

# “Tea first. Then war!” - Alan Ayckbourn’s *Neighbourhood Watch* (2011): A reflection on Great Britain’s 21<sup>st</sup> century internal security policy and its citizens’ need for safety?

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## Abstract

*In a time when terrorism has become a regular topic in newspapers and on television, security appears as a recent and urgent issue. CCTV cameras and surveillance operate in a great part of western public space and life. This article focuses on the ways in which the radicalized internal security policy of the Bluebell Hill Development, in Alan Ayckbourn’s play Neighbourhood Watch (2011), reflects on Great Britain’s security policy and society’s need for safety and security throughout the early 21st century. Security policy is one of the main issues in the western countries of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The paradox of using surveillance - a restriction of freedom - for the protection of freedom can be seen in Neighbourhood Watch. The result of contradictory security measures, as argued in this article, leads to paranoia. Neighbourhood Watch functions as a mirror to present-day Great Britain’s security measures, while using the microcosm of a small neighbourhood.*

**Keywords:** *surveillance, theatre, paranoia, security, Great Britain*

## Introduction

The attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, were a huge motivation for several nations to increase their safety measures (Evans 2013: 1-2). As the sociologist David Lyon argues, those “[...] anti-terror initiatives introduced since 9/11 have also included mobile phone locations and message tracing as a means of both investigating and even pre-empting

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violent acts" (2006: 218). The attacks drew attention on a lack in western civilisation's security and thus led to an increase in security measures and surveillance (cf. Bauman 2013: 126-127).

After the Australian activist, hacker and founder of the online platform *WikiLeaks*, Julian Assange, released secret U.S. documents belonging to the government, he had to hide in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he has been living until today<sup>1</sup>. Assange's case has raised the question how far a nation should be allowed to go to protect its national safety, since Assange fears persecution by the United States of America that, on the other hand, feels threatened by the rest of the world after Assange's leak of secret governmental documents, which, again, proved that the US government surveilled private individuals (Synnestvedt Jensen 2013: 29).

It seems paradoxical that a nation's freedom should be gained by restricting the citizens' freedom and right to privacy. In his play, *Neighbourhood Watch*, Alan Ayckbourn deals with the problem of safety and the obsessions which are born therein. The result, but also the foundation, of the absurd security measures used by the neighbourhood watch, as argued in this article, is paranoia. In a funny while exaggerated way, Ayckbourn depicts the absurdity of Great Britain's nowadays common security measures and shows in what ways the fulfilment of security can lead to a restriction of freedom.

### **Internal security policy in 21<sup>st</sup> century Great Britain**

Before going deeper into the common security measures in Britain and their potential dangers, as also depicted in *Neighbourhood Watch*, it is important to define security. Dan Caldwell and Robert E. Williams Jr. define security as "[...] a condition or state of being free from the threat of harm. There are both objective and subjective aspects of this condition. Security thus involves both material circumstances and the psychological state produced by those circumstances" (Caldwell and Williams 2012: 7). Therefore, norms play an important role in a state's definition of security. In a governmental context, security is defined as 'internal security'. In its *17th Report of Session 2010-12*, the British Council does not give a clear definition of the term 'internal security', but describes it as a measure to protect the state against crime:

The main crime-related risks and threats facing Europe today, such as terrorism, serious and organised crime, drug trafficking, cyber-crime, trafficking in human beings, sexual exploitation of minors and child pornography, economic crime and corruption, trafficking in arms and cross-border crime, adapt extremely to changes in science and technology, in their attempt to exploit illegally and undermine the values and prosperity of our open societies...

The concept of internal security must be understood as a wide and comprehensive concept which straddles multiple sectors in order to address these major threats and others which have a direct impact on the lives, safety, and well-being of citizens, including natural and man-made disasters such as forest fires, earthquakes, floods and storms. (House of Lords 2011: 11)

In other words, the Council defines internal security as a political sector that is concerned with the fight against and prevention of several kinds of serious crime. Since crime seems to be largely supported by the development of technology and science, a nation's internal security requires increasing scientific and technological knowledge to be able to protect the citizens. High-tech measures such as placing CCTV-cameras in public areas and using x-rays in airports should help protect a country and its citizens and show the technological possibilities of the government (Nayland 2006: 1).

The internal security policy in Britain can also be seen as a symptom of modern life, as argued by Torin Monahan who wrote in the preface to the book *Surveillance and Security – Technological Politics and Power in Everyday Life* (2006) that “[t]he desire for security permeates modern life. In a world perceived as increasingly unstable and insecure, surveillance has become a key mechanism for contending with threats of terrorism and crime” (Monahan 2006: ix). Surveillance, therefore, has a calming effect on citizens. In a society wherein terrorism has become part of everyday life, it simulates security. Thus, besides fighting against crime, surveillance helps to calm the more and more threatened society, wherein it becomes an instrument of social control (Björklund and Svenonius 2013: 1). Furthermore, it can function as a deterrent to crime and thus prevent crime by discouraging potential criminals (Björklund and Svenonius 2013: 1).

However, citizens are not only watched by the government when they pass through passport control or while they operate in the public

space (cf. Zurawski 2007: 25). Since Edward Snowden's 'whistle blowing' scandal in 2013, in which he revealed the NSA surveying private households, it became common knowledge that governments survey their citizens in their private homes. In the United Kingdom, the mass surveillance that Wall describes is accomplished by "[...] the ECHELON network, a joint USA/UK government-run interception system that surveils large numbers of 'transmissions and uses computers to identify and extract messages of interest from the bulk of unwanted ones.'" (Wall 2006: 343-344) Thus the government tries to ensure security for its citizens by invading their privacy at the same time.

Just as internet access is monitored, private conversations on the (mobile) phone are wiretapped (Lyon 2006: 211). Therefore, the price for security seems to be the lack of privacy. In this case, improving technology does not liberate people, as believed by sociologists such as Georg Simmel (qtd. in Lyon 2006: 211). It rather limits the citizens' freedom. According to Björklund and Svenonius, the technological development that took place in the past seven to ten decades and is still going on today does not only bring advantages and technology that make life easier but "[...] there is also reason to be very wary of how ICTs [information and communication technologies] are deployed" (2013: 1).

In Great Britain CCTV is a very present and widely seen method of surveillance (Nayland 2006: 2). In a safety-seeking society such as Great Britain, CCTV-cameras are often not seen as an invasion of privacy anymore, since they serve the safety of the state and its citizens. Since, "[...] argumentation for the effectiveness of CCTV differ[s] between societies[,] [t]he general public has to be convinced that cameras have safety benefits and/or it has to be persuaded that video surveillance is a sufficient and necessary means of combating crime" (Björklund and Svenonius 2013: 7). Consequently, the measures for surveillance are possible and internal security is needed as citizens are longing for safety and security.

However, according to Zygmunt Bauman and David Lyon, surveillance is not a guarantee for safety and security for the individual citizen, since security nowadays is often defined as national security, which does not inevitably mean security for the individual (2013: 126). Many crimes the government is fighting against do not concern the individual citizen per se but the whole nation that the individual is part of. An

increase in security measures brings restrictions and new dangers to the individual and the nation, as “[...] often the attempt to achieve greater security has the unintentional result of threatening security” (Caldwell 2012: 253). A society becomes dependent on its security measures so that a lack in one security measure might cause greater harm to society, since it relies on the flawless functioning of security measures.

Therefore, internal security measures often function by violating the citizens’ privacy. Often, citizens are not only surveilled in public but in their homes as well. However, although citizens have to face the violation of their privacy, safety is not guaranteed for the individual. The extent to which the need for security can create an environment of control and paranoia is depicted in an exaggerated way in Alan Ayckbourn’s *Neighbourhood Watch*, which will be discussed in the following section.

### **Security policy in Alan Ayckbourn’s *Neighbourhood Watch* (2011)**

From the very first scene of his play, Ayckbourn creates an atmosphere of paranoia and vigilantism. The play tells the story of the siblings Martin and Hilda, who move to the Blue Bell Hill neighbourhood. After Martin’s favourite gnome is thrown through their window, Martin and Hilda mobilise the neighbourhood to establish the Bluebell Hill Development Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. Throughout the play, the methods of the neighbourhood watch become increasingly radical. This radicalisation reaches its peak with Martin’s death at the end of the play. When Martin catches an unknown boy climbing over the fence into his garden, he immediately believes the boy is a criminal and takes away the boy’s clarinet case (Ayckbourn 2013: 9-10). To protect his private property Martin does not ask the boy about his identity and motives for entering his garden. Later he finds out that the boy was not a criminal.

**Luther.** Ethan Dudgeon, the young person whom you set upon and robbed whilst innocently on his way home from a music lesson with my wife [...] Did you even ask him, what he was doing there, Mr Massie?

**Martin.** I didn’t get a chance to, did I? [...] (Ayckbourn 2013: 33-34)

The newly gained information changes their roles. Ethan, the boy, becomes the victim, while Martin turns into a criminal. This incident, therefore,

reflects the precarious relationship between citizens and the surveillance measures introduced by the government, such as body searches. While protecting his property, Martin violates Ethan's rights by taking away his property.

As stated earlier in this article, 9/11 is seen as a trigger for stricter security measures in the western world. Therefore, parallels can be traced between the real life events of 9/11 that brought about an increase in safety measures and those determining the establishment of the neighbourhood watch in Ayckbourn's play. As in the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, it was a flying object in the play that caused a stricter internal security policy in the Bluebell Hill Development:

*[...] Before anyone can leave the room, there comes a sudden, ear-splitting crash of breaking glass as the window is shattered and a projectile lands in the middle of the carpet where a few seconds ago some of them had been standing. **Magda** screams, **Dorothy** and **Hilda** cry out in surprise. The men express alarm. (44)*

This situation triggers a radicalised security policy in the neighbourhood and the declaration of war against crime and terrorism. The new security measures would cause more damage to the residents rather than prevent it (see Caldwell and Williams 2012: 253). A similar paradox, one might say, has been experienced by citizens in western cultures whose freedom and privacy have been restricted by security measures, as stated by Langdon Winner in his essay *Technology Studies for Terrorists – A Short Course* (2006): "Indeed, the institutional responses to 9/11 have caused far more damage than the initial attack did" (2006: 279). With Martin changing his attitude towards radical security measures (41), the play mirrors the western cultures' shift towards stricter security policies.

After the aforementioned incident, paranoia is revealed in the neighbourhood, which seems to be the main reason why Martin and a group of neighbours establish the Bluebell Hill Development Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. This paranoia goes hand in hand with prejudice against an estate near the Bluebell Hill Development.

**Rod.** The estate down there, the Councillor Mountjoy Estate, it's a cesspit. All the local scum gathered down there. Drugs, violence ... incest. (15)

The residents of the Bluebell Hill Development are prejudiced not only against the Councillor Mountjoy Estate, but, seemingly, also against Eastern European immigrants:

**Rod.** There's dozens of them. The country's flooded with them. Eastern Europe. Never should have torn down the Iron Curtain. Biggest mistake we ever made. (13)

Therefore, prejudice and paranoia are very present in the characters' behaviour, so it seems paradoxical that Hilda does not want the Bluebell Hill Neighbourhood Watch to be run on fear ("We never intended to run our neighbourhood watch scheme on fear, did we?" – 90). However, it is rather salient that the neighbourhood watch has been established by safety seeking residents out of paranoia, fear and distrust of people with a different background or simply living in a different neighbourhood.

Furthermore, distrust is shown not only towards other citizens, but also towards the government that is considered to be in charge of the citizens' safety. This is, firstly, pointed out by Rod, who on the one hand identifies himself with the government, on the other hand he criticises it for tearing down the Iron Curtain. Secondly, the government's motives are mistrusted: Martin believes that the Members of Parliament lack interest in England and its citizens, and that they only seek to become rich (8). Finally, Rod, who used to work for a security service (15), lost his trust in the police after they failed to help him get back his hedge trimmer, which, in his opinion, was stolen by a resident of the Councillor Mountjoy Estate (18-21). Hence, Rod suggests working without consulting the police:

We can do this without the police. They'll be worse than useless as far as we're concerned. [...] There are a considerable number of people – and this is a tragic reflection of the times we're living in – but it is a fact of life that there are an increasing number who have developed a natural mistrust of the police. [...] They no longer trust them. Been victimised once too often. Needlessly stopped and searched. Gratuitous traffic violations. Day by day the rift is growing. The breakdown of trust. Many of us are now fearful of the very people we are paying to protect us. (42)

Not only does Rod state that the number of people mistrusting the police is growing day by day but he also suggests that people are scared of the police instead of feeling protected by them. The mistrust of government and specific groups of citizens reminds of a populist notion. According to Ernest Gellner, populism is "[...] anti-capitalistic, anti-urban, as well as xenophobic and anti-Semitic" (Gellner 1969: 3). Therefore, their disbelief in governmental institutions, as well as their fear of people from other Estates and of different origins, mirrors the members' similarity to political groups considered to be populist.

Also, the restriction of freedom by security measures is reflected in the play by the limitation of space. To protect their private property, Martin and Hilda, who were fond of their view when they moved in their new house ("I'm glad we don't have a great high fence [...]" – 7), build a higher fence, at Rod's recommendation, as a first measure to prevent crime against their privacy ("Rod. No, take my tip, a fence. First thing you need. [...] First rule of security, get yourself a fence." – 15). The open space, which they can see through their window, seems to be considered dangerous, while the closed space, which they create by building a high fence, is seen as safe. The notion of a closed space being a safe place becomes clear when Hilda asks Martin why people would put up fences. Martin provides a short and simple answer to her question: "Security, probably." (7) The idea of building fences in order to protect a community today is widely connected to the US-president Donald Trump<sup>2</sup>. Although *Neighbourhood Watch* was written five years before Trump was elected, the depiction of paranoia and fear by building walls and closing borders is seen as a strong but grotesque security measure.

The open space seems to be a symbol for freedom. While Hilda and Martin live under the restrictions of the neighbourhood watch they have created themselves, Hilda seems to be freed from those restrictions after the fence is torn down. Only then does she live her homosexuality openly and moves together with Magda who "impulsively kisses Hilda" (104). Martin, on the other hand, sees his romantic relationship to Amy, which he lives out outside the Bluebell Hill Development, as a "Doorway to freedom" (95).

The restriction of freedom through strict security measures is addressed directly by Luther's notion of the neighbourhood watch. He sees



Bluebell Hill as a prison rather than a safe and free place: “[...] You’ve turned a nice, peaceful, respectable neighbourhood into a prison camp” (46). In fact, Martin and his neighbourhood watch build high fences and therewith turn the neighbourhood into a high security zone (47). The prisonlike conditions in the neighbourhood are claimed to help obtain security for the residents, so that they have the freedom of living without fearing violence.

**Martin.** Regular patrols, all for your own safety, Mr Bradley. So you can sleep peacefully in your bed at night... [...] Pensioners, you can walk safely in daylight on your own street without feeling threatened, without being subjected to nine foot high, obscene graffiti on every street corner! Parents, you can feel confident your children are free to go outside to play! Women, you now can walk without fear alone at night! (48-49)

According to Martin’s argument, safety brings freedom that, for Hilda and her father, does not exist without restrictions: “Unfettered freedom is the devil’s delusion...” (96).

In fact, it seems that privacy is often restricted by the Bluebell Hill Development Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in order to reintroduce values that seem to be “unfashionable these days” (3) and to accomplish utopian aims, like the ones Hilda mentions in her speech in the prologue of the play:

**Hilda.** It must be allowed to grow until every parent loves the child; every child respects the parent. Every husband honours the wife; every wife respects the husband. Till every neighbour reaches in friendship to neighbour. Till no stranger is turned away from our door. Till love becomes the only arbiter, and God the final authority. (3)

The re-establishing and maintenance of specific values is an essential part of the definition of security (Caldwell and Williams 2012: 9). The neighbourhood watch protecting those values mirrors the fact that different cultures have different notions of security.

Moreover, it seems that, as in real life, surveillance is more and more taking place in the residents’ private space. Martin and Hilda are interested in tracking the residents’ lives and are shocked to hear that

Gareth does not know where his wife is (51). Hilda even goes as far as paying someone to spy on her brother and Amy (83). Thus, just as the internal security policy of Great Britain surveils its citizens in private places by using spyware to gain information about suspicious citizens and potential terrorists (cf. Wall 2006: 342-343), Hilda is obviously following Martin and Amy. Her purpose is to protect Martin from Amy, whom she considers to be “the devil” (58) and a threat to the neighbourhood:

**Hilda.** What sort of example is she setting to the rest of Bluebell Hill? With her open drinking and her loose behaviour? Her appalling language, suggestive innuendos - ? What sort of example is that for our young people? They see behaviour like that going unchecked, unpunished and they say to themselves, oh, if she can, the wife of a committee member, if she can behave like that, then why can't I...? [...] (86)

Amy is acting against the values of the neighbourhood watch and stands for values which are not accepted by the committee. Besides losing her protector, Martin, Hilda fears that Amy could function as a bad example for young residents and cast a bad light on the neighbourhood watch.

However, the Bluebell Hill Development Neighbourhood Watch Scheme's main aim is to protect its neighbourhood from “weapons, drugs and alcohol” (53). After forbidding the consumption of alcohol in public, the neighbourhood watch wants to forbid it inside private households too (53). Besides alcohol, the neighbourhood watch is also fighting against “Anti-social behaviour” (60) and “Foul language in a public place” (61). Those aims indicate how much freedom is restricted by security. Like the government, the Bluebell Hill Development Neighbourhood Watch Scheme takes on a teaching role to keep their values. They forbid the residents an unhealthy and unsocial behaviour, and limit the freedom of making their own decisions regarding their way of life.

It does not take long until the neighbourhood watch becomes more organised and, therefore, more radical. Instead of patrols carried out by volunteers, they build higher fences and create a border control point that checks the inhabitants' “Official Bluebell Hill Development Identity Card” (48), while entering and leaving the development (62). Besides proving the intruder's permission to enter the neighbourhood, the Official Bluebell Hill Development Identity Card helps the committee control the residents by

surveilling their moving in and out of the neighbourhood (47). Furthermore, the committee tries to surveil the behaviour of its residents and guests by searching their bodies and bags (53). Therefore, the neighbourhood watch uses measures for controlling and maintaining security that are similar to those used by the government.

Another measure against crime and rude behaviour in the Bluebell Hill Development seems to be punishment. As a method of punishment, the Bluebell Hill Neighbourhood Development Watch Scheme uses historical instruments of torture, such as stocks (52). Although first sceptical about stocks, the committee decides to use them, even though not often enough in the constructor's opinion:

**Gareth.** The stocks, the ones I took time and trouble building. I'd like to say, I'm dismayed, not to say disappointed, at their lack of use. They appear, in my view, to be underused. In the end, it's not for me to say how or when they should be used. That's down to the D and P sub-committee.

[...]

[...]

**Rod.** [...] Gareth, when you've a minute to spare, you might consider reducing the size of those foot apertures. Some of these anorexic teenage girls they just slip out of them, walk away laughing, calm as you like. Makes mockery of justice [sic].

**Gareth.** (*Huffily*) I didn't design them for teenage girls, Rod. I designed them for – mature wom [sic] – people. (61)

This conversation between Gareth and Rod shows that stocks are even used by the neighbourhood watch to punish teenage girls. Thus, not only adults are educated by the neighbourhood watch to adopt certain patterns of social behaviour but also children have to face the same kind of punishment as adults. Furthermore, Gareth's original intention by building the equipment seems to be sexual. During his conversation with Rod, he almost expresses the real purpose of the devices by pointing out his intention to use them with mature women.

Besides the use of stocks, further methods for punishing are introduced by Gareth, who finds them in history books.

So I was wondering if you'd given any thought, you know – during your researches – into historic punishments, as to one which might fit the crime,

if you see what I mean? Fitted this particular crime. Her crimes. Whether you'd come up with anything, during the course of your research? (87)

This affinity to violence turns into a striving towards war when Martin's gnome Monty is thrown through Hilda and Martin's window. Martin reacts to this incident in an irrational way: "If this is how they want it. This is war. War." (45). Here, Ayckbourn depicts how radical reactions can evolve when values are violated<sup>3</sup>.

The values protected by the neighbourhood watch are part of a strong Christian belief, which is the confession of the majority of western civilisations' citizens. Hilda's speech at the opening of Martin's memorial does not only depict the aims of the neighbourhood watch. It also shows how important God and Christianity are for Hilda and Martin and, therefore, for the neighbourhood watch. In the prologue, Hilda mentions Martin being a devout man whose only aim was to protect his loved ones:

Is it not typical of him that he died protecting his loved ones, protecting his home, unarmed and unafraid, clasp[ing] in his hand the symbol of his belief, the final words on his lips the name of our Blessed Saviour? (2)

After his death, Martin becomes a saviour himself, being depicted as a Jesus-like figure. Martin is seen as a sort of messiah by Hilda and other members of the committee. Hilda's speech mentions that "Martin was a man driven by faith and powered by love. Love for his fellow men and women" (2). The neighbourhood watch seems to be dependent on Martin, who takes on the position of their chairman (92). Furthermore, while the Jesus statue in Hilda and Martin's garden is introduced to have the function of watching over the neighbourhood<sup>4</sup>, Martin takes on a Jesus-like position as the messiah and leader of the neighbourhood by becoming the chairman of the neighbourhood watch. Consequently he becomes the observer of the neighbourhood. Moreover, after Hilda finds out that Martin has an affair with Amy, Martin points out to Hilda that his relationship with Amy is of noble nature:

**Hilda.** How could you consider living – co-habiting with a woman like that? You? You, of all people? A truly good man grovelling in the dirt ... for that worthless ...

**Martin.** [...] Well, there are noble precedents for that, you know, Hilda. For good men to consort with prostitutes. Surely?

**Hilda.** Yes, maybe there are. But He only used them to wash His feet, didn't He? (97)

While Hilda is worshiping Martin as a good man, Martin refers to another noble man helping out sinful women. Hilda immediately makes the connection to Jesus, who helped out a sinful woman by letting her wash his feet (See Book of Luke 7, 36-50). Finally, after Martin's death, his similarity with Jesus becomes explicit when the Jesus statue is nowhere to be found.

**Amy.** Oh dear, oh look. You've lost your little man, haven't you? I mean, sorry, Jesus. You've lost Jesus, haven't you? You must miss him. I suppose they must have taken him as evidence. Ironical, isn't it? Mistaking Jesus for a lethal weapon. [...] (103)

Besides the irony that Jesus is considered to be a weapon, Amy shows how much Jesus is to be connected to Martin. One can interpret Amy's statement as a hint to Hilda not only losing her brother, but also her initial connection to Jesus, since Amy's expression seems ambiguous in the first place. It is not clear in the beginning of her exclamation, whether her "little man" refers to Martin or Jesus.

To conclude, Alan Ayckbourn reflects on the increasing security measures in western countries by staging the real-life situation of this macrocosm in the microcosm of a fictional neighbourhood. The characters react in a grotesque way which mirrors the real-life situation the western society finds itself in. Martin being shot in the end is the climax of the monstrous paranoia of our society. It is worth noticing that the action is performed by a governmental institution – the police. Mistaking a Jesus statue for a weapon depicts the government's paranoia, believing danger and threat is to be expected everywhere, even in a private garden, situated in a small neighbourhood. The paranoia of the microcosm is finally directly and explicitly connected to the paranoia of the macrocosm.

## Conclusion

"Tea first. Then War!" (45) This sentence perfectly describes the 'normality' of strict security measures in our western culture. While security measures

violating the citizens' privacy became part of western everyday life, in his 75<sup>th</sup> play, Alan Ayckbourn shows in a funny and exaggerated way to what extent the need for safety can lead to paranoia and the restriction of freedom for the individual. The play does reflect on security policies in the western world. Public areas in London are not only teeming with tourists, but are also full of hanging cameras. Private individuals are filmed, recorded and surveilled everywhere and all the time. Surveillance is argued for as being a measure meant to increase safety for citizens and tourists. In fact, under this pretext, the government is violating its citizens' privacy.

Alan Ayckbourn used exaggerated narrow-minded characters in his play to evoke the contrast between the security seeking, calm society and the revengeful and strict law enforcer. This absurd combination of middleclass society between tea and war shows the absurdity of the British internal security policy. Since paranoia and fear have come to play a major role in the residents' lives, small occasions such as the offence of the wallpaper colour or a broken gnome can both lead to war. Far from stating that the attacks on the World Trade Centre were a small occasion, the current paper hardly assumes that Ayckbourn's intention was to express such an opinion. Rather, it would seem that Ayckbourn is trying to draw the spectator's or reader's attention to whether all the measures of the current security policy are actually necessary to prevent crime and terror.

Finally, it is worth noticing that fear and paranoia have become part of our daily life. Security measures violating the individual's rights are their symptoms. Without the citizens' fear, increasing populism would not have been possible. Ayckbourn depicts the exaggerated result of a radicalised security program and provides therefore a warning which points out that it is not possible to be entirely safe and free at the same time.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> On June 19, 2012, the Australian citizen Julian Assange showed up on the headquarters of the Ecuadorian Embassy in London with the purpose of requesting diplomatic protection from the Ecuadorian State, invoking the norms on political asylum in force. The requestor based his petition on the fear of an eventual political persecution of which he might be a victim in a third State, which

could use his extradition to the Swedish Kingdom to obtain in turn the ulterior extradition to such country. (Schiffbauer 2013: Chapter B II)

<sup>2</sup> Trump is considered to have populist characteristics. See, for example, Stephen Collinson, CNN, June 6, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> When talking about the problematic situation in the neighbourhood, Martin also says: "All quiet on the western front." (Ayckbourn 2013: 97) This sentence refers back to the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) by Erich Maria Remarque, which deals with the cruelties of the First World War. Therefore, this is another reference to war, describing the situation in the play as warlike.

<sup>4</sup> **Martin.** [...] What have you done with Jesus? I can't see him anywhere. [...] Ay, yes there he is, I see him. In the shrubbery, there, peeping out of the shrubbery. What's he doing in the bushes?

**Hilda.** Keeping an eye on things.

**Martin.** He's Jesus. He shouldn't be lurking in the bushes [...]. (Ayckbourn 2013: 6)

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Cultural Intertexts  
Year IV Volume 7 (2017)

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