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《瘋狂森林》，《莫斯科黃金》，《桌子的形狀》

Staging (Post-) Cold War State-of-Eastern Europe**:**

Mad Forest, *Moscow Gold*, and *The Shape of the Table*

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Abstract

This thesis intends to examine British theatrical responses to the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the subsequent end of the Cold War. The theatrical responses were unique because they are immediate responses from acknowledged British political playwrights to deal with the (post-) communist Eastern European politics. Drawing form the particularity mentioned above, this thesis delves into Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest* (1990), Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton's *Moscow Gold* (1990), and David Edgar's *The Shape of the Table* (1990) to examine their theatrical interpretation of the political events. By closely reading the three plays, this thesis intends to demonstrate that, although from different perspectives and dramaturgical styles, these plays not only portray the revolutions but also assess the failure of the Communist-style socialism. Moreover, these plays explore the post-Cold War state of Eastern Europe. What replaces the Cold War ideological antagonism, as the plays depict, is the surfacing of other chaotic irresoluble tensions, such as nationalism, ethnic conflicts that challenges the completion of Gorbachev's ideal of Common European Home. Through the characters debating about their post-Cold War future, these plays also reveal the playwrights' consistent commitment to the desirability of a socialist alternative to the iniquities of Western capitalism. Finally, these immediate theatrical representations demonstrate the playwrights' protest against Thatcherism and their aspiration to assert the role of theatre as a public forum for political and cultural intervention.

Keywords: Caryl Churchill, Tariq Ali, Howard Brenton, David Edgar, British political theatre, the fall of communism, post-Cold War

摘要

這篇論文企圖解讀英國政治劇場於一九九零年代初期興起一陣對於東歐共產政權瓦解，以及冷戰終結的相關議題所進行的戲劇再現的現象。有鑑於這些戲劇再現的獨特性，本篇論文將分別處理卡爾・邱琪兒的《瘋狂森林》(1990)，泰利・阿里與霍華・布蘭頓的《莫斯科黃金》(1990)，以及大衛・艾德加的《桌子的形狀》(1990) 來進行討論。透過仔細研讀與分析，本論文認為這些劇本分別藉由不同的觀點與戲劇手法來呈現共產政權瓦解的政治變遷，以及反省現行失敗的共產主義式社會主義。這些政治劇作家也在劇本中呈現出後冷戰的東歐所面臨的族群衝突與社會危機。這些日益浮現而難解的衝突與危機不僅質疑歐洲共同體的理想，也批判後冷戰情境下毫無疑問地接納自由市場經濟的運作邏輯。藉由對資本主義的批判，劇本反映出這些政治劇作家對英國柴契爾夫人主政的不滿以及他們對左派社會主義一貫的關懷。最後，這些對東歐共產政權瓦解的戲劇再現也反映出這些政治劇作家致力於發揮劇場的文化批判與政治參與。

關鍵字：卡爾・邱琪兒、泰利・阿里、霍華・布蘭頓、大衛・艾德加、英國政治劇場、共產瓦解、後冷戰。

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Introduction

> Whilst dates are only hooks to swing catastrophes upon
>
> This was a year to carve along the spines of sentimentalists
>
> And determinists both
>
> …
>
> The roar of falling monuments is our culture's music ("1989" 56)

Howard Barker's "1989" is an impressive instantaneous poetic response to capture the cacophony of the celebratory and apprehensive mood of the 1989 euphoria. Indeed, the year of 1989 was a pivotal year in world history, witnessing the rapid crumbling of the Communist regimes and signaling the end of the Cold War. This thesis concerns itself with this particular transformative historical juncture through reading three British theatrical responses to the political events in 1989 and the issues regarding the fall of communism and post-Cold War state of Eastern Europe. The aim is to investigate how British playwrights related themselves to and interpreted the revolution in Eastern Europe. The works that the thesis intends to interpret and analyze include Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest*, Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton's *Moscow Gold*, and David Edgar's *The Shape of the Table*.

The history of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 is too huge and complicated a task to narrative, and beyond the scope of this study. Yet, generally it is assumed that the revolutionary wave started in Poland in May, where its oppositional organization, Solidarity, was legalized and permitted to join in the June parliamentary elections, and swept swiftly across the Soviet satellite states in Eastern Europe. Just within a few months the rigid totalitarian Communist regimes in Poland,

Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania lost their monopoly of authorities and were removed from power. That the abdication of the Communist regimes in these Soviet satellite states could be possible owed much to Mikhail Gorbachev, who became the leader of the Soviet Union in 1985 and initiated a series of structural, liberalizing reform to reverse Soviet's political and economic problems. Gorbachev's reform not only affected the transformation of the Soviet Union, but also triggered the democratization of its Eastern satellite states, resulting in the abdication of the satellites Communist regimes. The revolution in Eastern Europe in turn heralded the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the end of 1991.

The incidents of rapid communist collapse in Eastern Europe were sensational and had a great impact on the global politics, economic structure and cultural milieu. They confirmed the general opinions that the "really-existing socialism" was a failure.[1] The political revolution brought the post-communist states democratic elections, an opening to market capitalism, the lifting of restrictions on travel, the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and eventually the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact consequentially signifies the waning power of the Soviet Union as one of the two superpowers in the Cold War antagonism. As the Berlin Wall fell down, the Iron Curtain, the most graphic metaphor used to signify the ideological and physical separation in Europe, was thought to be lifted.[2] And the Cold War, which dominated the postwar global power relations, was assumed to draw

[1] Eric Hobsbawm in his *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991*(1996) would favor using the term, "real-existing socialism" to refer to the de facto socialism as it was realized in the world. Gordon Marshall in his *A Dictionary of Sociology* (1998) lists an entry, "real socialism," and elaborates that the circulation of the term, (or its varied forms such as state socialism, developed socialism, actually existing socialism) is an acknowledgement of the divergence of the reality of Soviet-style socialism from the ideal as interpreted within the corpus of the Marxist-Leninist classics.

[2] The term, "Iron Curtain" was widely used as a common euphemism for physical or ideological boundaries between the communist and the capitalist states in the context of Cold War opposition. However, as Larry Wolff demonstrates, the curtain image has its pejorative connotation for the West that behind the "Curtail" the communist Europe is in misery and backwardness until the Soviet's "totalitarian control" (1).

to an end.[3] There appeared to be no ideological opposition between capitalism and communism, and the militant condition between the Soviet Union and the United States was ameliorated. The once "split" worlds were to become a unified one, leaving the United States as the sole dominant world power, waving its triumphant flag and proclaiming democracy and free-market capitalism. The crumbling of Communist regimes and the end of Cold War not only had a great impact on the international relations, remapping the geopolitics of world order, but also made the discourse of communism and socialism obsolete and embarrassing while parliamentary democracy and free-market capitalism, backed up by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, became the preferable vocabulary and "politically correct" ideology.[4] For those who were committed to the ideal of socialism, or stayed aligned with the Left, however, the demise of the really-existing socialism and the subsequent prevalence of neoliberal capitalism and economic globalization pushed them to the margin and forced them to contemplate what might be saved from the wreckage and speculate on the future of socialism.[5]

The momentous political upheavals and the consequential new historical conditions have drawn a number of leading political figures, as well as public commentators and scholars, to comment on the development of the events, to evaluate the scale of the impact, and to predict the future course of world history. In the terrain

[3] The so-called Cold War is not a real war in its traditional sense, but a common phrase to describe the evolving global conflict from 1945 to 1990. According to Eric Hobsbawm, the Cold War refers to "the constant confrontation of the two superpowers which emerged from the Second World War" (226). The "two superpowers" refer to the United States and the Soviet Union, and the "constant confrontation" means ideological opposition (communism vs. capitalism) and weaponry completion with the haunting nuclear annihilation that threatened the world.

[4] Without envisioning other possible alternatives to the western democracy, Francis Fukuyama in his *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), contends that the end of Cold War marks the demise of socialism as an alternative to liberal democracy and to capitalism, and proposes his version of the progress of history: "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (4)

[5] For example, David Harvey follows Marxist's dialectics and social class to criticize neo-liberalism and economic globalization which favors the mode of non-interventionist, free-market capitalism and will result in recreating a class distinct through what he calls, "Accumulation by Dispossession" (137-82).

of creative literary and cultural production, the fall of communism and the subsequent changes also left their footprints. A number of creative writings were generated to participate in the project of documenting the events and discovering the implications revolving around the post-Cold War and post-communist conditions. Take a few British narratives for example, Julian Barnes wrote a short novel, *The Procupine* (1992), which deals with the issues of de-communization and nationalism through the depiction of the fictional trial of a deposed Communist Party leader. Malcolm Bradbury wrote *Doctor Criminale* (1992), an initiation story that explores the post-communist moral ambiguities through the portrayal of a young London writer who travels across Eastern Europe to research on the famous Hungarian philosopher Bazlo Criminale. Jason Goodwin's travelogue, *On Foot to the Golden Horn: A Walk to Istanbul* (1993), describes the struggle and dilemma post-communist Eastern European nations had to face through the recount of his journey across the region to "the city of golden horn." As Malcolm Bradbury expressed in a conference in 1993, these writings were intended to explore "the vocabulary of the great difference," that is, to develop a set of discourse that could explain the new historical condition and shed light on our understanding of what happened to the significant historic juncture (27). These aforementioned narratives not only reveal how the British writers contemplate on the evolving conditions of post-communist Eastern Europe, but also show the writers' intention to be involved in the great momentum of historical change through literary creation.

The British political theatre also asserted its role as an important public forum through its immediate and enthusiastic dramatic responses to interpret and comment on the current political events.[6] Just within a month of the violent toppling of

[6] Since every performance could have political implication and be political, Michael Patterson defines the term, "political theatre," to refer to a specific kind of theatre in his *Strategies of Political Theatre* (2003). According to him, political theatre "not only depicts social interaction and political

Romanian communist dictator, Nicolae Ceauşescu, Caryl Churchill, one of the most acclaimed feminist socialist playwrights, was requested to join in a project to document the Romanian upheavals and the turmoil of the aftermath. The Romanian project turned up into a play called *Mad Forest* and was premiered on 25 June 1990 at the Central School of Speech and Drama, London. Apart from Caryl Churchill, Howard Brenton, another distinguished political playwright, felt excited about the state of the world and decided to forge a theatrical response to the waning of Soviet communism with Tariq Ali, a renowned Leftist political commentator. The result of their collaboration was *Moscow Gold*, a play about Gorbachev and the uncontrollable consequences of his liberalizing reform. Produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company, the play opened on 20 September 1990. As active and prolific as Churchill and Brenton, David Edgar was not absent in the rush of dramatizing the current political events and started his trilogy of political plays set in Eastern Europe. His *The Shape of the Table*, the first of his trilogy, attempts to tease out the similar historical process of the revolutions through fictionalizing the setting.[7] Edgar's play had its first night on 8 November 1990 to commemorate the first anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Since the initial thrust of staging the revolutionary events in 1990, there has been a noticeable proliferation of plays dealing with the post-communist transformations and the lingering communist legacies in Eastern Europe in British theatre.[8]

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events but implies the possibility of radical change on socialist lines" (3-4) In other words, any theatre practioners who attend to political theatre join in the project of using the media to promulgate socialist alternatives, and to raise the audience's political awareness of the injustices of capitalist society so as to expect any radical changes would take place.

[7] Edgar's trilogy of Eastern European plays includes *The Shape of the Table* (1990), *Pentecost* (1995), and *The Prisoner's Dilemma* (2001). The three plays all tackles the social and political upheavals in Eastern Europe since 1989 through fictional settings.

[8] A brief list of works by British playwrights about the politics in post-communist Eastern Europe and the region's communist legacies might include from much discussed *Berlin Bertie* (Howard Brenton 1992), *Pentecost* (David Edgar 1994), *Europe* (David Greig 1993), *Far Away* (Caryl Churchill 2000), *The Prisoner's Dilemma* (David Edgar 2001) to less publicized *Nearly Siberia* (Carol Rumens 1989), *Gorbi and the Dragon* (Paul Stebbings and Phil Smith 1991), *Brezhnev's Children* (Olwen

The popularity of dramatizing the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and its post-communist state has been discerned by Stanton B. Garner Jr. In a play review, he comments that "not since 1968 have events outside England furnished such an impetus for British Drama" (267). Garner's remark is an interesting observation. While recognizing the particularity of the "Eastern Europe" plays, his remark suggests a received assumption of the development of contemporary British theatre/drama. First, it acknowledges the influence of the May événements on British theatre.[9] As Howard Brenton defined the near-revolution of the événements in Paris as "a great watershed," the optimism and radical vision in Paris inspired some British playwrights to re-envision the revolutionary possibility (qtd. in Trussler 96). David Edgar also assessed the événements, attributing "the growth of the socialist theatre movement in Britain" to 1968 (qtd. in Itzin xiv). Despite acknowledging the impact of French événements on politicizing British playwrights and encouraging their endeavor for socialist and political theatre, Garner's remark hints on one intrinsic nature of British theatre, that is, it tended to disregard the issues happening outside British Isles in favor of dealing with British domestic social and political subjects. Thus, his remark calls our attention to one prevalent "British" dramatic genre developed in the 1970s. This genre is publicized and circulated through the term, "state-of-the-nation play,"[10] and a group of playwrights, such as Howard Brenton, David Edgar, David Hare, and Trevor Griffiths, are known for their state-of-the-nation

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Wynmark 1991), *Retreat from Moscow* (Don Taylor 1993), *Mrs. Ceauşescu's Organization of Love* (Phil Smith 1993), *Misha's Party* (Richard Nelson 1993), and *Romania's Baby* (Michael Wicherek 1993).

[9] The May événments refers to the large spontaneous general strike and a series of student protests in Paris in the summer of 1968. The activism extended into other French cities, and eventually a national strike in June almost brought the de Gaulle government to collapse.

[10] Although there is no established formal definition of the term, the plays that critics tend to classify into this category share some common features. According to Dan Rebellato, state-of-the nation plays tend to have a last cast and employ epic time-spans with "a panoramic range of public (and sometimes private) setting," and they are usually performed in large theatres, preferably those with a national profile (246).

plays. Combining the merits of agitprop and realism to create “a synthesis of individual motives and societal forces”, the state-of-the-nation play has the ability to hold the personal and the public together and is used by playwrights to conduct inquires into British national, political, economic and social issues (Rebellato 248). Thus, as Michael Billington appreciates, the state-of-the-nation play could best reflect “the mood of the nation” (“Lifting”). However, the collapse of communism in Europe and the subsequent political and social transformation drove some of the British playwrights away from the terrain of the state-of-the-nation play to concern themselves with the events in Eastern Europe. Their dramatic representations of the fall of communism do not fit in with the typical notion of the state-of-the-nation play. Their commonality of Eastern European settings and themes seems to form a particular dramatic genre.

In *Thatcher’s Theatre*, D. Keith Peacock devotes a chapter to investigate this particular dramatic genre. He interprets the phenomenon of dramatizing Eastern Europe as creating virtually “a sub-genre of political theatre” (103). His reading treats the appearance of plays about Eastern European politics as the transformative extension of British political theatre. According to Peacock, the rapid abdication of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 would to some degree force left-wing British playwrights to “adjust to the fact that state socialism had failed,” and confront them with a crucial problem of “reorientation” (103). Those who embraced the ideal of socialism had to contemplate “the efficacy of socialism” and “the future of socialism in Britain” (111, 103). Peacock’s reading of the phenomenon is illuminating and insightful because of his attempt to explain the emergence of the dramatic genre. However, his analysis of the play texts is limited to introductory description and plot summary. Although he claims that the left-wing playwrights are forced to reorient and speculate on their socialist ideal in the new historical condition, he does not venture

into analyzing the plays' complex discourses and their relevance to the playwrights' political reorientations.

Janelle Reinelt in her book, *After Brecht* (1994), also points out the phenomenon of dramatizing Eastern Europe, but her analysis of "Eastern Europe" plays is restricted to marshal evidence to prove her thesis of the Brechtian influence on British theatre. Later in an article, "Performing Europe," Reinelt relates the plays about Eastern Europe with the project of European integration in the post-communist context. She contends that the fall of communism has instigated a certain British playwrights to interrogate and intervene with almost utopian zeal in the struggle to "invent a New Europe" based on the notion, promoted by Mikhail Gorbachev, of a common European home (387). Though it is an optimistic reading, Reinelt's analysis encourages us to consider how the playwrights envision a post-communist state of Europe through their dramatic representations.

Another dimension of Reinelt's analysis is her assertion that these plays demonstrate the role of theatre as a powerful force for "democratic struggle in its own unique imaginative and aesthetic modality" (387). Indeed, since John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956), British theatre has managed to establish itself as a public art form to keep in tune with the flow of society.[11] However, the notion of theatre as an effective public forum was challenged from 1979 on when Mrs. Margaret Thatcher ascended to premiership. Thatcher's insistence on market principles and traditional Victorian value of self-help resulted in transferring the responsibility for many areas of welfare from state to the individual. The expenditure on public services was

[11] Two citations from acclaimed theatre workers are provided to show the conviction of British theatre practioners to make theatre a public forum for debating current issues. The first is from Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* (1968): "Today, it is hard to see how a vital theatre and a necessary one can be other than out of tune with society—not seeking to celebrate the accepted values, but to challenge them" (150). The second is from John McGrath's *A Good Night Out* (1981): "The theatre is, or can be, the most public, the most clearly political of the art forms. Theatre is the place where the life of a society is shown in public to that society" (83).

reduced, and certain civil institutions and state-owned companies were privatized. Mrs. Thatcher's administration seriously transformed post-war British welfare state and consensus politics. In theatre, Thatcher's monetarist logic altered the ecology of theatre. Insufficient state funding, the reliance on private sponsorship and the mentality of making profits refashioned the organizational structure of theatres and had a great impact on playwriting and the repertories of theatres.[12] The notion that British theatre was in crisis was pervasive, leading to two conferences held at Goldsmith College, in the University of London in 1988, and the publication of a conference declaration of protest and recommendation, signed by many leading figures in the theatre. The anxiety about the crisis of theatre forces dramatists and theatre practioners to re-evaluate the role of theatre and to contemplate how to save theatre from the wreckage of Thatcherism. If Reinelt's statement that British theatre has display its role as a powerful force through interrogating European politics is a reliable observation of the plays about Eastern Europe, her statement will imply that the playwrights have been recovered from the crisis mentality to some extent or have attempted to prove the efficacy of theatre as an important tool in intervening with current politics. This deduction carries some weight especially when we consider the immediacy of these dramatic responses to the events in Europe.

Based on the implications drawn from the critical works mentioned above, this thesis intends to examine what Peacock calls, "a sub-genre of political theatre," through reading Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest*, Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton's *Moscow Gold*, and David Edgar's *The Shape of the Table* respectively in the following chapters. The selection of these three works is a deliberate choice to suggest

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[12] The entire book of D. Keith Peacock's *Thatcher's Theatre* is to scrutinize and evaluate the impact of Thatcher's premiership on theatre and drama. Rather than being completely pessimistic and disapproving of Thatcherite influence, Peacock points out that theatre in the 80s witnessed the emergence of new playwrights. New voices from (sexual, ethnic, physical) minority groups were heard, new styles were tried, and counter-culture values were raised on stage.

their representativeness because they are written by established left-wing playwrights and were premiered (or had its first-time transfer) in the mainstream theatres in 1990, just a year after the revolutionary fervors. The intention of this thesis project is to explore how the playwrights concern themselves with the issues revolving around the collapse of communism, especially when the alternative to the really-existing socialist system would be liberal democracy, supported by Margaret Thatcher. How do they represent the failure of the really existing socialism? While recognizing the failure of state socialism, do the playwrights reorient or revise their socialist ideal through their dramatic representations? How do they envisage the state of post-communist, capitalist-prone Eastern Europe? How do they relate the issues in Eastern Europe to the contemporary British society? What are the implications of their immediate, responsive interpretation of the events in Eastern Europe when we read through the prism of British political theatre? In the following analysis of play texts, these questions will be observed and tackled.

The first chapter reads Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest* and examines her representation of the Romanian revolution. Based on the collective workshop experience and a field trip research in Bucharest, Churchill focuses on presenting ordinary Romanians' perception and reaction before, during and after the political uprisings. The study will analyze how Churchill represents ordinary Romanian citizens' living in hardship under the terror of state surveillance in a totalitarian regime and their experience during the frenzy of revolutionary moment. The study will also interpret Churchill's exploration of post-totalitarian freedom of speech. Along with her emphasis on ordinary Romanian citizens' experience, Churchill is conscious of her position as an outsider-spectator in engaging with the Romanian issue. Thus, the reading will analyze her dramaturgical strategies which help distance her and the audience so as to avoid reductionist, stereotypical interpretation.

The second chapter reads Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton's *Moscow Gold* and analyzes their depiction of the liberalizing transformation in the former Soviet Union. The play begins in the 1917 revolution but centers on dramatizing Gorbachev and the consequences of his *glasnost* and *perestroika* reform till 1990. Through depicting the intricate power struggle among top political actors and the chaotic situations experienced by ordinary Soviet citizens, the play displays the playwrights' reorientation of socialism. The study will evaluate their assessment of the Soviet socialism and illustrate how the playwrights envision the future after Gorbachev's reform. In addition, Ali and Brenton were intentional to make the play an event to protest the crisis of theatre under Thatcherite administration. Therefore, the reading will also explicate the playwrights' protest and their evocation of Meyerhold theatre for their theatrical ambition.

The third chapter reads David Edgar's *The Shape of the Table* and interprets his fictionalizing treatment of the political events in Eastern Europe. Conceiving that the process of democratization in the satellite states are similar in the form of closed-door negotiation among elite politicians, Edgar attempts to offer a generic representation through fictionalizing the setting. The politics of his fictionalizing strategy and its efficacy will be assessed. Moreover, the study will discuss the implication of Edgar's concentration on negotiation to represent the political sea-change. Finally, the play about the transition of power is wrapped in the discourse of fairy tales and anticipates the audience to view it as a political parable. The reading will pay attention to his deployment of fairy tales and construe what Edgar intends to convey through this parable play.

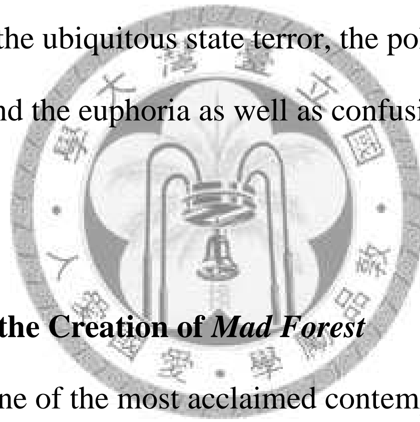
Through closely reading the three representative texts, the study is expected to help shed light on our understanding of how British left-wing playwrights integrate their respective dramaturgical styles and political stances to create plays that could

reflect, in Kenneth Tynan's approving phrase, "the forces of contemporary society" (248). Through their immediate dramatic representation of the momentous history of the communist collapse in Eastern Europe, the playwrights confronts themselves with issues of the efficacy of socialism and the challenges of post-Cold War conditions on the one hand, and contemplate on the role of theatre on the other hand.

Chapter One

Mad Forest

*Mad Forest i*s one of the first major British theatrical responses to the issues revolving around the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the end of Cold War. Just within a month after the overthrow of the Ceauşescu dictatorship, Caryl Churchill was requested to embark on a Romanian project. This project was developed through a typical Churchillian method, and the resultant dramatic piece is entitled *Mad Forest*. Through focusing on ordinary Romanian's perception and reception before, during, and after the turbulent revolutionary events, Churchill's *Mad Forest* reenacts the frightening experience of the ubiquitous state terror, the polyphonic account of revolutionary moments, and the euphoria as well as confusion in the post-totalitarian condition.



1.1 Caryl Churchill and the Creation of *Mad Forest*

Caryl Churchill is one of the most acclaimed contemporary British political playwrights, and the trajectory of her playwriting career demonstrates her excellence in creating theatricality as well as her firm commitment to socialism and feminism. In an interview conducted in 1982, Churchill expressed that her preference for "decentralized, nonauthoritarian, communist, nonsexist—a society in which people can be in touch with their feelings, and in control of their lives" (Aston 3). Based on this vision of an ideal society, Churchill attempts to offer socialist feminist analyses of the relationship between patriarchy and the economic system in her dramatic compositions to "analyze and understand the way in which power relations based on class interact with power relations based on gender" and to critique social, economic injustice and sexual oppression (Wandor 136). However, Churchill is not content with

the linear, realist dramatic narrative. Instead, she combines social critiques with theatrical experiments. She employs various Brechtian techniques to alienate characters as well as spectators in order to reveal the constructedness of social norms.[1] She also manipulates time and stage conventions to undermine the received notion of reality. Her introduction of overlapping dialogue and her incessant enthusiastic collaboration with figures from different spheres of performing art broaden the possibility of theatricality.[2] As a result, Ruby Cohn regards her as "the most profound and theatrical writer of her generation" (12).

Mad Forest was a very timely, immediate project that involved a field trip research in Romania. During the revolutionary fervors in Eastern Europe, Mark Wing-Davey, then Artistic Director of Central School of Speech and Drama, felt the impulse to make a play about the political events and thought that "Romania seemed particularly suitable, as students had participated in the Revolution to a great extent" (qtd. in Mitchell 499). Therefore, he invited Caryl Churchill to engage on a Romanian project with Central School students. The teamwork adopted a typical Churchillian workshop approach developed from Churchill's collaboration with Monstrous Regiment and The Joint Stock Company. This approach is a collective scripting process, involving actors to help generate the material for the play.[3] To familiarize themselves with the Romanian issue, Churchill and Wing-Davey brought ten acting students, along with other stage designers to visit Bucharest in the early April of 1990

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[1] In her study of Brechtian legacy in British stage, Janelle Reinelt considers that Caryl Churchill has "used a variety of identifiably Brechtian techniques to construct her socialist feminist dramas" (85)

[2] Caryl Churchill is known for her collaboration not only with such directors as Max Stafford-Clark, David Lan and with such theatrical troupes as Monstrous Regiment, The Joint Stock company, but also with choreographer Ian Spink and composer Orlando Gough.

[3] Caryl Churchill reveals the merits of workshop approach in her introduction to *Cloud Nine*: "The starting point for our research was to talk about ourselves and shared our very different attitudes and experiences. We also explored stereotypes and role reversals in games and improvisations, read books and talked to other people. Though the play's situations and characters were not developed in the workshop, it draws deeply on this material and I wouldn't have written the same play without it" (*Play One* 245)

and work with students at the Caragiale Institute of Theatre and Cinema, Romania. With the aid of the Romanian students, they set out on an extensive field work, including interviews, conversations with a range of ordinary people in Bucharest about their experiences of the events in the late 1989 and early 1990. Their visit took place at a time when the morass of political reality confused and affected Romanian people so that they seemed not to have a clear view of what had happened. A sense of confusion and uncertainty pervaded in the country. For ordinary Romanians, they were still trying to come to terms with the meaning of the revolution in Romania and to sort out the possibilities for the future.

What comes out of their field-work research is a play entitled *Mad Forest*, and the play slickly has the structure of three parts, each representing life before, during, and after the revolutionary events of December.[4] Although *Mad Forest* dramatizes the political events and its subject can be easily grasped as dealing with the failure of communism, and the breakup of totalitarian regime, its unique point of view and dramaturgical composition are significant and extraordinary. It does not represent any political representative or the violent revolution directly. Instead, it concentrates on the personal, the domestic, and the familial, and dedicates to offer a range of voices speaking of their observations of the political events. The first and the last part focus on two unremarkable families. Through dramatizing their perceptions of and reactions to events before and after the fall of the Ceauşescu regime, the play achieves in illuminating how Politics is exercised in everyday life. Sandwiched between these two parts, which both culminate in weddings, are eleven disconnected individual citizens appearing on the stage simultaneously and recounting their experiences from December 21 to December 28. A plethora of individual perspectives and narratives

[4] *Mad Forest* premiered on 13 June 1990, the very same day when miners entered Bucharest to crush anti-Front demonstrations. On 17 September, the play gave its first oversea performance on the National Theatre, Bucharest. It opened at the Royal Court Theatre, London on 9 October 1990.

creates a particular aural effect, that is, "an auralization of dramatic meaning" (Chaudhuri, 137). Tony Mitchell also observes the aural effect and comments that the "choral aspect" of the text, with its "fragmented structure" and "multi-purpose cross-casting," contributes to the "overall mosaic" (509). Apart from the text's polyphonic treatment, *Mad Forest* employs various Brechtian structure of scene titles, various gestic alienation devices, and nonlinear epic narrative techniques to explore "the complex, often discordant manifestations of historical/political forces within specific lives and relationships" (Garner Jr. 399). The personal, the domestic and the ideological are dramatized as being conditioned under various social pressures and the *theatre* of politics is played out in the "micro-politics of everyday life" (Sotto-Morettini105). Thus Janelle Reinelt contends that this play "shows Churchill's consummate ability to treat even inner life within an epic structure" (102).

In *Mad Forest*, the Brechtian devices are employed not only to illuminate the nuanced exercise of politic in everyday life, but also to break up dramatic illusion and to de-familiarize audience from their presupposition. As Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe* (1994) and Vesna Goldsworthy's *Inventing Ruritania* (1998) suggest, the repeated literary, cultural invention of Eastern Europe and the Balkans has contributed to the public imagination of these regions as barbaric, backward, and violent. These stigmatized stereotypes and negative images have been further plagued in the context of Cold War since Winston Churchill's "shadow of iron curtain" speech was widely publicized (Wolff 3). Of the region in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, Romania has long served as a particularly fascinating Gothic locale marked by tyranny, violence and chaos in the popular imagination.[5] What's worse, the

[5] Nárcisz Fejes explains why Romania became the fascinating locale of popular imagination: due to "its 'mysterious' lands…its metropolitan locations inviting foreign travelers and cross-cultural dialogue, its political atmosphere that is continuously heated as a result of the coexistence of ethnically varied populations, its membership in the Ottoman Empire, and its suppression under the

undesirable images were aggravated through worldwide circulation of the video broadcasting of the bloody street upheavals and the violent trial of the Ceauşescus in 1989, fostering stereotypes of "the way things *were* in the *other* Europe" (Kostova 88).[6] Bear in mind the danger of reinforcing the received stereotypes and sensationalism, Churchill inserts a tourist framing in the play so as to expose the problems of the West's reductionist stereotypical interpretation of the region. Churchill's exceptional deployment of a tourist framing will also be examined in the following analysis.

This chapter will read the play according to its before-during-after division because the three-part division plays a structural as well as thematic role to our understanding of the whole play. In his comparison of *Mad Forest* and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976), Tony Mitchell observes that both plays have a similar "before-during-after" structure by citing Geraldine Cousin's analysis of *Light Shining*:

> *Light Shining* begins with characters imprisoned within tightly confining ideologies and economic and social structures, and shows their elation and amazed excitement as these "rigidities" are challenged and loosened. As the characters take control of their lives the forward momentum of the play leads to an upsurgence of joy, which is then arrested and destroyed … Each character and episode has the charity of a snapshot, a brief moment of time arrested: each separate incident has its own meaning and resonance ... The "before-during-after" shape is created not

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Ceausescu-regime" these factors all contributing to the proliferation of works situated in the region (19)

[6] Ludmilla Kostova observes that by the time *Mad Forest* was produced, "the street violence in Bucharest and Timisoara and the Ceausescu's trial and execution had acquired an emblematic significance and were fostering stereotypes of the way 'things *were* in the *other* Europe…The world seemed to be witnessing a melodrama in which an evil dictatorship had been toppled and the oppressed millions had triumphed" (88)

as an unbroken line but as a montage of related fragments. (Cousin 20-21)

Each section of *Mad Forest* is devoted to different stages of political events and explores the predicaments and power relations which affect everyday life. As the experience of the revolution is staged through each character speaking his or her perspectives and desires, *Mad Forest* dispenses with the linear master narrative in favor of a more fragmented, episodic form and presents a series of personal histories.

1.2 Performing State Terror

The first section of *Mad Forest* consists of sixteen brief scenes that employ an impressionistic, cinematic narrative to sketch out the horrors and hardships of life under the Ceauşescu regime. Through the slice-of-life representation of two ordinary Romanian families, this section reveals harsh material conditions such as long queue, scarcity of products, school education as pure propaganda, and most of all, the palpable presence of state terror, including the ubiquitous state surveillance and the effective deployment of police state. What's worse, the various forms of state terror have left a traumatic impact on everyday life. The use of language is distorted and mutual trust among the characters is spoilt.

The omnipresent presence of state terror can be discerned in the opening two scenes of the play. The Vladu family has to turn the radio up blaringly whenever they want to talk about something sensitive while the Antonescu family can only interact with each other under the condition of power cut. The reliance on radio and power cut for frank communication suggests the presence of state bugging. When talking, they converse in an unenthusiastic, detached manner. The economy of their speech implies that the oppressed citizens internalize state intimidation in their daily communication.

The presence of state surveillance also makes verbal communication unreliable. Words may not be used as they are literally meant to be understood; rather, they are used deliberately to mask the characters' intentions. In a scene ironically titled, "Ascultați? Are you Listing?" Lucia goes to a doctor and asks for abortion (*MD* 19).[7] Aware of the danger of talking, the characters act out covertly to transgress the official policy. They speak a politically correct text on the surface while exchanging written messages and Lucia hands over a wad of money to pay for the abortion.

The discrepancy between talking and performing calls attention to the concept of Brecht's social gest. According to Brecht, "the social gest is the gest relevant to society, the gest that allows conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances" (104-05). The technique of social gest makes visible the inscription of ideology and economy in everyday life. Hence, the staging of characters queuing for meat and scraping broken eggs exposes the economic predicament in Romania, and disguised forms of communication reveal the characters' deliberation to elude a monitoring state. Moreover, the middle-class Antonescus can enjoy relative security and well-being because of their relation to the Ceaușescu regime while the working-class Vladus live in a constant fear and harassment because of their daughter, Lucia's decision to marry an American and go to America, which offends the Cold War ideology. When Flavia Antonescu confesses her disillusionment with State ideology, she cannot get any feedback from her husband, Mihai, and relies on talking with her dead grandmother. Though it is an unrealistic scene, Mihai's insensitivity and Flavia's reliance on talking with the dead insinuates the difficulty of having frank communication and the living dead conditions among the repressed Romanian citizens.

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[7] *MD* is the abbreviation of *Mad Forest*. In the following textual analysis, all page numbers from the play text are indicated in parentheses.

Despite the fact that talking is dangerous, the characters are shown to seize the opportunity to perform verbal resistance to the dictatorship regime and to challenge official mandates. As a young intellectual, Radu shocks a meat queue by whispering loudly, "Down with Ceauşescu" (17). Although he refuses to acknowledge it, this verbal provocation is the first direct act of resistance in the play. Establishing himself as a dissenter, Radu's covert rebellion is echoed in Lucia's transgression of Ceauşescu's policy of anti-abortion. Later, Radu exchanges political jokes with Gabriel and Ianoş in the public. One of their jokes implies that Ceauşescu is omnipotent and is responsible for the chaos he makes while another joke skillfully juxtaposes the scarcity of life necessities with the absurdity of Cold-War arms race. Still another joke tells of an angry smashing of a Securitate car because of an anticipated uprising: "I'm sorry, I thought it had started" (21). These jokes mock the ridiculous reality of life under the oppressive Ceauşescu regime and signal their anticipation for an uprising to removal the oppressive regime. In a familial gathering, Gabriel gleefully describes his success in avoiding succumbing to Securitate pressures on him to act as an informer despite that his shocked family try to silence him by turning on the radio. Unlike his father, Bogdan Vladu, who remains silent under Securitate pressures, Gabriel reacts volubly:

> …And because I'm a patriot I work so hard that I can't think about anything else, I wouldn't be able to listen to what my colleagues talk about because I work right through the lunch hour.' And I stuck to it and they couldn't do anything. And I'm so happy because I've put myself on the other side, I hardly knew there was one… (24)

His loquacious response proves that he can capitalize on the power of language to elude state coercion and resist to State's manipulation of blackmail. These instances of defiance against their parents' commanding and of verbal challenge to official

doctrine anticipate the open testimonies of actual resistance to the Ceauşescu regime in the second section of the play.

In *Mad Forest*, the depiction of state terror and distorted communication under the Ceauşescu regime is framed by a tourist text which works in a way similar to Brecht's placard. Each scene of this section as well as the last section of the play is prefaced by an actor reciting the title as if an English tourist reads from a phrasebook. These titles are required to be announced "first in Romanian, then in English, and again in Romanian" (13). The spoken titles provide ironic comments on the *gestus* of the following scene and the ironic contradiction between content and title creates a sense of estrangement, in other words, the Brechtian Alienation effect.[8] The Alienation effect is also achieved through the deliberate presence of a tourist figure. Similar to Marie Irene Forne's *The Danube* (1982), where an American businessman's oddly experiences in Budapest are prefaced by a Hungarian language-learning tape containing dialogue in English and Hungarian, which the characters repeat,[9] the constant presence of a tourist figure speaking out lines from a phrase book alienates the audience from easily absorbing in the dramatic illusion and leads them to be "critical observer[s]" (Brecht 91).

Mad Forest's use of phrasebook expressions by a tourist also draws attention to the ensemble's engagement with an unfamiliar place, in this case, Romania. As the director Mark Wing-Davey remarks:

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8 The most literal case of this occurs in the scene prefaced, "Are you Listening?," Another obvious instance is the second scene prefaced , "Cine are un chibrit? Who has a match?" (18). The preface anticipates the power cut that disturbs the Antonescus' evening work. Yet to light up a candle ironically signals the attempt to flare up a domestic argument.

9 Tony Mitchell compares the similar dramaturgical approaches of Mad Forest and The Danube to their Eastern European subjects, noting that both plays have "a marked absence of any direct portrayal of political events," and uses "an oblique, snapshot approach." Further, both plays avoid "linear narratives in their discontinuous, mosaic-like portrayal" and reject "Hegelian dialectical view of history" in favor of a feminist representation. (503)

> This isn't a documentary…And I wasn't interested in the actors trying to *be* foreigners. Much of the play is about a Westerner in a strange place: The phrase-book passages that open the scenes, for instance, are there as a reminder that this is simply a partial view; it's not *the* truth (Mitchell 502).

Wing-Davey's recognition of the impossibility of representing the play's Romania characters and situation resonates with the play's title and subtitle. *Mad Forest*, deriving from *Teleorman*, refers to the forest used to cover the site of Bucharest: "On the plain where Bucharest now stands there used to be 'a large forest crossed by small muddy streams…It could only be crossed on foot and was impenetrable for the foreigner who did not know the paths" (7). Alluding to the impenetrable quality of the access to the paths in a Romanian forest, the play's title not only suggests the difficulty of representing the subject by the foreign playwright and the ensemble, who are unfamiliar with the region, but also implies the difficulty of interpreting the indeterminate, inconclusive Romanian political realities. Moreover, the play's subtitle, "A play from Romania," stresses the play's engagement with place. It is a play whose playwright, along with the ensemble, set out to Romania to conduct an intercultural project, to translate the latest events for its English-speaking audience. Similarly, the device of a tourist framing introduces a spectatorial perspective for the audience to *read* the Romanian issue. The deployment of an obvious tourist gaze alienates the audience and prompts them to recognize that the representation is only a partial view which the playwright and the ensemble try to make sense of.

The difficulty of making sense of an unfamiliar place is further emphasized through the representation of certain unrealistic scenes. In the play, there is an angel talking with a priest; however, the content of their conversation is obscure and difficult to decipher. The enigma of their conversation becomes part of the discourse

about making sense of a truly foreign politics. Thus the ambiguous representation symbolizes the recognition of the difficulty of clarifying Romanian issues. Moreover, in a scene where a dog begs a Vampire to turn him into a Vampire dog, the Vampire is told not to appear as the assumed image.[10] The audience could recognize the Vampire only through its self-revelation that it is "not a human being, […] undead […] a vampire" (44). The unfamiliar appearance of the exotic signifier is an attempt to displace the stereotype of the vampire figure that is deeply associated with the region and has long fed Western pop-cultural imagination. Nevertheless, Caryl Churchill's decision to have a vampire on stage exemplifies the paradox of her theatrical intention to debunk Western's tendency to simplistic representation. On the one hand, the unconventional presence of Vampire shows her attempt to avoid reinforcing the received stereotypes and sensationalism. On the other hand, the presence of vampire suggests the inevitability of a Westerner to view Romania with an exotic gaze.

The first section of *Mad Forest* is unfolded through a tourist discourse, which underlines the nature of this project: to interpret the latest political upheavals in an unfamiliar foreign place. Through the tourist spectatorial lens, the audience reads the the hardship and distorted life under oppressive totalitarian state. The state exercises various terrors that traumatically have damaging effects on language, relationships and living conditions. Despite the fact that language is distorted and life is desperate under state surveillance, characters are shown to seize the opportunity to transgress rigid and repressive state controls. The ability to defy against official doctrine anticipates the overthrow of the dictatorship.

1.3 Recounting the Histories of the Romanian Revolution

[10] According to the "Production Note" in the play text, the Vampire should "not dressed as a vampire" (9).

The second section of *Mad Forest* is composed of fragmented monologues of eleven disconnected characters who recount their experiences and perspectives regarding the very revolutionary moments from December 20 to December 28. These characters are not the characters in the other two sections; instead, they represent a range of ordinary Romanian citizens from all walks of life: a painter, three students, a translator, a bulldozer driver, a Securitate officer, a soldier, a student doctor, a flower-seller, and a housepainter. Each character delivers his/her lines in English with Romanian accents and language inflections and behaves separately "as if the others are not there and each is the only one telling what happened" (29). Una Chaudhuri reads the composition as "a tour de force of symphonic dramatic writing" (154). The significance of such staging device is that each actor acts as a Romanian witness struggling to find a position in relation to the events and speaking out their moment-by-moment experiences during the revolution. Their discontinuous, interweaving accounts defy the concept that that history is a single, stable, authoritative master narrative. Histories are shown discontinuous, contradictory, made up of multiple skeins of conflicting individual accounts.

The discontinuous, overlapping accounts also create a rhythm which builds from fear and anticipation, to celebration and joy, and then to fear and bewilderment. Tony Mitchell regards the intricate three-part division of this section as "a microcosm of the play's overall structure" (502). In the beginning, everything remains static and "nothing unusual:" Securitate men keep "taking the pulse of the street in plain clothes with a walkie-talkie hidden" (31-32). However, the mood of expecting something to happen is established as people gather around to support for protest against Timişoara massacre, the regime's suppression of dissident demonstrators. When the radio and TV go dead on the 21st, they feel startled that the awaited thing happened at last. But no one has a definitive, omniscient view of what really happened, nor does everyone

is participatory and supportive at first. One soldier says that his army troop is fully armed but they are obscure of what to do next and have no idea of what has happened in Bucharest. One doctor reveals that no one know what happened even though “there were 14 dead and 19 wounded” (35). While one boy student is radical and eager to take part against the authorities, another boy student remains lukewarm and chooses to stay away. One girl student is forbidden to go out and could only witness the event through the crack of the shutters in her room. She accuses her father as a coward while he is told to confess that he would behave differently “if he was single” (32). One flower-seller is so scared and protective that she persuades her husband to stay home for the sake of their children. During the heat of bullet shooting, most characters decide to stay home with their families, watching TV and listening to Radio Free Europe to comprehend what really happened.

After the night of shooting subsides on 22nd , people gradually come to realize that “Ceauşescu is finish” (35), and set up shrines in the public to commemorate those sacrificing for the revolution. Out of patriotism, some even reveal their sense of shame for having done nothing and are eager to offer a helping hand and stay with the first people who make revolution. Since the dictator is said to be removed, people are free to say the forbidden line, “Down with Ceauşescu” and sing their banned anthem, “Wake up Romania” (36, 38). They are overwhelmed with joy and celebrate their post-totalitarian situation. According to one translator, their joy is beyond description that “no words in Romanian or English” can describe “how happy [he] was” (37).

After a short pause, however, the scenario turns dark and the mood of festivity disappears. The characters recount other terrifying shootings following the fall of Ceauşescu. A sense of uncertainty pervades and no one knows what happened and how bad the situation is. The soldier shoots blindly to “stay alive,” and the painter tries to act bravely “as a man” (39, 41). The terror and confusion, once again, prompt

some away from the very site of revolution, and stay home until the trial and execution of the Ceauşescus. However, the wound of the terror shooting lasts longer than the fall of the Ceauşescu regime. The translator feels his "leg buckled", and he "vomits and couldn't go out" for several weeks (39). More than physical discomfort, the traumatic experience of the bloody revolution leaves its mark on the estrangement of human subjectivity. The participating student loses his feeling ("don't feel scared") and becomes numbed when seeing a man killed in front of him (40). Witnessing a bestial shooting, the painter feels "empty" and doesn't know who he was. He even loses the ability to "paint for a long time" (41, 43)[11].

In this second section of the play, each isolated characters are drawn in a pool of talking, each recounting their personal experiences and perspectives. The composition of this section owes much to the process of collective workshop and a field work research in Romania. The result is that the representation of revolution is carried out by actors playing Romanians and reciting different versions of histories. Through the representation of the character recounting their personal experience, Churchill attempts to criticize the notion of single master narrative of official history and to prevent herself from committing the propensity for simplistic and reductionist reading of the revolution in the region.

1.4 Exploring Post-totalitarian Freedom and Chaos

While the second section of *Mad Forest* is populated by characters that are unrelated to the first section and recall their personal versions of the political events, the third section returns to the familial setting of the first section to explore the

[11] The painter describes a man shot in the throat in front of him as: "Some people couldn't look but I was staring, trying not to forget. I had an insane curiosity. It was like an abattoir. He was like an animal dying with no chance. He had an expression of confusedness. It was incredible he had so much blood. I felt empty" (41).

newfound freedom in the post-communist Romanian context. By dealing with the personal and domestic issues, Caryl Churchill attempts to explore the post-totalitarian realities. Rather than generating the grounds for a new stable political order, the revolutionary events are shown to spawn a series of doubts and confusions. A mood of disillusionment and a gradual realization that little has changed, along with the traumatic communist legacies and the surfacing racial/ethnic tensions, permeate this final, longest section of the play.

The apparent difference in the post-totalitarian context is shown through the language the characters use. Unlike the economy of verbal communication in the first section, each character now can speak their uncensored desires, prejudices and hatreds boldly. In the typical Churchillian fashion, the characters speak over other's lines, disagreement flares, and confrontation becomes sharp and violent. Mutual respect seems out of question, and harmony is harder and harder to reach. As the apocalyptic remark made by the Securitate man in the second section,[12] the newfound freedom of speech does not guarantee the fulfillment of communication; instead, it leads to the making of the irresoluble and chaotic post-revolutionary realities.

The play deals with post-revolutionary political indeterminacy through the recurrent questioning of the authenticity of the revolution. In the scene that opens the section, a vampire and a dog are presented to converse with each other. The vampire reveals that he comes here "for the revolution" (44), and he can taste man's blood easily because everything is in a mess. "Nobody knew who was doing the killing" (45). This ambiguous and unrealistic opening not only implies a mood of confusion, but also suggests the sense of doubts which persists to a series of scenes set in the hospital where Gabriel is recovering from injuries suffered in the street fighting.

[12] The Securitate man recalls his patrol in the street on December 21, and makes a apocalyptic remark that "How could they be made calm, what they want" (30).

Although Gabriel is established as the emblem of revolutionary heroes, he is uncertain about the resolution of the revolution and asks hesitantly, “We won. Eh? Ole…Yes?” (47). Later a string of alarming questions raised by an unknown patient directly heighten the sense of uncertainty:

> Patient: Did we have a revolution or a putsch? Who was shooting on the 21st? And who was shooting on the 22nd? Was the army shooting on the 21st or did some shoot and some not shoot or were the Securitate disguised in army uniforms? If the army were shooting, why haven’t they been brought to justice? And were they still shooting on the 22nd? Were they now disguised as Securitate? Most important of all, were the terrorists and the army really fighting or were they only pretending to fight? And for whose benefit? And by whose orders? ...
>
> Gabriel: Please stop. (50)

These puzzling questions appear to be undesirable and are to be silenced and neglected. However, like a catalyst, the series of confusing shouting prompts the young intellectual Radu to suspect the genuineness of the uprisings: “who was shooting on the 22nd? That’s not a crazy question” (53) and Gabriel to question, “Have you heard people say that by the 22nd / the revolution has been stolen?” (55) The controversy arises from the confusing political events and the unsatisfactory post-revolutionary political reality when Iliescu and National Salvation Front appear to be duplicating the political structure of the Ceauşescu regime, which in turns leads to suspicions and skepticism that the revolution is a coup engineered by Iliescu.

To reassure themselves and dispel their uncertainty about the authenticity of the revolution, the young characters make up a play mimicking the bloody trial and

execution of the Ceauşescus.[13] Although this play-within-a-play is set up to celebrate Gabriel's return home from Hospital by Radu, Lucia, Ianoş, and Florina, it is not celebratory in the conventional sense. The ferocious hatred is revealed in their playacting. During the climax of their re-enactment, they unleash their upmost anger:

> Gypsy.
>
> Murderer.
>
> Illiterate.
>
> We've all fucked your wife.
>
> We're fucking her now.
>
> Let her have it
>
> …
>
> Bite your throat out. (Mad Forest, 70-71)

Mixed with racial, sexual and violent abuse, the shouting unleashes their prolonged agony and continuing antagonism to the totalitarian regime. During their caricaturing, Gabriel notices that Ianoş has hugged his sister Licia, and bursts out a racist threat, "Get your filthy Hungarian hands off her" (71). Though he later remarks that it is a joke, the undercurrent tension regarding race and ethnicity cannot be concealed.

Not only does the authenticity of the uprising confuse the young characters, but the value of the revolution also bewilders their parents. Irina enjoys the apparent benefit of the revolution that "[e]ggs in the shops" (47), and appreciates the newfound freedom of speech (78). In contrast to Irina's appreciation, Bogdan downplays the revolution and shows his discontent with all the turmoil of the aftermath and prefers a more despotic leader:

[13] In this part of the play-within-a-play, Ceauşescu, played by Radu, lies still after the violent mimicking shooting at him. The sense of joy is interrupted by Radu (Ceauşescu), sitting up again and posing the question, "But am I dead?" The significance of this simple question reveals their anxiety that if the execution is artificial. In a sheer, powerful, "Yes," they get the needed affirmation and a temporal effect of theatrical catharsis. (70).

Bogdan: This country needs a strong man.

Mihai: And we've got one.

Bogdan: We've got one. Iliescu's a strong man. We can't have a traffic jam forever. Are they going to clear the square or not?

…

Bogdan: They're weak, aren't they. (77)

Although it is ambiguous whether Bogdan identifies with a totalitarian regime or just wants peace and order, his view implies that he cannot envision another alternative but retreat to the previous suppressive way to cope with post-totalitarian chaos. The contrast between Irina and Bogdan reveals that the status and meaning of the revolution in the minds of the people oscillates between two extremes. It is interpreted either as a radical change, promising the improvement of basic living conditions, or as a threat to order. This polarity prolongs to familial, generational conflict. Upset that the political structure does not change much, Radu directs his anger at his parents for their support of the Front, which he considers counter-revolutionary. He shows little sympathy for the predicament his parents would suffer — Mihai can no longer work on the People's Palace while Flavia might be transferred to the provinces for teaching Ceauşescu doctrines. When his father comments on the post-revolutionary confusion as "[n]othing is on a realistic basis," Radu loathes his anachronistic rhetoric (66). Radu also excoriates his mother for she once told him that she loved Elena Ceauşescu. Radu's clash with his parents reveals his eagerness to clean up the legacies of the previous didactic regime. However, the old mode of speech and ways of doing things

appear repeatedly, signaling that the lasting traumatic residues of a former totalitarian state cannot be easily swept overnight.[14]

The possible distortion of representing the revolution is tackled through Lucia watching the report of the revolution in the U.S. Unlike the other characters that have stayed in Romania and experienced the uprising themselves, Lucia, who marries and leaves for the U.S, could only rely on the transmitted videos to experience the events. However her viewing experience lays bare the reductionist tendency of mass media to interpret the event. The alarming patient warms Gabriel to "tell" Lucia what actually happened while Lucia complains that "they (TV) never showed enough" (51).[15] Their suspicion and discontent with mass media's reporting again serves as an indicator of the possible simplistic, sensational, distorting account of the revolution.

Churchill also uses Lucia's homecoming from the U.S. to serve as her critique of capitalism. Before the revolution, Lucia insists on marrying Wayne and pursues her American dream regardless of all the consequential troubles inflicting on her family. After the revolution, however, she returns home and decides to stay in Romania as to show her patriotism and make up for her regret of not being one of the many that really made the revolution. She also reveals her disenchantment with the American dream. Now her comment on America is cold:

> Gabriel: How's America?
>
> Lucia: If you mean how's Wayne he's fine ... But America. There are walls of fruit in America, five different kinds of apples, and oranges, grapes, pears, bananas, melons, different kinds of melon,

---

[14] For example, bribery is still practiced: Gabriel's father brings a bottle of whisky to bribe the doctor. The other instance is found as Irina's avoidance of undesirable topic by saying, "I used to say more with the radio on" (55), and Rodica's nightmare of bribing.

[15] In the hospital scene, Gabriel discloses that Lucia is coming from America, then the patient inquires if she knows what happened, Gabriel replies that she would have read the newspapers. However, the patient grouts, "Then you must tell her" (51).

> and things I don't know the name — and the vegetables, the aubergines are a purple they look as if they've been varnished, read yellow green peppers, white onions red onions, bright orange carrots somebody has shone every carrot, and the greens cabbage spinach broad beans courgettes, I still stare every time I go shopping. And the garbage, everyone throws away great bags full of food and paper and tins, every day, huge bags, huge dustbins, people live out of them. (51-52)

The landscape of America is perceived as amazingly prosperous, full of abundant material goods. However, its affluence is grounded on lavish squandering of resources, and unrestraint production of waste and trash. Thus, Lucia's comment on America functions as a critique of American capitalism, even if it symbolizes a desirable alternative to those suffered from the difficulties in Romanian context.

Another instance of Lucia unpleasant recognition of American dream is the familiar insoluble racism in America: "But I said to them you don't like blacks here, you don't like Hispanics…That shut them up" (53). The reference to the racial tension in America also implies the difficulty of disentangling racial/ethnic knots in the Romanian context. Although Lucia decides to stay in Romania and pursues a long-term relationship with Ianoş, her former boyfriend, a gesture of her expectation that their relationship will be "seen as something new" in a post-totalitarian context, her dream seems almost unattainable as well as a desirable new political order (59). Ethnic and racial difference gets in the way. Lucia's brother, Gabriel, disapproves her relationship with Ianoş because of his Hungarian ethnicity. His unaccommodating ethnic prejudice goes on to an open break in friendship with Ianoş. Lucia, though wishes to stay with Ianoş, is infuriated when Ianoş accuses Romanians of slaves. Ethnic and racial tension spoils mutual understanding. The rooted ethnic prejudices

and racial divisions, which have been coded in countless folk narratives and were once frozen under the Cold War opposition, starts to thaw. In the play, Hungarians as well as Gypsies become the target of attack. In a scene set in the rural landscape, the characters exchange their opinions and try to make sense of a mysterious murder. All the characters talk and overlap each other, with comments mingling with racial, political, and class biases. The cacophonic exchange disrupts the serenity of the rural landscape, and makes a sharp contrast with the next rural scene in which the young characters doze off on a sunny afternoon and make a series of wish list. The mood and tone of the wish-making scene is unusual. As Florina discloses her wish of "go[ing] on lying here" (64), which sum up the rural scenes, the double meanings of "lying" are symbolic because they imply the intractability of dreaming to doze on the lawn as well as to cover up the undesirable reality. The political discontent and ethnic tension permeate the whole section and are so detrimental that reconciliation and mutual understanding are unattainable.

The ethnic/racial antagonism exacerbates in the final scene in which there is a wedding party to celebrate Radu and Florina's marriage. Contrast to the ritualistic, solemn wedding of Lucia and Wayne in the first section, the wedding party in this section is raucous and unharmonious. The scene opens with Flavia saying, "What's so wonderful about a wedding is everyone laughs and cries and it's like the revolution again" (74). The speech compares the marriage to the revolution, anticipating the bespeaking joy and the future promise abounded with the idea of marriage and revolution. However, it creates a dramatic discrepancy. Similar to the political events that disappoint the characters, the wedding party turns out into chaos. As the scene develops, they become more and more audacious in their conversation and dare to provoke unpleasant sentiments. The Romanians, except Lucia, put the blame for current political confusions on Hungarians, and the presence of Ianoş, a Hungarian, is

singled out as the target of attack. Their conflict reflects the indeterminacy of the political event, whether "Hungarians started the revolution" claimed by Ianoş (83), or "In the roits on TV I saw a Hungarian on the / ground and Romanians kicking him" told by Lucia (83-84), or "That was a Romanian on the grounds, and Hungarians —" retorted by Gabriel (84). On the other hand, their conflict displays the nationalistic chauvinism: "If they want to live in Romania / they can / speak Romanian" (83) and tackles the unpleasant historical experience: "You were under the Turks too long, it made you like slaves" (84). Finally, the verbal argument bursts into a clumsy, farcical fighting until Flavia, the bridegroom's mother, reminds them of the decorum of the occasion: "This is a wedding. We're forgetting our program. It's time for dancing" (84). The characters pull themselves up and pair up to dance under the incongruous music of the lambada. The token sense of order is established and soon interrupted by each character speaking four of his or her key lines in Romanian. Again, they speak in an interwoven, overlapping manner similar to those characters in the second section. However, the cacophonic effect is stronger because the rhythm is built up from quiet and free, to angry and exuberant, to all talking at once. The sonorous speaking subsides with the vampire's last few words: "…keep moving faster and faster" (87). To end the play by the characters speaking Romanian is significant. The incomprehensible closure (to non-Romanian speakers) reinforces chaotic and bewildering situation portrayed in the play. This ambiguous ending responds to the mood of uncertainty and chaos as well as to the theme of dealing with unfamiliar place. The unfamiliar language de-familiarizes the audience and contributes to the overall thematic meaning that the mad forest of contemporary Romania is hardly penetrable and definable for the foreign observers.

In this section, each character is portrayed to cope with an unaccustomed freedom of speech which enables them to reveal their uncensored thoughts and

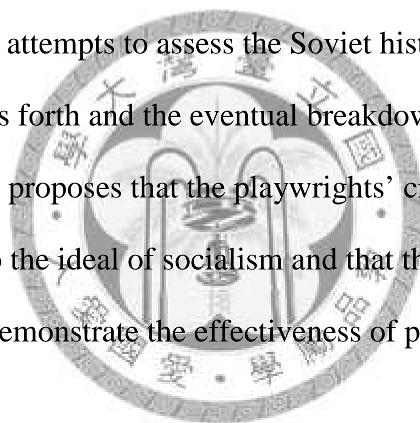
engage in political arguments and discussions. They talk about their sense of disillusionment with politics and reveal their unfulfilled vision that the radical Change is expected to bring up. Along with the freedom of speech, the characters traverse into the gnarled forest of internal ethnic tension. In the play Ianoş' Hungarian ethnicity becomes the scapegoat for their confusion. The mess and confusion are so traumatic that the possibility of reconciliation and a new order in the future are thus shown to be illusory. Furthermore, the fractured, contradictory desires write out the histories that should not be naively imagined.

Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest*, though a political play, eschews portraying real political figures to deal with ordinary Romanians' perception and reception of the nightmare of recent political turmoil. Through concentrating on the personal, the domestic, the play not only examines how Politics affects everyday life, but also manages to do a fair cultural translation. Aware of the danger of representing Other, Caryl Churchill employs various Brechtian devices and clothes *Mad Forest* with a tourist-text structure so as to de-familiarize the audience and to highlight the nature of representation. Moreover, Caryl Churchill presents multiple conflicting perspectives in the play not only to emphasize the indeterminate nature of the revolution but also to counter Western's simplistic, reductionist account. Ultimately, the play offers a landscape where people are left traumatized and bewildered by the political events and feel uncertain of a better future the revolution is expected to bring up.

Chapter Two

Moscow Gold

Moscow Gold is another dramatic piece that explores the issues revolving around the fall of communism and the state of post-Cold War Eastern Europe. Unlike *Mad Forest*, whose author, Caryl Churchill employed the workshop approach to deal with ordinary citizens' perception and reception before, during and after the Romanian uprising, *Moscow Gold* is a dual collaboration by Howard Brenton and Tariq Ali, and focuses on documenting the epic history of the former Soviet Union from 1982 to 1990. With special attention to the leading political figure, Mikhail Gorbachev, *Moscow Gold* attempts to assess the Soviet history and interpret the crises Gorbachev's reform brings forth and the eventual breakdown of Soviet Communist Party. Further, the reading proposes that the playwrights' critique of capitalism reveals their attachment to the ideal of socialism and that their dramatic representation is a deliberate gesture to demonstrate the effectiveness of political theatre.



2.1 Howard Brenton, Tariq Ali, and the Creation of *Moscow Gold*

Howard Brenton is one of the major contemporary British radical political playwrights that emerged after the Angry Young Men generation.[1] In the preface to his play collection, *Plays: One*, he expresses his conviction of "a rational, communist future" and makes it clear that his central dramaturgical concept is to deal with the theme of "how can we live justly" (xiii-xiv).[2] Believing the political function of theatre, Brenton integrates social criticism from a leftist perspective in his plays with

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[1] According to John Russell Taylor's study, Brenton is categorized as one of the figureheads of the "second-wave" new playwrights emerging after the Angry Young Men generation.

[2] "I have a Marxist view of the world [...] the western world is in thrall to a system that respects nothing but money and power, [...] our liberation lies in democratic and socialist movements, and if we are to survive and have a common destiny it will be communist" (Preface to *Plays One* xiv)

the intention of raising audience's political consciousness for future social and political action. Like many political playwrights at the time, Brenton began his theatrical life in the fringe circuit in order to reach new audiences. However, since the mid 70s, he felt that the fringe had become "a cultural cul-de-sac" and that the "new audiences" the fringe sought for were "as sophisticated and isolated from the rest of society as their West End counterparts" (qtd. in Bull 30).[3] Thinking of infiltrating into the mainstream theatres as a kind of guerilla action, Brenton moved to mainstream theatres with performances that were provocative and controversial in style and content in order to challenge perceived assumptions and complacency of established theatres.[4] Although his infiltration into the mainstream incurred some criticism,[5] Brenton effectively exploited the scale and facilities of large theatres to present a landscape populated by people of different perspectives and classes in order to criticize and satirize contemporary British social and political problems.[6]

Apart from criticizing capitalist, imperialist British society, Howard Brenton attacks the mainstream culture by theatricalizing the problem of representation so as to highlight the fabricated nature of history. Due to his reading of French situationist political writers' work, such as Guy Debord's *The Society of Spectacle* (1967),[7] Brenton believes that history is condensed into a series of two-dimensional images

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[3] Howard Brenton once commented that he would rather "have [his] plays presented to 900 people who may hate what [he's] saying than to fifty of the converted" sitting in a kind of "artistic ghetto" (qtd. in Sinfield 194).

[4] Notably, *Weapons of Happiness* (1976) is Howard Brenton's first play to be performed at the National Theatre, and this production inaugurated the National's new proscenium theatre space, the Lyttelton.

[5] Drawing from Julian Beck's remark, "Any art that the government supports is exploited," Alan Sinfield considers Brenton's infiltration into the mainstream theatre is as being incorporated: "Is Brenton gaining wilder influence at the National, or is he helping the state to present a liberal front? Who is using whom?" (194).

[6] Brenton defends his decision of moving into the mainstream theatres, claiming that "with fifteen (characters) you can describe whole countries, whole classes, centuries" (qtd. in Itzin 187)

[7] Brenton comments that "[the] situationists describe our world as 'the society of the spectacle'. There is a screen called public life which is reported on the telly and in the newspapers. This version of public life is a spectacle, it operates within its own laws. It's a vast, intricate game" (qtd. in Zeifman 132-33).

controlled and disseminated by mass media and mainstream culture. Thus he tends to expose the fraud of history by demythologizing the past and deconstructing representative historical figures. Because of Brenton's overt intention to disrupt the spectacle created and sustained by mass media and undermine public complacency, Ruby Cohn contends that "[of] the left-wing playwrights born in 1940s Howard Brenton has been most vituperative against mainstream culture" (56).

Moscow Gold is Brenton's second collaboration with Tariq Ali, a Pakistani immigrant, after their one-act project, *Iranian Night* (1989). Like the 1968 French student activity which politicized Brenton,[8] Ali's political activism was inspired by the revolutionary years of the 1960s, and he gained public profile in student movement against American imperialism and the Vietnam War when he was at Oxford. Since then, he has been associated with the New Left politics, and has become a vocal political commentator as well as prolific creative writer of contemporary world politics. Their first collaboration, *Iranian Night*, is very topical, aiming to intervene in the sensational cultural crisis, known as the Rushdie affair.[9] The idea of *Moscow Gold* was conceived when they were still working on *Iranian Night* at the Royal Court Theatre. Feeling unsatisfied with the rapid completion of their first theatrical collaboration, they decided to join hands again to forge a theatrical commentary on what excited them most about the current world politics—the drastic development of recent Soviet Union. After a year of research,[10] the Soviet Union project was crystallized and entitled *Moscow Gold*. The play opened

[8] Brenton reads that the year 1968 as "crucial…a great watershed […] it destroyed any remaining affection for the official culture […] a generation dreaming of a beautiful utopia was kicked […] kicked awake" (qtd. Trussler, 96-97).

[9] The Rushdie affair refers to the fatwa imposed by the Iranian mullah, Khomeini, upon Salman Rushdie after the publication of *Satanic Verses*.

[10] To do research, Howard Brenton made his first visit to Moscow and his experience in Moscow was documented in an article, "Gold in Moscow", collected in the appendix of the play. Tariq Ali's familiarity with the recent Soviet history, as in his *Revolution from Above: Where is the Soviet Union Going?* (1988), provides needed historical information to the play.

on September 20, 1990 at the Royal Shakespeare Company's main stage, the Barbican Theatre. Scheduled as the last production before a temporary closing of the Barbican for four months to protest against inadequate public funding, the play consciously and explicitly modeled on Vsevolod Meyerhold's theatre and employed an extravagant production style so as to deliberately make the season's closing performance a "noisy and memorable" funeral party (*MG* 89).[11]

Under Barry Kyle's direction and Stefanos Lazridis' stage design, 33 actors played 102 roles and a multitude of technique effects were used, such as a central mechanized rotating table, traps, and the flying of scenery and characters. However, the costly, extravagant production style left some reviewers the impression that it was not a wise strategy to protest underfunding while producing such a spectacular play. They assumed that the RSC would be able to live within its means if it could curb such extravagance. Clive Hirschhorn was one of the most critical in this aspect: "On the evidence of wasteful work like this, the beleaguered RSC should have its grant removed completely (qtd. in Peacock 106). Although the lavish production style drew much criticism, it was this spectacular effect that made the deadly serious political drama comic and theatrical and that the "funeral party" could be witnessed impressively. The theatricality of *Moscow Gold*, along with the playwrights' intentional politics, will be analyzed in the later section.

Moscow Gold is an epic and experimental dramatization of the changing events in the former Soviet Union from 1982 up to 1990. It focuses on dramatizing Gorbachev's attempt to reform Soviet's stagnant state economy and to salvage the ideal of socialism from the decayed Soviet Communist Party apparatus. As the play unfolds, however, Gorbachev runs into conflicts with both impatient radical reformers

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[11] *MG* is the abbreviation of *Moscow Gold.* In the following textual analysis, all page numbers from the play text are indicated only in parentheses.

and reactionary conservatives. His conflicts with these two groups govern the escalation of plot tensions. In addition to depicting power struggles among top leading political figures, *Moscow Gold* presents ordinary Soviet life through the close-ups of a Moscow family and several civil occasions so as to give coverage to the present chaos and bitterness in Soviet Union and to explore a multitude of domestic social and economic unrest unleashed by Gorbachev's reform.

Although the play's courageous attempt to pin down the process and changes in Soviet Union wins Michael Billington's recognition, its theatrical representation of the latest history leaves most critics terribly disappointed. In Billington's words, *Moscow Gold* seems "nobody's favorite play" (*One* 328). The critics condemn that the play fails to digest contemporary history and to analyze its complexities in a convincing way. Clive Hirschhorn regards the play as an "inept comic-cut history lesson" (qtd. Peacock 106). D. Keith Peacock remarks that *Moscow Gold* does not introduce any "new information", nor does it provide an "adequate portrayal" of the Byzantine political struggle in which Gorbachev was embroiled (107). Carl Caulfield regrets that the play does not give enough analysis of the history it evokes, which would run the risk of simplifying the controversial issues of Soviet history and "turning the play into an empty spectacle" (492). Caulfield's expression of "empty spectacle" implies his criticism that the simplified representation of historical events would reinforce stereotypical, popular images which Brenton himself would expect to smash. Both Caulfield and Peacock elaborate their criticisms further and infer that the nature of theatre is to extend our understanding of history. Yet their severe demand for an in-depth political analysis implies their indifference to the fact that *Moscow Gold* is after all a piece of drama and that it has to condense a wide range of materials into a two- or three- hour performance without sacrificing its theatricality. Moreover, their criticisms expose their tendency to essentialize how a play about politics should

be made. In his “Can Theatre Compete with the Real Life Drama of Recent Soviet History,” Michael Billington appreciates *Moscow Gold* for it “illuminate[s] specific moments in time and the burden of decision,” and argues that the role of theatre is not to compete with documentary reality (qtd. in Willcocks 11). Billington’s remark reveals a specific ideological understanding of history as the story of decision makers and powerful elites. Unambiguously, *Moscow Gold* is about the transformative moments of Soviet Union and the intricate political decisions Gorbachev is impelled to make. However, the play’s juxtaposition of family scenes and civil gatherings goes beyond this historical practice and suggests that the reality of any given moment of the past is constructed by a plurality of experiences that generate multiple, not singular narratives. Thus, while focusing on the determining figures that shape the course of history, the analysis in this chapter does not overlook the “plurality” of experiences and narratives presented in the play.

2.2 Documenting the Soviet History

In *Moscow Gold*, Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton endeavor to document and comment on the transformative moment of the Soviet history. They center their play on Gorbachev to explore the intricate political struggle in which he is embroiled. However, *Moscow Gold* is not confined to representing top political actors. In the prefaced “Explanatory Note,” the playwrights reveal that the play is “a chronicle of sorrow and anger, pain and despair, high hope and anxiety, frustration and fatalism as experienced by all Soviet citizens in Moscow.” Thus, in addition to dramatize the political struggle, *Moscow Gold* also tries to account for the plight of ordinary Soviet citizens as well as the depriving material conditions that Gorbachev’s reform could hardly reverse. The overall intention is to assess Soviet communism and to elucidate what makes the undergoing changes necessary but painful.

Moscow Gold opens in a boisterous and highly visualized pageant, which presents a brief historical survey of the Russian Revolution and the construction of the "socialist" state. When the curtain rises, a huge oval table is seen on the stage and behind the table sits Lenin in the upper centre stage with his fist raised. Soon after he has his fist flap on the table and announces, "We will now proceed to construct the socialist order," the audience witnesses a pageant of the 1917 Revolution, which represents the toppling of the Tsar's government (1). The pageant is carried out as "A Festival of the Oppressed," with clangorous, violent and chaotic choreographed sequence "like a volcano in constant flow" (1).[12] Only when Lenin establishes order and climbs atop onto the soldiers' shoulders does the pageant reach its climax: a solemn motionless tableau of a Meyerholdian pyramid is presented to the audience. The hubbub of the pageant reflects the riotous aspect of the revolution, and the waning of chaotic movement signifies the solid founding of a "socialist" state.

Having established the historical context, the action quickly leaps forward in time to 1982.[13] The leap of time symbolizes that the Soviet history has been frozen and remained glossed over since the Revolution. Yet, the frozen history cannot conceal the fact that the entire socialist cause the Revolution promised to bring about has been ruined and dumped. As the pageant ends, three women, Zoya, Katya, and Lena, move forward. According to Janelle Reinelt, they are like "a kind of chorus of 'the people'" and function to "relate individual points of view to the events of the 'polis'" (*After* 39). Zoya, who ages before the audience as the play jumps forward to 1982, gives voice to the feeling that the history of Soviet Union is a nightmare:

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[12] Brenton and Ali employ many aural and visual elements to set the backdrop of the pageant. For example, the strains of the Internationale, the appearance of red flags with the hammer and sickle, banners and posters of Lenin and Trotsky, placards of constructivist and other avant-garde paintings.

[13] Although the account of the 1917 revolution draws Caulfield's criticism that "the spectacle simplifies much recent historical reassessment of the revolution, which questions the notion of a spontaneous explosion in 1917" (492), it is such a brief account that not only establishes the historical context but also shifts the emphasis in time to the dramatization of Gorbachev's rising to power and his reforms.

> How am I what I am? What did I come from? The years of hopes and fears. Civil war. Famine. The Terror. Hitler. The lost millions, are they my family? Oh! The stark little sentence, the stark little phrase, 'the Soviet Union lost millions'… Does that mean my life? And now all that's left…is the mess, and we clean it up every day. (2)

After Zoya's speech, the three women go to clean up around the table and prepare for the 1982 Politburo assemblies. The physical gesture of cleaning up "the mess" around the table is symbolic. The "table" they clean serves as a key public space where government officials meet and make important political decisions. The "mess" that the women clean up could be interpreted as the debris of history made around the table by the Politburo members. In addition, the women clean "the mess" on and around the table every day, but they do not move or change the table. Thus, the presence of the huge table could be regarded as a token of indomitable Communist power. Moreover, while cleaning the table, the women amuse themselves with stories of the Communist Party's serious historical misrule. Their short conversation gives voice to the fact that the Party has turned out to be corrupted in bureaucracy and party privilege since the dreadful Stalin period.[14] As a result, the table, as an emblem of the Soviet Union, becomes "the tombstone of all the hopes and dreams" and the corrupt party apparatchiks are like "gravediggers" (11).

The representation of the 1982 Politburo assemblies, with the deployment of the Brechtian social *gestus*, illustrates the typical functioning of the party apparatus at that time.[15] Most of the constituent members appear to be "looking old and sick, smiles frozen upon their faces" (2). The image of a group of grave, senile Soviet leaders

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[14] The disappointment of the corrupt Communist Party can be perceived among the ordinary people. Zoya says that "the only one who enjoy the present are the gang who sit around this table"

[15] The text has Andropov make it clear the irony of the functioning of the party apparatus: "All meetings of the Politburo are emergency meetings. They have one function. Not to let anything emerge" (3).

attending the meeting suggests that the actual practice of Soviet socialism is conducted through the decaying party apparatus that adheres to an old, dead ideology. When Rashidov, the party boss of Uzbekistan, is asked to give a report on cotton production, he displays a hundred-page document and delivers in a superficial, eulogistic manner. As he drones on describing and analyzing the Uzbekistan economy, it seems that nobody cares about the report and falls asleep, except Gorbachev. The theatrical discrepancy is clear: while the politics is discussed, the action displays the stagnation and dishonesty of daily governmental operations. Ali and Brenton also present the corruption of the Communist Party through caricaturing threat and coercion. As a vote takes place following Rashidov's speech, Chernenko gestures for the wheeling in of a coffin, which symbolically suggests bully and intimidation. Every member looks at the coffin and silently "all hands go up at once" (4). No one dares to violate the leading instruction.

Gorbachev, who attends the 1982 Politburo meeting, is portrayed as a young, politically immature politician. Irritated and frustrated at the declining conditions of the Soviet-style socialism, he criticizes the wrongdoing of Stalinist inheritance which results in "[d]ust, dust, poverty and dust" all over the Soviet Union and blames the corrupt party hacks for making socialism "a dirty word" (4, 45). It is Andropov that coaches Gorbachev for the top leading position and provides timely guidance for later political reform[16]. With reference to his experiences of the 1956 invasion into Hungary and Khrushchev's failure, Andropov encourages Gorbachev to have "a new revolution […] a revolution from above" in order to "strengthen and safeguard the Soviet Union" (12). The lines of Andropov's instruction indicate that the Soviet transformation is a decaying party system trying to rejuvenate itself from within.

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[16] The playwrights have Andropov's instruction to foreshadow that, contrary to Boris Yeltsin, Gorbachev can grasp the immensity of the problems and has tactics as well as rhetoric in dealing with reform projects.

In Ali and Brenton's perception, Gorbachev is shown as following on the aims of Lenin and the 1917 revolution. When Gorbachev rises to power, he declares his ambition to "reconstruct the socialist order" and to "make a vast desert bloom, a desert the size of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" (14, 19). His schemes of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, however, are shown running into conflicts with both those who enjoy the past privilege and those who are not content with the pace of the reform. The former are the party hardliners, known as "Soviet nomenklatura" and the gangsters, know as Soviet Mafia (32, 16); the latter are the young impatient radical reformers, represented by Boris Yeltsin. Gorbachev's negotiations with these two opposing strands provide the central conflict of the play.

In the play, these party nomenklatura enjoy "the benefits of socialism" and would not like their special privileges to be taken away from any liberalization of Soviet society (22). The gangsters, who control the distribution of material goods and provide benefits for the party, also do not want their black-market operations to be curtailed and stay in accomplice with the party conservatives. Anxious about the impending loss of power and privilege, the vested interest groups conspire with each other to resist the completion of reform. Yet, the apparatchiks' reaction against the reform is not represented as simply "fearful of losing power and patronage" (62). What's more, they are shown concerned about more and more disintegrating state of the Soviet Union that Gorbachev's reform unintentionally catalyzes. In a scene that implies the plan to set up a military coup, Gromov, surrounded by these party hacks, expresses his opinion regarding Gorbachev's *perestroika*:

> *Perestroika* is a form of self-destruction. The ideological cement, the social vision of the future that united us, has crumbled into dust. Hence the retreat to nationalisms. [...] The attacks on the central planning mechanism has made the economy unmanageable. The

> Republics are taking over the industries within their territory. Entire branches of the economy are degraded. Our army, that guarantor of stability and sovereignty, […] is being torn apart by nationalism, desertion, breakdown in discipline. […] And the Party! The Party! This organism which suffused our country's brawn with its nerve tissues, reconciling a multi-national citizenry, this Party is being destroyed. And now the same firms and companies which constructed the crematoriums, and used the 'lower races' as slave labour to increase their profit margins, these same firms are now poised to enter Central and Eastern Europe. And the Soviet Union? (72)

Gromov' remark sums up their common distrust of Gorbachev's reform and their anxiety over the crisis in Soviet Union. The stability and sovereignty of a centralized Soviet Union are to be superseded by chaos caused by the rising nationalism and ethnic/religious tensions. They are also worried that the Party itself is under threat of losing its monopoly power, and that the abolishment of command economy would result in introducing a far more damaging, dehumanizing global capitalism.

Apart from the reaction from vested interest groups, Gorbachev's reform is shown unable to meet the radical reformers' demands. The playwrights single out pro-reform Boris Yeltsin, to openly challenge Gorbachev and his reform. Contrary to Gorbachev's sophistication, Yeltsin is portrayed as unable to "grasp the immensity of the problem" (19). Ignoring Gorbachev's advice of "[developing] a sense… of timing" and "[trying] to co-operate with people more," Yeltsin turns up in street queues to stir up people and excessively attacks the Party (18). According to him, the party apparatus is responsible for the Soviet economic as well as political crisis, "a disaster as great as Chernobyl" (33). Hence, he believes that the total abandonment of state command economy and the abolishment of party privilege are necessary.

However, his non-co-opted manners and inappropriate way of conducting things incur the opposition among the political body and result in his demotion. Convinced that Gorbachev's reform would not succeed, Yeltsin breaks up with Gorbachev's revisionist direction and moves radically towards capitalist economy. Thus Gorbachev's wife, Raisa comments:

> The old will not give way gracefully like the passing year. The new will not be patient. When winter will not go and everything remains frozen, spring can be ugly, and summer… Summer remains a dream. (42-43).

The reaction from conservative party apparatus and impatient radical reformers makes Gorbachev's utopian vision of revitalizing Soviet Union stay out of reach.

In *Moscow Gold*, the playwrights also dramatize the intransigent reaction to Gorbachev's liberalizing project abroad. Erich Honecker, leader of East Germany, and Egon Krenz are presented to denounce Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* in favor of the Stalinist suppression of political discontents around East Germany. However obstinate Honecker and Krenz are, they are shown unable to resist the tide of revolutionary change. In performance, they both wear attached flags with their names on, which seems ironically to remind the audience who they are in case they are to be forgotten and carted away with the debris of the crumbing Berlin Wall.[17]

The play ends its first act by reenacting the momentous moment of the collapse of the Berlin Wall. With the rendering of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, also known as "Ode to Joy," and harsh, incandescent lighting, a section of the symbolic Berlin Wall flies into the centre of the stage. Actors, now playing citizens of East Germany, tear holes behind the wall and jump through onto the stage. Their irrepressible

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[17] Similar stage effect can be found in the presence of Nicolai Ceauşescu. His presence is not a living person but a corpse dummified and operated by Victor, one of the old guards in 2:4. This theatrical device suggests that Ceauşescu is just a puppet of history, manipulated by the ghost of Stalinism.

excitement is displayed through their chanting chorus of "I want" (46). The collective chanting of "I want" reflects their longings for a decent life, right, freedom, and democracy, which are denied by the previous totalitarian communist regime.

After staging the sensational dismantling of Berlin Wall, the second act of the play deals with some of unbound forces and unintentional consequences that Gorbachev's liberalization brings forth. During the dispute between Honecker and Gorbachev, Honecker cautions Gorbachev that his reform "will unleash forces no one will be able to control" (45). Gorbachev replies, "When the ice melts what will happen to the carcass of the dinosaurs the cold has preserved all these years" (45). Appropriating the rhetoric of climate change, Gorbachev recognizes that Stalinism and the logic of Cold War has hidden or suppressed divided opinions and differences. Now in a time of *perestroika* and post-Cold War, the darker undercurrents that have been clamped down start to emerge.

The sense that a myriad of problems are about to surface can be discerned in the very opening speech that inaugurates the second act. As the curtain rises, Gorbachev is alone on stage and proclaims, "Come then, don't hold back. All out in the open. Misfortune. Pains. Indignations. Passions. Hopes. Loves. Hates. Illusions. Fear" and ushers in the "*perestroika* pageant" (47). In contrast to the Revolution one, the *perestroika* pageant is "chaotic, unfocused, bad tempered" and like "a market place," and has a series of confrontational protests (47). Disparate groups from all over Soviet Union are given voices to indicate the economic, social, racial and political crises.[18] A band of rock musicians, who have swastikas painted on their foreheads and sing "Freedom is a load of piss", prompt Gorbachev to embrace free-market economy (48).

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[18] The pageant includes as various social groups as possible to indicate a horde of problems Gorbachev's reform leads to or unleashes. They are pro-free-market young rock-n-roll musicians, two Azerbaijan separationist Muslims, two Russian fascists, four Baltic nationalists, three Moscow mafia, two victims of the Armenian earthquake, party hardliners, a teacher who identifies with the Marxist principle, Yeltsin, two angry miners, and a Chernobyl man.

Two Azerbaijan Muslims rebuff Gorbachev's vision of "Common European home" and threaten to massacre (49). Baltic folklorists in national costumes wave their national flags and protest for national independence. Two miners on strike are furious at the Communist Party and impatient with the pace of Gorbachev's reform. Although Gorbachev approaches to the confrontations by pleading for negotiation, empathy and sympathy, the protesting groups do not buy his appeals. This pageant is also far longer than the one in the first act, suggesting that the myriad of problems which assail Gorbachev as well as the country are endless and impossible to dispel along with the remains of the Chernobyl disaster. However, the presentation of the complex problems raised in the pageant is impressionistic, fragmentary and lack of analysis.

The lives of ordinary Soviet citizens, particularly through a realistic depiction of a Russian family, are dramatized so as to suggest that history lurks in every corner of the country. In the first family scene, the family is mourning for the death of their elder son during the Afghanistan war, another victim of decisions made at the oval "table". His last letter home serves as a critique of imperial invasion and exposes the helpless and powerless state of ordinary people in any military aggression. The mother, Zoya, is so distressed over the death of her son that she attacks the submissiveness of her husband, Grisha, who has been a secret policeman for fifty years. Their younger son, Boris, knows nothing about this and realizes that the family has been living a lie. Grisha pleads Boris to understand his situation and dilemma. In his confession, he discloses stories of the torture and purging of artists and poets, such as Meyerhold and Osip Mandelstaum. He also tells about cannibalism under collectivization, a reference to the great famine in Ukraine. Grisha's revelation suggests that the dirty history of the Communist misrule has been buried and stored secretly, guarded by policemen like Grisha himself. Now in the age of *perestroika*, much of the hidden history of what happened is to be uncovered and re-scrutinized.

In *Moscow Gold*, the "taste of real life", in Yeltsin's phrase, is also accounted for through two depictions of Moscow street queues (17). The first queue is a sullen long one in which no one is sure of what is offered at the end of the queue and no one, except Yeltsin, dares to complain. Working as a social *gestus*, the queue scene exposes the tough living conditions under which the Soviet people are cynically and fatalistically living.[19] However, Gorbachev's *perestroika* cannot reverse the deteriorating economy and is perceived by one citizen as "[t]he five plan for fine words" (31). The crude economic crisis is more acute and unbearable in the dramatization of the second queue. Taking place soon after the cacophonic, disordered *perestroika* pageant, the second queue is "bad tempered, jostling" (55). Strained by poverty and mobilized Russian fascists, Moscow citizens are shown to use racist language to abuse each other in the queue. The scene ends by the people in queue rolling down into an open trap on stage. The image of people dragged into an engulfing stage trap is sensational and appalling. The trap in the play has a different effect from that of comedy and farce. It is tragic, suggesting that the country is moving into a chaotic, unbridgeable abyss where its people cannot but fall into and that the future state of Soviet Union is at the verge of disintegration.

2.3 Re-visioning the Socialist Future

In *Moscow Gold*, the transformative history of Soviet Union and the failures of the really-existing socialism are documented and assessed. The Soviet future is shown as too riddled with problems and crises unleashed by Gorbachev's reform. As Bartlomiej Kaminski comments in his *The Collapse of State Socialism*: "policy actions designed to improve performance only accelerate its decay," the play tackles

[19] The play constantly evokes Soviet cynicism. For example, people reply to Yeltsin's agitation that they are used to promises: "promises have been made before" "kilos of promises. Piled up where the meat should be" (17)

the ironic unintentional consequences of Gorbachev's reform (qtd. in Legvold). Although the failures of the Soviet socialist system impel Gorbachev to liberalize the corrupt party machinery and reconstruct the socialist order, he runs into conflicts with political oppositions and is overwhelmed by pressures from economic crisis and social unrest. This section is intended to interpret how the playwrights dramatize Gorbachev's responses to the political dilemma he faces. In doing so, the reading will suggest that the playwrights' commitment to socialism and their criticism of the reckless propensity to adopt Western-style capitalism are revealed through their representation of Gorbachev's responses to the challenge he faces.

Gorbachev is portrayed as constantly anxious about the crisis his reform causes and the difficult political moves he has to make. He finds himself strangled in making decisions because any decision he makes will have a climatic, global-wide impact on the Soviet Union as well as the world. The sense of apprehension is displayed through his contemplation of making sense of history:

> Why is our destiny so impenetrable? The point of government is to know what you are doing! To do that, you need to know what will happen. That is why history must be a science, it must! If it is not, how can we foresee the consequences of our action? How is government possible? (58)

Gorbachev tries to analyze and understand the current political, economic and social crises through the Marxist notion of historical progression. However, his hesitation suggests that such a historical practice is in a state of crisis and that the notion of a scientific socialism, which could predict historical development, is problematic. Distressed by the present crises and the pressure of events, Gorbachev recognizes the burden of being a leader in this transformative historical moment and comments "It's a sad business, making history under circumstances out of your control" (69). This remark is also a self-reflexive admission. It reveals the playwrights' recognition that,

no matter how responsive any dramatic art is to the ongoing event, it is "impossible to compete with history" ("Explanatory").

Although admitting that it is hard to compete with history and that the world after the Cold War is too complex to define or theorize, Ali and Brenton still reveal their identification with the ideal of socialism and look forward to a socialist renaissance.[20] In a scene that depicts Gorbachev having "imaginary conversation" with the ghost of Lenin, Lenin encourages Gorbachev not to abandon the ideal of socialism because the "world is yet to be made" (27, 62). The appearance of the ghost of Lenin suspending in the mid-air in a statue pose not only serves to break dramatic illusion, but also suggests the paternal role of Lenin in determining Gorbachev's political moves. After the unrealistic conversation with Lenin, Gorbachev is portrayed as more ready to accept his predicament and more optimistic about the future socialist project in "twenty years" (69). With reference to Alexander Dubcek and his "socialism with a human face", the playwrights have Gorbachev convey what the ideal form of socialism is. To save socialism from the wreckage of Soviet Communist Party, Gorbachev decides to terminate the party's monolithic role in the country, which entails the removal of his leadership, and to introduce multiple-party democracy. Moreover, recognizing that the global-market economy in the post-Cold time is becoming more and more unavoidable, Gorbachev decides to "steal the Devil's spoon and appropriate capitalism for social ends," and adopts the concept of mixed economy that adheres to the logics o free-market capitalism, but is regulated (70). However, the playwrights have Gorbachev deliver his lines through Raisa's

[20] It is Howard Brenton's conviction that Western Europe was on the verge of a political renaissance, an inevitable historical movement towards a more "communist" society. As he stated in *Plays: One*: "It began with the Paris Commune in 1871. The Russian Revolution, whether you regard it with hope, hope betrayed, or with horror, has changed world history forever" (xiv). The "second Renaissance" Brenton describes is a transmutation from mercantile capitalism to a "communistic world view" (xiv).

manipulation as if in a pantomime show while Raisa acts and imitates Mrs. Thatcher. The audience will see Gorbachev speaking of mixed economy as if his idea was prompted by the Thatcher figure. Thus the theatrical discrepancy is achieved because, contrary to the performance, Mrs. Thatcher is a firm advocate of free-market neo-liberal capitalism.

Ali and Brenton's identification with the ideal of socialism can be perceived through their representation of the conflict between Gorbachev and Yeltsin. In the last scene of the play, Boris Yeltsin has just been elected President of the Russian Federation and taken a more radical line than Gorbachev's revisionist "third way" (69). Rather than proclaiming "social justice" as he used to be, Yeltsin is now an ardent follower of "free market" capitalism (82)[21]. Identifying with American-style capitalism, Yeltsin voices a version of Russia Utopia where the country becomes the "California of Europe" while disregarding the negative consequences that the operation of free-market capitalism would bring forth, such as inflation, mass unemployment, and the emergence of a "new middle class" (82, 83). Of course, Gorbachev does not share with Yeltsin's utopian vision. He warns him to "have no illusions about free-market" and emphasizes the priority of social justice (82). The sharp, pointed dispute between them demonstrates two possible contradictory resolutions to the problem of which political and economic direction Russia should follow. However, the characterization of Yeltsin as shabby, impetuous, and ignorant of the dangers of free-market capitalism reflects the playwrights' disapproval of uncritically wholesale acceptance of Western-style, or American capitalism.

The conflicting politics between Gorbachev and Yeltsin is duplicated in the last family scene. This scene takes place in a cosmopolitan Moscow airport, but the

[21] In the play, Gorbachev retorts Yeltsin's direction: "In those early days, Boris, you used to talk about social justice. Now you attack me for not introducing the free market tomorrow. You don't want any restraints at all" (82).

derelict visual effect, along with an "air of confusion, anxiety and boredom" and the announcement of flights delayed or cancelled, displays a feeling that the promise of *perestroika* reform is procrastinated and the country's economy is still in dilapidated condition (74). In the scene, Boris, who used to be "a radical […] one of the young lions, hard-headed, a critic of society," is now taken by the lure of the West, wanting things like an espresso coffee machine and a compact disc player, and plans to leave the country for Florence, which represents "a city of light." while his parents and his fiancé try to persuade him to stay with them (76). To their frustration, Boris discloses his complete distrust with Gorbachev's reform and is deeply pessimistic about the future of his country. He thinks that the country will degenerate into a "Second Brazil" with "shanty towns" and "Gimcrack economics" in a decade or revert to the past misery (77). Unlike Boris' naive identification with the West, his father, Grisha has become aligned with Gorbachev's reformist principle,[22] and cautions him not to romanticize the West. Like the politician Boris Yeltsin, the young Boris is indifferent to his father's advice and insistent on going away. His leaving is portrayed as naïve and doomed. He claims that he has an offer to lecture at a university in Florence but does not have any substantial contract. His departure cannot avoid meeting the harassment of gangsters. Thus, the family scene repeats the conflicting politics through the deliberate parallel between the family Boris and the politician Boris Yeltsin. The characterization of both Boris' simplicity entails the playwrights' preference to a fine, just socialist society rather than a ruthless capitalist one.

The enactment of two endings to explore the possible future of Gorbachev's *perestroika* is another dramatic arrangement that reflects the playwrights' commitment to socialism. The first ending is tragic because Gorbachev is shown to be

[22] In a earlier family scene, Grisha expresses: "My son. I'm no bleeding liberal. In my veins there is still some old Bolshevik blood. What frightens me is your delusion. Don't you realize that reform communism is our last chance? If Gorbachev fails even the mountains will weep" (40).

assassinated by three gangsters who mask themselves as Russian Orthodox priests and conspire with the party hardliners. Involving Mafia, party conservatives, and the religious figures in the assassination, the scene not only gives a complicated sense of the problems unleashed by Gorbachev but also implies the logical consequences of the restoration of the old guard. However, the scene of assassination is not the real closure in the play. The playwrights present another ending following the pessimistic one. This second ending is comic and optimistic. Set in an unspecified future Russia, Gorbachev has reached retirement and, in an idyllic Chekhovian mood, sits in a wicker chair reading newspaper. His ideal of rebuilding the Socialist state is shown to have been realized. As an ironic contrast to the reality, Gorbachev insists that Soviet Union must aid the USA, whose human rights record is notoriously "atrocious," and which is desperately in short of "bread" (85). The portrayal of the bleakness in the future America can be read as the playwrights' disagreement with capitalism. Although they declare that *Moscow Gold* is "not as it should be," a gesture of refusing providing any political parable, the seconding ending explicitly exposes the playwrights' penchant for "a Utopian lapse" ("Explanatory"). Especially this ending is introduced with a typed projection displaying, "At this stage, the two authors decided it could not end like this. It must end like this" (84). The audience will recognize the playwrights' preference to the second ending which signifies the success of rebuilding socialism. Although it is a drawback that the playwrights do not cope with or explore how the desired socialist order could be achieved, their vision of a successful socialist future displays their political stance.

The dramatic arrangement of having two endings — one tragic and the other comic — reinforces the playwrights' recognition that the history of Soviet transformation is still in a state of flux and that it is difficult to prophesy how the situation will be resolved. Thus, to avoid providing a fixed closure to the play, they

propose two alternative endings to indicate that the outcome of history is precariously up for grabs. Although the device of two endings demonstrates the unpredictability of the events the play attempts to dramatize. With logical deduction, the utopian representation of the second ending suggests that the direction of socialist order is worth pursuing.

2.4 A Noisy and Memorable Funeral Party for British Political Theatre

Moscow Gold could be read as the playwrights' attempt to document and assess the Soviet history as well as to reaffirm socialist objectives for the future. Yet we should not ignore the playwrights' pronounced theatrical intentions when the play was staged. For one thing, the production was intentionally to be an event that could expose the crisis of British political theatre under Thatcherite administration. For another, the stylistic evocation of Meyerhold theatre and the immediate dramatization of the changing events in Soviet Union demonstrate the playwrights' aspirations to assert the intervening power of drama and theatre in engaging with current politics. In this selection, the study attempts to elaborate these dual theatrical intentions and to evaluate the playwrights' dramaturgical devices.

Aware of the disastrous impact of Thatcherite administration on theatre, Ali and Brenton intended to make their play about Soviet Union a sensational event so as to demonstrate the predicament of theatre. As illustrated in the introductory chapter, Margaret Thatcher's premiership undermined much of the British social and political structure. Her insistence on imposing free market capitalism ideology and transferring the responsibility of the State to the individual had a damaging effect on theatre. Subsidy cuts from the Arts Council and the introduction of private sponsorship made theatres cater to producing market-oriented repertoires rather than experimental, controversial plays. Theatre seemed to lose its prominent role as a public forum for

serious political debate. Aware of the crisis condition of British political theatre, Ali and Brenton bestowed a specific theatrical significance on *Moscow Gold* when the play was produced at the Barbican Theatre. Planned as the last program before the temporary closure of the Barbican, *Moscow Gold* was intended to protest against inadequate State funding. To make the theatrical protest impressive, the director as well as the stage designer utilized the facilities of the Barbican and the ensemble of the Royal Shakespeare Company to fit in with the play's large-scale depiction of the Soviet history. The outcome was an extravagant, lavish production.

The production style accords with Brenton's revelation in one appended article that *Moscow Gold* was intended to function as "a very noisy and memorable party" for "the funeral" of British political theatre (89). Juxtaposing the elegiac, grieving image of "funeral" and the celebratory, festive image of "party," Brenton's remark describes the tone of the play. The play's depiction of the hardship of living in the failed Soviet communism and the bitterness of conflicts that Gorbachev's reform initiates is full of sorrow while the representation of the two public pageants is playful and theatrical. The effect of lament is a gesture as if the playwrights mourned for the dying state of British political theatre, and the element of festivity signifies the assertion that theatre can engage in "cultural interventionism" and" celebratory protest" against hegemony (Kershaw 21). The effect of mixing party and funeral proves the playwrights' courageous attempt to protest against Thatcherism by attending to the dying bed of political theatre.

To fulfill their ambition to save political theatre from the crisis,[23] Brenton and Ali set out to search for new tactics and new approach to do political theatre

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[23] After expressing the intention of the play is to make the funeral of political theatre a "noisy and memorable party," Howard Brenton concludes the appended article by stating, "if the *Moscow Gold* team does its job well, the funeral may be so enjoyable it will not be we who end up in the grave" (89).

effectively. They openly state their aesthetic and stylistic inspiration from Vesvolod Meyerhold and his theatre in the prefatory "Explanatory Note": "*Moscow Gold* […] owes much more to the work of Meyerhold than to Brecht." According to the playwright's conception, *Moscow Gold* is "a song of history as it *is*, not as it should be and, apart from one utopian lapse, not as we would like it to be" ("Explanatory Note"). These words suggest that, rather than being idealistic or prescriptive to demonstrating one particular political lesson or thesis, the play attempts to describe the Soviet history "realistically" and to present the bitterness and chaos that Soviet people are experiencing. In other words, Brechtian didactic theatre is not what the playwrights attempt to follow or emulate. In an interview conducted by Janelle Reinelt, Brenton express that "Brecht represents a parable theatre, which means very clean lines" (41). Yet this understanding does not intend to deny the Brechtian legacies in *Moscow Gold*. The devices of social *gestus*, epic structure, historicization, and alienation effects are employed in dramatizing the Soviet history.

The core concept of Brechtian theatre is a "thesis" theatre that the spectators are taught how to perceive and interpret the conflicts enacted in a play. However, the changing events in the Soviet Union seem not to indicate "clean lines". This sense of uncertainty is spawned by the end of Cold War. As shown in a passage from "Explanatory Note":

> The changes in the East have transformed world politics. Uncertainty has replaced the tried and tested formulas of both Right and Left. The nettle we had to grasp, as socialist writers, was that there are no longer easy ideological solutions. What we are witnessing is an epochal change […] This involves a rethink for everyone: cold warriors as well as closet Brezhnevites, not to mention those on both extremes of the spectrum who can treat the upheavals either as an irreversible capitalist triumph or a

> fantastical betrayal of the socialist cause by Mikhail Gorbachev and his friends. Both views are wrong. A simpleton's view of history.

Previous oppositional discourses seem inadequate to explain the indeterminacy of post-Cold War world politics and cultural milieu. The impossibility of conceiving "clean lines," thus, not only causes the playwrights to reconsider historical progress and socialist project, but also impels them to search for tactics and approaches different from Brechtian political theatre. In this case, they evoke Meyerhold theatre for their creative inspiration.

The stylistic emulation of Meyerhold theatre comes from the playwrights' understanding of Meyerhold theatre. Instead of labeling him as a formalist, Howard Brenton appreciates Meyerhold for his incessant observation, reflection and flexibility of accommodating theatrical forms and styles to meet dramatic contents and political purposes. His emphasis on visual effect as well as inventiveness leads Brenton to comment that his theatre is "capable of endless renewal" in the appended article, "How Can We Do It, Vsevolod?" (92).[24] Also Meyerhold's predilection for the conglomeration of styles suits Brenton's dramaturgical concept of dramatic coherence, exaggeration and disrupting the audience's expectation.[25] As a result, *Moscow Gold* emphasizes creating unfamiliar visual images and deploys various forms and styles (satire, history, tragedy, farce, song etc.) in depicting the epic history of Soviet Union. The pageant scenes may have been inspired by Meyerhold's circus theatre. The dramatization of history as it happens is similar to Meyerhold's notion of living history style. However, the significance of modeling on Meyerhold theatre goes

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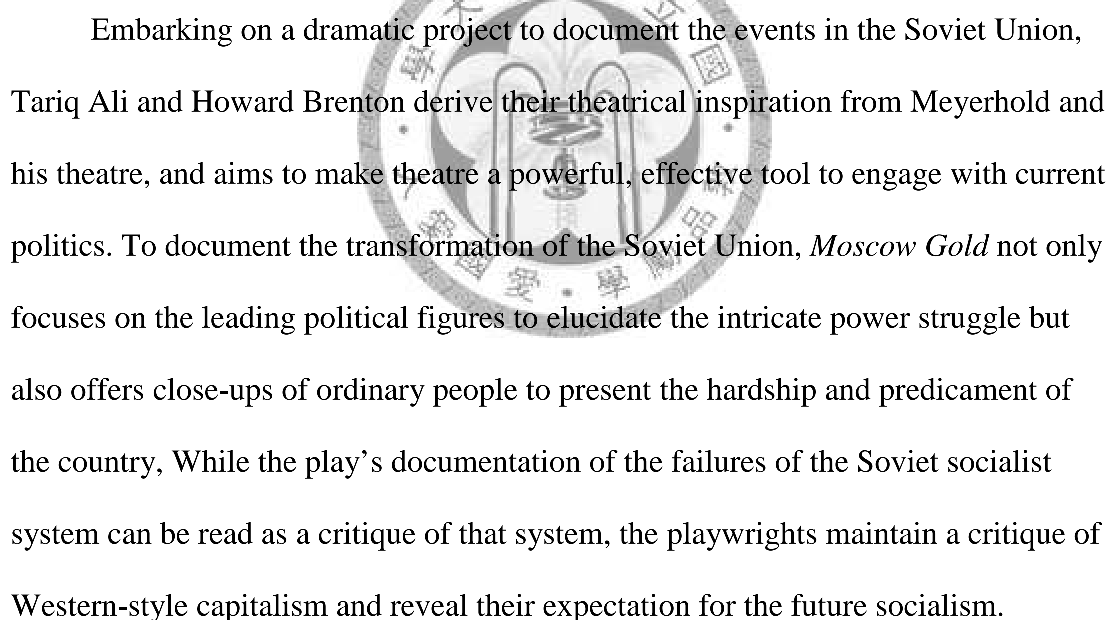
[24] In another appended article, "Gold in Moscow," Howard Brenton also describe Meyerhold as "attempting a theatre of great breath, trenchant but nimble-footed, which was not documentary but 'living history,' played out upon the stage at many levels of meaning with many techniques" (86).

[25] In an interview, Howard Brenton remarks: "coherence within a play is not a matter of choosing to write in one style. That's just sameness, superficial neatness. Actual coherence means using many different styles, moulding them, a deliberate process of selection, in order to express that whole within a play" (Reinelt 22).

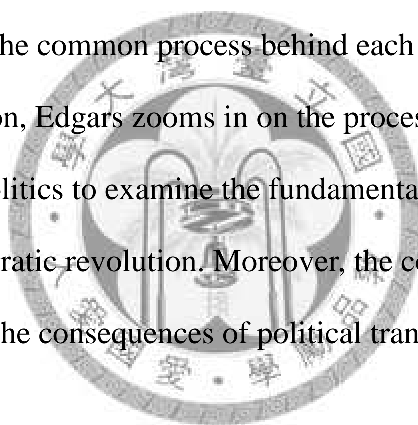
further than simply "[imitating] the 'look' of his productions (86). *Moscow Gold* owes much to the "spirit" of Meyerhold theatre (86). The "spirit" refers to the inventiveness and *event-tiveness* of Meyerhold theatre. The *event-tiveness* refers to making theatre a sensational event so as to generate debate and discussion. Thus, *Moscow Gold* does not conform to any single dramatic styles and forms; instead, it integrates a variety of forms and styles to create something innovative. Their attempt to dramatize what is happening in Soviet Union is to make theatre an active participant in commenting on current political events and to turn theatre into an event, "a living drama about changing our lives" (91).



Embarking on a dramatic project to document the events in the Soviet Union, Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton derive their theatrical inspiration from Meyerhold and his theatre, and aims to make theatre a powerful, effective tool to engage with current politics. To document the transformation of the Soviet Union, *Moscow Gold* not only focuses on the leading political figures to elucidate the intricate power struggle but also offers close-ups of ordinary people to present the hardship and predicament of the country, While the play's documentation of the failures of the Soviet socialist system can be read as a critique of that system, the playwrights maintain a critique of Western-style capitalism and reveal their expectation for the future socialism.

Chapter Three
The Shape of the Table

David Edgar's *The Shape of the Table* is also a topical dramatic response to the issues about the fall of communism and the state of post-communist Eastern Europe. Similar to Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton's *Moscow Gold*, Edgar's *The Shape of the Table* focuses on the transition of power from a monolithic communist regime to a democratic government; however, Ali and Brenton concentrate on portraying Gorbachev's reform and a myriad of problems his reform causes or unleashes while Edgar avoids depicting specific political events in favor of a mode of generic representation to analyze the common process behind each individual state. Through fictionalizing the revolution, Edgars zooms in on the process of negotiations in the higher echelons of elite politics to examine the fundamental mechanism of power struggle behind the democratic revolution. Moreover, the constant evocation of fairy tales is used to allegorize the consequences of political transition.



3.1 David Edgar and the Creation of *The Shape of the Table*

David Edgar is a prolific political and a "typical post-1968" playwright, and his socialist conviction remains unshakeable throughout his career (Borreca 135). Edgar started his career as a professional journalist in Bradford after graduating from college. After a short period of partaking in journalism, which encouraged him to "portray the conflicting social perspectives," Edgar turned to be a full-time playwright and wrote from a consistently socialist perspective (Borreca 137). He began writing plays by employing agitprop to explore a wide range of social issues and got involved with one of British leading fringe theatre collectives, the General Will. Although the agitprop strategy had the advantage of "present[ing] the immediacies of local political

struggles in a larger socialist context" relevant to the intended audiences (Bull, "Left" 441), Edgar grew skeptical of the suitability of the simplified, two-dimensional characterization of agitprop to deal with complicated issues. In an interview with Catherine Itzin, Edgar remarks:

> because they are the areas in which the subtle combination of the personal and political, the emotional and the intellectual, takes place. They are fused subjects and the great inadequacy of agitprop is in inculcating consciousness (qtd. in Itzin 146)

Edgar's comment on agitprop also exposes his doubt of the dramatic form to bring about any radical political change.[1] Consequently, Edgar revised his agenda and moved to work with larger, established theatres in the mid-70s to seek a dramatic form that could accommodate "the personal and political, the emotional and the intellectual" while consciously avoiding any "co-opting of his leftism" by those established theatres (Borreca 135). In his "On Drama-Documentary," Edgar reveals that the personal and the political are inseparable and that the political drama should move from the macrocosm to the microcosm: "if the left is seriously to address society's present and its own recent past, then personal behavior cannot remain off political limits" (*Second Time* 53). Edgar's major breakthrough, *Destiny*, produced by Royal Shakespeare Company in 1976, is a controversial play about the growth of right-extremism in the post-war British context. In this play, Edgar tried to combine realistic depiction, epic techniques, documentary sources, and strategies from agitprop to explore psychological and political complexity. His dramaturgical experiment gradually developed into an aesthetic called "social realism." According to Edgar,

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[1] A similar comment is found in an interview with Clive Barker and Simon Trussler, In the interview Edgar revealed why he was fed up with the agitprop: "What happened was that after Dunkirk I got obsessed with slickness. I was fed up with seeing agitprop plays that were messy, and also I was increasingly thinking that the politics you get across was very crude, wheras the world about us was getting more complicated" (13)

social realism is "a synthesis of the surface perception of naturalism and the social analysis that underlies agit-prop plays" (*Second Time* 171). In his conception, naturalism, in a broad sense, places emphasis on detailing individual psychology and ignores the objective analysis necessary for dealing with the political issues whereas the agitprop disregards the subjective reaction of an individual character and determines his or her behavior out of economic, historical necessity; these two forms are inadequate in revealing complicated social and political reality. Hence, the combination of agitprop approach and naturalistic representation is necessary, and the resulting dialectical tension between subjective and objective factors creates a form of true "social realism". By placing realistic characters within a concrete public context, the playwright can handle political issues on an epic scale without sacrificing the personal dimension. Another merit of social realism is that realistic characters as well as contexts are presented as "recognizable" as possible for the audience to relate to so as to confront themselves with the dramatized issues (*Second Time* 171).[2]

The aesthetic of social realism is also related to a technique termed by Edgar himself as "faction". According to D. Keith Peacock's *Radical Stage* (1991), faction, which is "[Edgar's] major contribution to the historical drama," is "a combination of fact and fiction" (169). To put it plainly, faction technique is to create fictional but realistic characters and set them in a context based on factual situations. Thus faction technique allows Edgar to present a truthful reflection of the social life in contemporary Britain and to explore "the dialectic between the individual's private experience and the public, social world" (Borreca 137). With his pronounced dramaturgical concepts of "social realism" and "faction," Edgar dedicates himself to

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2 David Edgar considers drama should concentrate on "recognizable people with recognizable concerns" so that spectators" would recognize the characters from the inside, but be able, simultaneously, like a sudden film-cut from close-up to wide-angle, to look at how these individual journeys were defined by the collective journey of an epoch" (*Second Time* 172)

dramatizing and analyzing postwar British political and social landscape so as to create “a theatre of public life” (qtd. in Itzin 145). Even in his famous dramatic adaptation of Charles Dickenson’s *Nicholas Nickleby* (1980), Edgar capitalized on Brecht’s epic theatre and attempted to relate the text’s Victorian context to the contemporary society rather than simply staging the novel. Because of his preoccupation with the contemporary, the *Guardian* critic, Michael Billington regards him as “a secretary for our times” (qtd. in Swain 335).[3]

Expecting himself to “a secretary for the times through which [he’s] living,” David Edgar was not absent in commenting on the drastic political upheavals happening in Eastern Europe. Drawing from his observation that “there was enough in common between uprisings in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria,” Edgar felt it preferable to “create a representative fictionalized narrative of the fall of Eastern European communism” (“Secret Lives”). Due to this rationale, he decided to create a kind of model drama that could better account for the similar historical process in Eastern European. The resultant project was a play entitled *The Shape of the Table*, produced by the National Theatre in its studio theatre, the Cottesloe, under the direction of Jenny Killick. The opening night was on November 8, 1990, which coincided symbolically with the first anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.[4]

The Shape of the Table demonstrates the process of power transition from a hard-line communist regime to a sovereign democratic nation-state in an unknown

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[3] The original citation in Elizabeth Swain’s *David Edgar: Playwright and Politician* (1986) is: “The best review I’ve ever had was when Michael Billington said that, like Balzac, David Edgar seems to be a secretary for our times. And that defined, rather more precisely than I’d ever defined before, what I’d like to be. I’d like to be a secretary for the times through which I am living” (335)

[4] Critics, such as Christopher Innes and Susan Painter, notice the coincidence between the play’s run at the National Theatre and the force resignation of Margaret Thatcher from the office of Prime Minister on November 22, 1990. Painter considers that the play adds “exquisite appropriateness” to the Britih political incident (130), and Innes remark the play’s debate on the transference of power gains “coincidental relevance” from Thatcher’s resignation (192).

Eastern European country. In the beginning of the play, the country suffers from serious civil discontent and mass public demonstrations. The only legitimate Communist government is shown unable to straighten out the political crisis and has to agree to meet with delegates from various public interest groups, including the Opposition, to negotiate the future governance of their country. Much of the play's theatricality lies in Edgar's detailed portrayal of the political negotiations. While the government officials intend for a socialist democracy to preserve their power, the members from the Opposition demand to democratize the country further and to break the country away from communism and the Warsaw Pact obligation. No matter how hard the Communist regime tries to avoid full-scale political sea-change, it has to make concessions and give way to a new liberal, democratic government.

The play is a pure demonstration of power in action. It reveals Edgar's aspiration to delve into the intricate political events in Eastern Europe and to tease out the essence of power operation under. In his essay, "Speaking in Tongues," Robert Hanks contends that the play is "engrossed in the nitty-gritty of politics, taking the audience behind the scenes to watch the negotiations and maneuvering necessary before a totalitarian regime could relinquish power." Susan Painter recognizes Edgar's "sensitivity and intelligence" in dealing with the issues of contemporary politics and assumes that the audience will keep thinking about the issues provoked in the play after they leave the theatre (143). Painter's remark reveals her appreciation of the play to engage with current politics and to secure theatre as a public forum for political debate. D. Keith Peacock, however, holds an opposite opinion. Although he acknowledges the humorous, witty aspect of the play's depiction of negotiations, he denounces the seriousness of the play, saying that "the discursive, intellectual nature of the action" and "the public nature of the characterization" would discourage the audience from engaging in the issues raised (*Thatcher's Theatre* 109, 108). Indeed, the

action of the play takes place in a meeting room; its plot revolves around negotiating about political structure, sovereignty and national identity among political elites and intelligentsia. This discussion play could be dull and un-theatrical. Yet, Art Borreca observes the "performative" quality of the play, indicating that the play's theatricality lies in its demonstration of power at work (137). Indeed, the merit of the play is its close-up, realistic description of political negotiation and power struggle. Its minute portrayal of the interaction among characters to struggle for power exemplifies Edgar's social realism of combining the political with the personal, the psychological.

3.2 Fictionalizing the Revolution in Eastern Europe

As Edgar perceives, the events of the Communist collapse in Eastern Europe were, in many respects, very similar. He intends to offer an archetypal portrayal of the story of the "Revolution" rather than dramatizing the story of the "revolution" in one particular country. To make a play that is as universal as it can to account for the revolutionary events in Eastern Europe, David Edgar consciously disregards the exact geographical location of the country by creating a fictional space where *The Shape of the Table* is set.[5] Before moving to textual analysis, this section will explicate Edgar's intentional dramaturgical strategy and the politics of such a representation.

The strategy of fictionalizing the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe fulfills Edgar's thesis about dealing with the commonality of the political events. In an interview with Geoff Willcocks, Edgar explained his deliberate dramaturgical device through contrasting drama with history and journalism:

> I think that history tells what happened, journalism tells what's happening and what I try and do is tell what happens. My work is in the present

[5] The only geographical information Edgar provides in the published text is stated in the prefaced stage direction: "Setting: The Banqueting Hall of a baroque palace in an Eastern European country, now used as a meeting room by the Communist government […]."

> tense, but it is more general, more generic than journalism (qtd. in Willcocks 11)

Appropriating the concept of grammatical tense, Edgar indicates that dramatic art is to disclose the general truth behind each incident, and that his Eastern European project is to tease out the habitual nature of the political process in each individual state. Edgar's dramaturgical conception earns Susan Painter's recognition. She comments that the efficacy of the play lies in its "scrutiny of recurrent archetypal political issues" (131).

Fictionalizing the revolution is also a device to de-familiarize the audience and prevent them from easily interpreting the play as a play about a certain country, in particular, Czechoslovakia, since the play bear a strong resemblance to Czechoslovakia at the time.[6] As Edgar discloses:

> I suppose the play hovers over the Czech/Hungarian/Polish border, and has rather more limbs in Czechoslovakia than the other two. But what I hope people will accept is the idea of a world parallel to the real world, where you have fictional people who are clearly based on real people, but have different names and different voices. You enter into a deal with the audience, which says this person is like that historical person, but they are not the same. So you're not setting up to be an advocate, nor indeed a prosecuting counsel for the historical person. (qtd. in Painter 132)

Edgar's desire to avoid reading the play as pure documentary and history prompts him to fictionalize the revolution in Eastern Europe. In this respect, the play's fictionality keeps the audience from falling into the trap of demanding the historical accuracy of

[6] It is tempting to read the play as a play about the revolution in Czechoslovakia because of the similarity between the fictional Pavel Prus, a dissident writer who turns out to be elected as the new president, and Vaclav Havel, the real dissident playwright and president of Czechoslovakia, or between the fictional oppositional force, the Public Platform and the real opposition in Czechoslovakia, the Civil Forum.

his representation and allows them a chance to glimpse below the surface of the TV documentary and news report. On the other hand, the remark reveals Edgar's awareness that his representation might have the effect of reinforcing possible bias and presumed images of historical figures and actual locales. To avoid the process of what Larry Wolff terms, "inventing Eastern Europe", Edgar erases specificity in favor of fictionality to explore the common pattern within similar processes. The ficitonality also exemplifies Edgar's faction technique. Based on meticulous, close observation of real historical events, the play is enacted through a set of fictional characters so as to serve as a truthful reflection of the real political context. While fictional, the play retains its merit of being "recognizable" so that the audience can relate themselves to, but refrain from uncritical identification (Edgar, *Second Time* 171).

However, Edgar's inclination to fictionality and holistic representation may cause problem in the stage performance. As Susan Painter observes, the play's descriptive, documentary content of the political events challenges the directors "to consider carefully how to retain the 'fictional country' aspect" (132). Directors and stage designers would have trouble deciding style and setting for fears that their particular theatrical arrangement would blur the generic aspect of the fictional play and lead the audience to make easy comparison between the fictional and the specific.

As far as the politics of representation is concerned, Edgar's intention to extract the "generic" process of the varied revolutionary events could also be problematic. As Geoff Willcocks points out, there would be "the loss of specific social and political circumstances of each particular nation and the motivations of individual players" (11). The holistic representation tends to eliminate the peculiarity of each individual case. Moreover, the representation of history cannot avoid taking a stance and making points of view. In this play, Edgar focuses on dramatizing in camera negotiations among influential political figures while not seriously taking the street protests into

account. Thus, Edgar's *The Shape of the Table* tells a sharply different version of the fall of communism from Caryl Churchill's *Mad Forest*. Unlike *Mad Forest*'s emphasis on ordinary citizens, Edgar's representation is displayed as a power game among political elites and intelligentsia. In this respect, Edgar provides a perspective in his playwriting, which may challenge his assumption of making a "generic" play.

3.3 Dramatizing Political Negotiation

The Shape of the Table is a dramatic documentation of the gradual breakdown of a local Communist regime during a time when it is challenged by popular civil protest in an unnamed country in Eastern Europe in 1989. Although the play is about revolution, it does not represent genuine street demonstrations and public revolt. Instead, the play tackles the transference and preservation of power through a series of closed-door political negotiations between opposing political forces. David Edgar once confided, in a *Guardian* article, his interest in the "politics" inherent in the process of power struggle among the countries that were to remove their Communist government:

> Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, I have been fascinated by the process of politics, by negotiations, the drafting of documents, strategizing, role-play and ceremony. This is, I suppose, political theatre in its narrowest definition: plays about politics as work ("Secret Lives")

His fascination with "politics as work" gives full voice in *The Shape of the Table*. Each scene of the play presents the minutiae of negotiation and structures the depiction of human interaction among politicians debating about how to overcome the political crisis in their country.

The overriding sense that *The Shape of the Table* is a play about negotiation and political bartering can be discerned in the first scene of the play. In that scene, two

Communist political meetings are dramatized to illustrate the typical expedient that the Communist regime would adopt to manage its domestic political discontent. One is to incorporate prominent political dissenters; the other is to discuss how to suppress effectively. Anxious about the massive discontent released in demonstrations and marches in the capital as well as in other five cities of the nation, the local Communist government considers recruiting and assimilating Pavel Prus, a famous imprisoned dissident writer to help prevent the escalation of violence. Given the popularity and prominence of Prus among the political dissenters, the government attempts to make use of his influence to manipulate public opinions against the rebels. The government approaches him with a document guaranteeing freedom and a six month residency at the University of Illinois with "all expense paid" and "a stipend of five figures" (7) in exchange with a "single sentence letter, asking for pardon" (8). Prus, however, refuses to be in compliance with the state by burning the document and saying that he would like to be released from prison on his own. Prus' uncompromised attitude ensures his integrity of being a political dissenter and paves way for his ascendency as the leader of the opposition, the Public Platform.

Failing to co-opt Prus, the top leaders of the Communist regime meet together to negotiate how to take action against the demonstration. At this stage, the regime regards the public demonstration and protest as "disturbances" which may pose "a threat to public order" (8), and discuss the possible alternative plans to suppress the uprising and to "sweep'em off the streets" (15). One of the alternatives, proposed by Joseph Lutz, then the First Secretary, is to ask for the country's "eastern ally for fraternal military assistance" (16). The eastern ally unambiguously refers to the Soviet Union, and the reality that the "eastern ally" publicly refuses to provide any military interference suggests that the Soviet Union, under Gorbachev's administration, has repealed its Brezhnev Doctrine as its primary foreign policy in favor of

non-interventionist attitude in the internal affairs of its Warsaw pact allies.[7] Lutz' proposal also lays open the local regime's inability to preserve its own authority and power without the aid of military interference from its "great neighbor" (18). Failing to receive the Soviet Union's intervention, the regime decides to order its Special Duties Unit to pursue aggressive tactics in dispersing the demonstration in order to stabilize the country and to regain its monopoly power.

The aggressive tactic adopted to cope with street demonstration is shown a failure and the Communist regime is forced to consider compromise to make sure that "the party will survive this crisis" (31). The government reviews the unsuccessful suppression, thinking that it not only fails to stop the demonstration, but also fosters further discontent among workers and generates criticism from the coalition parties. Moreover, the aggressive repression results in disseminating images of the government mowing down its own people on the international media, which reinforces the negative stereotype of the government. The government's awareness of the West media's representation lays bare the West's tendency to simplistically interpret Communist governments as totalitarian, repressive regimes. Edgar is not inclined to offer such a reductionist interpretation, and the play mingles political crisis with personal dilemma to demonstrate the complexity of social and political reality. Aware that the tension is growing sharper and sharper and the legitimacy of the Communist monopoly is challenged, the government discusses to makes some slight adjustments in order to gain "a more positive response" to save the party and the

[7] During the Cold War, Soviet Union controlled ideologically and militarily its Communist European satellites in the form of the Warsaw Pact Treaty and through the logic of the Brezhnev Doctrine. The logic of Brezhnev Doctrine is that the stability of Communist states in Eastern Europe is central to the security and well-being of the Soviet Union. The concept of Brezhnev Doctrine can be best illustrated through a speech by Brezhnev in 1968 when he ordered member states of the Warsaw Pact to military intervene Czechoslovakia and to crush the Prague Spring. In the speech, he said: "When external and internal forces hostile to socialism try to turn the development of a given socialist society in the direction of the restoration of the capitalist system, when a threat arises to the cause of socialism in that country…this is no longer merely a problem for that country's problem but a common problem, the concern of all socialist country" (qtd. in Ouimet 67).

regime from the crisis (29). One of the adjustments is to have someone pay for ordering the violent suppression, and the other is to widen the Council of Ministers to include some members of their coalition partner parties. Similar to the case of co-opting Prus, the government approaches Vera Rousova, the deputy of National Peasant Party, to ask her to collaborate with the government. Though stunned and flattered by the Communist Party's request to participate in real power, Rousova is fully aware of the trick of incorporation, thinking that such an offer is just the Communist party's desperate measure to "[save] its own skin" (29). Thus, Rosouva refrains from expressing her consent for collaboration and remains in the opposition to the government.[8] As the play unfolds, the revolutionaries from the Public Platform and other groups are alert to the government's strategy of inclusion and assimilation.

Not satisfied with the government's minor reform, the revolutionaries become determined to democratize the country and end "the Communist monopoly of public life" (53). To terminate the monolithic power of the party, the revolutionaries demand and insist on having direct talks with the representatives from the government, not the party delegation. In the depiction of the meetings between the government and the opposition, Edgar displays the treacherous, bureaucratic nature of the process of political negotiation. The scene that portrays the first meeting, the Public Platform representatives attempt to make sense of what the meeting means:

> Matkovic: I thought it was supposed to be informal
>
> Prus: I'm not sure our view of what's 'informal' would quite match.
>
> Zietek: Not sure our view of anything'll match (32)

Matkovic pessimistically conjectures that the government will not treat the meeting seriously and that the meeting is held as a trick for the government to disguise itself in

[8] Rousova is aware that the role that coalition parties play is just like "a parliamentary rubber stamp" (29), to promote a positive, democratic outlook of an actually monolithic government.

order to gain a more helpful public profile and to ameliorate its political crisis. Prus, however, disagrees with him and suggests that even an "informal" meeting could be a significant step to initiate further talks and negotiations in the future. Zietek, as a young radical student, observes the difficulty of reaching consensus of opinions and discloses a sense of fatalism that the meeting will be futile, lost in rambling. Their remarks reveal their uncertainty about the result of this meeting with the government. Thus, a sense of the treacherous nature of negotiation is established. Later when the government officials appear, they express similar perspectives. Michal Kaplan, the Prime Minister of the Communist government, welcomes the opposition, saying:

> I think…We hope of course that today's talks will result in a retreat from some entrenched positions. But the most important thing is that they happen. In Paris, the Americans and the Vietnamese spent seven months agreeing the configuration of the delegations at the talks. Quite literally, the shape of the negotiating table. I think we can agree we haven't go that long (37-38)

This remark displays that the government, though still clings to retain its dominant authority, is aware of bureaucratic, meandering process of political negotiation. His welcoming speech also suggests a sense of uncertainty: what the "talks" will give rise to and how much changes are to be made. Moreover, Kaplan's reference to the seven-month discussion that preceded the peace talks between the Americans and the Vietnamese, which is where the play's title derived, is not only the recognition of serpentine political bartering, but also an acknowledgement of the Public Platform as an undeniable oppositional force. Since everything is "all subject to negotiation," the meeting between the government and the Public Platform is carried on with sarcastic, bitter and barbed expression to confront the other side (40). When the government asks for a stall to revise its statement, it exposes itself to "a negotiating position," a

position that implies the vulnerable situation of the government (39). Gradually, the government appears to reduce its hostility and stay on equal terms with the Public Platform to negotiate their roles and measure the degree of their influences in refashioning the existing political structure.

As the Public Platform attempts to democratize the country, Edgar also democratizes his text to include voices from different social spheres. In the scene that deals with the eventual fall of the Communist government, a wide range of representatives "drawn from the broadest social spheres" are present in the "full dialogue" to negotiate for the formation of a new national structure (50). The representatives from a variety of social sectors attend the meeting to speak for the interest of different social groups. This dramatic arrangement not only coheres with the depiction of the new political possibility which democratic pluralism is expected, but also functions to express different points of view about the political sea-change in the country. Lutz and Milev, representing the hardliners of the Communist Party and thought to be consigned to "history's dustbin," speak for the working class and those who believe in the ideal of socialism (60). Rousova stands on the ground of nationalism, fears for disastrous effect of the replacement of central command economy by unregulated market economy. Their comments, which will be analyzed in the later section, expose their anxiety over the future direction the "de-" communist country will take. Lutz also attacks the elitism of the Public Platform representatives, his criticism accords similarly with the rage of Victoria Brodskaya, the secretary of the Public Platform.[9] She disparages the behind-the-door negotiations and document-drafting as armchair, idle theorizing, a separation from the real concerns of the street demonstrators and ordinary citizens. Her anger also lays bare the criticism

[9] Brodskaya bursts into rage and says: "And all of you. They say the most extraordinary, outrageous things. And you just sit there talking about deals and timetables […]" (61).

that the non-violent democratic revolution is just about haggling, horse-trading among elite politicians.

To negotiate for the formation of a new government, the revolutionaries desire a full sovereign nation-state based on the principles of “Democratic Pluralism” (49). The first step is to insist on a radical change in the structure of governmental organization, “taking it as axiomatic that such a government will have a majority of Ministers who are not members of the present ruling party” (54). The second step is to reevaluate the country’s diplomatic relations. In this respect, Edgar tackles the issues of claiming sovereignty in the (communist) Eastern European countries. During the Cold War, these communist European countries were ideologically and militarily controlled by Soviet Union in the form of the Warsaw Pact Treaty and through the logic of Brezhnev Doctrine. However, as Matthew J. Ouimet observes, the logic of the Brezhnev Doctrine places Soviet supremacy and the interests of the Soviet Union in the first priority and refuses to “differentiate between the interests of the Soviet Union and those of its Warsaw Pact allies” (4). Thus, in the play when the revolutionaries attempt to remove the communist government and terminate “the Communist monopoly of public life” (53), they understand it could be impossible to pursue a “full independent sovereign national life” were the country not dissect its tie with the Soviet Bloc and the Soviet satellite politics (46). To achieve their goal, the revolutionaries insist on the withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact obligation and the “evacuation of all foreign forces” from the country (53). In other words, the opposition proposes to “renege on international agreements with regard to military alliances and the stationing of troops” (63). Although the Communist government is alarmed and resistant, it cannot refuse the demands from Prus and the Public Platform. The Communist government accepts the demands reluctantly and rewords the document in order to mask their defeat from power.

In dramatizing the political negotiations, Edgar accounts for the revolutionaries' desire for a complete change of government and a total abandonment of the current failed communist system. The system, according to their understanding, prevents them and the rest of the country, from achieving the dream of justice, freedom, and democracy. During the interval of the "full dialogue" meeting, Brodskaya, the secretary of the Public Platform, bursts out her anger at the ruling state:

> …And I'd ask them how they feel about 'a so-called socialist society' which promises a new Jerusalem but offers tangerines. In which the rule is, if you want to eat, then keep you mouth shut. Which pledges the collective liberation of all humankind but actually makes people greedy, selfish, cynical and sly. In which no-one actually feels responsible to anyone or anything beyond themselves. (62)

Brodskaya's rage is a direct condemnation of the state and Communist system, which has led to serious economic and moral crises in the country. The Communist state is also a totalitarian, repressive regime which distorts civil rights and employs ubiquitous, strict state surveillance upon its citizens in the form of bugging and censorship. As a result, the characters are shown to suffer from state terror.[10] Moreover, the regime, that "preached water and drunk wine," is corrupt and enjoys its bureaucratic privilege (72). "Governed behind the locked doors," it shows disregard to the appeals from the citizens and tends to employ "straight rejection, or prevarication, or delay" to the requests made by the people (58). Consequently, the revolutionaries are wary of the promises made by the government and are determined

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[10] When Prus, who is the victim of censorship of publication, is requested to co-opt with the regime, the regime displays its omnipotent surveillance through monitoring letter exchange. The expression of "not knowing if there's things that haven't got to you at all" poses a psychological fear (6). To this condition, Prus complains that, "It's like in hospital. One has no control over one's cricustances. One has become a child" (6). Later when he and the other revolutionaries enter into the Communist building and start to discuss about politics, they are aware that they should play music so as to avoid bugging

to carry out the reform without relying on the government. The depiction of the revolutionaries' furious reaction to the ruling Communist state and the failed system, thus, can be read as Edgar's critique of the mistakes of Communist-style socialism.

Edgar's assessment of Communist-style socialism extends to the last scene of the play. In a reversal of fate, Prus, who used to be an imprisoned writer, becomes a new elected president and confronts Lutz, who is charged with "treason, corruption, abuse of authority and running an unconstitutional organization," in the same meeting room (77). Similar to the first scene of the play, Lutz is offered to sign a document that will guarantee the mitigation of the crimes he committed. The mitigation of crime reveals the realization of the difficulty of conducting massive political cleansing in the post-communist condition. Uncompromised, however, Lutz burns the document as Prus does in the first scene, and defends to the death his commitment to socialism. Through his confession, the failure of Communist-style socialism is interpreted as "pilot error," not "the machine" (80). This realization demonstrates his repentance of failing to implement the ideal of socialism when he was the leader. The play ends in him heroically locking himself in the room which used to inspire his socialist zeal, saying "it's best if I'm still in it at the end" (83). To end the play by Lutz locking himself in the room reinforces his perpetual attachment to socialism. This closure is also a heroic theatrical gesture for Edgar to declare that he will loyally defend the ideal of socialism through theatre.

The Shape of the Table opens in a Communist meeting room where the doors and the windows are closed and the action of the play never ventures beyond the political bartering of the meeting room, giving the play a claustrophobic, backroom feel. Inside the meeting room, the entire political discussions take place around the negotiating table, which serves as a Brechtian "teaching device for the audience" (Painter 138). In Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton's *Moscow Gold*, the presence of a

huge table is used to stand for the Soviet Communist system; however, the presence of the changing shape of the table in *The Shape of the Table* is used as a visual metaphor to symbolize the development and political changes that occurred throughout Eastern Europe at the time. In performance, the table is first seen by the audience in a form of a dominating rectangle with a single cloth-covered expanse of crisp white laid with formal settings. The table stands for, in Christopher Innes' word, "the sham purity of the Communist regime, its apparent monolithic unity and its rigidity" (191). When the revolutionaries enter into the room to meet with the government officials, the single cloth is stripped away and the huge rectangular table is revealed to be made up of many smaller tables. The act of uncovering is the recognition that political and cultural differences exist but are concealed, covered in the communist society. Later it transforms into one composed of the three sides of a square, and then into an L-shaped arrangement along with the changes occurring during the negotiations between the government and opposition. In the last scene of the play, only one small table is left and pushed to the side with a single chair while all the other tables are removed. Although the conspicuous reshuffling of the shape of the table seems to pass unnoticed by all the characters in the play, the table serves as a dramaturgical reminder to the audience of the complex political transformation. The physical transformation of the table's shape reflects the gradual fragmentation of the monolithic communist state, and the forming patterns reflect the maneuvers in the struggle for power.[11] In the last scene, the remaining single table placed in the margin represents the establishment of a more democratic, individualistic system in which no single political force seems to enjoy the dominant role in the post-communist society.

[11] In the formal meeting to discuss the direction for future government, the shape of the table is formed into the three sides of a big square, and the government officials occupy the central side of the arrangement while the other social interest groups take the two arms. The seating arrangement displays that the Communist government takes the leading part in the political discussion and intends to affect the course of the negotiation.

However, the removal of other tables backstage could be an ambiguous stage device. It may insinuate that the new democratic system favored by Prus and his companions would not treat the political and cultural differences as democratically and pluralistically as it claims.

3.4 Allegorizing the Revolutionary Future

In *The Shape of the Table*, the elements of fairy tales are repeatedly evoked by the characters to make sense of the country before and after the Communist administration. The application of fairy tales, thus, plays a significant allegorical role in the play. It is used not only as a metaphor to describe the eventual breakdown of the Communist regime, but also as an apocalyptical device for the playwright to explore the post-communist state of Eastern Europe. This section will delve into Edgar's deployment of fairy tales and explicate their allegorical meanings in the post-communist context.

Edgar's clever deployment of fairy tales is displayed through his characterization of Pavel Prus. Through Prus' analogy between fairy tales and the reality, the communist regime is shown abnormal and its removal will be a fait accompli. In the play, Prus is an established dissident who is imprisoned because the local regime thinks that the anthology of stories he compiles would "[disseminate] fabrication hostile to the state" (4). Although Prus appears to be innocent of why the state forbids the publication of his anthology, his familiarity with stories leads him easily to draw the parallel between the circumstances of fairy tales and those of the country he lives in, saying "how relevant those themes are to our situations now" (4). Later in an attempt to illustrate his observation, Prus implicitly makes a series of comparisons to explain the relevancy of fairy tales to the "situations now." According to his perception, the country is like a fairyland occupied by the villain:

> And there's sometimes people who look kind and nice and caring but who turn out to be monsters. And there may be a forbidden room, with a secret book, which will tell you everything, but if you read it may bring about what you least want, and leave you worse off than you were before. […] (4)

The "monsters" refer to the cruel communist government, and the "secret book" implies the grand vision that communism promises to make. The consequence of reading the "secret book" is an acknowledgement of the frightening actuality the communist system has brought around.[12] Yet, as all fairy tales end happily, Prus ends his comparison by saying, "at the end the false prince is exposed and punished, and the real prince comes into his kingdom" (4). His comparison of fairy tales and the actual situation indicates that he envisages the eventual overthrow of the communist regime. As the play unfolds, Prus becomes the head of the Public Platform, the country's leading oppositional force, and leads the opposition to challenge the Communist state. At the end, he is shown elected as the new president of the country after the democratic revolution. In this respect, he represents "the real prince" who will ultimately defeat the villain and restore the country in a fairy tale (4). Prus' ascendency to the leadership of the county corresponds with the logic of a fairy tale that ends happily. What's more, the play ends with "bells ringing for the inauguration of the President […] bells are tolling all round the theatre" (83). This musical device echoes Prus' illustration of the convention of fairy tales that the ringing of bells announces a happy ending. The closure will lead the audience to see the play as a fairy tale and expect that the political crisis and the power struggle described in the

[12] In the play, when the Communist government is removal, Prus uses a graphic allegorical story to reiterate his denouncement of Communist addiction to provide grand vision: "Communism, one of those appalling holidays you read about, where some mad enthusiastic schoolteacher takes a group of pupils up a mountain, and when the weather turns, he can't cope and the whole thing ends in tears" (80-81)

play are resolved at the end. However, there is a paradox in this interpretation. If the audience read the play as a fairy tale with a happy ending, they are conscious that the scenario it depicts is unreal and turn to contemplate what the reality is.

The paradox becomes manifest if we examine the dénouement of the play carefully. The play's ending does not entirely meet the expectation of a fairy tale. In *The Shape of the Table*, the audience see the impending presidential inauguration as a celebration (a happy ending), but also conceive that there are conflicts left unresolved. The post-communist country is shown still in turmoil. Although Prus cannot wait to make "a clean break with the past" and "usher in the new," he cannot promise the stability of the country (72, 69). Through Prus' self-mockery, it seems that the civil demonstration has not subsided along with the removal of the Communist government. Moreover, Kaplan tells some unpleasant incidents:

> An incident, apparently. A young Vietnamese. Guest worker, walking to his dormitory. And rather badly beaten, by a gang of young men with short hair.
>
> (*slight paus*e)
>
> And the first graffiti. Gas All Gypsies Now. (75)

His report brings in the flow of events outside the closed negotiating room and exposes some tensions within the nation. The racist abuse shows the emergence of xenophobia, nationalism and anti-Semitism, that will threaten the stability of the country. Observing the appearance of such divisive and potentially dangerous features, Prus' himself admits that the revolutionary promises will not always work out as they are expected. This admission corresponds to Edgar, Howard Brenton, David Hare, and other left-wing political playwrights' lament for the lost possibilities of the 1968 revolutionary optimism and their disillusionment with Harold Wilson's government. Evoking a different sub-genre of fairy tales, Prus states his recognition that the

dismantling of the old totalitarian system brings in of the unintended drawbacks:

> At root it's the same myth as the genie in the bottle, or the book in the forbidden room, or Pandora's Box, or the serpent's apple. The spirit with its promises of boundless power who once unleashed turns out to be demon (73)

As the "spirit" turns out to be "demon," the revolutionary promises may result in uncontrollable consequences. Thus, rather than offering a happy ending, the play ends with perceivable unresolved conflict, which displays Edgar's pessimism about post-Cold War state of Eastern Europe, a region that moves towards a growing nationalism, ethnic tensions and civil war.

In Edgar's perception, the spirits that will turn out to be demons also include the adoption of free-market capitalism. In negotiating for the future governance of the country, Lutz, a firm believer of socialism, senses that the communist command economic system will be replaced by unregulated market economy, states his concern of the deficit of capitalism:

> While I myself might have some comments on the right of people to organize politically at their place of work. And about reneging on our promise to the working class to end the crime of capital accumulation and the exploitation of one man by another. (56)

Lutz appears to speak on the ground of the working class, and his remark bears a severe criticism against capitalism: a system that benefits the interest of a few individuals at the expanse of the welfare of the collective. Rousova also utters her concern about unheeded adoption of capitalism. Standing on the ground of nationalism, she fears that free-market economy will sell the post-Communist country

to the U.S., resulting in a form of cultural colonization.[13] Lutz's and Rousova's worries expose the post-Cold War condition that Francis Fukuyama would agree in his *The End of History* (1992) that the eventual historical progress is moving toward a governmental system of "Western liberal democracy" (4). For those who suffer from totalitarian system and economic malaise, American-style free-market capitalism seems a tempting alternative to get rid of its Communist legacies and away from its economic backwardness. Thus, when Prus becomes the president, he cannot envision other alternatives but Western liberal democratic capitalism regardless of the consequential injustice, exploitation and the explosion of unemployment.[14] He declares, "[L]et's get back to the normal, ordinary way of doing things. The way that works. The way they do them in the west" (81). Prus' propensity to romanticize and generalize "the west" not only reveals his inability to envisage an alternative to capitalism but also exposes his ignorance of the heterogeneity of the West. Edgar also specifies that the costume of Prus on his way to the inaugural ceremony should be "oddly formal" (76). Prus' ridiculous, discordant looking seems to serve as a mockery of his "west-ward" policy and suggests an inharmonious capitalist future. Through the prism of Edgar's leftist stance, the discussion of the inhuman consequence of a capitalist society and the caricatured representation of Prus serve as his critique of post-Cold War propensity to neo-liberal capitalism.

Edgar also reveals his skepticism of the revolutionary change through his

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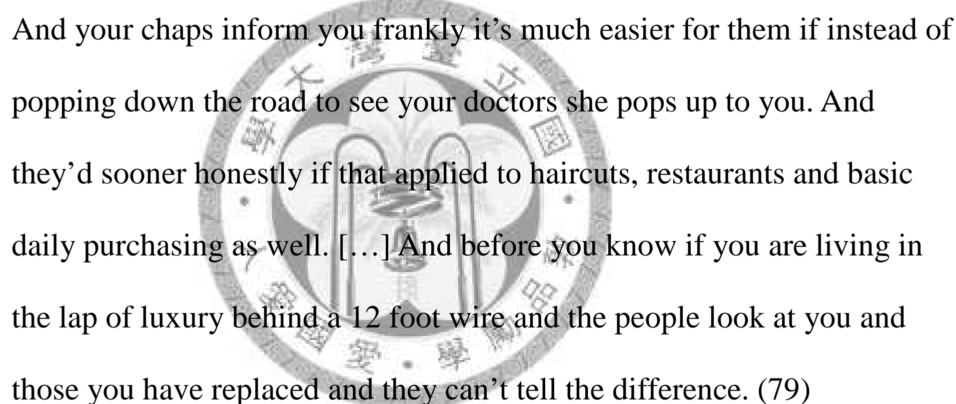
[13] Rousova worries that: "You see, I wonder if 'out there' they've really grasped what's going on. If they realize that they're exchanging the Red Flag for the pop song. Pravda for Playboy. The hammer and the sickle for the strip-joint, cola tin and burger-bar. To have expelled the Germans and the Russians just to hand the whole thing over to—American. [...] I sometimes think we are the only European left. We in the so-called Camp of Peace and Socialism. Since the West became a New York colony" (60)

[14] Prus' indifference is displayed through his conversation with Spassov, who reminds him to take heed of the inhumanity of capitalism: "From the sense that if you're not a young and thrusting sort of chap, if in fact you're old or weak or frail, then you're alone. Surrounded by a bleak indifferent world. And that if things go bad for you no-one's going to care" (73-74). Prus remains insensitive and keeps attacking the previous Communist regime.

depiction of Prus' elitism. Prus, who succeeds the power left by the old totalitarian, steps atop to the leadership and determines to lead the country by liberal democracy. However, he maintains a sense of aloofness and unconsciously displays his superiority to the lay individuals on whose behalf he and the rest of the Public Platform members take control of the state: "Now, you know the rule. As long as they're in the street they're a queue. They hit the square, they're a mob" (69). This remark demonstrates his manifest elitism after the transformation of power. Through rewriting the people whom he used to esteem into a mob, Prus distances himself from the general citizens and appears to enjoy the power he accumulates. He also appears insensitive to Lutz's warning of the insulating effects of power:



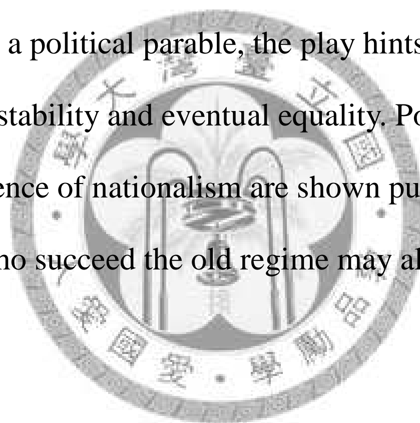
> And your chaps inform you frankly it's much easier for them if instead of popping down the road to see your doctors she pops up to you. And they'd sooner honestly if that applied to haircuts, restaurants and basic daily purchasing as well. […] And before you know if you are living in the lap of luxury behind a 12 foot wire and the people look at you and those you have replaced and they can't tell the difference. (79)

In this respect, Lutz's sarcasm hints at the duplication of power from the old totalitarian regime to a new democratic government, and implies the subsequent bureaucratization and corruption. Lutz' warning of the repetition of hierarchy and political elitism is validated especially now that Edgar subtly keeps the street protesters or the ordinary citizens remain off-stage in the end of the play when Prus declares to lead the country towards liberal, pluralistic democracy.

In *The Shape of the Table*, Edgar employs the discourse of the fairy tale and leads the audience to view the play as a political parable. The formula of fairy tales expects that each tale eventually ends happily with the villains expelled and the conflicts resolved. Edgar structures the play to conform to the formula that the

symbolic villain (the local Communist regime) is forced out, but he ends the play with a series of emerging irreconcilable conflicts. The unresolved conflicts in the ending disrupt the audience's full engagement with the illusion of fairy tales and prompt them to consider the issues raised in the play when they walk out of theatre.

David Edgar's *The Shape of the Table* is a subtle representation of the process of democratization in Eastern Europe in the late 1989. Through fictionalizing his setting, Edgar endeavors to teases out the common process behind each individual state and explores its implications. According to the play, the so-called revolution is shown as a power game where political elites and intelligentsia struggles to preserve or take over the power. As a political parable, the play hints that the revolutionary future does not guarantee stability and eventual equality. Post-Cold War propensity for Capitalism and the emergence of nationalism are shown pushing the country to the brink of disaster. Those who succeed the old regime may also likely replicate old political structure.



Conclusion

This thesis examines how British political playwrights assess and reorient their socialist project through their dramatic responses to the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. The three plays that are examined in this thesis project portray the failure of communist-style socialism and the necessities for changes. In *Mad Forest*, characters are shown to live in harsh material condition and are harassed by ubiquitous state surveillance and terror. Verbal communication is distorted and unreliable; mutual understanding is threatened. Yet, these characters seize chances to defy or mock the authorities so as to express their discontent with the totalitarian regime and their anticipation for the overthrow of the dictatorship. In *Moscow Gold*, Gorbachev is singled out as the central protagonist who worries about the misrules of Soviet communist-style socialism and the damaging consequences. The plight of ordinary Moscow citizens is also given voice to. Thus, Gorbachev's restructuring reform is shown vindicated and necessary. In *The Shape of the Table*, the old communist government is evaluated by the revolutionaries as fraud that governs behind the door and never keeps its promises to the people. Apart for violent suppression, this government can only think of coercion and assimilation to maintain its monopoly of power, which the revolutionaries consider insufficient and determine to refashion the political structure. The portrayals of the failure of socialism reflect the playwrights' assessment of the really-existing socialism and their agreement that the changes are needed.

Although the three plays demonstrate the need for changes, they all explore the confusion and irresoluble conflicts subsequent to the euphoria of the changes. In *Mad Forest*, the characters enjoy the excitement following the toppling of their dictator government, but soon find them in a morass of verbal and physical conflicts. They

dispute over the meaning and status of the revolution, and are traumatized by the resurgence of ethnic nationalism. In *Moscow Gold*, Gorbachev is stranded in the political predicament and overwhelmed by a myriad of political, social, economic problems his reform unleashes. Not satisfied with his reform to reverse the Soviet problem, some Soviet citizens are shown to press for more radical change rather than Gorbachev's ideal of rebuilding socialism. The challenges from the emerging ethnic nationalism foreshadow the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In *The Shape of the Table*, the deepest worry about reckless adoption of free-market capitalism is repeatedly expressed by the communist officials as well as those who stand for the national interest during the political negotiations for the future governance. When deposed, the communist officials caution the new elected democratic leader the danger of the replication of power structure, which may hijack the ideal of democratization. The new leader, who embraces Western democracy and capitalism, prophetically admits the growing nationalism, ethnic tensions and civil war. The three plays all depict much conflicting dramatic landscapes following the revolutionary changes. Through the characters debating about their future, we can discern that the playwrights attribute the fundamental cause to the emerging conflicts to the penchant for free-market liberal capitalism in replacement of the ideal of socialism. Reading through the prism of the playwrights' leftist political stance, the depiction of the impeding conflicts reveals their consistent commitment to the desirability of a socialist alternative to the iniquities of Western capitalism.

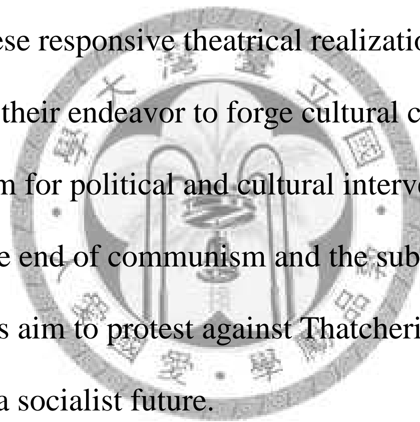
Through representing ethnic tension and conflicts as well as the resurgence of nationalism, the playwrights reveal their much less confident views about the future state of Eastern Europe. Their perspectives go against the optimism and anticipation for post-Cold War European integration— significantly represented by the notion, promoted by Mikhail Gorbachev, one of the central architects of this era's political

climate, of a common European home. In retrospect, the depiction of ethnic conflicts and the resurgence of post-Cold War nationalism following the end of Cold War opposition does not anticipate the utopian vision of European political and economic integration but the disturbing reality of the horrific confluence of ethnic nationalism such as the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the destruction of Sarajevo, the massacre at Srebrenica and the events described in the chilling euphemism of ethnic cleansing in the 1990s.

In this thesis, the playwrights employ different strategies in order to avoid reinforcing received images and stereotypes when representing issues in Eastern Europe. In *Mad Forest,* Caryl Churchill inserts a tourist figure and reenacts famous exotic signifiers in an unfamiliar way for the sake of alienating the audience and highlighting the play's engagement with an unfamiliar place. In *Moscow Gold*, Tariq Ali and Howard Brenton problematize the West's tendency to recapitulate the plight and misery of the Soviet Union by staging the complicatedness of the Soviet political and social structure. In *The Shape of the Table*, David Edgar disregards a concrete geographical setting to circumvent any penchant for reading the play as about any specific country. Although the playwrights share the same ambition of preventing from the process of Larry Wolff's "inventing Eastern Europe" in their dramatic representation, their identity as British observers would make their ambition a paradox. Their outsider-spectator position will lead one to regard their interpretations of the political events in Eastern Europe as following the project of "inventing Eastern Europe."

Finally, the analysis of the three plays' immediate, responsive theatrical representation of the events in Eastern Europe should be located in the context of British political theatre. The proliferation of staging (post-) Cold War Eastern Europe is significant and these plays constitute a sub-genre of political theatre. For the plays

analyzed in this thesis, they demonstrate that the playwrights deal with the political events from different perspectives and employ various dramaturgical strategies rather than conforming to the terrain of Brechtian political theatre. These left-wing playwrights, nourished by and believing in the concept of using theatre to affect the audience and raise their political consciousness for radical action, were anxious about the crisis of political theatre at the time when Mrs. Thatcher's monetarist policy and ideology were exceedingly pervasive in British society. The aim to recover the crisis of political theatre and to explore its efficacy in the future is the project shared by the playwrights studied in this thesis. If the events of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe prompted them to reorient their socialism and to contemplate the efficacy of socialism in the future, these responsive theatrical realizations of the political events symbolically demonstrate their endeavor to forge cultural critiques and assert the role of theatre as a public forum for political and cultural intervention. Through their dramatic exploration of the end of communism and the subsequent espousal of liberal capitalism, the playwrights aim to protest against Thatcherism and emphasize their committed desirability of a socialist future.



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