Dramatizing the Burden of History in the Age of Globalization:
Caryl Churchill’s Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?, Howard Barker’s The Dying of Today, and Charles L. Mee’s The War to End War

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Abstract

Despite the perception that globalization has eliminated national barriers as capital floats above them and enables international cooperation, since the late 1980s, the world has experienced a strikingly high number of conflicts that effectively challenge the concept of an emerging postnational society, as historic forms of social organization still determine politics and culture. The inherently contradictory coexistence between the cosmopolitan and the national that resides at the core of globalization remains to be sufficiently represented theatrically. Caryl Churchill’s Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?, Howard Barker’s The Dying of Today, and Charles L. Mee Jr.’s The War to End War are three historical plays informed by a consciousness of the immanence of the historic past sharing a vision of history as a long process that affects later generations.1

Keywords: theatre, politics, globalization, war

Introduction: Globalization, History, Theatre

The theory of globalization points to an irreversible mutation in the evolution of capitalism, in which technoscience and multinational corporations have rendered imperialism obsolete and challenged the nation-state’s monopoly in designating territorial (and social) borders.2 By and large, this paradigm shift is claimed to have engendered a transnational cooperative capitalist elite without national ties, inevitably leading to what Fredric Jameson has called the postmodern condition of the “weakening of historicity” (Postmodernism 6).

The political decisions of the past twenty-five years—imperialist interventions, retaliatory wars, and ethnoreligious conflicts—have seriously questioned the theories of de-territorialization, transnational unification, and cultural hybridity. Hegemonic attitudes within supranational institutions have provoked skepticism about their constituent values of cosmopolitanism and transnational solidarity. Simultaneously, fascism—in multiple forms—is revived, shattering the dream of a post-national convivial culture. Nationalism and racism are not just side effects of the noxious aspects of global capitalism; they are essential in

1 As Karl Marx has pointed out in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, “[t]he tradition of the dead generations [which] weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living” (146).

2 The main standpoints of the globalization theory have been the internationalization of economic activity caused by the penetration of national markets by multinational corporations, the relaxation of commerce customs, the facilitation of global transactions and communication by the Internet, and the centrality of finance capital. Along with the establishment of continental-wide institutions such as the EU, national barriers have relatively loosened, resulting in broadened labor markets, increased migration and the co-existence of native and migrant communities, effectively reshaping the cultural composition of western societies.
governmental rhetoric, arguably leading to a post-modernized appropriation of such categories as national consciousness and historicity, in line with the “cosmopolitan” motion of capital.

This contradictory situation that resides at the heart of capitalism underlines the need to transform theory into a lived experience, beyond dominant political discourses mediated through mass media and ideological apparatuses. Dan Rebellato argues that “globalization’s effects are so profound that they require—and have generated—wholly different forms to represent them” (29). Theatre has the benefit of transforming history and social contradictions from a mass of written words into such an experience. As Edward Bond argues, “[w]e are not made by our ability to reason, but by our need to dramatize ourselves and our situations. In drama, reason and imagination elucidate each other. This enables us to understand ourselves and what we do” (1). Furthermore, the theatrical world of imitation becomes, in Jameson’s words, “a peculiarly privileged space for allegorical mechanisms, since there [...] is always [...] the nagging sense that these spectacles also imitate, and thereby stand for, something else” (Brecht 153).

Jameson also notes that historical plays acting as allegories enable multiple interpretations (Brecht 154). The issue of representation seems to generate a friction between realism and non-realism. Herbert Linderberger claims that “[t]he powerful effect that a drama on a people’s own can exert is often lost when it is presented in a foreign environment, for this effect is predicated on the audience’s awareness that it is witnessing the enactment of its own past” (7). Arguably, non-realistic historical plays allow audiences, in places and times distant from specific historical events, to interpret and relate such events to their own experiences; this would be impossible in realistic historical plays that discuss only the immediate reality of the people involved.

This essay focuses on three plays written in the so-called globalization era, which contemplate on the immanence and re-emergence of the historic, as well as the lingering effect of past conflicts. Caryl Churchill’s Drunk Enough to Say I Love You? (2006) documents US political-military interventions as the conspiracy of a gay couple, and argues that imperialism may take different forms and shapes. Howard Barker’s The Dying of Today (2008) re-enacts the news of the Athenian fleet’s defeat in Sicily during the Peloponnesian War, discussing how social identities are mediated through reports of destruction. Charles L. Mee Jr.’s The War to End War (premiered in 1993) revisits the 1919 Versailles Peace Treaty and the Manhattan Project employing Brechtian techniques to demonstrate how revanchism incubates future conflicts. As will be argued, the three plays share a number of dramaturgical characteristics that are also reflected in their focus on the contradictions of history and politics as well as in the commitment to non-realism.

Reminiscences of Political Subservience

Churchill’s Drunk Enough to Say I Love You? deals with post-9/11 American aggression, and can be read as a critique of the political relationship between the United States and Britain. Of the two characters, Sam obviously alludes to Uncle Sam, while Jack stands for Union Jack. The two men meet in a bar and start an affair; Jack is charmed by Sam and
leaves his family to aid the latter realize his plans for world domination.\textsuperscript{3} The play documents post-1945 American military and political interventions with references to practices of terrorizing populations.\textsuperscript{4} However, in Sam’s words, the tactics of terror propaganda sometimes “don’t work out the way we [want],” as in the case of Venezuela or Gaza, thus “now we need to prevent some elections” (7).

Aside from violent clampdowns on progressive politicians, the play decries the post-1973 neoliberal onslaught, portraying the IMF-imposed structural adjustment as another form of imperialism. In the play, military violence and economic coercion constitute a historic synchronicity. The post-communist era, instead of leading to worldwide prosperity, led to a proliferation of players vying for political hegemony against the US. Along with what Sam calls “the proliferation of wmd,”\textsuperscript{5} this has justified a renewed cycle of violence from the Gulf War onwards to “combat the threat” (Churchill 25). In the fifth scene, Sam seeks to secure space satellites as a means of preemptive strike against any opponent, fulfilling the age-old American exceptionalist imaginary of the ever-expanding frontier:

SAM. space  
JACK. god  
SAM. all mine  
JACK. so  
SAM. deny others the use of space  
JACK. it’s just  
SAM. we have it, we like it and we’re going to keep it  
JACK. fantastic  
SAM. fight \textit{in} space, we’re going to fight \textit{from} space, we’re going to fight \textit{into}  
JACK. wow  
SAM. you like it?  
JACK. so big (24; emphasis in the original)

The pace of the play is fast, without punctuation or stage directions. There are no full sentences, as the characters complete each other’s thoughts; or, to be more specific, it is Jack who obediently fulfills Sam’s orders, while reassuring his macho ruler of his love. This may be interpreted as a direct reference to the complicity between imperialists and local politicians, who compromise their countries’ independence to multinationals. The play’s lack of a specific location or stage directions offers a more universal perspective transcending national borders in the face of a world crisis. Churchill herself altered the name of Jack into Guy for American productions, and Paul for German ones, indicating the continuous penetration of every country by imperialism.\textsuperscript{6}

The course of the couple’s love affair exemplifies diplomatic intimidation and subservience; in the fourth scene, every time Jack expresses his doubts about the morality of

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\textsuperscript{3} The characters of the play allude to the allegations about Tony Blair being George Bush Jr.’s “poodle.”

\textsuperscript{4} There are references to Chile, for example, where, if the people “vote communist they lose their children, the Russians will take [them]” (7), as well as references to “mak[ing] numbers up” in “polls in the Philippines” (8).  

\textsuperscript{5} “wmd” (weapons of mass destruction)  

\textsuperscript{6} When the play was produced in Greece in the spring of 2011, it was considered timely, referring to the austerity imposed to the country by the EU (Etaireia Theatrou Syn-Epi online; Prassa online).
their actions, Sam mistreats him, reminding him that “you chose” (23). Eventually, Jack leaves Sam, only to return in the seventh scene, with Sam demanding “total commitment” (34), cruelly demonstrating that capitalism is all-encompassing, allowing no room for independence within its tracks.

Ultimately, Sam’s power is destabilized due to an ecological disaster brought on by capitalist greed. His last few lines, where he encourages Jack to “to try to smile [...] because you have to love me” (42), shows that the loss of hegemonic power does not usher peacefully into a new multilateral era, but entails a stubborn grip on self-interest. Churchill criticizes the notion that globalization is an entirely new era in which capitalist states refrain from utilizing old imperialist practices; however, past modes of exercising political power are not necessarily abandoned, for they are determined by the exigencies of capitalist metropolises. The playwright suggests that manipulative propaganda techniques have not essentially changed, despite the mutations of capitalism. Sam employs religion and superstition, which still exert influence on the masses, despite scientific advancement and transnational co-existence:

SAM. literally believe literally Jesus Christ has
JACK. so clever
SAM. and simultaneously astrology
JACK. superstitious
SAM. horoscopes daily horoscopes will say
JACK. and they vote the way you want, that is so
SAM. because you have to appeal to their deepest (5)

Religion still acts as a referential point for the perpetuation of illusions of social security against all “Others” that supposedly threaten the values of the American nation. It is no coincidence that since the 1980s, Republican administrations, with their conservative religious ideology and aggressive imperialist policies, have played a pivotal role in global politics, despite the fact that – historically – the neoconservative political hegemony gained momentum around the same period with the emergence of techno-science, and theories of globalization and cosmopolitanism arguing for cultural amalgamation in the “global village.”

Churchill’s attention is on the historical causality and continuity of imperialist tactics rather than on simply writing an anti-war protest play. Imperialist policies are not portrayed as isolated from each other, but as complementary to one another and applicable to any imperialist power, leading to ever greater chaos in the spiral and cumulative motion of capital, which is reflected in the spiral development of the plot itself.

**Bad News as National Historical Narrative**

In Barker’s *The Dying of Today*, the action unfolds in a barber shop, where a stranger called Dneister is about to tell his coiffeur about Athens’ defeat in the Sicilian Expedition of 413 BC, during the Peloponnesian War. Dneister introduces himself as a bringer of bad news with an “infinite capacity for detail” that “someone else is unlikely to possess” (87).

However, despite Dneister’s long monologues, “which arguably add to the tension and therefore the success of the occasion” (91), it is the barber—whose son is a soldier—who
actually recounts the defeat in the Second Battle in Syracuse. The barber narrates the dramatic annihilation of the Athenian army, where scores of soldiers eventually died of starvation and thirst. He knows of death and destruction, because he had been a soldier during Athens’ unsuccessful siege on Amphipolis (95).

As the catastrophic narration unfolds, the barber becomes overwhelmed with grief; he predicts the enslavement of Athenian citizens to Sparta and destroys his barber shop, with wails of despair being heard in the distance. At first, Dneister trembles “with admiration” at how “[t]he barber has already far surpassed [him] not only in the quality of his telling some part of which must be attributed to his personal investment in the outcome of his narrative but in this powerful instinct for what must surely be the outcome of it all” (104). But, to his amazement, the barber eventually accepts his fate, and lets go of the dignified rage. Resigned to his future slavery (“It is so hard not being a slave” [111]), at the play’s closure he sweeps the wreckage off his shop, wearing a clean apron.

The play’s historical background is based on Plutarch’s biography of the Athenian General Nicias; a stranger reached Piraeus and went to a barber shop where he started talking about the events, not knowing that the news had not arrived yet. The barber immediately informed city authorities, but because he did not know the messenger’s identity, he was tortured in public for spreading panic, until the news officially arrived (Ragkos 199-202). As Spyridon Ragkos correctly notes, this is the starting point of Barker’s play, but does not necessarily need be known for the play to be understood (205); it is rather a vehicle for contemplation on the narration of history, the formation of collective psychology around historical events, and the media(tiza)tion of information.

Dneister repeatedly mentions people’s morbid fascination with reports of tragedy and catastrophe:

I absolutely forbid myself the slightest embellishment of the facts and believe me that is not easy with news so extraordinary as this one is seduced by the rapt attention of the audience whose appetite for horror is insatiable yes the more terrible the description the more they are transfixed they gasp they beg. (87, 88)

This comment echoes the condition of viewers in postmodernity, which is largely shaped by the massive overflow of information; viewers are able to learn immediately about everything that happens anywhere in the world, without, however, fully absorbing the vast volume of circulated information. Natural disasters or man-made extreme situations disrupting the peaceful passage of life shockingly inspire awe. The invention of the term infotainment has uncanny connotations regarding how one can be entertained with images of suffering and destruction. At one point, Dneister remarks that “[b]ad news travel fast, but very bad news oh that much faster” (108); Indeed, Dneister describes the narration of bad news as a “discipline,” encouraging the barber to “imagine the worst only the worst and you cannot fail” (98).

Dramaturgically, Barker highlights this sense of the incessant pounding of information on the subconscious with the complete lack of punctuation in his text. The fact that the barber is the one to narrate the ineffable tragedy that took place in Syracuse without actually having
knowledge of it, suggests that images of horror and destruction have been imprinted on his subconscious, resulting in an *a priori* knowledge of the massacre.

Barker focuses on how social identities are formed around national historical narratives; Dneister claims that “this very bad news . . . cleanses. . . [it] has the propensity to cleanse all trivia swept down the gutter all the ephemera washed out on a tide of grief.” Dneister highlights tragedy as a referential point for social unity, adding that “in the end you’ll thank me *it is not as if you will suffer alone*” (Barker 88; emphasis added). The idea that wartime loss has a healing effect against social divisions brings to mind Randolph Bourne’s timeless remark that “war is the health of the State.” The very fact that the action takes place in a barber shop—both a public and private space with special intimacy—is central to the play’s dramatic construction; it provides the space where the national narrative as a news report is to be delivered. Dneister explains to the barber that “I might have raced to the authorities or clambered on a statue in the square but I knew the moment I set eyes on you this is the one him and no other my style of telling will never be the same again” (91).

As Benedict Anderson has declared, the nation is an imagined community united in “a deep, horizontal comradeship,” transcending class divisions (7). Moreover, the idea that the nation “always loom[s] out of an immemorial past and, still more important, glide[s] into a limitless future” (Anderson 11, 12) resonates through the barber’s detailed description of military defeat. His social consciousness is formed out of memories of past oppression, war, and conquest, leaving an indelible mark on his socio-cultural identity. The mirror-filled barber shop, that ends up in a pile of broken glass comes to stand for a deep cut, a still-bleeding wound from the immemorial past.

Since, for Anderson, the nation emerged with the invention of print, it can be further argued that it extends its operations through the use of technology, connecting people and disseminating political ideology. Whereas the globalization of information and communication might weaken the rigid foundations of nationalism and pave the way for cosmopolitanism, the grip of mass media on people’s perceptions is becoming stronger, and even more so in a crisis, with the spread of misinformation against those supposedly threatening the nation’s stability. With the social fragmentation experienced in our postmodern, globally interconnected and, yet, increasingly isolating communities, mass media employ techniques that inscribe national discourses far deeper than ever into the psychology of individuals. Confined within their four walls, TV viewers are overwhelmed with the unstoppable invasion of images of chaos and destruction into their intimate spaces and daily life, represented in the play through the routine of haircutting in the barber shop. Benjamin describes modernity as the “time of hell,” “and the sadist’s delight in innovation” (Arcades 842, 843).

While Barker does not necessarily address specific political issues in his play, his dramaturgy inevitably hints at the tactics of mass media in periods of social upheaval and crises, in which governments are portrayed as safeguards of “national salvation.”

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7 In his “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Walter Benjamin has suggested that the various social subjects are formed by their understanding of the past: “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’ It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger” (*Illuminations* 255).
Consequently, citizens experience a sense of insecurity, substantially exacerbated by their overreliance on mainstream media as a source of information. This is also reflected in Linderberger's reference to the “mutual awareness that the members of the audience have of one another in the theatre,” where “[they] are not simply aware of the presence of others, but of the fact that others are sharing the same experience” (81; emphasis in the original). The barbers’ smashing of the shop acts as a presage of Athens’ destruction; his cry “NO BOY NO SHOP NO CITY LOOK AT ME” (Barker 104), points to collective loss. Dniester congratulates the barber: “You have made such a good start especially in regard to placing private melancholy in the wider context of what we both know or to be precise I know and you suspect to be a national catastrophe” (97).

Consequently, it becomes evident that Barker is deeply concerned with the immanent historicity of the national that is reinforced by the most global aspects of the world system; namely mass media and the all-encompassing effects of crisis. History casts its burden ever more heavily as time elapses, accumulating the traumatic events and hatreds of previous epochs.

**The Persistence of the Historic Past**

The causal approach to historic events evident in Churchill and Barker is also present in Charles Mee’s *The War to End War*. The play consists of three parts: the first part pertains to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference; the second one comprises of Dadaist sound poems and chaotic performances; the third is a poker game between the scientists that created the first nuclear bomb at Los Alamos. The play is essentially a rewriting of history, and a contemplation on what constitutes historical knowledge. Being a historian himself, Mee puts together a vast amount of historical information, while he intentionally blurs historical facts.

The Versailles Treaty part can be seen as a postmodern dramatized historiography, thus attaining a metatheatrical dimension. Mee had already written a play on the treaty called *The End of Order*; according to Elissa Adams, who performed in the play’s first production:

> [c]iting personal memoirs, diaries, gossip, and guest lists as well as political documents, *The End of Order* presents the peace conference at Versailles in a rich sociological context. . . . When Mee decided to create *The War to End War*, he returned to the same source material used in *The End of Order*, but played fast and loose with time and space to present the conference in theatrical terms. (Mee 46)

The conference was dominated by the American president Woodrow Wilson, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, British delegate Harold Nicolson, and German Foreign Affairs minister Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau. However, more characters exist in the play: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Marcel Proust (who had a correspondence with Nicolson), an Oriental standing for Ho Chi Minh (who attempted to intervene at the conference), a dead soldier and an African. Mee’s characters do not strictly discuss politics, but are presented in a more personal context, providing a clearer understanding of the era.

Throughout the scene, Mee tackles the imperialist nature of war and peace. Although not explicitly mentioned, during the conference Wilson suffered a heart attack, while Clemenceau survived an assassination attempt. In the stage directions, both of them look
haggard and are helped by the plebeian characters. In Marxist thought, imperialism is presented as capitalism’s final stage, and as dominated by decay, parasitism and a tendency towards rivalry, while peace and inter-state alliances are part of the same spiraling process (Lenin 9, 144). In the play, Nicolson analyzes the meaning of the Versailles Treaty:

What would be the point? What quite had been the point? Of course, there were matters of substance: the structure of the Old World; old empires crumbling; new ones reaching for the spoils; former colonies squirming to stay free; the old order of the Congress of Vienna coming apart. (Mee 47)

This desolate description of the post-war landscape brings to mind Vladimir Lenin’s description of imperialism as “capitalism in transition, or, more precisely, as moribund capitalism” (153). Clemenceau and Wilson’s ill health can be perceived as a metaphor for this moribund state; the African and the Oriental helping Clemenceau symbolizes France’s parasitic colonial rule in Africa and Indochina.

The characters themselves do not seem to communicate; there are no real dialogues, but rather parallel monologues, indicating a power game exemplified in Clemenceau’s ironic phrase: “the English sent their missionaries on ahead; the Americans sent their liberals” (Mee 50). The Versailles Treaty, according to historian Ruth Henig, “represented an uneasy compromise between Wilsonian idealism, French security requirements and British pragmatism” (28). The treaty’s failure, which culminated in World War II, is highlighted in the characters’ behavior, as they compete at exploiting national sentiments. In one of the play’s most interesting instances, a dead soldier recounts a battle in which soldiers fought until no one remained. While he is talking, Nicolson and Wilson are irritated, but Clemenceau says “[i]et him go on! These are Frenchmen he speaks of!” and weeps. Nonetheless, Nicolson says that “these are Englishmen he speaks of, not French” (50).

The understanding of history as a non-linear process with advances and discontinuities pervades the play.8 Mee’s drammurgy confirms Linderberger’s comment that:

[t]he continuity between past and present is a central assertion in history plays of all times and styles. One of the simplest ways a writer can achieve such continuity is to play on the audience’s knowledge of what has happened in history since the time of the play. (6)

Still, apart from discussing old wars, there is a dystopian element of predicting future conflicts. Dennis Hupchick notes that “[s]tate borders drawn at Versailles generally followed the victors’ shortsighted policy of rewarding those peoples regarded as allies and punishing those who were defeated,” which “pointed to an innate but unrecognized fallacy in Western European nation-state nationalism” (331). In the play, there are numerous examples of racist comments against Balkan countries that sided with the Central Powers. For example,

8 This is significant especially if we think that it was written by a historian-by-trade, at a time when the “end of history” was declared. Mee indicates the lingering impact of the Treaty of Versailles. We now know how the treaty’s revanchism fostered Nazi ideology and German aggression. Notably, Brockdorff-Rantzau says at an instance “L’ Allemagne renonce à son existence” (56), while stage directions indicate that all characters except Brockdorff-Rantzau drink champagne (49).
Clemenceau explains the origin of the word “bugger”: “It comes from Bulgaria, where all they did, so I’ve been told, was bugger each other for three or four centuries. It was their religion, they said” (Mee 49); thus, the imperialist territorial partition has not secured peace, but has instead become the source of future conflicts as a result of unjust territorial divisions.

The third scene, “Los Alamos,” is also pervaded by the same view of history; four leading scientists of the Manhattan Project—Robert Oppenheimer, Edward Teller, John von Neumann, and Enrico Fermi—are playing poker. In reality, at no period during the nuclear bomb’s construction did all four scientists get together, but Mee takes historical license in order to discuss the origins of wars and the transformation of science and technology into a weapon. Throughout the scene, there is a voiceover of Oppenheimer revising the Ten Commandments into Brechtian-like comments on scientific responsibility. The first commandment says:

Recognize . . . the laws of the conduct of men, so that you may know what you are doing. Try not to forget it. You may begin, for instance, with a thought of what you are doing and find, soon enough, that someone else has taken over the direction of your work. (58)

It has been widely acknowledged that Oppenheimer regretted having helped in the making of the atomic bomb, which was controlled by corporations and the American military. The eighth commandment says: “This is an important one again: do not add to the madness. If you can’t stop it, at least do not help to push it over the edge” (58), alluding to widespread hysteria during wartime. Notably, Enrico Fermi actually “added to the madness,” as he had suggested that “radioactive fission products bred in a chain-reacting pile might be used to poison the German food supply” (Rhodes 510).

The play’s ending is a most striking example of the accumulation of historic events in a magnifying, spiral process, whose weight is cast upon the present order rather than evaporating into an idealist postnational post-capitalism. Von Neumann, founder of the game theory, explains the rules of the card game. In his monologue, which “is so straightforward it could have been pulled from a textbook” (Mee 46), he says:

The play itself is consequently completely mechanical and predetermined. . . . One can play or not play, but the game goes on in any case, with new players replacing the old; and it has its own logic on which the players are carried along with ever-increasing stakes. . . . The players cannot affect the game, although the game can affect the players. (59)

Evidently influenced by Brecht’s Verfremdungseffekt (the estrangement effect), Mee reveals how the laws of capitalism determine political governance. The replacement of old players by new ones is also a comment on the entry of more economic powers in the world market.

Finally, Mee challenges mainstream conceptions of history as the product of leaders. Through the presence of the dead soldier, the African and the Oriental in the Versailles scene, he gives voice to the subaltern, the voiceless social and ethnic groups that are excluded from politics and history books. As a historian himself, Mee defamiliarizes and deconstructs non-partisan perceptions of the political by shifting attention to class struggle. The dead soldier
reveals his class hatred when he says that “[i]t’s the worst bastards that rise to the top in this world” (50), whereas, when Nicolson wonders if they have a right to invade Russia, the African says with a Brechtian sense of humor that “[i]n former times, statesmen never spoke about rights” (52). This makes us recall Bond’s claim that “[t]he human desire for justice is so basic that it is confirmed in drama’s unreal reality” (95). Furthermore, it undermines traditional realistic aesthetics constructed on established Western-centric cultural concepts.

**Conclusion**

Reading and reinterpreting history as a process is sustained by all three playwrights, as they reconstruct historic events with an allegorical spirit. The question of artistic license and modification of history and tradition has preoccupied dramatic theory since Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Corneille devoted a great part of his *Three Discourses on Dramatic Poetry* to this question, remarking that “the circumstances or . . . the means through which one acts remain under our jurisdiction” (160). Subsequently, Brecht claimed in his *Short Organum for the Theatre* that “if we play works dealing with our own time as though they were historical, then perhaps the circumstances under which he [the spectator] himself acts will strike him as equally odd; and this is where the critical attitude begins” (190).

The three plays’ disparate starting points do not obfuscate the shared view of history as inescapability, or the common anti-realist attitude. Their emphasis is not on the local, but on the global’s contradictory and disorderly features and illusions; an emphasis which is in every case achieved through the lack of extensive stage directions. All three plays resist closure and resolution, something that signifies their negation of a world claimed by established academia to be in a linear, irreversible state of equilibrium. This is further stressed by the playwrights’ openness to the unconventional and the extreme, which justifies Savas Patsalidis’ note that “we also need ‘disorder’ not only to challenge order for the sake of challenging it, but also to define and comprehend it” (275). The three plays’ lack of realism indicates this desire to smash illusory conditions.

In conclusion, all three plays provide radical new suggestions for what theatre can be in an age with largely unexplored possibilities. The contradictory and dynamic features of the present phase of capitalist development – and even more of the crisis – which create domino effects with global repercussions, remain to be represented in an alternative artistic and political language that can adequately speak for our times.

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