Indecipherable Chaos: A Cultural Study of Churchill’s Mad Forest

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Abstract:

The dramatists and literary men constantly make all their efforts to highlight the negative aspects in the societies and encourage the audiences to disgust them. One of the major issues that has been tackled by the dramatists is war. This study explores the consequences of war and chaos on social lives of the people and is examined in relation to the socio-political context which is contextualized by the playwright to show new example of the insidious institutional power.

The focus is on the mass surveillance and data collection against the potential ethical questions it raises along with taking power from those same overseers. This introduces another panoptic principle that the study looks at, while panopticism is hierarchic, there is no one at the top of the hierarchy. The managers are controlled by their plant systems the same way the workers are, and in the wider panoptic sense, even those that are on the outside watching are still being watched by someone higher up the chain of command. Anyone who is ostensibly at the top still has expectations projected onto them and must modify their behavior in certain ways to conform to those expectations.

This paper is about Caryl Churchill’s play Mad Forest which sheds light on the Romanian revolution on 16th to 25th December 1989. The play presents the Romanian society before, during, and after the revolution. Meanwhile it focuses on the lives of two families who are Vladu Family and Antonescue Family.

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1. Introduction

From the beginning of her life, Churchill has been affected by cases like abuse of power in the society and has written many plays about that. One of those political works is Mad Forest (1990). In this play she questions the nature of 1989 revolution of Romania (qtd in Yonkul 4, 6).

Critically, Mad Forest holds more than one approach of analysis because Churchill makes use of many methods, techniques and characteristics that have made some critics and authors give different opinions about it, as Stanton and Garner who believe that Mad Forest shows complex events that happened in Romania in 1989 as they say “Organizing the New York Theatre Workshop’s Mad Forest was the antithetical structure that so tightly patterns Churchill’s text: between a way of life subjected to totalitarian control” (400). This shows that the political force and totalitarianism lead to panopticism and Churchill’s Mad Forest contains both, so the characteristics of panopticism are reflected.

2. Foucault’s theory of Panoptic Society

In his study, Foucault, Power and the Modern Panoptic Sheridan states that “The panoptic society exists, and we are currently living in it” (28). The idea of panopticon came from the building of the prison where there is a tower at the center, “this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building” (Foucault 200), then there is a supervisor that watches all those cells from one place which is the tower. The Panopticon is a machine for observing in the peripheral ring while one person is able to see everything without being seen (Foucault 200).
According to Pellegrino, panopticon, surveillance and social control are the synonyms (4). Indeed, the purpose of strategies of surveillance is to have a control over the timing and spacing of human activities (Pellegrino 39). Accordingly, there are three types of power created by surveillance: The first one is direct, and that is when a security asks the person to cease the behavior. The second form is deterrence, when an individual is afraid of being caught and that is why he/she is aware of his/her behavior. The third type is to “abolish the potential for deviance” (qtd in Gray 320). This needs an acceptance of the power of surveillance that transforms those who are under his eyes and understands the third type of power which begins with Jeremy Bentham’s eighteenth-century disciplinary concept of the panopticon (Gray 320). According to Bentham, panopticon is not only used as the design of prisons, it is also used as the means of surveillance in the society (Hope 360).

Panopticon has moved beyond prisons because it cannot be used only in the prison but contains a whole society and throughout history the panoptic theory has been used to help the power to control populations and modify their behaviors (Sheridan 1, 3). Foucault brought the panopticon outside the fictional prison and showed the society-as-prison metaphor, especially in light of the new surveillance (Simon 7) because according to Foucault panopticon makes the possibility to make the exercise of power perfect and it gives “power of mind over mind” (206). Panopticism is a matter of power and control over individuals in such a way that “we never know about of the control of it has over us” (Sheridan 3).

According to panopticism, the inmate must never know the exact time and moment that he had been watched but he must be sure that he may always be under surveillance (Foucault 200). Kennedy states that the individuals become guardians of their own behaviors and “every citizen becomes a prison master and every soul a panoptic gallery” (36), as Gabriel’s conversation with his family about the discussion that happened between him and the Securitate, he argues about this information to his family in contravention of perceived surveillance (Adiseshiah 2009: 15), thus, Irina moves to turn on the radio and when she remembered that it is not working, she was interrupting Gabriel by telling him “Wait…Wait, stop, there’s no power…Gaby, stop, be quiet”(1.10.17). Again in act I scene 1, while Irina, Lucia’s mother, was trying to persuade Bogdan to agree on Lucia’s marriage, she turns on the music and talks in whisper because they were afraid of being heard by the securitate as the government has its spy everywhere in order to control everyone, this is one of the techniques of panopticism. Also the Priest in the church discusses this with Angel: “Someone says something, you say something, you’re called to a police station that happened to my brother” (1.9.15). This shows that Ceausescu forbids any opposition to his power and the secret police would kidnaps people. The people were afraid of being mixed up in political situations because the ruling groups were frightening people so that they cannot hold ideas against them (Yonkul 32-33). Whenever Gabriel was talking about politics, Irena would interrupt him because she did not want to be heard by Securitate (Yonkul 70).

Foucault believed that “Surveillance is based on a system of permanent registration: reports from the syndics to the intendants, from the intendants to the magistrates or mayor” (196). It seems that even the reports should have delivered through Securitates which made a panoptic society. It is confirmed that “the panopticon should be seen as an instrument of government, as an agency, not the government itself” (qtd. in Pellegrino 40).
The new regime does not distribute any gun directly but they use children to control the revolution and distribute gun in a way that nobody can see them, the power is the maker and it is invisible, this is one of the principles of panopticism.

Social media is a technology of control and surveillance, and this made academicians look at social media “as a more classic form of Panopticon” (Romele et al 2, 3). This can be noticed in the play when the authorities were speaking to people from radio station and trying to control their minds.

The rebellions were also controlling people’s mind through radio and TV, and people were using codes to talk about it because the government was spying on their phones. Even some of the characters were using the TV and the radio to encourage people to join the revolution. It is clear that some principles of panopticism have been used by both sides; first it was used by the previous regime when they forced media to say what they want in order to control people’s thinking and control the media. Secondly it was used by the new regime when they began to control people’s emotion by telling them what they like to hear.

Foucault mentions that “invisibility is a guarantee of order” (200). Based on Foucault’s information Pellegrino believes that “From the central tower, the contractor could easily watch over the prisoners while remaining invisible” (7). Central surveillance system and the invisibility are the two basic elements of the panoptic building and the craftiest thing about the Panopticon is the eye may observe without being seen (Miller 4). Bozovic Defends that idea by saying the power over the prisoners is derived from invisibility, or invisible omnipresence (qtd. in Sheridan 24-25). The invisibility of the power appeared in the play when the securitates killed the man and nobody knew who exactly did it. In a conversation among Grandparents, Radu, Florina, Lucia, and Ianos talk about a man who had been killed while he was putting up posters, their question was about who killed him?, and the audience comes to the conclusion that the Securitate killed him because they believed he was a traitor. Nobody can blame the government directly because when they killed him they were invisible. The Romanian authority used secret techniques to watch the citizens and monitor them by enrolling people in the government as a spy called Securitates, without the knowledge of any one. Thus, principles of panopticism could be found in the play when people have been watched without their knowledge. The previous regime tried to get control over the revolution by hiding among them and shooting in an invisible way.

According to Mitchell Gray there are three types of power created by surveillance; a direct power, for example, when a security asks the person to cease the behavior. The second form is deterrence, exemplified by an individual who is refrained from inappropriate behavior due to a fear of being caught. The third form is to abolish the potential for deviance. This requires an inner acceptance of the power of surveillance that delivers to those who are under its control (320). Mad Forest contains all three types; first type could be found when the securitate was directly blaming Bogdan for the marriage of his daughter:

SECURITSTE. Do you love your country? …And how do you show it? …You love your country; how do you show it? …You encourage your daughter to marry an American (1.6.11-13).

An example of the second type could be noticed when each of the characters wants to talk about the politics. They turn on the music because they were afraid of been caught by the Securitates;
when Radu said “Down with Ceausescu” (1.5.11) the people ignored him because they were afraid of being arrested by the securutates. The third type is seen when Flavia is teaching history to the pupils,

FLAVIA. Today we are going to learn about…the president of the republic, Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu…this great son of nation is everything in the country…the great personality of Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu” (1.4.10-11).

She was teaching exactly what the power wants from her, she praises Ceausescu because she is submitted to the power as the government transformed this believe to her.

In the play, patriotism is used as a weapon by the authority to control Romania. People stay away from unpatriotic people and their relatives too. For example, Lucia is getting married to an American man, Wayne, and everybody around her indirectly labeled her unpatriotic. This idea appears when securitate tries to humiliate Bogdan for not being patriot and blames him for encouraging his daughter to marry an American and he considers the marriage “the waste of the resources that could have benefited a young woman with a sense of duty” (1.6.12) the Securitate believes that a person who loves his/her country must not marry people from other countries (Yonkul 68).

Foucault gives explanation about the one, who is subjected to a field of visibility, and knows it, he/she takes responsibility for the controls of power; he/she makes them play upon him, he/she marks in himself the power relation and she/he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (202-203). For example, Flavia was teaching anything that the power gave her and force her to teach it before the revolution and after it they blamed her for that and she was about to lose her job, therefore she submits to the new order and confirms “let them give me a new book I’ll teach that” (3.5.52). Foucault argues that the aim of this partitioning is to “establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals” (qtd in Sheridan 14). They stopped Flavia from working as a teacher and they put a list of the names of those who have the same situation. It means the new power tries to change every employee who is working for the previous regime. Although Flavia was not with the previous regime, she was about to lose her job. This is the way to control every building, schools and institutions in the country in order to create a panoptic society.

Another panoptic principle is that panopticism is hierarchic, which means no one at the top of the hierarchy can be seen, so, panoptic modality of power can be understood as a pyramid (Sheridan 4). It is clear that during the revolution there is a chaos in the country, as there is an unknown authority that is shooting everyone. In a very short period of time the dictator is killed without being trialed. Thus, this unknown authority tries to hide some facts which might be used against it in the future;

PATIENT. Did we have a revolution or putsch? Who was shooting on the 21st? And who was shooting on the 22nd? …or were the Securitate disguised in army uniforms? If the army were shooting, why haven’t they been brought to justice? 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 by whose orders... (3.2.3.38,40).
There is a hidden power, an invisible hand that did all these things and nobody has information about the identity of this invisible power. In such an indecipherable chaos there is a power that can arrange things indirectly and control everything, in the panoptic society nobody knows who is the one who is always watching and controlling them! It means that there is a plan by an unknown power that has made arrangements and preparations for the revolution. The invisible ruling power keeps the TV working in order to control the society in the future.

Sheridan explains that Foucault breaks down people to the idea of bodies that do what they are told (2), this can be again seen in Flavia’s character role; Flavia as a state school teacher has to teach things in favor of the ruling regime. She explains the history of Romania;

FLAVIA. Today we are going to learn about a life dedicated to the happiness of the people and noble ideas of socialism (1.4.10).

She calls Ceausescu’s ideas as noble and his life as dedicated to people’s happiness and she uses nice words for describing Ceausescu and his personality like “this great son of the nation” (1.4.10), and “the great personality of Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu” (1.4.10). In those places where chaos and political disorders exist, the people are oppressed by the government, therefore; people are unable to stand against the government. The ruling power has secret information sources that report people who rebel. Keeping this in mind, Flavia teaches what she has to teach whether she wants or not (Yonkul 31).

Also when Radu states “the Front tricked us” (3.4.4.48), and that the new regime is a continuation of the old: “Ceauşescu Ceauşescu. Iliescu Iliescu” (3.3.3.49), it means that the new regime in a panoptic way controls the revolution and the people, and also forces his power on them just as the old one (Adiseshiah 2009: 6). After Radu states that;

RADU. Iliescu’s going to get in because the workers and peasants are stupid…Not stupid but they don’t think. They don’t have the information (3.4.4.48).

This shows one of the reasons that ruling power is able to control society especially when the individuals are primitive; this gives the chance to the government to control everything easily. That is why again in the same act and scene Radu insists that when the people become stupid and follow the orders the power can control them and take their freedom as he speaks about Iliescu with hatred;

RADU. I hate him worse. Human face. And he’ll get in because they’re stupide and do what they are told (3.4.4.49).

Foucault focuses on the functioning of sexuality as a regime of power. He said sexuality is made through the exercise of power relations. He considers body as the principal target of power (qtd. in Akcesme 97). In the play when Radu, Florina, Lucia and Ianos are playing the event of killing Ceausescu’s they show hatred and sexual power relations in which they use Elena Ceausescu as a sexual object, as a weapon to victimize Nicolai Ceausescu as they said “Gypsy/Murderer/Illiterate/We’ve all fucked your wife/We’re fucking her now/ Let her have it”
Similarly, when the youth visited their grandmother and Ianos was with them, she warns Lucia that she can be victimized as a result of this love. She sates:

**GRANDMOTHER.** I knew a woman married a Hungarian. His brother killed her and ripped the child out of her stomach” (3.4.2.44).

This means that they victimize women to gain victory over their enemies. Again when Bogdan asks Ianos to keep away from his daughter, Ianos answered Bogdan by exploiting Lucia’s body as a weapon to gain control over him “I’m already fucking your daughter, you stupid peasant” (3.8.3.70). (Akcesme 97).

In the play it is clear that schools, Church, media, army and hospitals are exercising power, that is why it is clear that Ceausescu tries to control not only the population but also the religious and educational institutions as well (Gultekin 80). This explains another panoptic point of Ceausescu’s regime when one ruling government has the authority of forcing his power over everything everywhere.

**GIRL STUDENT.** There were leaflets thrown down from helicopters saying, go home and spend Christmas with your family (2.1.28).

This is an attempt by the government trying to control people by making them go home to make them away from politics.

In another dialogue the Girl Student says “We were told the water was poisoned by Securitate” (2.1.29). This is the last try by Ceausescu’s regime to control over the revolution and from another point of view it could be just propaganda by the new ruling power to make people think badly about the old regime. In both ideas the point is controlling people’s mind. The Securitate adds that “Until noon on the 22 we were law and order” (2.1.32). It symbolizes the previous power that was the only power which controlled everything and everyone. The new regime also tries to control the people; this is clear when the student1 says:

**STUDENT1.** It is announced that people must return their weapons so we go to the factory and give back our guns, out of 28 who had guns only 4 are alive (2.1.32).

Panopticism appears here when the new government takes back the gun from people in order to control them, thus it tries to maintain power only in the hand of the government.

Ceausescu makes the last attempt to control people’s thinking and minds but this time not by force or surveillance but by offering them money which is another kind of controlling people. In the play, the young characters were playing the event of murdering Ceausescu, Radu who acts as Ceausescu states:

**RADU.** Not me, you’ve shot her that’s enough, I’ve money in Switzerland, I’ll give you the number of my bank account, you can go and get my money (3.6.59).
The vampire is another obvious character in the text who symbolizes those leaders who suck people's blood and the dog symbolizes the hungry people who are ready to be a pet or a servant because they are starving. The vampire explains that he wants blood or in another point of view he symbolizes death:

VAMPIRE: I came here for revolution; I could smell it a long way off (3.1. 33).

He symbolizes the power how it can hide and control people in an invisible way, he will be invisible that is why he feels stronger and thus it gives the reader the idea of panopticism.

In conclusion, after criticizing Churchill’s Mad Forest, which is authentically contains most of the principles and characteristics of panopticism, the reader comes to the fact that Romanian society during Ceausescu’s ruling and even after the revolution under the rule of the new regime remained the same. Therefore, at the end the society remained as a chaotic society and this play tries to describe the Romanian society as a chaotic society.

3. Vladu Family

Act I and Act III of the play are fictional stories about the life of two Romanian families Vladu and Antoniscu before and after the revolution. Churchill explains the life of people in Romania during that period of time (McGlynn). The first act is about Lucia’s wedding that is from Vladu family and the third act about Florina Vladu’s wedding. The wedding scenes are juxtaposed with the scenes of the revolution (qtd in Yonkul 6-7).

Before the revolution Vladu Family were the working class family who were somehow poor, this is clear when Lucia brings egg to her family “Lucia produces four eggs with a flourish. Irina kisses her” (1.1.7). Four eggs and a packet of American cigarettes which are illegally acquired was very important to them because there were not very much eggs in the country and generally it was very expensive, but the father Bogdan breaks one of the eggs on the floor and shows his disapproval of Lucia’s behavior as Ertin said “The conflict between Bogdan and his daughters is seen” (265). Immediately, the other eggs are secured “Irina gathers the other eggs to safety” (1.1.7), and the broken egg is scraped off the floor. They really need the eggs, so they scrape the broken one off the floor. That behavior shows that the political oppression bothers the father so much that leads him to waste his family’s necessities (Gultekin59).

Lucia is in love with an American guy named Wayne and wants to marry him, thus her family is blamed by the government and the society because Wayne is a stranger and because Romanian government is not in a good relationship with America; therefore, they see her as a traitor.

LUCIA. I’m sorry…No but all of you…because of me and Wayne.

FLORINA. You love him (1.3.9).

She knows that her family must pay for her marriage but in the same time her family give her a chance because according to their knowledge she loves him.

Lucia’s marriage has two results; the first one is good, it is because of Wayne Vladu family benefits from more productions such as eggs and American cigarettes. It is also because of Wayne’s money that Lucia is able to bribe the doctor to abort illegally. In the play Lucia is pregnant and wants to make abortion and the Doctor agrees but he is afraid of the authorities;
DOCTOR. There is no abortion in Romania…I am appalled that you dare suggest I might this crime (1.7.13).

The Doctor’s words tell what he is expected to pronounce but in written words, he accepts the abortion. This explains that during that time people were using an indirect way for exchanging their ideas and that was through writing in order to avoid panoptic system because they knew that someone may listen to them and the only way that they could speak freely was through writing (Yonkul 32-33).

Lucia is pregnant from Ianos the one that her family may kill her if they realize that she has relationship with him and her society will may harm. The person is the Hungarian friend of Radu and Gabriel whom is hated by the Romanian people. Churchill has a massage through this relationship and the message is that there is no limit for love even the love which is forbidden as it mentioned in the play, “Lucia and Ianos standing in silence with their arms round each other”(1.13.20) but “Lucia chooses the abortion in order to have her own life”(Hori 73-74). Another benefit of her marriage to Wayne is that she has the chance to get American passport and see America (Gultekin 60-61).

The second result of her marriage is bad as Bogdan became under pressure and angry because of the marriage of her daughter Lucia, as Securitate said “Do you love your country? And how do you show it?” (Churchill 1.6.11). The secret service, the Securitate, investigates people as showed by Bogdan who is questioned and offered the opportunity to be a secret agent to catch the traitors. This tells readers that before the revolution the government spread fear, suspicion, and hatred throughout the country and this fear of surveillance is reflected even in the private space of the families (Gultekin77). Another side effect was that Irina moved to a workplace much away from home and that was a kind of punishment used by Ceausescu’s regime (Adiseshiah 2009: 287-288), about this Bourbonnais states that “The Vladu family, on the brink of starvation, suffers job demotions because their daughter plans to marry an American” (29).

Lucia’s choice extends negatively on her sister, Florina who is in love with Radu Antonescu because they try to persuade their son Radu to leave Florina as Radu’s family do not want their son to be close to an unpatriotic family’s daughter. Radu’s mother said “There are plenty of other girls, Radu” she tries to convince him with these words (Yonkul 31-32).

It is notable that through the female characters Churchill tries to say that under the revolution, women decide to go their own independent ways or rebel against the norms. Especially, Lucia, a primary school teacher, decides to marry an American to make her living, though she loves another one and she is pregnant with his baby, but her American fiancé has no idea about how she uses the money that he gives her, actually she uses it for the abortion of her baby (Hori 73).

Several months before the Revolution, they focus on Lucia’s marriage and the argument that’s going on between the two families, no one cares about the revolution building. So the first act is more social than political (Negron).

Lucia’s awareness of her own sexuality enables her to move from the position of sexual object to that of sexual subject. While the preparations for her wedding are going on, she is still having an affair with Ianos and when she gets pregnant from him Ianos feels guilty and ashamed of this pregnancy, but Lucia does not think she has done something to be ashamed of (Akcesme 103).
Gabriel is happy because he will join army but at the same time he is against Ceausescu as it appears when the Securititates force him to work for them and join army as a reaction to the marriage of his sister to an American, in order to show that he is patriot.

GABRIEL. And I ‘m so happy because I’ve put myself on the other side, I hardly knew there was one. They made me promise … I’m going straight home to Rodica to tell her, I’m so happy… I knew you’d be proud of me (1.10.17).

The family are afraid of speaking freely because they are afraid of politics as Churchill states in the selected play that “Irina turns the radio up loud and is about to say something” (1.1.7), so, she tries to interrupt him continuously when he was speaking because she was afraid if somebody listens to them (Yonkul 67). Thus, the situation before the revolution is clear that telling the truth is dangerous and indeed a punishable act. (Willcocks 9-10).

The effect of the revolution was not very bad on Vladu family, it was very good to them because their son Gabriel who was wounded in the war became a victim of that Chaos as Churchill says “Gabriel is in bed in hospital” (3.2.35) but he was announced as a hero; therefore, this became a strong point for his family to be proud of him and to be respectable among people again. Also Mihai mentioned Gabriel as a hero when they visited him in hospital “To pay our respects to a hero” (3.2.1.36). Mihai mentions Gabriel as a hero which shows that the relationship between these two families has become better than before and those who can get benefit from this good relation are the lovers Radu and Florina because they have chance to get married.

Notably, the marriage between Lucia and Wayne fails, as she prefers Ianos; therefore, she comes back from America to marry him but because Ianos is a Hungarian they have to separate because Romanian people hate Hungarians, but after the revolution they both think that they have a chance because the Hungarians helped them in the revolution as Lucia states;

LUCIA. Hungarians were fighting beside us they said on TV. And Ianos wasn’t hurt, that’s good. I think Americans likes Hungarians (3.2.3.41).

Also as a response to Gabriel’s speech who mentions Hungarians as a poor people Lucia replies with a love to Hungarians;

GABRIEL. The poor Hungarians have a bad time because they’re not treated better than everyone else.

LUCIA. This is what we used to say before. Don’t we say something different? (3.2.3.41).

Adiseshiah states that “her [Lucia’s] desire to move away from anti-Hungarian sloganeering seems selfishly motivated and does not extend to a more enlightened anti-racism” (2009: 293). After that the two lovers became with each other again but Ianos tells her he feels shame because of loving her but Lucia asked him if he wants to marry her and finally in the same part after a discussion between them Ianos asked for Lucia’s hand;

IANOS. I’m ashamed of loving you when I think you are probably not very nice.

LUCIA. Shall I stay here and marry you?
IANIOS. Would your family let you marry a Hungarian? (3.4.3.46,48).

Even at first Lucia praised America by saying;

LUCIA. There are walls of fruit in America, five different kinds of apples, and oranges, grapes, pears, bananas, melons, different kinds of melon, and things I don’t know the name – and the vegetables, the aubergines are a purple they look as if they’ve been varnished, red 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 (39-40).

But she also ends up rejecting America when Ianos says he would like to go there, Lucia told him “I don’t like America” (3.4.3.47). “Lucia’s rejection of Wayne and America is also, in an important sense, the play’s articulation of antipathy towards the free market” (Adiseshiah 2009: 288). Churchill draws Lucia’s character as a woman of little sensibility because she gets rid of her child by abortion and marries a man whom she does not love for money. These behaviors of Lucia are not presented completely critically. Also when Ianos blames her for changing her political position after her marriage, Lucia answered him: “I’m not your slave” (3.8.84). From her reaction the reader can see a woman who tries to get her own life (Hori 74). This means she is proving to be independent.

In the play, Lucia rejects motherhood, so she can easily have an abortion, this is because Lucia generally dislikes children when she goes to visit her grandparents with Iano and Toma, she asks “Do we have to have him with us all the time?” (3.4.3.45). Again when Toma pounces on the last piece of her chocolate, she shouts at him angrily, “You horrible child. I hate you” (3.4.3.46). It is clear that “feminist writers views motherhood as an obstacle in the path of women’s liberation since females are reduced to mothering, nurturing and other maternal qualities, which continues to produce male dominance in a patriarchal culture” (Akcesme 103).

The revolution and the murder of Ceausescu’s left strong effects on the Romanian people and both families. The children from both families remembered the killing process of Ceausescu in details, Florina and Radu were very happy because of that event. They got a joyful time from playing that accident, this can be seen clearly in the play “Radu and Florina get up, everyone’s laughing” (3.6.59). “The stage directions indicate that Gabriel is particularly vicious throughout this” (Adiseshiah 2009: 285). The hatred that they had for the previous leader appears when the young characters make a play about the murder of Ceausecucus’ they said “Gypsy./ Murderer./ Illiterate. / We’ve all fucked your wife” (3.6.58). Thus Mad Forest presents a black comedy spontaneously composed by the characters who play the role of amateur actors (Gultekin71-72).

Even though they got married at the end, the revolution and the situation of Radu as a hero left effect on the relationship between him and Florina Vladu, she had the feeling that Radu is showing off as a hero and he is not taking care of her anymore, also he spends most of his time in speaking to the people about his bravery. Florina tells Radu;

FLORINA. So what have you done today? Sat in the square and talked?

.............
FLORINA. I don’t like what you think. You just want to go on playing hero, / you’re weak, you’re lazy (3.7.60-61).

All of these made them have a quarrel. After the quarrel between Radu and Florina a ghost appears on the stage after the leaving of Radu. The ghost is the voice of all the people who fight and die for politics unconsciously and whose rights to be happy are blocked and it is a kind of criticism for the lovers who hate each other for politics. The ghost reminds her that they hurt each other unnecessarily and the happiness between lovers is more important than politics (Yonkul 56).

Despite the fact that a lot of things changed after the revolution like the acquisition of freedom to talk about the disgust for Ceausescu, some basic elements remained the same, such as controlling the people and imposing themselves on the people.

4. Antonescue Family

The second fictional family in the play Mad Forest is Antonescu family who consists of: Mihai (the father), Flavia (the mother) and Radu (the son). They are middle class family who economically are better than Vladus, this appears in the play as Churchill states “noticeably better off than the Vladus” (3.2.8), based on this idea Gultekin said “in comparison to the Vladus, they are positioned relatively close to the established bureaucracy” (59). He also argues that Mihai’s work is close to Ceausescu because he works in People palace (59). Antonescu family is more dependent on the state and government and their son Radu is described as “revolutionary and post-revolutionary disorder” (Yonkul 6), because he was under the oppression of Ceauşescu politics before the revolution as he said “down with Ceausescut” (1.5.11). After the revolution Radu kept unsatisfied with the new government and Iliescu as he states “I hate him worse…Ceausescu Ceausescu. Iliescu Iliescu” (3.4.4.49).

Radu’s character represents the revolutionary young man who is always unsatisfied with the government whether the new government or the previous one. Radu’s argument shows that Iliescu replaced Ceausescu and he also has the potential to become the new Ceausescu because the same behaviors can be seen in his actions. Now people may get the same problems with the new leader or the same suffering may return again to Romania because people follow him blindly and without asking any questions and this made Radu feel worry and he is afraid that they may face another Ceausescu (Gultekin 69). Rich also describes Radu as “A rebellious art student” who blames his parents and disagrees about their way of thinking and behaviors and that made him angry due to their cooperation with the dictator.

In the first act, the Antonescus urge their son not to marry Florina because she has an unpatriotic sister (Yonkul 38), they see her as unpatriotic woman and they were afraid from the government and they did not want to get problems with the government.

Anghel said that Flavia was not speaking about Florina, when the light was on because she was afraid they might be listened to but when the light is off, she tells her son she is against that marriage (5). Bourbonnais also states that Flavia and Mihai Antonescus forbid their son Radu to marry Florina Vlada because Antonescus want to keep their jobs and they are careful to avoid opposition (29) which means in this point the reason is economic and not political because they know the reality that if they stand against the government they may lose their jobs and that situation will make them poor. Both Flavia and Mihai are working for the favor of government as Mihai works on an ever-lasting project of Ceausescu’s People’s Palace and Flavia teaches the history,
when the electric power cut out they began to tell their son about their disapproval of his marriage with Florina, because they are afraid of government and their fear was that they may lose their jobs or their freedom or in other perspective they may lose their lives because the dictator regime was very villain and never show mercy for those who were against them (Bahun-Radunovic 457).

After the revolution everything became vice versa, in act III Antonescu want Radu to marry Florina because now she has a brother who is a patriotic hero, this has been expressed when Mihai Antonescu says;

MIHAI. We’re so glad the young people no longer have a misunderstanding. We have to put the past behind us and go forward on a new basis (3.2.1.37).

This means that Antonescu’s family’s psychological feeling changed from hatred to love and that love was not from inside or a pure love but it was for their own benefi, they want to be closer to Vladu’s family in order to show the society that they are the relatives of a patriotic family (Yonkul 38).

Before the revolution Flavia was addressing her students in a speech on the facts of the president without searching about its truth because educators are forced to teach exactly what Ceausescu orders and she teaches what she has to teach whether she supports that ideas or not (Akcsmé 97). The audience note that Flavia is speaking on the stage “loudly and confidently to her pupils” when she teaches the lesson. “The severity of these lies is appalling, but Flavia does not have the authority to fight them” (Kiebuzinska 244).

After the revolution Flavia becomes a different person and asks different questions. She begins to search for truth. This type of question after the revolution is a symbol for changing the political environment, it also shows that people were not wise and they were not choosing even their words by their own, but after the revolution, everything is changed and the people began to speak out about the words that they were hiding inside their hearts because of the fear of the regime.

Flavia hugs Florina when she realizes that she is with the Liberals too because after the revolution she changes her political position from Ceausescu’s side to Iliescu’s side and voted for the Liberals (Hori 74-75). Flavia decides to write a new history book by her own hands. Churchill aims to write a “true history” through this play. She documented a history that was written by a female and she shows this through Flavia's post-revolutionary behavior (Bourbonnais 51). Thus, Flavia tries to say that the true history is what can be written by free people not the one that government forces to be written. Even her husband dislikes her political statements, yet, Flavia engages in politics and changes her political side in order to continue her life after the revolution. Flavia Decided to “get on her own way to survive in a chaotic society" (Hori 75). Flavia’s behavior is an example of most of those people who change affiliation based on the situations of their countries and they behave according to their favors.

Radu, the most interesting and intelligent member of Antonescu’s family, is aware of the social environments that his mother backings in the school, but is also aware of his narrow communication within the regime. In a chaotic society after the revolution, it is not clear which group will come to power that is why Flavia may now be mistreated for supporting the dictatorship (Bourbonnais 31-33).
After the revolution Flavia’s relationships became better, as she tries to find new friends, like Florina, her son’s future wife, because now she knows the reality that she was wrong when she stood against her before the revolution; therefore, she wants to be closer to her than before. Before the revolution she made a friendship only with her dead grandmother by using her imagination, when her grandmother would tell her;

GRANDMOTHER. How do you know? Who do you talk to? Your closest friend is your grandmother and I’m dead, Flavia, don’t forget that or you really will be mad. (1.12.18).

If the reader focuses on this situation it can be found that socially, this conversation tells the fact that those people who have no principles are physically and psychologically get hurt. They lose their lives and beloved ones, and finally they feel empty inside and the reason is that “fighting for something makes people stronger in their inner lives” (Yonkul 33), that is why the grandmother warns her granddaughter in order to be away from that empty feeling, she wants her to do something in her life and she does not care if that thing is right or wrong, but she wishes that Flavia does not go with the flock as she did, she knows that Flavia’s life was an empty life, people with these believes and ideas are always losing at the end. Therefore, Flavia’s grandmother advised her in order to save her from the mistakes committed by herself in the past and not to repeat them in the future (Yonkul 33).

Through Flavia’s character the playwright makes it clear that the revolution changed many things as believes and principles of most of the people. Does “revolution solve the problems or not?” (Yonkul 38) this is the question that Yonkul asks about in his study and this can be answered by Radu’s words “We have got to have another revolution” (3.8.3.69), the audience and the reader may think about this problem and get the answer that according to some people the answer is ‘yes’, while according to others like Radu it is ‘not’ (Yonkul 38).

In Mad Forest there are some important quotations that are very attractive to the readers, for example one of the quotations is when Flavia notes that in the aftermath "everyone's gone back behind their masks." (3.8.1.62), which means no one is on the right way and no one shows exactly what they think that is why they use masks they think in away and they show another which means they are unsettle again.

After they all agreed with the marriage between Radu and Florina, so, at the end the wedding starts and the lovers finally became a bride and groom and the important point was that even during the wedding Radu was not stopping from his opinion and his political speeches (Anghel 7) as he started repeating one of the patient’s questions that he said before in the hospital when they were visiting Gabriel, realizing it is not meaningless as he said: “Who was shooting on the 22nd? That’s not a crazy question.” (3.2.3.41). Repeating these expressions in his own wedding shows that he still thinking politically and again disagrees about the new events that happened after the revolution as he was against his parents because they were not against Ceausescu's regime while his ideas were parallel with Gabriel and Ianos as they were revolutionary as he was (Gultekin 59).

Thus, finally the result of the revolution on Antonescu’s family was very strong just like it was strong on Vladu’s because Antonescu’s are not having the same believes that they had before the revolution. The changes that happened to this family can be divided into three categories:

First, politically, they changed their political positions and opinion as before they were with Ceausescu but after the revolution they supported the new regime in order to survive.
Second, socially, they accepted the marriage between their son Radu and Vladu’s daughter Florina in order to get respect from others because they will be relatives of a family who has a hero patriotic son and this leaves effects on them among all of the people and in their society.

The third change can be labeled under the name of psychological change, each one of Antonescu’s family is not afraid anymore of the ruling power and they began to love those whom they hated before the revolution. This is obvious in Flavia’s feeling towards Florina when she hugs her in the wedding while she was not accepting her at first.

Conclusion

Panopticism was and still exists in most of the societies in this world and Romania was a panoptic society during the rule of Ceausescu’s regime because that power was controlling the citizens in every part of their lives and that is a clear element of panoptic society.

Certainly, both fictional families even Antonescu’s and Vladu’s in Churchill’s Mad Forest were the exemplary symbols of those families who were living under Ceausescu’s power and through this it appears that Mad Forest is a fantastic political piece of literature that serves the people of Romania and shows the reality that existed at that time through subject that is not political which is play which is a beautiful genre in the world of art.

The life of each family explains more than only politics. It tells the story of society and from feminist’s point of view it narrates a story of the life of those girls and women who were living in Romania during the rule of Ceausescu and after that, it shows how they were under pressure and the freedom had taken from them by force. It also claims that the young boys and girls of Romania were very brave and had a soul of advantages and creating victory by their own was their aims.

Works cited


