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## A Postmodernist Study of Capitalism in Mike Bartlett's *Earthquakes in London*

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### Abstract

Drawing on a postmodernist background, the researcher tackles the subtle nature of the capitalist system as depicted in Mike Bartlett's *Earthquakes in London* (2010). The study points out how capitalist practices lead to socio-economic problems associated with natural catastrophes. Such natural catastrophes caused by capitalist practices and negotiated throughout the play are carbon emissions, air pollution, rising temperature, global warming, earthquakes, high ocean levels, and floods. The paper has reached three findings. First, the playwright has stressed the detrimental capitalist nature as limitless by employing the dramatic technique of extending his play both in time (spanning three periods from the 1960's to 2525) and in scope (global catastrophes, corporate corruption, and estranged family). Second, the practices of the capitalist system have been demonstrated to escalate the socio-economic impacts of natural disasters; these practices will subsequently fail to provide any solutions to problems radically caused by them. Third, the play's finale implies that activists, faced with the infernal powers of capitalism over ages, are before two difficult options: either conquer or be killed by it.

**Keywords:** Bartlett's *Earthquakes in London*, capitalism, carbon emissions, global warming, natural disasters, postmodernism, socio-economic impacts

### Introduction

Mike Bartlett (1980- ), a contemporary British playwright, has written plays like *My Child* (2007), *Cock* (2009), *Earthquakes in London* (2010), *Bull* (2013), *Game* (2017), and *Vassa* (2019). His *Earthquakes in London*, directed by Rupert Goold and staged at the National Theatre in 2010, is described as a "big, epic, expansive play about climate change, corporate corruption, fathers and children" (Billington *para* 1). The only study published so far on this play is Zümre Karahan's "Dancing to the End of Humanity" (2020). It focuses on humanity's indifference towards the inescapable "environmental catastrophe they created" (265). There is not a single study touching upon the "corporate corruption," represented by the capitalist system, and its relation to fathers and children. The present study attempts the play on a postmodernist basis to see how far capitalism as a mode of production is paving the way for global warming and, hence, for further crises, including earthquakes and flooding.

From the early 1970's, we have been living in an epoch that has undergone cultural, economic, and technological changes. These changes have been brought

together under the umbrella of postmodernism. Capitalism “naturally appears when and where expanding markets and technological development reach the right level” (Wood 542). Books and articles connecting capitalism with postmodernism are so various. From these books one mentions Fredric Jameson’s *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1984), David Harvey’s *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), and Perry Anderson’s *The Origins of Postmodernity* (1998). There are articles like Ellen Wood’s “Modernity, Postmodernity or Capitalism?” (1997), and Donna Hayter and Peter Hegarty’s “A Genealogy of Postmodern Subjects: Discourse Analysis and Late Capitalism” (2015). Saroj Koirala concludes her article “Postmodernity and Late Capitalism” (2016) with both arguing that postmodernism is “the newest transformation of capitalism” (168) and declaring that postmodernism is “the logic of Late Capitalism” (174).

Concisely defined as a dynamic system based on accumulation (Marx 722), capitalism is referred to as “a mode of production” wherein such specialized producers as manufacturers, companies, and corporations “produce some commodity for the market but do not produce their own means of subsistence” (Smith 30-31). Edward Younkins defines it as “a rational doctrine based on a clear understanding of man and society in which economics, politics, and morality...are found to be in harmony with one another” (*para* 2). Since the term “capital” is essential for understanding “capitalism” (Hodgson 1), the former is commonly understood as “money invested in businesses by their owners or shareholders, and it continues to be understood this way in everyday business practice and common parlance” (Braun 2). Geoffrey Hodgson regards capitalism as “a socioeconomic system” characterized by the private ownership of the different means of production by individuals/firms producing goods/services for sale and, hence, profit (20). Nowadays, it hinges “on the impurities of the household and the state” (40). As a socioeconomic system dominant since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, capitalism is “a particular mode of production” based on the private ownership of all “means of production and its operation for exchange value,” and people’s need for selling their own industry to make their living (Cumbers & Gray 413). However, it is known for its tendency to generate instability, often associated with financial crises, job insecurity, and failure to include the poor. Society is embodied by two opposed classes—the capitalist and the proletariat. It is due to such a struggle that society can be malformed through time, “from one hegemonic mode of production to another”—for instance, from feudalism to capitalism or from the latter to communism—as the oppressed class/workers attempt overthrowing and liberating themselves from the oppressing/capitalist class (*Ibid*).

Books and articles negotiating capitalist transgressions against nature are numerous. Joel Kovel's *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?* (2007), George Monbiot's "Capitalism Is Destroying the Earth" (2019) and "Capitalism is Killing the Planet" (2021), Nathaniel Flakin's "Capitalism Is Destroying the Planet" (2019), and Nafeez Ahmed's "Capitalism Will Ruin the Earth by 2050" (2020) are just few examples.

Capitalism has flourished for centuries by abusing nature, "either as an inexhaustible supply of resources to produce commodities or as a waste dump" (Flakin *para* 3). Capital's avidity "to ensure its profitability and reproduction" has really led to a change in the soil quality and the chemical pollution caused by industry (*para* 4). While the earth's ability to bear the destructive processes of capitalism is reaching its utmost limit, the capital's need for persistent development has no limits and is therefore breaking down the complex natural cycle that has taken thousands of years to develop. To Wood, capitalism implies a "constant change and development, not to mention cyclical crises" (549). The main problem capitalism causes nature and the earth alike is air pollution that raises the earth's average temperature. According to Susan Ajiere and Peace Nwaerema, air pollution results from the retrogression of air quality with destructive effects on both human health and the natural environment. These crises happen due to the penetration of substances like "gases and aerosols" into the atmosphere by means of "natural processes or human activities." Such gases and aerosols have direct/indirect "pollutants with resultant harmful" effects (276). It is the most harmful of all forms of pollution since it includes the emission of gases and fumes/odour—elements that make the atmosphere harmful to humans, animals, and plants. The excessive emission of such elements makes the air more contaminated. The main cause of this problem is the activities of industries released in the form of "poly-nuclear aromatic hydrocarbons and petroleum hydrocarbons" (Kaur 46). Zameerpal Kaur clearly argues that it is because of their modern complicated life and unlimited desires that human beings have "created pollution in the form of the waste materials of different industrial sectors which are dumped in soil, air, and water" (*Ibid* 47). All these problems caused by the political structure of society have to do with the "capitalistic forms of production that depend on the manipulation of the dynamic of supply and demand" (Garrard 28). Due to these activities carried out within a capitalist mode of production and the intense increase in population, "the availability of the space on earth for each one is limited and smaller. The storehouse of natural resources is limited whereas the needs of the modern generation are increasing both in quality and complexity" (Kaur 45).

In fact, such problems as air pollution, high temperature, and global warming are related to one another, leading in the end to further problems like earthquakes and flooding. This issue has been explained in detail by Niklas Hagelberg (*para 4*). Since “the average global surface temperature could increase by 2 to 5 degrees Celsius in the coming decades,” “ocean levels could rise by 18 to 59 centimeters.” The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) “warns that past and future emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) will contribute to warming for more than a millennium” (Flakin *para 7*). Many sources warn people against the enormity of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Richard Smith, on the one hand, argues that the rising of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will lead to “catastrophic global warming [and] if there are no magic technofixes currently available, or in the foreseeable future, then the only way to stop global warming before it exceeds 2°C is to put the brakes on growth” (29). Flakin, on the other hand, stresses that according to the United Nations, there are millions of climate refugees. He argues that if the global temperature goes beyond 2 degrees, it is expected that the number will reach 280 million. He adds that the air pollution springing from such vehicles as gases, particles, and industrial production in big cities ends the lives of nine million people each year, including 800,000 in Europe alone (*para 9*). Global warming, as one of the most shocking “expressions of the destructive nature of the capitalist system toward the environment” (*para 10*), not only causes more devastating hurricanes but also shakes the grounds under our feet (McGuire *para 1*). The Oxfam report from 2020 shows that the richest 1% of the world’s population are mainly responsible for more than twice as much carbon pollution as the 3.1 billion people who made up the poorest half of humanity during a critical 25-year period of unprecedented emissions growth. This report implies that the poor/majority are paying for the destruction caused by the rich/capitalists. Thus, “the capitalist mode of production” is in unresolved conflict with “nature and its processes of development” (Flakin *para 23*) simply because its very essence is the expansion of profit and accumulation at any cost, even if this includes the material destruction of the planet.

Thus, all problems starting from carbon emissions, air pollution, high temperature, global warming, earthquakes, and high ocean levels are related to one another as they were originally caused by capitalism and its insatiability. Michelle Cooper explains that earthquakes can cause flooding in different ways. A tsunami causes flooding in the areas wherein waves hit inlands. Also, broken dams and walls made on rivers lead to flooding. Such structures, made originally to hold water in, can be easily damaged when an earthquake occurs (*para 5*). However, capitalism is based on the principle that the rich have the utter right to buy the natural wealth on which others depend, simply because a capitalist’s

earnings cannot be further increased except at the expense of another. Monbiot summarizes the nature of capitalism by arguing that “at the heart of” a capitalist system there is “a vast and scarcely examined assumption: you are entitled to as great a share of the world’s resources as your money can buy” (“Capitalism Destroying Earth” *para* 2). You can get as much land, space, meat, fish, and anything you seek as you can afford, paying no attention to those poor who are deprived. Since you can pay for these things (even if they are entire mountains and rich plains), you will undoubtedly own them. You can therefore burn as much fuel as you like because each pound/dollar “secures a certain right over the world’s natural wealth” (*Ibid*). Thus, capitalism knows no morals or principles; it is after its own profit. The health of its economy relies on grasping natural wealth from its future owners/generations. “This is what the oil companies, seeking to distract us with MCB and carbon footprints, are doing. Such theft from the future is the motor of economic growth. Capitalism is...nothing but a pyramid scheme” (Monbiot “Capitalism Killing Planet” *para* 35). Thus, capitalism’s limitless need for continuous growth entails limitless detrimental practices. It has been argued that the new spirit of capitalism is very close to its material/economic base. In Lukas Meisner’s words, “the postmodern spirit of capitalism is the cultural logic of capital” (*para* 46). Capitalism is there where there is profit.

Given this background/review based on postmodernist capitalism, the present study attempts to answer one fundamental question: How could the playwright drive his idea of the capitalist dominating subtle nature home? This question implies two subsidiary queries: (1) How far do the detrimental capitalistic practices develop through generations? (2) To what extent is the solution offered by capitalist practices to the socio-economic impacts of natural disasters acceptable?

### **Analysis**

A full-length play comprising five acts (preceded by five prologues and ending with an epilogue), Bartlett’s *Earthquakes in London* employs about eighty characters and is so sprawling in time that it flicks between the past (the 1960’s), the present (2010), and the future (2525) to tell the story of three generations. It revolves around the lives of three sisters—Sarah, Freya, and Jasmine—abandoned long ago by their doom-mongering father, Robert Grannock. He has not spoken with any of them for twenty years. They do not like him; they are doing their own things. Sarah is the environment secretary, Jasmine is a university student, and Freya is pregnant—that is all he knows about them (86). The past is lived by Robert (the prominent climatologist who has been predicting the environmental apocalypse), and Roy and Daniel (capitalist representatives). The present is

represented by the three daughters and the Eritrean activist Tom vs the capitalist Carter—an extension of both Roy and Daniel. It is characterized by Freya's and Tom's fears of the future. The future proves Robert's predictions as true and significantly closes with the Epilogue including Tom's dialogue with the young activist Emily—an extension of both Robert and Sarah. In an interview published in 2011 (and recently [in 2020] quoted by Shari Barrett (*para* 6)), Bartlett stresses that his play was inspired by a quote from James Lovelock, a well-known scientist, climatologist, and futurist in his 90's, who believes that we are all doomed. He argues that the worst is to come and we are living in a period similar to the Weimar Republic since we know something bad is going to happen and try to ignore it. "It's the line Robert has in the play 'we've got our head down and we're dancing and drinking as fast as we can.' That was my starting point I think. A kind of cabaret at the end of the world" (7). That is why the play "received reviews for its depiction of a climate scientist and the effects of his apocalyptic warnings on his three daughters" (Johns-Putra 5). The play is a miscellany of social breakdown, population explosion, bad dreams, and worldwide paranoia.

The prologue of the first act touches upon the causes of the environmental problems early in 1968 when Robert, the young activist, informs his future wife Grace of the field of his doctoral thesis: "Atmospheric conditions on other planets" (8). He states that gases, minerals, and the excretions of all creatures go up into the atmosphere changing its composition (8). He explains to her that everything in life can change the environment: "Imagine if we all came in with a fever, the room would get much hotter, and then we'd get even hotter as a result, our fever would get worse and the room would become hotter in turn and so on and so on, upwards and upwards" (9). This is how our air is influenced by every bit. The issue is elaborated later in 1973 in the prologue of the second act that explains the influence of air travel on the atmosphere. In a dialogue between Robert the scientist and two businessmen (Roy and Daniel) representing the capitalist system, Roy predicts an increase in the number of air flights in the years to come which will make them a lot of money. He, "*smoking*," argues that the organization he works for predicts that there will be thousands of planes/flights all over the world, which makes them happy for making much money (40). Thus, "capitalism as a system is highly exploitative of both people and the planet. It is driven by a desperate need for profit and accumulation. That is the overriding priority" (Hannah *para* 2).

Capitalists regard their illegal activities as legal enterprises of buying and selling. They are likely to say that they have hard works and enterprises including buying and selling. "This is how the beneficiaries of the system want it to be understood. In reality, the great fortunes amassed under capitalism are not

obtained this way, but through looting, monopoly and rent grabbing, followed by inheritance” (Monbiot, “Capitalism Killing Planet,” *para* 32). Aware of “the emissions into the atmosphere” (41) and conscious that people start to become “*curious*” about what burning and fuel may do to the world (41), Roy asks Robert, as an expert, about the effect of this air travel on the atmosphere. The former wants the latter to “do a study” (41) to know what is about to happen. Robert is aware of the two businessmen’s/capitalists’ wish for a negative answer: “You’re hoping for a negative answer which says these fumes are doing no harm at all” (41). At first, Roy appears as an unbiased man: “Robert, you do your science and you tell us what you find. We won’t interfere at all” (41). When Robert repeats: “No interference,” Daniel replies: “None” (41). Such an intriguing face that first appears of capitalism is transient.

Roy expansively reassures Robert that if the “project seems promising,” they will be “authorized to commission further work, over the next ten years” (42). Capital’s avarice and thirst for more profits are always there. Roy and Daniel try to encourage Robert to side with them. The former informs him that his results may be useful not only for them but also for other similar organizations, such as the motor industry and oil companies which will “be very interested in promising results” (42). When they tempt Robert by giving him a fee and he regards it as good enough for making a start with, Roy soon informs him that this is his own money and the project will have a separate budget (42). Supporting his colleague Roy, Daniel entices Robert further by telling him that there is a possibility for a good deal in the days to come. “I would imagine someone like you, in your position, academic, young family. This could make a real difference” (43). They do their best in tempting him.

Robert’s answer comes in the prologue of the third act. When he shows them “a preliminary document” giving them some idea of the way his study goes, Roy, gradually revealing the other/real face of capitalism, replies: “These aren’t really the results we were expecting” (66). Daniel adds: “They’re not meaningful” (66). The results are meaningless since they are not satisfying them. Robert argues that “releasing huge quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere at such a high altitude” causes “heat to be reflected rather than released,” which, in turn, leads to rising temperatures (67). Not satisfied with Robert’s answer, Roy interrupts him: “No Robert. ... All that you’ve said ... tells us very little” (67). He further asks Robert for more clarification and tells him that if “the report could focus on something [they] can understand,” it will be “the start of a very fruitful relationship” (67). They have soon become clearer with Robert, who receives their temptations with silence. Enticing him into a fruitful relationship has been made clear. Daniel cunningly offers him more time to change his mind, not only by

suggesting that he may need some more references to see things clearly but also by hinting at the fees (67). Thus, the two capitalists, fishing for a certain answer that satiates them and their capitalist wish for growth, leave Robert a paper that can be well regarded as a warning or a bribe: “There’s six months before the final report. That’s long time. Anything could happen” (68). Of course, the capitalists who have promised Robert above not to interfere in his report come now to contradict themselves and further warn/threaten him. It is true that “capitalism is living alone with its own internal contradictions” (Wood 558). This is how the capitalist system is fishing for its own targets regardless of such subsequent consequences as rising temperature.

The first act opens in the present (in 2010) referring to the environment from different perspectives. The eldest sister, Sarah, the cabinet minister, ridiculously notices that the department of climate change is so massive and devoid of anything green: “Flowers are dead. We want some life round here” (13). The middle sister, Freya, heavily pregnant, is so passively obsessed with the current climate that she tells her husband Steve about the imminent earthquake: “[T]hey’ve detected tremors. It was on television” (17). The stage directions show us Freya scared “*as the door shuts*” and “*the walls shake a little*” (18). Moreover, drinking and smoking can be seen as another element that has to do with rising temperature. All characters—not just capitalists—indulge in drinking whisky and vodka, and smoking cigarettes paying no attention at all to their passive effects. Instead of lessening the huge quantities of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere (and causing rising temperatures), they are celebrating their helplessness and awareness that it is irreversible now. That is why the play has been described by its author as a play “*about excess*” (5) and its world is described by Robert as a “Cabaret” where “there’s nothing to *be* done, so we’re dancing and drinking as fast as we can. The enemy is on its way, but it doesn’t have guns and gas this time, it has wind and rain, storms and earthquakes” (97). Commenting on this most prominent quotation, Karahan argues that people, stunned and crushed due to the persistent environmental problems, cannot take any action to prevent this environmental imbalance. They try to celebrate “their limited times as the last human species of the terrestrial existence” (276). This sense of desperateness leads them to see “Nature” in diabolic opposition with human civilization, which widens “the gap between Nature and Culture” (*Ibid*). This gap creates more environmental problems since it “triggers all social and environmental wrongdoings in the first place. This cycle cannot be broken unless people give up resigning to their so-called incapacity and failure in reversing their ills back” (*Ibid*). In other words, since people cannot bridge the gap by solving their nature’s problem, they thus widen the gap between themselves and nature by going

excessively beyond their limits through their everyday practices. The quality of the air we breathe every day relies on our own lifestyles.

The young Peter warns Freya against drinking whisky and smoking cigarettes. One time, he advises her: “You shouldn’t be drinking if you’re pregnant” (20). He informs her that if she drinks, her baby will end up disabled and may die in her; and in such a case, they will have to pull it out with tweezers (20). One other time, he stresses: “[C]igarettes are supposed to be bad for you” (34). Despite this warning, she keeps drinking whisky and smoking cigarettes most of the time. The stage directions, in most cases, show her either producing “a packet of cigarettes and light[ing] one” (18) or “drink[ing] the whisky” (30). She herself admits she has been smoking and drinking most of the time (76). She resorts to drinking and smoking as a means of escape from her increasing depression about the uncertain future into which her child is being born. Thinking that “smoking helps [her] relieve tension” because “cigarettes help people cope throughout stressful situations by regulating mood” (Erskine *et al* 3), Freya is not aware that by doing so she is increasing the source of her own depression both internally and externally. In addition to polluting the air around her, she, by smoking and drinking “with abandon,” is “trying to kill off the new life in her womb, and experiences terrifying, hallucinogenic visions of death among the next generation” (Bottoms 10). Unlike Sarah, who is searching for a solution to carbon emissions: “We have to be seen doing all we can to lower carbon emissions” (24), Freya thinks only of the result of carbon emissions—earthquakes—that scares her: “They say there’s going to be an earthquake. There’s going to be a massive tremor, the day after tomorrow” (26). Endorsing the *status quo*, the stage directions show “*Bumbling. Turbulence or possibly the sound of thunder*” (29). Freya’s fears of the future are fundamentally caused by capitalists’ destructive methods in expanding their air flights (that lead to increasing carbon emissions and further problems). Her fears are further triggered by her own contribution to the problem prompted by capitalism instead of struggling against it. Niklas Hagelberg argues that we have “been contributing to air pollution and global warming” through our busy lifestyles. We produce and consume more than usual and, therefore, we generate “more greenhouse gases” “as well as air pollution” in such forms as chemicals that include black carbon (*para* 2).

When the African/Eritrean activist Tom, Jasmine’s boyfriend, fails to convince her to pass his country’s/Eritrea’s environmental problems due to “airport expansion” to her sister Sarah (the cabinet minister), he blackmails her and threatens to use some porn photos taken for her unless Sarah stops the airport expansions in the UK. Only now does Jasmine (who is uninterested) inform Sarah that Tom’s “family in Africa are being affected by climate change” and that she is

not “doing anything so his family are going to die.” Hence, the latter must do something against “airport expansion” (51). Aware that expanding airports increases carbon emission into the atmosphere, Sarah says to Tom: “I assume you’re going to tell me about the current and tangible effects of climate change on the agriculture, on the villages, your family” (52). However, Carter, who represents the airline industry in the present, attempts to blackmail Sarah’s opposition to airport expansion and offers her an exciting job to change things from the inside, but she refuses. Like Roy and Daniel, who have blackmailed Robert in the past, Carter tries to follow suit with his daughter in the present. This episode has so greatly ruptured Sarah’s relationship with her husband Colin, who informs Jasmine he wanted a divorce (109). All social relations are passively influenced by the general milieu created by the capitalist system and its practices. The play negotiates the existential challenges reflected by successive greedy generations of “neglect and science denial, laying particular blame on boomers who knowingly traded their descendants’ futures for short-term gratification” (Brandes *para* 2).

Tom gives Carter an account of his country’s calamity: the crops do not grow, the temperature rises gradually, and the people are bound either to move or to die. The former’s generation pay the price for capitalists’ avarice (117). However, feeling blackmailed by Tom, who “demanded a complete halt to air travel expansion” (118), Sarah announces an entire halt to expansion: “No more runways, control, terminals, nothing, right across the country” (119). She informs Carter that she will never accept the job offer emphasizing that she would rather eat her own shit than work for him (122). She plans to halt all airport expansion, choosing environment over economy, and, at the same time, to avoid more of Tom’s threats: “Right now. I’m going to sleep with more sisters of elected politicians, I’m going to attack police, issue bomb threats. Until something is done” (123). He smashes a plate onto the floor crying: “There are children dying that shouldn’t be dying. *Lifestyle?* Fuck your *lifestyle*” (123). Tom’s words remind us of the consequences postmodernist capitalism leads to, such as air pollution caused by vehicles—gases and particles—and industrial production in big cities that kills millions of people each year (Flakin *para* 9). His reaction is further echoed by Flakin’s argument that young activists, faced with the “infernal powers” created by capitalism and whose effects are inescapable, have become increasingly aware of this catastrophic reality caused by the capitalist system (*para* 31). In this way, Tom succeeds not only in solving his problems by utilizing Jasmine’s naivety in convincing Sarah to side with him but also in making Jasmine’s naivety significant. Tom achieves his target, if temporarily, against capitalism by using its own subtle means—blackmailing and threatening.

The finale of the second act, introduced by the appearance of Freya's father Robert, a "seventy-year-old man, in a raincoat, and holding a small wind turbine" (59), brims with dark cloudy sky, rain, and storm. In such a climate, Freya is worried about the future, especially for her baby. She asks other mothers if they worry about the future or feel their children were a mistake (64). She is terrified of giving birth to "a child into a world facing ruin caused by human action, and then unthinkable inaction" (Jones *para* 2). She in particular accentuates the reliability of her father's predictions, a fact that substantiates his appearance here and his talk to her husband about overpopulation and global warming (87). Robert argues that "species live and die and evolve," and the planet too evolves via "cycles of hot and cold and responding to the demands of life" (87). Defining the problem as "global warming," he reverts it to "the rise in temperature" (88). Moreover, explaining Steve the connection between overpopulation and global warming, Robert imagines the planet as a house and argues that when the population is doubled, the house gets hotter, and both food and drink are used up at twice in everything—the rate and the floor. "The world will be fine in the end, and it knows what it wants. It wants to get rid of us" as part of the system (89). By underlining "the polarization between Nature and Culture as the ultimate reason for this catastrophe," "Robert puts the blame on the social wrongdoings for the environmental decline and projects Nature as a vengeful formation taking revenge on humanity for their misuse" (Karahana 271). He is aware of whole problem as originated by humanity.

Robert puts it explicitly at the core of the third act, when he tries to get Steve to the idea of seeing the future (which is going to be worse) more via the entire system we live in. He argues that if you want to understand things well, you must look at the whole system (including mountains, animals, the air, and the sea), which is so complicated: "I try to see the future. Every model suggests things are going to be worse than anyone imagines. I've seen something terrible" (95). Robert suggests a solution for reducing "the carbon footprint" by removing all extra people (95). He argues that the planet has now six billion people while it can sustain about one billion only: "Five billion people wiped from the face of the earth in a single lifetime. Mass migration away from the equator, world wars, starvation" (96). Robert's words echo his awareness of the activities carried out within the capitalist system, not to mention the increase in human population and "the storehouse of natural resources [that has become] limited" (Kaur 45). However, he shocks Steve by telling him that Freya's child will regret being born and will hate her for giving birth to it into such an awful world (96). He further horrifies Steve by admitting that he has suggested that Freya kill her daughter (96). Justifying his words to Steve, Robert argues: "The enemy is on its way, but

it doesn't have guns and gas this time, it has wind and rain, storms and earthquakes" (97). Robert the reasonable scientist conquers Robert the affectionate father when he accentuates to Steve that Freya "had to know the truth" that it is better her daughter "never lived" (98). Thus, "much of the play's complexity, and Chekhovian angst, comes from Robert being a lousy father, a cold and even cruel personality" (Jones *para* 3). The third act ends with Freya's giving birth to her daughter as significant of an earthquake: "*Sound of the womb getting louder and louder. Sounds like an earthquake. The foetus turns its head to face us and screams*" (99). Bartlett wants to inform us that the new child is not seeing it good, for it faces us with screams! This argument accords with Robert's which echoes Lovelock's.

The project done over the last thirty years by Robert has proved that the emissions resulting from aircraft have a great impact on environment and hence are "disastrous for the world" (74). Unhappy with Robert's results, the airline industry wants them to play down the effect of emissions on the planet. Accepting a large cheque, Robert agrees to publish fake results to cater for capitalists' pursuits. Thus, like his daughter Freya who has contributed to polluting the atmosphere by smoking excessively, Robert is supporting the capitalist violations against the environment by becoming one of them when he falsifies the report they needed and accepts a cheque in return. Carter explains Sarah her father's situation: although Robert's project has proved that aircraft emissions are disastrous to the environment, he does not announce that conclusion. Carter assures Sarah that her father "was paid" (74). This is how the capitalist corruptive system conquers Robert (who spent decades of investigations about carbon emissions) at last. Moreover, his words to Freya later on, "this earthquake might be caused by us" (123), are well applicable to them both. However, confessing her opposition to airport expansion and, hence, to her father's sudden novel situation, Sarah both insists on passing the report to the press as soon as possible and expresses her hatred for her father: "I hate him. I'm more than happy to disown him publicly" (75). Although she might have been forced to resist capitalist pursuits due to being blackmailed by Tom, the daughter has thus proved better than her father in her attitude towards the environmental crisis. Robert's submission to capitalist pursuits is reminiscent of Fredric Jameson who argues that it is easier today to imagine the entire deterioration of nature and the earth than the halt of late capitalism (Hyman 18). However, unlike her father, who has been defeated by the capitalist airline, Sarah takes it upon herself to continue against them. She has not only rejected an enticing job offered her by Carter but also sided with Tom in his case against the capitalist project.

Influenced by her father's old predictions that "there'll be heat waves, storms, even this earthquake might be caused by us" behaving badly with nature (123), Freya feels at a loss: "I don't want the baby but I can't get rid of it" (126). However, the scene reveals a sixteen-year-old girl who turns to be Freya's daughter, Emily—representing the next generation from the future. Emily gives her mother a future-like vision of "the London Eye" that "after the flooding it was going to go on tour" (131). Emily seems to be alluding to the floods triggered everywhere by the earthquakes caused by carbon emissions and global warming. The play here presents Emily as "a Christ-like figure" that can lead humanity to its salvation (Bartleet 13). Freya's obsession with earthquakes is obvious in her talk with Police Officer, who tries to keep her calm. She is overwhelmed with Waterloo Bridge that "was called the bridge of sighs" (135) for witnessing many suicides. She further remembers Thomas Hood's poem about the homeless woman who committed suicide by throwing herself off (135). The stage directions support Freya's fears: "*The ground shakes. An earthquake. The bridge is moving*" (136). Asked by Emily as well as the crowd to jump, Freya clings to the bridge's side. The police officer attempts to help her come down as the earthquake hits: "*The earth moving*" (137). At such a moment, Freya is horrified: "I don't know what to do. I don't want the baby, I really can't have a baby. It's moving. Shaking. The bridge. Everything's *moving!* It's *too late!* *The earthquake is very loud*" (137). Freya cannot do anything nor can she hold on because the sound of destruction and the earthquake make her fall from the bridge into River Thames (137). She falls a victim to the earthquake into the river.

The fifth/last act collects, in dream-like scenes, all characters of the past and those of the present in the far future (2525). This act is described as "a surreal projection into the future, conjured by the coma-state dreams of the central character, Freya" (Escolme 5). Freya's dead mother, Grace, appears arguing: "We are simply earthquakes ourselves, wonderful irregularities in an evolving system. We die and the earth uses us for something new" (154). In present day London, Freya's family, gathering at the hospital, face the fact that she has been severely injured and is unlikely to survive. Frantic and confused as usual, Freya awakes in the present day and hugs her husband, who delivers the news of her imminent death and the birth of their baby daughter. The play ends with Emily aged 16 wearing Grace's dress. As the future generation activist, Emily prepares to leave her house and walk "barefoot" to London (158). Walking barefoot to London is significant of Solomon, the young woman the narrator has referred to earlier in the prologue of the last act—the prologue which delivers the final message of the play(wright).

Telling the story of a young woman called Solomon in the old times, the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century when man “thought of himself” (138), the narrator (in 2525) refers to Emily. He alerts the attention to the crimes committed by capitalists/people against nature and hence causing our world’s dilemma, such as stealing from the land, plundering the seas, killing animals, tearing “out the minerals from the ground,” and poisoning the sky. As the sea begins to rise, people simply close their eyes and drink, dance, and attempt “to ignore their certain destruction” (138). Thus, capital’s need for constant growth has not been limited to poisoning the sky (by carbon emissions); it goes further to include the land, the seas, animals, and minerals. This is how the capitalist system works by robbing the future generations of their rights: “Such theft from the future is the motor of economic growth. Capitalism, which sounds so reasonable when explained by a mainstream economist, is in ecological terms nothing but a pyramid scheme” (Monbiot, “Capitalism Killing Planet,” *para* 34). The narrator ends the prologue by stating that “Solomon spent the rest of her life travelling the world, walking a new path, showing us the future, a new way to live” (138). Solomon/Emily is the one seen walking a new path and searching for a new way of life resisting capitalist destructive nature.

The play ends with the Epilogue (sixteen years later) when Emily (a young activist now) and Tom, “*now thirty-five, a man, rather than a boy*” (157) have a dialogue revealing much about the future generation and the unending destructive reality of capitalism. She has left the town on her own to start a journey “showing us the future, a new way to live” (138). In a scene echoing that old one between her grandfather Robert and his wife Grace, Emily says: “I’ve done my research” (158). They exchange love words and reiterate what Robert has said previously to his then-wife Grace. This scene alerts attention to the fact that Emily will start a research journey like her grandfather and it is possible to have the same confrontation with capitalists and their transgressions against nature. The message of the play(wright) may be thus: the capitalist violations against nature will be permanent. Thus, it seems that the conflict with the capitalist economy will be growing unstoppable and their blackmailing policies will be followed with all future generations. However, a number of regional economies and nations have launched initiatives to reduce carbon emissions and hence nip further climate problems in the bud. Among the most notable of these initiatives is “the implementation of a carbon tax in the Canadian province of British Columbia” (Wright and Nyberg 12). The implementation of higher taxes on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than the capitalist parties are proposing is the most powerful way to conquer capitalistic pursuits by using their own weapons against them.

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**Conclusion**

It has been demonstrated that postmodern capitalist practices lead to various problems associated with one another, such as carbon emissions, air pollution, rising temperature, global warming, earthquakes, high ocean levels, and floods. Each problem leads to the other and they are all caused by the capitalist system represented by airline industry. However, the paper has reached three findings.

First, the playwright has stressed the detrimental capitalist nature as limitless by employing the dramatic technique of extending his play both in time (spanning three periods from the 1960's to 2525) and in scope (global catastrophes, corporate corruption, and estranged family). The young Robert spent many years (since the 1960's) to see whether emissions from aircraft had any permanent impact on the environment or not. When he proves that emissions will be disastrous, capitalists (representing the airline industry) get the better of him by paying him off and getting the report they needed. In the present (2010), capitalists represented by Carter resume their practices and try to dissuade Sarah from her activist position, but she, blackmailed by Tom's threats, goes on in her opposition rejecting their fascinating job. The far future depicts both Tom and Emily as young activists echoing Robert and Sarah. Emily takes it upon herself to save the world from those who steal from the land, plunder the seas, kill the animals, tear out the minerals from the ground, and poison the sky. This is how global catastrophes are caused by the corporate corruption represented by the airline industry and undergone by an estranged family over the years. The future stresses the fact that both activists and capitalists will be in diabolic opposition as two irreconcilable opposites.

Second, the practices of the capitalist system have been demonstrated to escalate the socio-economic impacts of natural disasters; these practices will subsequently fail to provide any solutions to problems radically caused by them. Such practices followed by capitalist representatives (like Roy, Daniel, and Carter) to silence activists (like Robert and Sarah) by offering them bribes (in the form of cheques and enticing jobs) and, hence, to keep capitalist economic growth are not expected to solve any problem. These practices escalate the social problems—created by the capitalist system—between the daughters and their father, the wife and her husband, and the mother and her child. The unhealthy relationships between Robert and his daughters become worse due to the bribe given him by the capitalist system. Sarah's relationship with her husband Colin collapses once Carter offers her a tempting job as a bribe. Freya, afraid of giving birth to a child into a catastrophic world, thinks of getting rid of her pregnancy or committing suicide. Moreover, the capitalist practices of the airline industry passively affect countries, as in the Eritrean Tom's case. Thus, the capitalist system starts subtly lenient; but once its pursuits are not achieved, it follows such cunning practices as bribing and blackmailing against its opposing activists.

Hence, the capitalist system cannot offer solutions to the problems originally caused by it.

Third, the play's finale has confirmed that activists, faced with the infernal powers of capitalism over ages, are before two difficult options: either conquer or be killed by it. Tom, the Eritrean activist, has demonstrated this issue, representing both the present (as Jasmine's boyfriend) and the future (as Emily's future husband). When Tom fails to pass his country's environmental problems (caused by airport expansion) to Sarah (the cabinet minister), he blackmails her and threatens to use some porn photos taken for her sister Jasmine. This is how he not only forces Sarah to side with him announcing a total halt to airline expansion but also encourages her to have a firm stance against capitalists refusing their cunning policies.

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**"دراسة ما بعد حدثية للرأسمالية بمسرحية زلازل في لندن بقلم "مايك بارتليت"****المستخلص**

تتناول الدراسة الحالية الطبيعة الحقيقية للنظام الرأسمالي كما تم تصويرها بمسرحية زلازل في لندن (2010) بقلم "مايك بارتليت"، وذلك استناداً إلى خلفية ما بعد حدثية. وتوضح الدراسة كيف أن الممارسات الرأسمالية تؤدي إلى مشكلات اجتماعية واقتصادية مرتبطة بكوارث الطبيعة. وهذه الكوارث التي تسببت فيها الممارسات الرأسمالية وناقشتها المسرحية تتمثل في الانبعاثات الكربونية والتلوث الهوائي وارتفاع درجة الحرارة والانحباس الحراري والزلازل وارتفاع منسوب الماء بالمحيطات الذي يؤدي إلى الفيضانات. وقد توصلت الدراسة إلى ثلاث نتائج. أولاً: تأكيد الكاتب على الطبيعة الجائرة غير المحدودة للنظام الرأسمالي وذلك من خلال التوظيف الدرامي لتقنية امتداد النص شكلاً وموضوعاً؛ فمن ناحية الشكل ليشمل النص ثلاثة أجيال (من ستينيات القرن الماضي إلى سنة 2525)؛ وأما الموضوع، فثمة قضايا مختلفة دارت في فلك النص، مثل الكوارث الكونية والفساد الجماعي والأسرة المفككة. ثانياً: تُزيد ممارسات النظام الرأسمالي من تفاقم الآثار الاجتماعية والاقتصادية للكوارث الطبيعية، وعليه فقد تبين أن تلك الممارسات سوف تكون تباغاً عاجزة عن طرح أية حلول لمشكلات هي التي أوجدتها. ثالثاً: أقرت المسرحية بمشهدها الأخير أن الناشطين بمواجهتهم القوى الشيطانية للرأسمالية في كل عصر يجدون أنفسهم أمام خيارين أحلاهما مُر: إما قهرها أو الانصياع لها.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** زلازل في لندن بقلم "بارتليت"، الرأسمالية، الانبعاثات الكربونية، الاحتباس الحراري، كوارث الطبيعة، ما بعد الحدثية، الآثار الاجتماعية والاقتصادية.