical charge. There is a clap of thunder at the same time. The French windows open and a monstrous eight-foot beast enters with a rush of cold wind. Barnes employs expressionism as a device in this scene: he does not say that Jack changes from the God of Love to an evil person. Instead, Barnes creates a hairy eight-foot beast dressed like a Victorian gentleman who shakes Jack until he accepts that his name is Jack. The stage direction continues, "the beast walks upright like a man, covered with thick black hair swept out from each side of its face like a gigantic guinea-pig, and is dressed incongruously

in high Victorian fashion: morning coat and top hat. None of the others see the beast, which grabs the EARL and shakes him violently, to the accompaniment of high-speed jabber from the tape-recorder, thunderclaps” (Barnes, 1996, p. 73). Because Menippean satire is free from the limitations of history or memoir, it does not feel any obligations to answer the demands of the verisimilitude of life. There is a surrealistic scene with a beast in it. Although the other characters do not see the beast, the audience can see it through the eyes of Jack. Then, Jack writhes in an epileptic fit, saliva dribbling from his mouth. All sorts of bodily functions are shown, as Menippean satire uses them to deconstruct the concepts of idealized beauty and aesthetic. Jack is described as “legs and arms are twisted, and his face forced back by a heavy paw. He struggles, but his strength soon leaves him. As the background noise reaches a crescendo, the beast slams him down across its knee, tosses him on to the floor and then looking down at the unconscious man, raises its hat, grunts and lurches out the way it came in” (Barnes, 1996, p. 73). There is a silence and after which, Grace having given birth, Sir Charles brings the baby and says he is a boy. Jack says: “Jack. I’m Jack. I’m Jack. I’m Jack” (Barnes, 1996, p. 74). This may be considered as ironic because, as Jack has become ‘normal’ he does not now need an heir. In addition, Jack’s acceptance of his name would be a step towards sanity, according to Dr. Herder. However, the second act will show that Dr. Herder is wrong as Jack becomes a murderer after accepting his name. Science is ridiculed once more through Dr. Herder’s cure.

Thus, on the road to sanity, Jack changes his behavior by saying that he will learn the rules of the game. He states: “I must learn to keep my mouth shut, bowels open and never volunteer” (Barnes, 1996, p. 80). Jack now tries to act like other members of his family to show that he is sane. He fires randomly and kills a dove with his gun, to the music of ‘Oh for the Wings of Dove’, as a sign of normalcy. This is an important sign showing that Jack rejects the world of love and adopts the world of cruelty. Another doctor named Truscott also examines whether Jack is normal or not. Jack influences Truscott easily when he states: “Our country’s being destroyed before our e-e-eyes. You’re MOCKED in the Strand if you speak of patriotism and the old Queen. Discipline’s gone. They’re sapping the foundations of our society with their adultery and fornication! The barbarians are waiting outside with their chaos, anarchy, homosexuality and worse!” (RC 87). The ‘Old Queen’ referred to by Jack is Queen Victoria because Jack becomes very conservative in his moral outlook. Hearing Jack’s advocating of his class principles, Truscott determines that Jack is normal. After Truscott leaves, Jack says: “...I AM GOD. Not the God of Love but God Almighty. God the Law-Giver, Chastiser and Judge...I’ve finally been processed into right-thinking power. They made me adjust to modern times. This is 1888 isn’t it? I knew I was Jack...Jack the Ripper!..Mary, Annie, Elizabeth, Catherine, Marie Kelly” (Barnes, 1996, p. 90). Jack who thinks he is the God of Justice and Jack the Ripper is pronounced normal by Truscott and by Dr. Herder. This reveals the unreliability of the ‘Master in Lunacy’ as an institution and of Dr. Herder as a man of science. Dr. Herder, Sackstead and McKyle convince Jack that the world is a cruel one without love in it and they call it a cure.

Jack judges people around him because he thinks of himself as the ‘God of Chastiser’ and the ‘God of Justice’. He sees himself free to do anything. For instance, Jack kills

Claire as he regards her attempting to make love with him as immoral. When Claire kisses Jack, the stage changes into a nineteenth-century slum street in Whitechapel. It is described as follows: “A dark huddle of filthy houses, broken doors, windows stuffed with paper. Beyond, an impression of dark alleys, low arches, row upon row of lodging houses...Drunken singing and street cries can be heard off and the clip-clop of a horse-drawn van over cobbles” (Barnes, 1996, p. 94). This detailed description of the street is a factor of the realistic style, whereas Jack utters meaningless words such as “Suuuuck. Grahhhh. Spinkkk. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, against God. Labia, foreskin, testicles, scrotum...Orgasm, coitus, copulation, fornication. Gangrened shoulder of sex. If it offends. Tear. Tear. Spill the seed, gut-slime” (Barnes, 1996, p. 98). His speech becomes disordered again. Claire does not like these words and asks Jack to kiss her. As he does, Jack plunges his knife into her stomach imagining her as a prostitute but also the wife of his uncle. Whitechapel is the place where the real Jack the Ripper killed six prostitutes in 1888. The fictional Jack the Ripper as an Earl is therefore equated with a historical serial killer, as Claire a lady from the ruling class, is equated with a lower-class prostitute. The immoral and hypocritical nature of the ruling class is shown in this scene as Menippean satire aims to deflate the hierarchy between the high and the low to show that there is no difference between them. Both of them are shown as corrupted.

Tucker comes under suspicion after inspectors find copies of Lenin’s ‘Complete Revolutionary’ and Mao Tse-Tung’s ‘Selected writings’ in his suitcase. They react to these books by calling them ‘disgusting’. However, Tucker explains that he has just paid his dues to the Party and they have sent the pamphlets and a Christmas card from Mr. Palme Dutt. There is a criticism of the Communist party leader here as Tucker, a Communist party member, pays his dues and gets only a Christmas card from the leader of the Communist Party. As a Menippean satire, the play satirizes not only the leaders of the ruling class but also the leaders of the Communist party. In addition to these books, Grace finds a photo in Tucker’s suitcase and turning it round and round, she asks: “How the devil did she get into that position” (Barnes, 1996, p. 107), which is an exemplification of the medley of serious and frivolous. While there is an intense atmosphere on the stage as they are searching the murderer there is also comic element, the photo. Tucker is found guilty after Jack says that he heard Tucker’s voice in the drawing room before Claire was killed. This parody of detective story as a genre recalls the biggest cliché of detective stories, that is, ‘The Butler done it’. Instead of looking further for the murderer, they detain Tucker for an absurd reason and they are convinced that Tucker is the murderer after Jack says that he heard Tucker’s voice. The two inspectors are ridiculed in this scene because they do not conduct the case scientifically, but accept Jack’s testimony and arrest Tucker. Thus, the innocent Tucker is arrested while the real murderer testifies against him, and justice is perverted by Jack’s self-interest. Testimony of Jack, as a member of the ruling class, assumes the role of law. The absence of ordered values in such a convoluted situation brings comedy close to potential tragedy. In addition, these two inspectors lose their credibility. One wonders whether other malefactors arrested by them might in fact be innocent. Therefore, as a Menippean satire, the play reveals the institution represented by these inspectors as corrupt. Tucker asks for help from Jack, but he claims that Tucker has done this because of his envy, hate and revenge

towards the ruling class.

The only person who suspects Jack is Dr. Herder. He states: "I cured you. You could never turn violent. It's not in your illness. If I'd failed I'd know it. You'd retreat back into delusion. You haven't. You've accepted the world on its own terms. You believe more or less what other people believe" (Barnes, 1996, p. 110). Jack confirms that he has adjusted to his environment. After Dr. Herder blames Jack for the murder of Claire Jack denies it, saying "I'm cured, Herr Doctor, M.D., Ph.D. You cured me. I was a pale lovesick straw-in-the-air moon-looney. You changed me into a murderer, is that what you're saying?" (Barnes, 1996, p. 110). Subsequently, Jack asks whether Dr. Herder has evidence or not and when Dr. Herder says he does not need proof, Jack tells him to kindly leave the stage (Barnes, 1996, p. 110). Using the word 'stage' may be considered as another example of metafiction, which enhances the playful nature and carnivalesque quality of the play and challenges the border between fact and fiction as an example of Menippean satire. Then, Jack challenges him: "Physician heal thyself. Don't you recognize the symptoms? You suddenly know against all the evidence... This monstrous belief of yours that I'm guilty is a clear case of paranoia...If they ask about me at the trial, tell them the truth that I'm a hundred percent normal" (Barnes, 1996, p. 111). Jack claims that Dr. Herder has paranoid symptoms and, thus, the hierarchy between the doctor and the patient is subverted. As a Menippean satire, the play subverts all sorts of hierarchy prevailing in society. Dr. Herder decides that Jack is normal by explaining: "It's only a feeling. I can't rely on feelings. Everything he's done confirms to a classic recovery pattern. His occasional paralalia is normal. Even his trying to blackmail me into saying he's completely normal, is normal" (Barnes, 1996, p. 111). This scene is important in problematizing the notion of normalcy. Jack is judged as insane in the first act when he says that everybody is equal and everybody should love one another. However, when he kills Claire, he considers sex as a perversion and immoral, and blackmails Dr. Herder, Jack is considered normal. Thus, the hierarchy between sanity and insanity is broken down as Menippean satire aims to deconstruct the binary oppositions. Reason is not glorified and even madness may be seen as preferable after the cruel acts of a sane Jack.

At the end of the play, Jack makes a speech before the lords. Just before Jack's speech, the stage is described as follows: "Smothered in age-old dust, there goitered Lords with bloated stomachs and skull-like faces crawl on stage groaning, to take their places beside the dummies and the EARL OF GURNEY. One of them drags a skeleton behind him. The music stops as the FIRST LORD hauls himself as upright as his twisted body allows" (Barnes, 1996, p. 118). Barnes employs expressionism as a theatrical device while describing the lords in this way. That is, instead of explaining that the ruling class is outmoded and monstrous he shows them in this way. In addition, the lords are described in a grotesque way in order to break down the hierarchy between the high and the low and to break the aesthetic unity. Also, the lords are positioned next to dummies, which may be considered as a degradation of the lords by equating them with the dummies. The lords talk about the rise of immorality in the society and the need to restore flogging. Then, Jack makes his speech:

My Lords, these are grave times, killing times...There is no love without fear. By His hand, sword, pike and grappling-hook, God, the Crowbar of the World, flays, stabs, bludgeons, mutilates. Just as I was- is- have been- flayed, bludgeoned... (Recovering.) You've forgotten how to punish, my noble Lords. The strong MUST manipulate the weak. That's the first law of the Universe- was and ever shall be world without end. The weak would hand this planet back to the crabs and primeval slime. The Hard survive, the Soft quickly turn to corruption. (Shuddering.) God the Son wants nothing only to give freely in love and gentleness. It's loathsome, a foul perversion of life! And must be rooted you. God the Father demands, orders, controls, crushes. We must follow Him, my noble Lords. This is a call to greatness...On, on you noblest English. (Barnes, 1996, p. 118)

All of the lords appreciate and applaud this speech which suggests the hanging and manipulating of the weak and illustrates the cruel and selfish nature of the ruling class in a very overt way. Dinsdale says that the Earl is capable of anything. Sir Charles declares that "he's one of us at last!" (Barnes, 1996, p. 118). By saying 'us' he refers to class and normalcy and he excludes 'them' who are abnormal and the lower class. Thus, as Jack has turned to sanity and is now fit to be a Gurney, the maintenance of the conservative politics of the ruling class is assured. The ranks Jack belongs to are the ranks of his ancestors whose principles are outmoded and inhuman (like hanging) since the legislative body consists of lords covered with cobwebs and with skull-like faces. The acceptance of Jack in the House of Lords after his speech may be considered as a debasement of the ruling class because the ruling class prefers cruelty to love. In addition, the acceptance of Jack (as murderer) in the House of Lords is a clear example of Menippean satire subverting the hierarchy between the ruling class and the low people like murderers. In addition, a further example of Menippean satire in the play is when Jack the Ripper becomes a member of the House of Lords and the House of Commons accepts Dinsdale as a member. Menippean satire attacks all ideologies without making any of them superior to another. For instance, Sir Charles helps his son to get a seat in the House of Commons because Sir Charles thinks that Dinsdale is a disappointment and that it is too risky to put him into business. He states: "On time thought of bringing him into the business, but it's too risky. Can't have Dinsdale messing about with money. He's proved disappointing" (Barnes, 1996, p. 37). Thus, because Sir Charles does not want to lose money, he helps his son to have a seat in the House of Commons. Both the House of Commons and the House of Lords are shown ridiculous and corrupted through their members.

After Jack has finished his successful speech in the House of Lords he meets Grace. She tells him that she only loves happy endings but, ironically enough, she dies tragically at the end of the play. Jack calls her Annie who is another victim of Jack the Ripper. This is a foreshadowing of the murder of Grace in the epilogue, in which there are romantic words such as "I love him because he's wonderful...He is my Jack" (Barnes, 1996, p. 108). These words are derived from a song 'Along Came Bill' from *Show Boat*, a musical comedy. Although this is a highly emotional song, it is played here when Jack kills Grace, which is ironic. It shows the place of romanticism in Jack's world. Jack kills Grace because she has provided an heir and Jack does not need her anymore. By killing his lower class promiscuous wife, Jack aims to consolidate the class structure and a conservative sexual ideology. Therefore, the play may be claimed to be about the desire to preserve, its consequences and the violence authorized by right-wing tradition as represented by Jack. It is interesting to see that although the

lower class people, Tucker and Grace, are punished at the end of the play for their greedy nature and irrational actions, the members of the ruling class, except for Claire who either supports or disregards the ideals of the ruling class as she pleases, are not punished for their greedy nature and irrational actions. For instance, Dinsdale has a seat in the House of Commons and Jack has a seat in the House of Lords. However, if all of these characters both from the lower class and from the ruling class are greedy and act absurdly the class distinction will be meaningless. That is why the audience may not have sympathy with any of these characters, as all of them are greedy and faulty. As a Menippean satire, the play does not have any explicit moralizing showing all characters as faulty. As a Menippean satirist, Barnes shows the absurdities and follies in the society in a comic way and lets the audience judge the characters by looking at their actions. As a result, the play as an example of Menippean satire may claim to be highly entertaining as well as philosophic.

3. Conclusion

As a conclusion, *The Ruling Class*, as an example of modern Menippean satire, cynically questions the established values of morality and the superiority of Englishness and of institutions ranging from the Church to the House of Lords which represent the values of 1960s' Britain, by creating a carnivalesque context. The aim is to ask cynical questions about the idea of absolutes through parody and irony. Without offering any answers to the questions it asks, the play ends with a question mark in the minds of the audience. That is, the audience is left with a Menippean questioning at the end of the play with Grace's dying scream. Barnes only shows his despair and terror of this corrupted social system. The cynical questioning of the absolutes is achieved by creating a carnivalesque atmosphere as the aim is to reject a fixed and standardized form and to have dialogism as a result of the dialogues between different things. The carnivalesque quality in the play is created through the medleys of various literary styles such as dance, mime, and song; through quoting or misquoting from other books like the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Richard II; through referring to both classical literature and traditional songs, to contemporary popular culture and modern songs at the same time; through employing different languages like English, German and Latin; putting contradictory ideas such as the God of love and the God of Vengeance in the same text; through using different ideologies in the same text, such as the ideology of the working class and the ideology of the ruling class and through the medley of fact and fiction. As a result, the play has been considered to be comic and tragic; serious and frivolous; low and high, entertaining and disturbing as a work in the tradition of Menippean satire.

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