The Sea

Edward Bond

Edward Bond - his life, works and critical reception

Introduction

Edward Bond (born July 18 1934) is an English playwright, theatre director, theorist and screenwriter. He is the author of the play *Saved* (1965), the production of which was instrumental in the abolition of theatre censorship in the UK. His highly controversial work has met with extremes of reaction, from vilification to claims that he is the world's greatest living dramatist.

Early life

Edward Bond was born on July 18, 1934 into a working class family in Holloway, North London. As a child during World War II he was evacuated to the countryside where his exposure to the violence and terror of war shaped themes in his work. At fifteen he left school and worked in factories and offices, followed by two years in the British Army.

First plays

In 1958 Edward Bond was invited to join the first writers' group at the Royal CourtTheatre in London after submitting two poetic plays, *The Fiery Tree* and *Klaxon in Atreus' Place*. Neither has been professionally produced, nor published.

Bond's first produced play, *The Pope's Wedding*, was given as a Sunday night "performance without dÃ©cor" at the Court in 1962. This is a naturalistic drama set in then contemporary Essex. Bond's next play,*Saved* (1965) put him on the map theatrically as well as becoming one of the best known dramatist s in 20th century theatre history.*Saved* delves into the lives of a selection of working class South London youths, who, suppressed by a brutal economic system, have lost sight of their humanity and become immersed in promiscuity, co-dependence and murderous violence.

Since the eighteenth century, plays for production had been subject to the Lord Chamberlain's approval, although a loophole in the Licensing Act of 1737 allowed for private performances of unapproved plays. Among the many excisions the Lord Chamberlain demanded to *Saved* was the stoning to death of a baby in its carriage. Bond refused to alter a word, claiming that removing this pivotal scene would destroy the play. The Royal Court became a temporary, members-only club, producing*Saved* as the "English Stage Society." The Lord Chamberlain prosecuted the English Stage Society, the first club to be arrested for producing a banned play. Despite a passionate defence from Laurence Olivier, then Artistic Director of the National Theatre, the court found the English Stage Society guilty and given a "conditional discharge" that promised severe consequences if they attempted to cross the Lord Chamberlain again.

In 1967 the Court produced a new Edward Bond play, the surreal *Early Morning*. This portrays Queen Victoria as having a lesbian relationship with Florence Nightingale, the royal Princes as Siamese twins, Disraeli andPrince Albert as plotting a coup and the whole dramatis personae as being damned to a cannibalistic Heaven after falling offBeachy Head. "His Lordship will not allow it" said the censor. The Royal Court produced the play anyway; and within a year the

British Parliament had abolished stage censorship.
Bond followed this with the British Empiresatire *Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1968), two agit-prop plays for festival performances, *Black Mass* (1970) to commemorate the Sharpeville Massacre and*Passion* (1971). Above all else, in 1971 he composed an epic rewrite of Shakespeare's King Lear, simply entitled *Lear*.

Contribution to the cinema

Bond also made some important contributions to the cinema. He wrote an adaptation of Nabokov's *Laughter in the Dark* (1968, dir. Tony Richardson) and the aborigine drama *Walkabout* (1971, dir. Nicolas Roeg); as well as contributing dialogue to *Blow-Up* (1966, dir. Michelangelo Antonioni) and *Nicholas and Alexandra*(1971, dir. Franklin J. Schaffner).

The 1970s and early 1980s

The subdued Edwardian-set comedy *The Sea*(1973) brought to an end what Bond then realised was a sequence of plays, beginning with *The Pope's Wedding*, in which he had asked pertinent questions about our society, its history, its class antagonisms and violence. He then produced two pieces exploring the place of the artist in society:*Bingo* (1973) which shows the retired Shakespeare as both exploitative landlord and suicide; and *The Fool* (1975) showing the 19th century poet John Clare driven insane by his patronising and violent class enemies. In 1976 *Bingo* won the Obie award as Best Off-Broadway play.

Bond followed his sequence of "question plays" with what he called two "answer plays" — *The Woman* (1978), a massive meditation on the myth of the Trojan War; and *The Bundle* (1978), a new version of*Narrow Road*. By this time, Bond was also directing. He himself staged the premier of*The Woman* in the National Theatre's huge Olivier auditorium, opening up the stage like no director before him and creating an impressive, strikingly intelligent spectacle.

Also from this period are: the short play*Stone* (1976), written for the gay rights theatre company Gay Sweatshop; and *A-A-America* (1976), a double-bill concerning racist violence in the USA.

In 1976 he collaborated with the German composer Hans Werner Henze on the Opera*We Come to the River*, first produced at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. In 1982 the pair collaborated on another opera, *The English Cat*.
His next plays were a return to contemporary subjects: *The Worlds* (1979) about industrial unrest and terrorism;*Summer* (1981), an Ibsen-like memory play; and *Derek* (1982), on class exploitation.*Restoration* (1981) is another study of Ruling Class culpability, this time set in the late 17th century.

Prophet without honour

Up until this point, Bond's plays were produced by the major institutions of the British theatre: the National, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Court. These relationships came to a dramatic end in the mid-1980s, with the National's refusal to let him direct the premier of *Human Cannon* (1984), a Spanish Civil War epic; his dissatisfaction over the Royal Court's revivals of *Saved* and *The Pope's Wedding* in 1984; and the disastrous premier of the trilogy *The War Plays*, dealing with nuclear apocalypse, by the RSC in 1985. This meant for example that a major work, *Jackets*(1989), is still virtually unknown in the UK.

From the mid-seventies, Bond's audience in mainland Europe has grown and it was to here that he turned. He has a fecund relationship with the Theater National de la Colline in Paris; they produced a major version of *The War Plays* in 1995 as well as productions (some premieres) of *In the Company of Men* (1992), an intense exploration of the big business world; *Coffee*(1996), set partly in the Imagination and partly at the Nazi execution site Babi Yar; and *The Crime of the 21st Century* (2000), a bleak parable set in a *The Matrix*-like future.

Bond's most recent contributions to British theatre have been for the Birmingham-based theatre-in-education company Big Brum. These have included *At the Inland Sea* (1995), in which a youth confronts the legacy of the holocaust; *Eleven Vests* (1997), on scholastic and military authoritarianism; and *Have I None* (2000), another futuristic parable. Also in 2000, *The Children* was performed at a Community college in Cambridge.

In the past two decades, he has written the television plays *Olly's Prison* (BBC, 1993), which has also been produced on stage by Berliner Ensemble and American Repertory Theatre, and *Tuesday* (BBC Schools, 1993); as well as the radio plays *Chair* (BBC Radio 4, 2000) and *Existence* (2002). The BBC have broadcast productions of "The Sea" and "Bingo".

Publications

Since the early 1970s, Bond has been conspicuous as the first dramatist since George Bernard Shaw to produce long, serious prose prefaces to his plays.
These contain the author's meditations on capitalism, violence, technology, post-modernism and imagination. Seven volumes of his *Collected Plays*, including the prefaces, are available from the UK publisherMethuen.
In 1999 he published *The Hidden Plot*, a collection of writings on theatre and the meaning of drama. He has published two volumes from his notebooks and four volumes of letters.
His *Collected Poems* was published in 1987.

Current reputation

Bond remains a colossal figure in contemporary drama. He is hugely respected and popular in mainland Europe; but has been largely ignored or neglected by producing venues in his homeland. An exception has been the recent major revival of *Lear* at the Crucible Theatre Sheffield featuring Ian McDiarmid.

Critical reception

Bond is now considered to be one of the major living English playwrights. Despite this, the “difficult” reputation which dogs both the man and his plays means he is rarely performed today. Bond is still writing and still politically engaged. Often he provides the introduction to his own published plays, and these polemical pieces clearly show the author’s political and social standpoint, though they rarely provide a direct insight into his writing. The plays, we must assume he believes, speak for themselves.

Violence has always been a tool for Edward Bond through which he criticizes society, but it has never been an end in itself. In his preface to Lear he writes, "The question of the play is why is it that violence is licensed by society, but only on a political level? When the same thing happens on an individual level, then it's absolutely disgraceful."

Bond's Concept of Violence

I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austen wrote about manners. Violence shapes and obsesses our society, and if we do not stop being violent we have no future. People who do not want writers to write about violence want to stop them writing about us and our time. It would be immoral not to write about violence.

Many animals are able to be violent, but in non-human species the violence is finally controlled so that it does not threaten the species' existence. Then why is the existence of our species threatened by its violence?

I must begin with an important distinction. The predator hunting its prey is violent but not aggressive in the human way. It wants to eat, not destroy, and its violence is dangerous to the prey but not to the predator. Animals only become aggressive - that is destructive in the human sense - when their lives, territory or status in their group are threatened, or when they mate or arc preparing to mate. Even then the aggression is controlled. Fighting is usually ritualized, and the weaker or badly-placed animal will be left alone when it runs away or formally submits. Men use much of their energy and skill to make more efficient weapons to destroy each other, but animals have often evolved in ways to ensure they*can't* destroy each other.

A lot has been written on this subject and it is not my job to repeat the evidence; but it shows clearly, I think, that in normal surroundings and conditions members of the same species are not dangerous to one another, but that when they are kept in adverse conditions, and forced to behave unnaturally, their behaviour deteriorates. This has been seen in zoos and laboratories. Then they become destructive and neurotic and make bad parents. They begin to behave like us.

That is all there is to our 'innate' aggression, or our 'original' sin as it was first called. There is no evidence of an aggressive*need,* as there is of sexual and feeding *needs*.We respond aggressively when we are constantly deprived of our physical and emotional needs, or when we are threatened with this; and if we are constantly deprived and threatened in this way - as human beings now are - we live in a constant state of aggression. It does not matter how much a man doing routine work in, say, a factory or office is paid: he will still be deprived in this sense. Because he is behaving in a way for which he is not designed, he is alienated from his natural self, and this will have physical and emotional consequences for him. He becomes nervous and tense and he begins to look for threats everywhere. This makes him belligerent and provocative; he becomes a threat to other people, and so his situation rapidly deteriorates.

This is all the facts justify us in concluding: aggression is an ability but not a necessity. The facts are often *interpreted*more pessimistically but that is another matter.

If we *were* innately aggressive, in the sense that it was *necessary* for us to act aggressively from time to time, we would be condemned to live with an incurable disease; and as the suffering caused by aggression in a technological culture is so terrible, the question would arise: does the human race have any moral justification for its existence? A character in my play *Early Morning* answered no, and he tried to kill himself. It is astonishing that many people who share his beliefs are not forced to draw his conclusions, but can still go about their daily business. This

ability shows mental shallowness and emotional glibness, not stoicism and spiritual strength. Their 'realism' is really only the fascism of lazy men.

Then why do we behave worse to one another than other animals? We live in ways for which we are not designed and so our daily existence interferes with our natural functioning,, and this activates our natural response to threat: aggression. How has this happened ? Why, in the first place, do we live in urban, crowded regimented groups, working like machines (mostly for the benefit of other men) and with no real control of cur lives? Probably this situation could not have been avoided. Men did not suddenly become possessors of human minds and then use them to solve the problems of existence. These problems were constantly posed and solved within an inherited organization or social structure, and this structure was redeveloped to deal with new problems as they arcse. So there was probably never much chance for new thinking. As men's minds clarified they were already living in herds or groups, and these would have evolved into tribes and societies. Like waking sleepers they would not know dream from reality.

What problems did these half-awake, superstitious men have to face? They were biologically so successful that they probably became too numerous for their environments and they could not go on living as loose bands of scavengers and .hunters. And the environment itself changed, sometimes suddenly and sometimes gradually but inevitably. And perhaps the relationship between earlier instincts and human awareness produced its own problems. Ail these changes required adaptations in social organization and created new opportunities for leadership. Habits and techniques of control would be strengthened. In critical times any non-conformity would be a danger to the group. People who are controlled by others in this way soon lose the ability to act for themselves, even if their leaders do not make it dangerous for them to do so. And then, as I shall explain, the natural feelings of opposition become moralized and work to perpetuate the very organization they basically oppose. The whole structure becomes held together by the negative biological response to deprivation and threat — it is an organization held together by the aggression it creates. Aggression has become moralized, and morality has become a form of violence. I shall describe how this happens.

Once the social structure exists it tends to be perpetuated. The organizing groups, the leaders, receive privileges. Some of these were perhaps necessary in the critical situations that created the need for leadership. But the justification for them becomes less when they are inherited by their children. At the same time they become more extensive and entrenched. They become an injustice. But the organizing group becomes self-justifying, because although its position is unjust it is the administrator of justice. At first opposition, to it will not be revolutionary or even political; it will be 'meaningless' and involve personal discontents and frustrations. When public problems become private problems, as they often do for the people involved in them, they are distorted, and then people's behaviour may seem to be arbitrary and self-regarding. This can always be shown to be socially disruptive, of course. In this way an unjust society causes and defines crime; and an aggressive social structure which is unjust and must create aggressive social disruption, receives the moral sanction of being 'law and order'. Law and order is one of the steps taken to maintain injustice.

People with unjust social privileges have an obvious emotional interest in social morality. It allows them to maintain their privileges and justifies them in taking steps to do so. It reflects their fear of an opposition that would often take away everything they have, even their lives. This is one way in which social morality becomes angry and aggressive.

But there is another way. Social morality is also a safe form of obedience for many of the victims of the unjust organization. It gives them a form of innocence founded on fear - but it is never a peaceful innocence. It is a sort of character easily developed in childhood, when power relations are at their starkest. Then i^sjs dangerous to have aggressive ideas against those in power .because' they can easily punish you, they are stronger and cleverer, and if you destroyed them how could you live? (In adults this becomes: We can't have a revolution because the buses wouldn't run and I'd be late for work. Or: Hitler made the trains run on time.) Our society has die structure of a pyramid of aggression and as the child is the weakest member it is at the bottom. We still *think* we treat children with special kindness and make special allowances for them, as indeed most animals do. But do we? Don't most people believe they have a right, even a duty, to use crude force against children as part of their education? Almost all organizations dealing with children arc obsessed with discipline. Whenever possible we put them into uniforms and-examine their minds like warders frisking prisoners. We force them to live by the clock before they can read it, though this makes no biological sense. We build homes without proper places for them. They interfere with the getting of money so mothers leave them and go to work - and some of them are no longer even physically able to feed their own children. Parents are worn out by daily competitive striving so they can't tolerate the child's natural noise and mess. They don't know why it cries, they don't know *any* of its inarticulate language. The child's first word isn't 'mummy' or 'daddy', it is 'me'. It has been learning to say it through millions of years of evolution, and it has a biological right to its egocentricity because that is the only way our species can continue.

The point is this: every child is born with certain biological expectations, or if you like species' assumptions - that it's un-preparedness will be cared for, that it will be given not only food but emotional reassurance, that its vulnerability will be shielded, that it will be born into a world waiting to receive it, and that knows *how* to receive it. But the weight of aggression in our society is so heavy that the unthinkable happens: we batter it. And when the violence is not so crude it is still there, spread thinly over years; the final effect is the same and so the dramatic metaphor I used to describe it was the stoning of a baby in its pram. This is not done by thugs but by people who like plays condemning thugs.

One way or the other the child soon learns that it is born into a strange world and not the world it evolved for: we are no longer born free. So the small, infinitely vulnerable child panics - as any animal must. It does not get the reassurance it needs, and in its fear it identifies with the people who have power ever it. That is, it accepts their view of the situation, their judgement of who is right and wrong - their *morality*. But this morality - which is social morality - now has all the force of the fear and panic that created it. Morality stops being something people want and becomes what they are terrified to be without. So social morality is a form of corrupted innocence, and it is against the basic wishes of those who have been moralized in this way. It is a threat, a weapon used against their most fundamental desire for justice, without which they are not able to be happy or allow others to be happy. The aggressive response of such people has been smothered by social morality, but this only increases its tension. So they try to relieve it in extravert ways. Often they become missionaries and campaigners. They are obsessed with a need for censorship - which is only the moral justification of the peeping Tom. They find the wicked and ungodly everywhere - because these things are in themselves. Their' social morality denies their need for justice, but that need is so basic it can only be escaped by dying or going mad; otherwise it must be struggled against obsessively. In this struggle pleasure becomes guilt, and the moralizing, censorious, inhuman puritans are formed. Sometimes their aggression is hidden under strenuous gleefulness,

but it is surprising how little glee is reflected in their opinions and beliefs, and how intolerant, destructive and angry these guardians of morality can be.

Their morality is angry because they are in conflict with themselves. Not merely divided, but *fighting* their own repressed need for justice with all the fear and hysteria of their original panic. Because this isn't something that is done once, in childhood or later; to go on living these people must murder-themselves every day. Social morality is a form of suicide. Socially moralized people must act contemptuously and angrily to all liberalism, contentment and sexual freedom, because these are the things they are fighting in themselves. There is no way out for them - it is as if an animal was locked in a cage and then fed with the key. It shakes the bars but can never get out. So other people's happiness becomes their pain, and other people's freedom reminds them of their slavery. It is as if they had created in themselves a desolate, inhospitable landscape in which they had to live out their emotional and spiritual lives. This landscape reflects, of course, the inhospitable, unjust world in which they first suffered; and it exacerbates and reinforces their aggression and seems to give it added depths of bitterness. By calling the unjust world good they recreate it in themselves and arc condemned to live in it. They have not learned that when you are frightened of the dark you do not make it go away by shutting your eyes. These people are the angry, gleeful ghosts of my play,*Early Morning*.

Not all children grow up in this way, of course. Some solve the problem by becoming cynical and indifferent, others hide in a listless, passive conformity, others become criminal and openly destructive. Whatever happens, most of them will grow up to act in ways that are ugly, deceitful and violent] and the conforming, socially moralized, good citizens will be the most violent of all, because their aggression is expressed through all the technology and power of massed society. The institutions of morality and order are always more destructive than crime. This century has made that very clear.

Even if a child escapes undamaged it will still face the same problems as a man. We treat men as children. They have no real political or economic control of their lives, and this makes them afraid of society and their own impotence in it. Marx has described adult alienation very well, but we can now understand more about it. We can see that most men are spending their lives doing things for which they are not biologically designed. We are not designed for our production lines, housing blocks, even cars; and these things are not designed for us. They are designed, basically, to make profit. And because we do not even need most of the things we waste our lives in producing, we have to be surrounded by commercial propaganda to make us buy them. This life is so unnatural for us that, for straightforward biological reasons, we become tense, nervous and aggressive, and these characteristics are fed back into our young. Tension and aggression are even becoming the markings of our species. Many people's faces are set in patterns of alarm, coldness or threat; and they move jerkily and awkwardly, not with the simplicity of free animals. These expressions are signs of moral disease, but we are taught to admire them. They are used in commercial propaganda and in iconographic pictures of politicians and leaders, even writers; and of course they are taken as signs of good manners in the young.

It is for these reasons I say that society is held together by the aggression it creates, and men are not dangerously aggressive but our sort of society is. It creates aggression in these ways: first, it is basically unjust, and second it makes people live unnatural lives -both things which create a natural, biological aggressive response in the members of society. Society's formal answer to this is socialized morality; but this, as I have explained, is only another form cf violence, and so it must itself provoke more aggression. There is no way out for our sort of society, an unjust society must

be violent. Any organization which denies the basic need for biological justice must become aggressive, even though it claims to be moral. This is true of most religions, which say that justice can only be obtained in another world, and not in this. It is also true of many movements for political reform.

Moralized aggression can, of course, be mixed with ordinary kindness and decency, so can the aggression of the social institutions it maintains. But aggression is so powerful (it was after all evolved to deal with desperate situations) that it decides the character of all people and institutions it infects. So through historical times our institutions have been aggressive, and because of this they make it even easier for aggressive people to get power and authority. That is why leaders - revolutionary as well as reactionary - so often behave worse than animals. I don't say this as invective - it is a sad, historical truth.

So human aggression has important features that make it more destructive then the aggression of other animal;. It *is* animal aggression, but it has to be accommodated by our human minds, and presumably it appears to us as more alarming and frightening than it does to other animals. This is true of our subjective feelings of aggression as well as of the aggression we meet from outside. We have more complicated resources to deal with this increased vulnerability. When panic and fear become unbearable it is as if we lied and said they were not there, and out of this lie we build social morality. Children are especially vulnerable in this way, as I have said, but we are all exposed to the same pressures throughout our lives. As animals we react to threat in a natural, biological way; but we must also react in more complicated ways as human beings -mentally, emotionally and morally. It is because we cannot do this successfully that we no longer function as a species. Instead we have created all the things that threaten us: our military giantism, moral hysteria, industrial servitude, and all the ugly aggressiveness of a commercial culture.

Our situation has been made much worse, at least for the time being, by our technological success. The problem can now be described in this brief, schematic way.

We evolved in a biosphere but we live in what is more and more becoming a technosphere. We do not fit into it very well and so it activates our biological defences, one of which is aggression. Our environment is changing so rapidly that we cannot wait for biological solutions to evolve. So we should either change our technosphere or use technology to change human nature. But change in our society is really decided on urgent commercial imperatives^ so nothing is done to solve our main problem. But a species living in an unfavourable environment dies out. For us the end will probably be quicker because the aggression we generate will be massively expressed through our technology.

This is very over-simplified and our fate is far from being so certain. But the combination of technology and socialized morality is very ugly, and it could lead to disaster. Alternatively, governments could begin "to use technology to enforce socialized morality. That is by using drugs, selection, conditioning, genetics and so on, they could manufacture people who would fit into society. This would be just as disastrous. So if we do not want either of these things we must do something else. There are signs, in the search for counter-cultures and alternative politics, that we are beginning to do so.

What ought we to do? Live justly. But what is justice? Justice is allowing people to live in the way for which they evolved. Human beings have an emotional and physical need to do so, k is their biological expectation. They *can* only live in this way, or all the time struggle consciously or unconsciously to do so. That is the essential thing 1 want to say because it means that in fact our

society and its morality, which deny this, and its technology which more and more prevents it, all the time whisper into people's ear 'You have no right to live'. That is what lies under the splendour of the modern world. Equality, freedom and fraternity must be reinterpreted in the light of this - otherwise real revolutionary change is impossible.

We can express this basic need in many ways: aesthetic, intellectual, the need to love, create, protect and enjoy. These are not higher things that can be added when more basic needs are met. *They* are basic. They must be the way in which we express all our existence, and if they do not control our daily life then we cannot function as human beings at all. They are not weakness, but they have nothing to do with the caricatures that pass for strength in our society - the hysterical old maids who become sergeant majors, the disguised peeping Toms who become moralists, the immature social misfits who become judges. Society pays lip service to these needs but it has no real interest in them, and they are of course incompatible with the strident competitiveness of a commercial culture. So really we deny them. Like ghosts we teach a dead religion, build a few more prisons to worship Caesar in, and leave it at that. Blake said that when we try to become more than men we become less than beasts, and that is what we have done. Our human emotions and intellects are not things that stand apart from the long development of evolution; it is as animals we make our highest demands, and in responding to them as men we create our deepest human experience.

I have not answered many of the questions I have raised, but I have tried to explain things that often go unnoticed but which must be put right if anything is to work for us. They are difficult to put right because reforms easily become socially moralized.-It is so easy to subordinate justice to power, but when this happens power takes en the dynamics and dialectics of aggression, and then nothing is really changed. Marx did not know about this problem and Lenin discovered it when it was too late. The understanding of this problem must become part of contemporary socialism, otherwise change will be slower and more difficult.

There is no need for pessimism or resignation, and this play is certainly not either of these things. Lear is blind till they take his eyes away, and by then he has begun to see, to understand. (Blindness is a dramatic metaphor for insight, that is why Gloucester, Oedipus and Tiresias are blind.) Lear's new world is strange and so at first he can only grope painfully and awkwardly. Lear is old by then, but most of the play's audiences will be younger. It might seem to them that the truth is always ground for pessimism when it is discovered, but one soon comes to see it as an opportunity. Then you don't have to go on doing things that never work in the hope that they might one day - because now you know why they *can't.*Even bourgeois politics is more efficient than that.

Finally, I have not tried to say what the future should be like; because that is a mistake. If your plan of the future is too rigid you start to coerce people to fit into it. We do not need a plan of the future, we need a*method* of change.

I want to say something brief about the play. Lear did not have to destroy his daughters' innocence, he does so only because he doesn't understand his situation. When he does understand he leaves Thomas and Susan unharmed. But I think he had to destroy the innocent boy. Some things were lost to us long ago as a species, but we all seem to have to live through part of the act of losing them. We have to learn to do this without guilt or rancour or callousness -or socialized morality. So Lear's ghost isn't one of the angry ghosts from *Early Morning,* but something different.

Apart from the ten or so main characters of the play there are about seventy other speaking parts. In a sense these are one role showing the character of a society.

Act One shows a world dominated by myth. Act Two shows the clash between myth and reality between superstitious men and the autonomous world. Act Three shows a resolution of this, in the world we prove real by dying in it.

Critical Synopsis of Play "The Sea"

Introduction

Edward Bond is one of the most respected playwrights living today. His work and plays aimed at young people have redefined 'Theatre in Education'. The Sea is one of Bond's earliest plays, having been written in the 1970s.

The play – sadly - still has huge relevance today. Evens's speech about living in a time where people will fill the world with 'bombs and germs and gas' is regrettably something we see every day. The main themes about class struggle, aggression and mutual respect of religion and self appear to be more prominent than ever before.

Bond insisted that 'The Sea' be seen as a comedy; this enables the issues to be placed under the microscope and perhaps helps us see the vulgarity of situations we often accept as the norm. The play finishes half way through one of Willy's lines 'I came to say goodbye and I am glad you….' The story is thrown to the audience - they themselves have to decide Willy's fate. One we hope offers happiness and freedom. With 'The Sea' set in 1907, the spectre of the First World War looms and with Willy being a young man, it would seem more than likely that he would see active service.

Bond believes that young people have the ability to reshape the world. The plays in which they act and the plays they create can establish the blueprint for this. Hopefully they can see an ending where Willy and Rose walk into a sunset, where this play no longer has any relevance.

Source and plot of the Play

Bond has chosen his ingredients well. He takes an archetypal plot, the arrival of a stranger into a small, inward-looking community – in this case James Thornton's Carson, shipwrecked on a turn-of-the-century East Anglian beach in a storm which killed his boating companion. To this is added tension between differing social and psychological orders: the old-school patrician tyranny of Mrs Rafi versus the upheavals promised by the rising commercial class, personified by a draper who happens to be completely round the bend, fixated with the idea that Carson is the advance guard for invaders from space. Top off with symbols in both large (the periodic booming of guns on a nearby artillery range) and extra large sizes (the constant looming presence of sea itself, albeit standing in a morally neutral position – possible threat, but also possible opportunity of change; this is simply what poet Patti Smith called "the sea of possibilities"), and it is a rich mixture, but one which Bond never stirs in thoroughly enough. His comedy is frequently as broad as a 1970s television sitcom, and his passages of more profound comment tend to interrupt this silliness obtrusively rather than to sneak in under its Trojan-horse cover.

Production

Put simply, director Sean Holmes has helmed a solid production of a wavering play, and has done so by taking choices that Bond seemed to funk in the writing. Unfortunately, whenever a conflict arises between the dark grey metaphor and moralising characteristic of Bond and the broad comedy he uses here, Holmes's decision is to play the comedy. The result is to maroon the unavoidably Bondian elements even more forlornly than did the playwright himself. Susan Engel's Mrs Rafi is a barking joy, but this is because her eccentricity so completely dominates her big-house despotism rather than being merely a facet of it; when she is given a late speech which promises insight into her own character, Bond once again fumbles matters into just another kdegree of specioousness. Alan Williams as the beach-dwelling outcast Evens is the only character to avoid being rendered as either a cartoon or a cipher. *The Sea* constantly declares that it has depths, but Bond never summons the resolve to trawl them properly and Holmes settles for a pleasure cruises.

The Sea: A Critical Analysis

Bond's play is subtitled 'A Comedy'. It was written, straight after *Lear*, as an antidote to the remorseless theatrical experience of early play. In *The Sea,* Bond shows the ability of human beings to survive the worst, to retain their optimism, and not to be brought down by the lunacy and injustice of the world they live in:

I wanted very much in *The Sea* to look at the same sorts of problems but this time to put the emphasis on the strength of people, on their ability to change their society... So wanted to make people laugh and experience human strength.'

'This is not to say that *The Sea* in any way encourages complacency. The tightly knit society of a small town on the East Coast of England is a battleground over which the victims of an oppressive and morally impoverished culture wander in mad distraction. Alternatively, they hide away in disgust at what they have seen. The town is isolated on the edge of the sea; the effect is of a society sealed off from the outside world and from any potential for change. Bond sets the play at a precise moment in time-it is 1907, and the iron-clad values of Edwardian England are leading inexorably to the disasters of the early twentieth century.'

It is a world ludicrously bent on self-destruction - just like that of *Early Morning*.The central character is another Bondian innocent. Willy Carson, like Arthur, is a young man who slowly awakens to the horrors around him. He is not a heroic figure, but a very ordinary man who is forced by circumstance into trying to understand his world: 'He isn't consciously searching for anything. What happens intrudes into his day-to-day compromise with living.'

Willy and Arthur both come close to being overwhelmed by cynicism and despair, but they survive, and Bond expresses through them his conviction that society *can* be changed, while people like them continue to question its values. Their reactions inevitably involve a rejection of the world as they know it: at the end of both plays, they are seen moving out of the irrational world the other characters inhabit as though abandoning it as lost. Their action is a rejection of their present (and *our* present), but it also signifies the chance for a better future.

In *Lear,* Bond is concerned with different kinds of political oppression and the violence he shows is exclusively political in nature. In *The Sea,* Bond shifts the focus and shows a more characteristically English form of repression - the operations and influence of a rigid class structure, which is carefully worked into the whole fabric of the play. It is the source of the strong thread of social satire that runs through it. Mrs. Rafi, the village dictator by virtue of her supreme upper middle-class self-assurance, is the
Edwardian equivalent of the lady of the manor; she and her entourage of genteel middle-class ladies are characterised as figures of fun, unaware of the emptiness of their posturings and the hollowness of their values. To mock their pretensions, Bond uses a more conventional comic approach than in any of the earlier plays — although there is a marked family resemblance between Mrs. Rafi and Victoria in *Early Morning* or Georgina in *Narrow Road to the Deep Nortb,* Mrs. Rafi is essentially a*grande dame* in the tradition of English high comedy. In the same way, the farcical events that disrupt the funeral service on the cliff-top have earlier forerunners in scenes like the one with the young priests and the holy pot in *Narrow Road to the Deep North,* but without the sustained pitch of comic anarchy and the sheer ingenuity in the handling of the farcical mechanics that Bond attains in *The Sea.*

The satirical comedy is, however, only one element in the play. Bond is concerned to show the effects of a rigidly sectionalised society on its victims. Mrs. Rafi practises a form of mental and emotional violence on all those beneath her - as Rose says late in the play: 'The town's full of her cripples.' Her main victim is the draper, Hatch, a tradesman who uneasily straddles the two worlds - that of me working class (Hollarcut, Thompson and Carter, the village men whom he influences with his ideas) and that of his genteel middle-class customers, to whom he is obliged to display an attentive servility. Unable to give direct expression to the antagonism he feels, he redirects his hostility. His fears of an alien invasion ofEngland from outer space may be lunatic and unreal, but they find very real expression in his attitude towards Willy and Evens.

Willy is an object of suspicion because he arrives, in strange circumstances, from outside the village; Evens is equally suspect because, in removing himself from society to his hut on the beach, he has rejected the same social pressures that constrict Hatch-he has found a solution which Hatch, still grappling with them in his own way, is unable to accept. Evens and Hatch represent two extreme poles of social response, as Bond explained: 'My play is pointedly about sanity and insanity, and the town represents the dilemma of entrapment. The 8o-year old man, Evens, is the sane one. The rest are manic about their entrapment.'

What finally drives Hatch mad is not so much his sense of the unjust way that his society is organised, as the fact that he is forced to suppress his feelings about the real causes of these injustices -his aggression is directed not at Mrs. Rafi but at alternative scapegoats. As a result his views border on the fascist; although this is not made explicit in the play, in interview Bond has made the point very directly: 'There is no doubt but that Hatch is a Hitleresque concept on my part.' While Willy works steadily towards a view of his world that allows grounds for hope and optimism, Hatch's inability to reach an intellectual understanding of his situation culminates in the futile intensity of his knifing of the corpse washed up on the beach.

The progress in Willy is from the shell-shocked state he falls into after the drowning of his friend, Colin, in scene one to a fuller understanding of the problems of his life and his society. Above all, he 'has to learn to face and accept Hatch's fury, but not be seduced, corrupted or intimidated by it. He must avoid it and its deeds. But he mustn't pretend it isn't there.' Hatch, however, has an increasingly insecure hold on reality - he invents fantasies to explain the

tensions in the real world: 'he lives in a world as illusory as that of the play which is rehearsed in Mrs. Rafi's drawing-room.' His false diagnosis of the reasons for his own unhappiness and discontent is a form of irrationality which, Bond suggests, in the end wreaks its own revenge.

Three main elements, then, are interwoven in *The Sea:* the world of Mrs. Rafi, expressed mainly through high comedy; the barely controlled paranoia of Hatch; and Willy's growing maturity and understanding, partly under the tutelage of Evens, together with his dawning relationship with Rose, Mrs. Rafi's niece and the fiancee of Willy's drowned friend.

The dramatic pattern that Bond forges from these three elements is very carefully shaped, as an examination of the distribution of main characters through the play's eight scenes shows. Willy is there almost throughout. The only scene in which he does not appear is scene five (the confrontation between Hatch and Mrs. Rafi which precipitates Hatch's madness); he witnesses only the *effect* that Mrs. Rafi has on Hatch. In scene two he comes into the shop *after*Hatch's fawning attempt to sell the curtain material and gloves to her, and Willy's other meetings with Hatch consist entirely of the series of bizarre encounters on the beach (scenes one and six) and on the cliff- top (scene seven).

Hatch appears in six of the eight scenes; the prominence Bond gives to this character underlines the importance he attaches to keeping Hatch's failure to cope with the social pressures exerted on him constantly in the audience's mind. There is no call for him to be involved in scene five (the rehearsal of the play Mrs. Rafi and her ladies are putting on), but far more telling is his exclusion from the last scene; clearly, he can have no part in the rational deliberations between Willy and Evens about the state of the world and Willy's best course of action.

More interesting still is a breakdown of the respective appearances of Mrs. Rafi and Evens. They appear together in the same scene just once — at the cliff-top funeral service, theatrically the climax of the play. The remainder of the scenes contain either the one character or the other, a structural pattern which emphasizes how Willy is shuttled backwards and forwards between the kind of society to which, by birth and social station, he belongs and the influence of Evens, the old recluse, whose support Willy needs if he is to face and to comprehend the lunacy around him.

Given that the three elements in the play involve considerable variations in mood and tone, where does a director or actor place the main emphasis? What is the balance between the fun and the intensity? Bond would want to stress that any production should reflect the comic nature of the play *as a whole,* and not just go for the humour in the scenes which are obviously comic - otherwise the intended effect of the play will be lost:

'I simply cannot reconcile myself to a life that will ultimately end in violence and chaos. I do believe in the triumph of the human spirit. If *The Sea* starts violently and noisily, it should end with the profoundest sense of tranquillity. I gather from the reviews that the German productions treat the play as something very grim and serious. Please remember it is labelled a comedy and for a reason! It should be played lightly and with as much fun as possible.'

Bond's instruction is clearcut and straightforward. It precisely matches his intention 'deliberately to say to the audience "You mustn't despair. You mustn't be afraid. You must be conscious of the dangers but nevertheless be conscious of your strengths."

How useful, though, is this general observation to an actor playing, say, Hatch or Willy? Each of these actors is presented with a number of situations of a seriousness and intensity that must be

reflected in their performances: Hatch's stabbing of the body, for example, can't be played 'lightly'.

The task for an actor in *The Sea,* or in any play by Bond, is to avoid letting moments such as these colour the rest of his performance or form the basis for an overall characterisation of the part. To do so is to misunderstand the way Bond constructs the characters and the function he gives them - as he has explained : '

We see the character from different facets, we see the character acting in different situations, and what the actor therefore has to act is *simply that one situation.'* In other words, the situation is never to be used by the actor as a basis *{or generalising* about his character elsewhere in the play. As Bond describes it : 'The situations are designed not to show the development of his character but to show the crucial situations that an individual has to cope with in order to produce what is'of value in him.

Scene one of *The Sea* is the most directly the theatrical of all the openings to Bond's plays. Although the first lines of *The Woman* also plunge the spectator right into the thick of the dramatic action, the opening scene rapidly demands an attentive *intellectual*response to the excitement and tension displayed on the stage. In *The Sea,* Bond aims at a very different effect. At the start, there is only the darkened empty stage, and a wall of sound that stuns the senses:

B*each.*

Empty stage. Darkness and thunder. Wind roars, whines, crashes and screams over the water. Masses of water swell up, rattle and churn, and crash back into the sea. Gravel and sand grind slowly. The earth trembles.

Two subsequent stage directions indicate that this is only the beginning - the assault intensifies in the course of the scene, as *'The tempest grows louder'.* The sounds, the empty stage, Willy's offstage cries for help, twice eclipsed by the noise of the water, combine to disorientate the spectator. To begin with, there is no fixed point of focus for the audience to look at; when one arrives, in the shape of Evens *('A drunken man comes on singing'),* the result is to add a layer of strangeness to the general pattern of chaos, disorder and despair. It is not only what Evens *says* that seems so strange, but even more his behaviour. Two young men are struggling for their lives in the sea, yet he makes no effort to help them. His one gesture is to offer Willy a drink from his bottle — and even this minimal gesture has a chillingly surreal quality about it, since Willy is *still in the sea.* What one sees is a drunken old man proffering his bottle to the raging waters offstage.

An audience's first response might be to view the situation as a combination of accidental and tragic circumstances: Willy is unable to save his friend from drowning because, through an unfortunate freak of fate, the only person on the beach is an old drunk. Such a view at once appears too easy and reassuring with the entrance of a second, even stranger figure] In the published script, Bond's only direction is*'Hatch a middle-aged man comes on with a torch.* This is expanded in his script for the B.B.C. Television production to include a brief description of Hatch's movements:*'Hatch, a middle-aged man, is marching stiffly towards the camera with a torch. He looks like an automation.'* In this case, it is not only the character's attitude - nakedly hostile to the young man in distress - which strikes a chill: his lines ring with the sound of a harsh, crazed morality: 'Filthy beast... I know who you are. You thought you wouldn't be seen

out here.' The failure of the drunk to offer help was one thing: suddenly, it seems the whole world is crazy, incapable of one single natural response.

The whole scene lasts two to three minutes: the audience does not have time for a considered, rational response. The function is to shock and disturb - and incidentally to make Willy's traumatic state throughout most of Act one seem convincing and understandable as a reaction not only to Colin's death but equally to the callousness and inhumanity he has encountered. Yet one inescapable question stares out at us from what we see: what kind of world is this, where basic human impulses are so blunted and attitudes so deranged?

The thought might also cross our minds that another play has started in a very similar fashion – even without the help of Bond's tongue-in-cheek stage direction. '*The tempest grows louder*'. Bond has openly confessed his indebtedness: 'Yes the play is strongly influenced structurally by Shakespeare's*Tempest*. I even have it start with a storm too.' But he has also explained how what matters in the end is the essential difference between the two plays rather than the similarities: 'The basic idea behind *The Tempest,* I think, is the idea of conflict and resolution. The image of the sea conveys this very well - the storm is a destructive image, it reflects social and personal conflicts; the sea is finally able to resolve these images into a powerful continuity. That's what Shakespeare, I think, had in mind. That's not finally a satisfactory image for our own age.'

For Bond, conflict is rooted not in basic human nature but in the constrictions forced upon it by society, and conflict can only be resolved by human action to change society.

In an early note on the play, Bond wrote: 'The storm at sea is to image the storm in the draper's shop' — a reference to Hatch's onslaught on the curtain material, and on Mrs. Rafi. (One of Bond's two early titles for the play was 'Two Storms'.) Scene two, although set in Hatch's shop, offers no hint of the man-made storm to come.

The tone is very quiet. Hatch's opening lines are full of the ingratiating servility of the tradesman: 'Art serge is coming in now, Mrs. Rafi. Very fashionable for winter curtains.' Dropped softly into the sudden stillness and silence after the end of the storm, their effect is to bring one back with a jolt to what seems a reassuringly familiar world.

Evidently the sound-effects of the storm need to continue beyond the end of scene one and through the scene-change for the sharpness of the contrast to be fully registered. The effect Bond is after is more easily achieved in film or television than on the stage, as Jane Howell, who directed the play for television, explains:

The marvellous thing that you could do in the television production was make changes in a flash, so you could get the counterpoint of the relationship between the scenes, the rhythm of the scenes against each other — something you can never truly do in the theatre. .. Bond does hand one scene into the next and you can never quite get that in the theatre, where something has to be taken off the stage, or characters have to go off.

Hatch's hushed tones are also in violent contrast with his last lines in scene one, railing demoniacally at Willy above the booming of the guns from the shore battery. Within the space of a minute we have seen a Jekyll and Hyde character, the two facets of his personality clinically juxtaposed. When the audience recognises him as the madman they saw on the beach, the inevitable question which arises is: can this be the same man? There is no apparent link between the two extremes of behaviour we have witnessed.

The first clues are laid as we watch Mrs Rafi systematically humiliate Hatch. She grudgingly selects her curtain material, then rejects the gloves he has on offer; the tension caused by his subservient social position and by the precariousness of his livelihood, at the mercy of Mrs. Rafi's whims, are clear to see. In the television script, when Willy enters the shop, Hatch reacts by *'watching nervously as he pretends not to notice and tidy the gloves away instead'*. Is this an expression of guilt? Or is it out of fear that Willy might publicly condemn his behaviour on the beach? The former seems unlikely since, when Willy and the two ladies have gone, Hatch persuades the other coastguards that Willy is the advance guard of an invasion force from another planet.

As he talks to the three men about his beliefs, Hatch's manner changes. His words have a directness and confidence about them: 'They come from space. Beyond our world. Their world's threatened by disaster. If they think we're a crowd of weak fools they'll all come here. By the million. They'll take our jobs and our homes. Everything.' But this is different again from his expression of these selfsame fears when he confronted Willy during the storm.

In a way, the changes we see in Hatch - the different Versions' of his character presented over the short space of two scenes - make perfect sense: it's a truism that human beings behave differently in different situations. What is distinctive here is the compactness and terseness of Bond's dramatic technique. The changes in Hatch are shown not as subtle gradations from a secure and established reference-point, but as a series of apparently contrasting statements. The audience's perception of the character is formed out of this dialectic and, what is more important, can only be formed from an understanding of the *situations* in which we see him. The key to the first part of scene two, for example, is the difference in class and social standing between Hatch and Mrs Rafi.

Several implications for the actor spring from this. He must play the character in each situation *and that situation only;* he will not get very far by inventing an overall psychological base for the character as a launching pad for the performance of individual scenes. As Bond explains: 'There*is* a continuity within the character .... because although things are done to them, they do still react with a certain consistency. The actor has to ask what type of person am I - and then define this in terms of a situation . . . It's no use asking: "How did /get here?": You have to ask: "How did *it* [the situation] get here?"'.

So far, the play hardly sounds much like a comedy. There *is* comedy, even in the first scene, as Jane Howell points out: 'It comes from Evens during the storm. But it seems so improbable. I don't think an audience can*laugh* at it. It's so difficult for them to know what is going on. So much so that I love it when Hatch comes on and says "I know what's going on here"'. But until scene four the comedy is mostly on a slow fuse; it is used to point the strangeness of the situation and to set up questions in the audience's minds. The exception is Mrs. Rafi. Bond gives to this character lines which in their polished wit trigger memories of Oscar Wilde, particularly when she gives vent to her feelings by way of epigrams: 'Leave her. Never show any interest in the passions of the young, it makes them grow up selfish.' The language reflects her continual disdain for everyone she comes into contact with. What is missing from her words is any sense of human feeling. With the blithe, unquestioning self-assurance that derives from her social position, she queens it over the other characters, sweeping all before her on an imperious torrent of words; the casual viciousness with which she treats her social inferiors goes hand in hand with her haughty, *grande-dame* manner. It is this one facet of her character that Bond holds steadily before us until her last four speeches in the *play*.

Willy's appearance in scene two is limited to the one brief conversation with Mrs. Rafi and Mrs. Tilehouse. He is cautious and withdrawn. There is no evidence of how the events of the first scene have affected him. There is more than a suspicion of the stiff upper-lip in his bearing-Mrs. Rafi's world is not conducive to the open expression of personal grief. It is only when he visits Evens at his hut on the beach, prompted by Mrs. Rafi's suggestion that the old man will know where Colin's body might be washed ashore, that he gives vent to his feelings:

Willy *sits down on a box and starts to cry into his hands.* evens *looks at him for a moment and then goes slowly into the hut. willy cries a bit longer before he speaks.*

Willy *(trying to stop).* So stupid - doing this-coming here and . . .

Evens *(inside the hut).* Is there a proper place?

This small incident lays the ground for the vital conversation between them in the last scene; as scene three develops, there is the sense that we are in a different world from the one over which Mrs., Rafi presides, a world with at least the potential for an open exchange of thoughts and feelings. At this stage Bond allows no more than a hint of this potential, while Hatch and Hollarcut watch suspiciously from not far off, forcibly reminding us of the warped aggressiveness that Mrs. Rafi's values can provoke. (Hatch's interpretation of Willy's tears as a signal to his fellow space-creatures is itself a sign of his reluctance to tolerate any display of natural human feelings.)

Evens tells Willy what he wants to know about the tides. But his long speech giving this information contains a lot more than is needed to answer Willy's questions:

Perhaps not. We're into the spring tides now. He'll be washed up where the coast turns in.*(Points.)* You see ? People are cruel and boring and obsessed. If he goes past that point you've lost him. He should come in. He's hanging round out there now. He could see us if he wasn't dead. My wife died in hospital. She had something quite minor.

I sold up. They hate each other. Force. Make. Use. Push. Burn. Sell. For what? A heap of rubbish.

This extract, and the remainder of the speech, is a characteristic Bond 'soliloquy'. Evens's lines switch continually from one train of thought to another; the subject is changing all the time, from his description of the movement of the body in the sea to his account of his view of the world. At first sight, it might seem that these abrupt changes in subject also represent a movement from the external to the internal. On closer examination, this is clearly not the case - it is hard to imagine how an actor could pitch half of the lines on an emotive, interior register and then switch back to an impassive description of the tides without making the whole speech topple over into melodrama. The variations in the speech^ demand only the very slightest changes in the vocal and emotional register; its distinct sections need to be played as simply a succession of individual statements. The method is analogous to the way in which Bond constructs a character, showing the character from a number of fixed points and asking the audience to draw the necessary conclusions. In the same way, the actor here needs to deliver the lines trusting in the information they convey about Evens, not complicating them by trying to construct a hidden network of emotional linkages.

Played this way, there is no danger of Evens becoming a sentimentalised figure, a wise old man of the sea. Even at this early stage the character needs to be kept in perspective: 'The old man on the beach has weaknesses - and he indulges in the luxury of admitting this without doing

anything about it. Perhaps he can be excused more easily than other people in the play - but perhaps he should be condemned more than any of the others.' Evens's comments on human beings in scene three are entirely negative; he has withdrawn from society and sits outside it, staring balefully in. Bond does not want us to be too easy on him: 'He is a man of enormous potential and intellect, and also a man of personal taste and conviction ... and he has done nothing with his talents - or only enough to show what he could have done. Was anything done again?'

The reverberations from this early note on the character carry through to the next play,*Bingo,* where Shakespeare, like Evens, sits watching with disgust the way men behave towards each other, yet does nothing to interfere with the injustice he sees. The question Bond has him frequently ask of himself is phrased in the same words. Was anything done?'. It is echoed, in a significantly modified form, in Mrs. Rafi's burst of self- analysis - and self-pity — in scene seven j 'Has anything been worthwhile?'. Bond's earliest projected title for *The Sea,* before 'Two Storms', had been 'Was Anything Done?'.

By the end of the scene, it must seem possible that Evens's negativism will carry the day. There is no question that he is a more powerful figure than Willy and the fierce irony of his reply when Willy asks him why he was drunk during the storm has a convincing ring to it: 'I drink to keep sane. There's no harm in the little I drink. Li Po: you who are sated with life, now drink the dregs.' His explanation prompts further questions in our minds. Can he honestly claim there is no harm in his drinking? What if he had not been drunk? Might Colin have been saved? Later, Willy voices this thought for us: If you hadn't been drunk. ' Evens disposes of it with a reply which implies far more than it says: 'I answered that question long ago: *if* he hadn't gone to sea. ' Nothing can be gained by wishing things different. Colin is dead, Willy is alive, and he must face the world as it is.

To begin with, Willy shows no inclination to question his condition; his mind is still locked on thoughts of Colin and his death. It has argued that the character on stage presents much the same problems as Arthur in *Early Morning,* because Willy too seems to hover on the edge of the main action rather than being directly involved at the centre of it. It is easy to see how Willy's role could be overshadowed by the more virtuoso parts of Mrs. 'Rafi and Hatch. 'These are the "vital" characters,' wrote one critic, 'the ones to whom you respond, for whom you care ... If the death matters . . . then it matters to the stony-faced, the silent, the young automatons Willy and Rose - as "dead" as the dead man, but representing the hope of the future.

But Willy, as we shall see, is very far from being dead by the end of the play. What truth there is in this stricture might fairly be applied only to Willy's characterisation in the early scenes. His appearance in scene two amounts to only a very brief conversation with Mrs. Rafi and Mrs. Tilehouse. Scenes three and four present more difficulty, because he plays a large part in both yet his state of mind remains something of an enigma. How, then, does an actor playing Willy negotiate these two scenes without creating the kind of totally negative reaction stated above?

To a large extent, it comes back to the point made earlier about the character of Hatch. Bond's method is to show different facets of a character, either from scene to scene or within a scene. There will always be the danger of an actor or an audience unconsciously combating this by striving, too hard and too soon, for a generalised, composite view of the character which glosses over Bond's emphasis on the primacy of the situation in favour of a more conventional consistency of character. Jane Howell points to the distortions that can result:

Willy could be played as the perfect hero - a generalised performance of Willy would make him always quietly spoken, never raising his voice, very intelligent - which he undoubtedly is - calm, all-seeing, wise — totally wonderful!... If you let the actor generalise from scene to scene, the logic will go something like this: he has lost his best friend in the storm, the rest of the time he is shell-shocked, he is in mourning for his life, he is in mourning for everything eke. And the actor won't actually look for the changes in the scene.)

In scene three, Willy *is* self-absorbed and relatively withdrawn. The 'changes' in the scene, as far as Willy is concerned, are minor variations on that one note. What must not happen is that the Willy of this scene should come to characterise and colour the part as a whole. It is clearly significant that Willy is young- twenty-one years old - and that in the course of the play he starts to come of age. The intelligence and maturity he shows later should not strike the audience as extraordinary or come as a surprise.

In scene four Bond switches back from the beach to the unnatural climate of the town. With imperious authority, Mrs. Rafi presides over an event which — characteristically - represents a triumph of art over life - the rehearsal of a play on the subject of Orpheus and Eurydice, to be given by her group of local ladies in aid of the Coastguard Fund. The irony that this play within a play is on a theme which, according to one critic, contains strong correspondences with the remainder of the play (one only needs to substitute Colin, Rose, and Willy for Orpheus, Eurydice and Pluto) cannot be completely ignored. But thematic ironies of this kind are infinitely less important than what Bond shows in direct stage terms — the juxtaposition of Willy and Rose (the dead man's fiancee) with the arid inanities of the rehearsal.

The rehearsal scene is one of two comic highlights in *The Sea.* It is a wicked parody of the worst kind of village hall amateur theatricals. By the standards of, say, *Early Morning,* the comic effects are quite conventional- the scene is structured on one basic comic principle: the idea of constant interruption. As Mrs. Rafi struggles to inspire her cast, she is frustrated by a combination of external circumstance and individual recalcitrance. Mrs. Tilehouse questions the appropriateness of Mrs. Rafi's star turn- a solo rendering of 'There's No Place Like Home'. Mafanwy objects to playing the dog. Jilly is so overcome with emotion that she breaks down and cries. The Vicar is incapable of delivering his lines without indulging in constant digressions about the life of the parish. On top of all this come two major dislocations of Mrs. Rafi's insubstantial pageant: Willy's arrival, and the sound of guns, which finally and conclusively shatters the elaborate cocoon Mrs. Rafi has carefully spun ('one can't play lutes to the sound of gunfire').

Mrs. Rafi's first action in the scene is to send her ladies scurrying to close the curtains on the windows overlooking the sea -nominally to prevent Rose from tormenting herself with thoughts of Colin. However, as John Dillon remarked, describing his production at the Asolo Theatre, Florida: 'The closing off of that light is an important moment. The women scurried over to the curtains - and the three curtains fell as one. And you had that idea of artificial light, which is very much Mrs. Rafi's environment.' The alternation between indoor and outdoor scenes, between the town and the beach, between the tight enclosed environment of-Hatch's shop or Park House and the natural world outside, is fundamental to the structure of *The Sea*; the contrast between the two worlds is built into the narrative rhythm. In the Royal Court pro-duction, the backcloth of sea blending into sky was always visible behind interior and exterior scenes alike; partly, as the designer Deirdre Clancy explains, 'for its symbolic effect, but also because it was practically impossible to get rid of it! The impression of the wider natural world

waiting outside heightens our sense of the cramped artificiality of Hatch's and Mrs. Rafi's behaviour. In David Carson's production at the Marlowe Theatre,Canterbury, 'six or seven feet were left clear each side of the shop set; Hatch's shop seemed like a small island.' The effect of the world outside the windows should be one not of threat but hope: in the television production, Bond's suggestion for the lighting of the exteriors was: 'I think everything should be bathed in light, cocooned in white.'

The rehearsal is well underway and the comic momentum well established by the time Willy appears. For the remainder of the scene, until his conversation with Rose at the end, Willy is onstage but silent- after stuttering out a few words to Rose when they are introduced, he returns to the sidelines to watch the play. It is vital that the audience remains aware of him there during the rest of the rehearsal but this presents the director with an immediate theatrical problem — in the words of William Gaskill, who directed *The Sea* at the Royal Court; 'How do you make it clear that the passive figure is also the central figure?'

Bond's only stage direction for Willy after his entrance is close to the end of the scene. The rehearsal has broken. Rose *crosses to*Willy. *He sits alone on a chair. While they talk the others are admiring and giggling at the designs.'* But what of Willy earlier on? In the Royal Court production, Gaskill had Willy and Rose sitting on a sofa in the foreground, stage right, with the back of the sofa towards the audience. Thus, two characters who have little direct part in this scene, but who must remain in the forefront of the audience's mind, were placed in a strong position downstage. At the Asolo Theatre, the director found the same solution, placing them on a downstage sofa 'as if putting a frame around their meeting'.

From this vantage point, Willy — and Rose, until her turn comes to appear in Mrs. Rafi's play — watch the rehearsal. Rose's first lines in the character of Eurydice — 'I am queen of this dark place. My heart burns with a new cold fire.' - are an ironic comment on her own reaction to Colin's death. They introduce a moment of genuine feeling into the general posturing and histrionics around her, but they also mark Rose out as a potential victim - like Willy, she is in danger of letting her feelings close her off from life. Meanwhile, the actions and gestures of the other participants in the theatrical travesty point up the ludicrous hollowness of their lives. The grand declamatory style of the play they are rehearsing, the constant interruptions, Mrs. Rafi's attempts to keep things on an even keel, all cry out for a calculated comic exaggeration in the acting. The exaggerated comic style is important for another reason — Bond wants to show not only the ridiculousness of their values but the *unnaturalness* of their behaviour. The final effect of this play within the play, together with the alarums and excursions that surround it, is to project a bizarre vision of a dead world.

Willy's presence as an onlooker at these weird and artificial rites focusses our attention more keenly on the chasm that separates Mrs. Rafi from the real world outside, but it is easy to overlook the fact that this is also a vital scene in terms of the development of one Howell explains: 'In the play scene he goes into hell, if you like, and sees these strange fantasy figures, and then suddenly the curtains are drawn and there is light on his face, and it's like recreating the whole experience of the storm for him in a different form - something like the torch Hatch shone on his face; suddenly there's light on his face.'

The opening of the curtains, following on from the sound of the guns^ firing as they did during the storm, jolts Willy out of his trance-like state. (The script for the television adaptation contains direction that perfectly describes the image of Willy sitting gazing at the rehearsal – 'Willy *appears as a pale, ghostly, unmoving shape in the background.*' On television Jane

Howell had sought to underline the metaphysical connection between the play scene and the storm scene by adopting a suggestion made by Bond. When Willy first enters, the curtains have been drawn and *'He looks round at the darkness'*. Bond's suggestion was that, as Willy makes for a seat, he has to clamber past the chairs and other furniture, pushed to one side to make space for the rehearsal; his movements through the darkened room should suggest his struggling movements through the waves in scene one. This is a difficult effect to bring off-it is more likely that Willy will simply look awkward - although this kind of visual simile, like the 'pale, ghostly' image of Willy, is probably easier to realise on television than on the stage.

What must be registered is the change in the scene - and in Willy's state of mind -after the curtains have been opened again. The change of attitude comes at a precise moment in his conversation with Rose.

Rose. Mr. Carson, you must go home.

Willy. No. I sat in that hotel all yesterday. No. And what has been happening here this afternoon, I noticed nothing till the guns... ? There were people on the beach when the boat turned over.

The last sentence signals a complete change of tone. For the first time he talks to Rose directly about Colin's drowning. The platitudes he'd spoken a few lines earlier ('I can't say how sorry I am. There's nothing I can do.') are replaced by an urgent need to describe the experience to her. On the evidence of the character we have seen so far, this has to be regarded as a positive step. But two cautionary notes are struck. Willy is still obsessed, just as he was when talking to Evens, about what might have been: 'We were so near the shore. If only I'd been able to get to him.' And Rose closes her ears to his account, preferring her role as tragic heroine to the disturbance Willy's new tone would cause her.

Willy's 'reliving' of the storm is a prelude to the storm that erupts in Hatch's shop. Unlike the natural storm at sea of the first scene, this one is unnatural, man-made, the consequence of intolerable social pressures. In scene five, Bond shows a man driven into madness; but the tone of the scene is by no means unrelieved-ly serious. As in the play scene, comedy is used to satirise and to deflate. It acts as a frame within which Hatch's outbreak of emotion stands out that much more starkly. The mood of the scene switches from comedy to near melodrama to periods of calm - the audience is never allowed to relax into a settled response. Ironically, we see two sides of Hatch with which we are already familiar- they are different sides of the same coin, in that both are ways of coping with his role in society, but whereas his ingratiating manner towards Mrs. Rafi is consciously adopted, his vision of alien invasions, although rationally and coherently expressed, is not a *conscious*mechanism for survival: it is a form of displacement activity, a transference of aggression from its natural target in the real world (Mrs. Rafi and those who hold sway over him) to a fantasy substitute. The connection between Hatch's paranoid interpretation of other people's behaviour and his own struggle to survive is made in his conversation with Hollarcut and the others - his instinct is to see anyone who poses a threat to him as in league with the creatures who are out to subvert his world/'You soon spot them behind this counter. You get a fair indication from the way they pay their bill. That shows if they respect our way of life, or if they're just out to make trouble by running people into debt.'

Hatch still has the cool logic of the self-assumed prophet. But his mask of rationality, or reasonableness, crumbles in the face of Mrs. Rafi's ultimate blow to his livelihood: because of his dereliction of duty in failing to help Willy in the storm, she refuses to accept the 162 yards of

blue velvet curtain material he has ordered for her. Her action triggers off the comic frenzy that typifies the rest of the scene. Hatch's first reaction is to make excuses for his behaviour, but there is more than a trace of exasperation in his voice: 'Did you see the storm? What could I do - Christian or not! - calm the waters, Mrs. Rafi?'. Mrs. Rafi's immovability rapidly pushes him into further excesses - he hints darkly that she is in league with Willy - but he is still torn between a compulsion to retrieve the situation and the need to speak his mind. Bond's way of representing this in the dialogue is succinct and graphic: 'Feel the stuff, ma'am. Really, an educated person of your taste can't resist a product as beautiful as - *(Crying.)* but oh the pity of it is you don't see the whole community's threatened by that swine, yes swine, bastard, the welfare and livelihood of this whole town!'. The shift in the tone and rhythm of the speech is another instance of Bond's characteristic method of juxtaposing contrasted statements. There is no sense of a slowly mounting hysteria in Hatch's remarks; it is the suddenness of his display of open emotion that shocks and works on the mind.

In a conversation with William Woodman, who was about to direct *The Sea* at the Goodman Theatre, Chicago, Bond stressed how important it was for the actor not to anticipate Hatch's breakdown - and acknowledged the technical difficulty of the sequence when he cuts, tears, rips and slashes at the material, all the time commenting on his life in the trade:' The cutting scene is the most difficult to stage. Ian Holm wanted a glove, it was such arduous work. The actor playing Hatch mustn't be obvious at all in this scene that he's cracking. It's a temptation to be avoided.. '.

The attack on the material is yet another displacement activity: shortly afterwards Hatch actually strikes out with the shears at the real object of his aggression - Mrs. Rafi. But the seriousness of Hatch's predicament, and the sense of the agony of long years of oppression bursting to the surface, is counterbalanced by sharply comic sequences: Hatch's hacking of the material is prefaced by Mrs. Rafi sternly leading Thompson, her gardener, out of the shop by his ear; Hollarcut watches the height of the drama from a safe position behind the counter, ducking his head down beneath it when things get too hot; Mrs. Tilehouse swoons; and there is a continual, increasingly frantic coming and going, marked by the clanging sounds of the doorbell which Bond scrupulously indicates in the stage directions on each occasion One consequence of the way he has written the scene is that, although we are made still more aware of Hatch as a victim, we are not encouraged to feel empathy with the character. The overriding principle is one of demonstration.

Hatch's breakdown and the preceding scene of the rehearsal expose the hollowness and frailty of the protective shells which individuals like Hatch and Mrs. Rafi grow to avoid any real contact with other people. In the remaining three scenes, Bond shows through the characters of Willy and Rose that there are alternatives to the irrationality we have seen.

Reviewers and critics have tended to sentimentalise Willy and Rose by referring to them in a lazy shorthand as 'the young lovers' - the vision conjured up is of them walking hand in hand down the beach and into the sunset as they leave for a new life together. But what Bond shows is Willy and Rose learning to live in the real world, learning to face the worst and not to grow protective armour but to plunge back into life: 'Like the young couple in *The Tempest,*Willy and Rose have to create their own personal maturity. The ideal figure is drowned and lost - he would have been impossible either to live with or live up to - and the couple have to find their own strength by learning to solve the problems of their own lives and their society. They find that strength in the process of learning, they don't bring that strength to the process.'

Our last sight of Willy was of him trying to convey to an unwilling Rose what he remembered of Colin's drowning. After only a few lines of scene six, talking to her on the beach, he again confronts her with his thoughts about Colin. It is like a continuation of his earlier, fruitless conversation with her — except Willy has changed. The calmness and directness of his words is one aspect of this change - although he had shown evidence of this capacity in his talk with Evens in scene three. More striking is what he actually tells her.

Rose's attitude is remote: as Jane Howell puts it: 'She still has an image of herself sitting in black on the beach.' Their early exchanges consist of separate trains of thought which overlap, rather than an actual dialogue. Willy is now capable of being objective about Colin; Rose continues to romanticise both Colin and her own position, and her stance is entirely negative: T can't bear to lose him. I don't think I can live without him.' This self-regarding quality in Rose goes hand in hand with a passive despair: 'How can you escape from yourself, or what's happened to you, or the future?

Willy offers no easy comfort:

If you look at life closely it is unbearable. What people suffer, what they do to each other, how they hate themselves ... you should never turn away. If you do you lose everything. Turn back and look into the fire. Listen to the howl of the flames. The rest is lies.

This is Willy's strongest speech in the play, echoing Evens's long speech to him in scene three but with a maturity and power which alert us to how changed he is from the ghostly figure of the play scene. Deliberately, Bond shows the *change* not the *development;* this scene could be happening two days, three days, a week after his visit to Park House, and we are neither shown nor told anything of his thoughts in the interim. All that matters is that he is now capable of confronting reality, however grim, with the voice of reason.

The whole sequence between Willy and Rose is played out in front of Colin's dead body, washed up on the shore and lying upstage, at first unnoticed by them. The drowned man's appearance, down to the last detail, had been one of the formative images in Bond's mind when he started to think about the play: '... I heard about somebody who had been drowned after a ship had sunk, and he was found washed up, dead, lying on the beach. And he'd been trying to get his jumper off over his head so that he could swim better - his head was covered by this jumper, and his hands were stretched upwards, still caught in the thing, and he'd drowned like that... it seemed to me so extraordinary, that he'd pulled this hood thing over his head trying to escape.'

The body clearly has a metaphorical significance: the action of 'trying to escape' is analogous to the situation of Willy and Rose, who have both come close to being swamped by their own despair. But any metaphorical connotations give way to a more immediate theatrical reality: Willy has come to terms with the death and has achieved a sane perspective on life and so reacts undramatically to the body, but the same is not true of Hatch, who arrives on the beach and, thinking himself to be alone, stabs and hacks at the corpse in the delusion that it's Willy he is killing. The parallel with his earlier slashing of the curtain material is obvious, but by now Hatch has lost all hold on reality and his alienation is expressed through a vicious and calculated act of violence. Our immediate reaction might be horror and repulsion, but the parallel with his attack on the material reminds us of the pressures that forced this action by driving Hatch into madness. Willy's comment to himself as he watches- 'Hit it. That's an innocent murder' - is true not only because Colin is already dead but because Hatch, in the fullest sense, is not responsible for his actions.

The body is used as a focus for the contrasting states of mind -and views of the world - that Willy and Hatch have arrived at. Willy's newly-born determination to 'look into the fire' is put to an acid test. He is not horrified by what he sees. He does not react with conventional moralising. His observations on the innocence of Hatch's fury is not a ham-fisted attempt by Bond to ram home a message, it is evidence of the clarity and maturity of Willy's perception.

As if to test our readiness to confirm Willy's judgement, Bond makes the desecration of Colin's ashes the centrepiece of the comic action in scene seven - the scene where he gathers together all his characters for the play's dramatic climax. The funeral service on the cliff-top disintegrates into chaos when Hatch bursts in upon it; Colin's ashes, already dropped, scattered, and carefully swept up by Mrs. Tilehouse with her handkerchief, become a weapon in Mrs. Rafi's self-righteous hands-she throws handfuls of them in Hatch's face (in the Royal Court production she also hit him with the urn!). The effect is overwhelmingly funny; it also emphasizes the desperation of Mrs. Rafi's efforts to keep control of the empty ritual which she has so carefully stage-managed. The similarities with the play scene are inescapable: the merciless parody of the Church of England funeral service (with the accompaniment of a piano whose sound is *'hollow and spread')* takes the place of the bloodless Orpheus play, and the false piety Mrs. Rafi imposes on the proceedings is again undermined by interruptions. She is confronted, as before, with nig-gling challenges to her authority: the rivalry for the most elaborate descant between Mrs. Rafi and Mrs. Tilehouse is a comic *tour de force*. The sound of the guns again shatters the spurious solemnity of the occasion.

It is another broadly comic scene, but the comedy is played off against a number of very sobering moments. Hatch enters in a frenzy of messianic zeal, believing he has saved the town (the world, perhaps) by killing Willy; he comes face to face with his supposed victim, very much alive. His bafflement and despair intrude on the mood of farce, just as his last speech in the play intrudes on the mind. It starts with Hatch afraid: 'I don't know if you're all ghosts or if you still have time to save yourselves', and ends with the warning:'. . . no one can help you now.'

In his delirium, Hatch offers a piercing observation on the town's inhabitants: they*are* all ghosts, as Mrs. Rafi admits to Willy later in the scene, living a dead culture, exercising a morality which consists of stock responses and pious faces. Although the shakiness of their morality has been exposed, it reasserts itself as Hatch is dragged away 'to the town lock up'. Mrs. Rafi regains control of the situation, bossing a surly Hollarcut into promising to atone for his part in the anarchy by digging her garden.

Then Bond gives Mrs. Rafi a speech which, for the first time in the play, shows her as a vulnerable, frightened human being 'afraid of getting old'. The placing of the speech is deliberate - any earlier in the play, and the critical amusement with which we have viewed her might have been clouded by sympathy. Like Hatch as he hacked at the curtain material, she talks of her life having been wasted. Like Hatch in that scene, her mask drops and we see the tense and twisted face behind it. But even now we are not asked to waste too much pity on her - what she does is to find excuses for the harsh way she has treated people, and Bond's attitude towards that is unequivocal: 'I think what she says about herself is ultimately unacceptable. I don't think you can push people around in the way she does and then find a legitimate excuse for it. That's wrong. That's the excuse of a lot of leadership - and it's absolute nonsense. . .'.18 We should be wary of misinterpreting Mrs. Rafi's plea for sympathy as an occasion for extending it to her: 'She looks into her soul when she is alone with Willy on the beach - but even as she does so she

admires her courage for doing so, and this is also an illusion, as Rose points out a few moments later with her cutting remark about cripples.

Rose's remark not only undercuts Mrs. Rafi's speech, it also tells us a lot more about Rose's strength of character. The change in her from the previous scene is as pronounced as the changes in Willy from scene five to scene six, although her acceptance of what Willy told her is still tentative and hesitant:

Willy. The dead don't matter.

Rose. I'm not sure.

Willy. Then you're like your aunt. You talk and have no courage.

It is inevitable that Willy will leave the town: Rose might stay and turn into aversion of Mrs. Rafi. Bond never has her actually state her decision to leave with him. He indicates it through two simple actions. First, 'rose*covers the piano with a green or faded dirty white sheet*' - exactly the same colours Bond specifies for the blanket used to cover Colin's corpse on the beach. And when Willy announces his intention to go for a swim in the sea-it is as if by swimming in the same sea in which Colin drowned he is asserting that he has exorcised his former self and *can*look life in the face - Bond shows Rose coming to her own decision. It takes no more than a dozen words:

Rose. Will you?

Willy. Oh yes.

He looks at her for a moment and then turns to go.

Rose. Wait. *(He stops.)* I'll come down and hold your clothes...

She follows him off, leaving behind the dead past- the covered piano and, by association, Colin's drowning. Bond might have ended the play here, if he had merely been aiming for a satisfying theatrical resolution. Instead, he wrote a last scene which most critics have seen as a postscript, an addendum in which 'enactment gives way to philosophising'. At a cursory glance, Evens's speeches in this scene - in particular the fable of the rat and the ratcatcher-might seem to bear all the marks of an epilogue, with Evens as the author's spokesman, but this view ignores the context in which Bond has set them and the interaction between Willy and Evens, of which the speeches are only one part.

In the two preceding scenes we have witnessed Willy's new strength and resolve. In this last scene we see that he is still a prey to doubts. The old man confirms what Willy knows - the world full of savagery and aggression - and Willy openly expresses the weakness he feels: 'How can you bear to live? I'm not sure if I can bear it.' In the following speeches Evens offers Willy a positive vision; he still emphasises the difficulties, but he counsels hope: 'What the old man says is that there is certainly a lot of violence in life. And that life kills other forms of life in order to exist. And that on this planet, most life has been lived this way- that's why life has survived. But what he really says is that this is unacceptable to human beings. It's not the sum total of all life. Human beings have other possibilities open to them.'

It is important to note that Evens shows considerable hesitation before telling Willy all this:

Evens. .. . Have faith.

Willy. In what?

Evens *(shrugs).* Well. *(Looks round.)* Would you like some tea?

He pours himself a mixture of tea and whisky. Even then, in a stage direction Bond added for the collected edition of his plays:*'The silence lasts a moment longer.'* There is a strong sense of deliberation, as if Evens had often *thought* about what he says to Willy, but has never before *said* it to anyone. The distinction is vital. It is not only what Evens says that is important, but the fact that he is saying it: 'The old man doesn't say anything that Willy hasn't already told Rose, in essence, when they talked on the beach just before they found the body - but the act of saying it and listening to it *demonstrates*their belief in the possibility of a rational, sane society.'

The scene is convincing *because of what is being enacted.* Not that the intellectual content of the speeches is unimportant, but the interplay between the characters, as Jane Howell emphasises, is vital to its meaning: 'It's like two people testing each other. They've both been through an incredible experience, they both respect each other, and they discuss the root causes of what's been going on. And they test each other out as they do so.' In a way, Willy and Evens serve as a model of the rational, sane society in which Bond wants the audience to place their trust. We should take hope, as much from the relationship we have seen them work their way towards as from Evens's parting words of advice: 'Go away. You won't find any more answers here. . . Remember, I've told you these things so that you won't despair. But you must still change the world.'

There is no guarantee of success. That much is implied by the unfinished sentence that ends the play - Willy's reply when Rose asks what he has been discussing with Evens: 'I came to say goodbye, and I'm glad you -'. Bond leaves room for a literal-minded interpretation, something like 'I'm glad you are coming with me', but the effect is to leave us in a state of suspension: 'I left the last sentence of the play unfinished because the play can have no satisfactory solution at that stage. Rose and Willy have to go away and help to create a sane society- and it is for the audience to go away and complete the sentence in their own lives.'

The Sea stands at the end of Bond's first cycle of plays. In an interview in 197 5, Bond explained how he had conceived of the relationship between *The Sea* and *The Pope's Wedding* before he wrote any of the plays. An image for the beginning and the end of the series, which he then thought would take him his entire working life, was in his mind from the start: 'I would begin with a tragedy in which the old man would not talk. .. Scopey never gets an answer from him. I wanted to end the series of plays with two people sitting on a beach after the storm has died down, talking to an old man. They try to come to terms with the problems that they have to face.'

The connection between the two plays becomes even clearer when we realise that Scopey is there in *The Sea,* in the figure of Hollarcut, a character whom Bond treats with great sympathy -he alone of Hatch's three disciples remains loyal; he has a mind of his own, and there are a number of indications that he doesn't really swallow all of Hatch's strange beliefs; and he speaks out forcefully against Mrs. Rafi after the *melee* at the funeral. There is a strength and dignity about Hollarcut which is impressive. Like Hatch, he feels frustrated and alienated by the way he is made to live, but because he never clearly understands the nature of his problem he is reduced to expressing his feelings by way of a cheerful aggression. At the beginning of scene eight, he stands outside Evens's hut, holding a big stick. He could be Scopey, about to murder Alen, since in his muddled anger he still fixes on Evens as a scapegoat; 'Who drove him wrong in the hid ? Why'd he take up all they daft notions? I don't know no one doo that if that weren't yoo.' As his

parting shot, he indicates that he also intends to ensure that nothing will grow in Mrs. Rafi's garden. It's an appropriate gesture of defiance, but it will do nothing to change his life. Hollarcut is a character who will appear again in Bond's later plays. He is the working man, conscious of the injustices to which he is subjected, but with a blurred vision, without the same degree of rational consciousness that Bond gives to his central characters. He reappears, with a more substantial role, in the second cycle of plays -in the shape of Darkie in *The Fool and* the Dark Man in *The Woman*.

The Sea: An Introduction

The Sea, Bond's most complete exercise in tragicomedy, is a very different play from either *Saved* or *Early Morning*. It is set in 1907 in a small East Coast town and shows the attempt of the central character Willy to come to terms with the death of his friend Colin who has been drowned.

The play is important in Bond's development as the clearest statement he makes on the necessity to come to terms with tragedy, to see things as they really are and to go on living. The emphasis in this drama is very strongly on the personal. Though the characters are seen in a specific social context at a particular historical point in time. *The Sea* is the least overtly political of Bond's plays. Willie is an outsider: he does not belong to this society, and it is his encounters with the three principal figures - Mrs Rafi, Hatch and Evens – all three of them eccentrics, which enable him to understand more fully his own position. Compared with *Saved* and *Early Morning, The Sea* is a very static play. Very little happens: the tragic event - Colin's death - occurs off stage in the opening scene; thereafter we are presented with a sequence of scenes dramatising small-town life. Aspects of this are notably bizarre: Hatch's tearing up of the velvet and his attack on Colin's corpse, as well as Mrs Rafi's amateur dramatics, both in her rehearsal of the Orpheus play and at the funeral. But all these features are closely related to the play's social environment and the corresponding pressures it creates on the characters.

The Sea was written straight after *Lear* and immediately before *Bingo*. The Shakespearian allusions are significant, particularly within the context of tragicomedy. After *Lear* Bond felt the need to compose something at the furthest remove from its catalogue of violence and horror. There is perhaps an irony in the fact that whilst in *Bingo* he was to go on to present Shakespeare at the end of his career as a disillusioned suicide, thereby negating the message of hope vested in the images of rebirth and reconciliation in the last Romances, his own sequel is this gentle life-enhancing drama which has a number of close affinities with *The Tempest*. The parallel is firmly established in the opening scene with its powerful stage directions:

Beach

E*mpty stage. Darkness and thunder. Wind roars, crashes and screams over the water. Masses of water swell up, rattle and churn and crash back into the sea. Gravel and sand grind slowly. The earth trembles.*

Willy, like Ferdinand, must suffer and learn. He must face reality: Colin will not be re-born and the future for him and Rose is a very far cry from Miranda's 'brave new world', as the final lines of the play reveal:

Rose. I followed you. We mustn't miss our train. What were you saying?

Willy. I came to say goodbye, and I'm glad you.

Bond ends on a question mark here because Willy must now reconcile the advice given to him by the old hermit, Evens, with what he has seen in the conduct of Mrs Rafi and Hatch. Mrs Rafi's Orpheus drama - a play within a play - is fraught with more problems than Prospero encounters in presenting his masque for the benefit of the young lovers, whilst Mrs Rafi's attempt to stage-manage Colin's funeral misfires as spectacularly as Prospero's wedding celebration. It is Evens, the wise old seer -- quoting from the Chinese poet Li Po - imparting his knowledge to Willy who more completely fulfils the function of the magus Prospero. In the final scene of the play he obliges Willy to observe the condition of the world with such a depth of rational analysis that the young man is encouraged to build on the foundations of his philosophical propositions.

Everything in the drama is tending towards this final confrontation. Unlike Arthur in *Early Morning,* however, Willy is a more silent observer, still recovering from the emotional blow of his drowned friend. It is Evens who is the more articulate thinker, expounding here an evolutionary argument which - once again - has strong affinities with Shavian philosophy. Evens's credo begins with a statement recalling Orwell's*1984* - 'I believe in the rat. What's the j worst thing you can imagine?' - but this drama so concerned with predictions for the future will transform Orwell's symbol of horror into a positive emblem. Evens continues:

I believe in the rat because he has the seeds of the rat-catcher in him. I believe in the rat-catcher. I believe in sand and stone and water because the wind stirs them into a dirty sea and it gives birth to living things. The universe lives. It teems with life. Men take themselves to be very strong and cunning. But who can kill space or time or dust? They destroy everything but they only make the materials of life. All destruction is finally petty and in the end life laughs at death.

This is very close to the central thesis put into the mouth of Don Juan in *Man and Superman:* the strongest expression of Shaw's faith in an evolutionary future. Elsewhere in his plays Bond's evolutionary emphasis tends to be more firmly political; here is its complement in a more abstract philosophical explanation. It is Evens too who explains - in his first meeting with Willy - the meaning of tragedy:

It's always the details that make the tragedy. Not anything larger. They used to say tragedy purified, helped you let go. Now it only embarrasses.

It is a sense of perspective, of not being lost in the individual heart-breaking incidents which represent the destructive side of life, that informs Bond's consistent ethic. From the dogged determination of Len in *Saved* through to the enlightened revolutionary action of Wang in *The Bundle*or Hecuba in *The Woman* there is a vision which looks beyond tragedy. *The Sea* is the last of Bond's plays to express an alternative essentially in the format of tragicomedy; after this he has attempted more and more to confront tragedy not so much with comedy as with an epic structure to give added strength to his emphasis on political issues.

Whilst Evens encourages Willy to hope: 'The truth's waiting for you, it's very patient and you'll find it', he also presents a picture of humanity at its worst in a nightmare image of the future:

When your life's over everything will be changed or have started to change. Our brains won't be big enough. They'll plug into bigger brains. They'll get rid of this body. It's too liable to get ill and break. They'll transplant the essential things into a better container. An unbreakable glass bottle on steel stilts. Men will look at each other's viscera as they pass in the street.

This envisages mankind entirely stripped of its humanity: a world 'without grass' and 'without tragedy' where 'there's only discipline and madness'. The implications of such a world are

glimpsed already in the play through the attitude and conduct of Mrs Rafi and Hatch. The latter, a victim of the society presided over by Mrs Rafi, is a figure who elicits complex sympathies. He is bullied and put upon, a slave to the whims of his autocratic and privileged customers. But he is a chilling example of petit bourgeois vindictiveness, taking out his sense of social inferiority in a manic extension of racism. This crazed little draper envisaging an invasion from outer space is for all the world like a caricatured version of H.G. Wells whose own description of the Martians in *The War of the Worlds* was precisely of 'unbreakable glass bottle(s) on steel stilts.' The violence in this drama is confined to Hatch: his attacks on the velvet, Mrs Rafi and Colin's corpse are risible, a particularly ironic note being struck in his conviction that he has killed an alien when Colin's corpse oozes water instead of blood. But the violence, handled here in a markedly different theatrical style from *Saved* or *Early Morning,* is no less firmly related to social and political realities. Hatch is a pathetic victim of his class, just as Mrs Rafi is trapped by her own bourgeois indoctrination. It is only the outsider, Evens, who-like the hermit, in *The Pope's Wedding* - is able to teach Willy a valuable alternative.

In Mrs Rafi there is an attempt to organise society according to an ethic which is essentially Victorian. Mrs Rafi's attempt to bring discipline into her life is the last stand of a nineteenth century authoritarian faced with a new society and a new century.Victoria died in 1901; the play is set in 1907. As with his picture of Victoria, Bond's presentation of Mrs Rafi is richly comic and this old harridan is also endowed with a much stronger depth of sympathy, notably in her lengthy final speech to Willy which counterbalances the propositions of Evens. Here she sees the futility of her life with a clarity and honesty that is at the same time endearing through its wry humour:

> **Mrs Rafi.** I'm afraid of getting old. I've always been a forceful woman. I was brought up to be. People expect my class to shout at them. Bully them. They're disappointed if you don't. It gives them something to gossip about in their bars. When they turn you into an eccentric, it's their form of admiration. Sometimes I think I'm like a lighthouse in their world. I give them a sense of order and security. My glares mark out a channel to the safe harbour.'

There is more than a touch of Shaw's Mrs Warren here: that 'aimiable old blackguard of a woman' defending her way of life. Bond fully exploits the technique Shaw admired and copied from Ibsen, of leading from exposition through development to discussion, in Willy's confrontation first with Mrs Rafi and then with Evens at the end of the play. But Mrs Rafi asks herself the same question Shakespeare will ask at the end of*Bingo* and reaches the same conclusion: 'Has anything been worthwhile? No, I've thrown my life away'. Bond also employs a particular style of comedy in his presentation of Mrs Rafi to bring home more clearly and precisely the social implications of his critique of her world. She is modelled firmly on Wilde's Lady Bracknell, no-where more clearly than in her dictatorial handling of Hollarcut:

> **Mrs Rafi.** You can come and work *hard* in my garden every evening for the next two months. There's a lot of especially *hard*digging you can do. That, or 1 must take up this matter with the local magistrate. Which?
>
> **Hollarcut.** *(grumbling)* Diggin', I suppose.
>
> **Mrs Rafi**. I'm glad you've got some wits left. I shall assume Hatch led you astray - an easy assumption. Present yourself at my back door tomorrow at five-thirty sharp.
>
> **Hollarcut**. Mornin' or evenin'? '-
>
> **Mrs Rafi**. Both.

But Mrs Rafi's class is a doomed one, as she recognises in her inability to hold her society together by force. Her own failure is a microcosm of the situation Bond has presented in *Early Morning,* handled here with a very different theatrical style but entirely consistent in its viewpoint. When Willy later teases Hollarcut over his enforced labour he receives the cryptic response: I'll tell you something you ought to know, boy. I dig for her *(He lays the side of his index finger against the side of his nose and looks crafty.)* -but will anything grow? . . . Mornin'. It is a mark of Bond's immense versatility as a comic dramatist that here he can present his continuing critique of society with a warmth and humanity which is at the furthest extreme from the grim realism of*Saved* or the outrageous satiric savagery of*Early Morning*.

Mythological and Biblical Allusions in The Sea

Orpheus

Orpheus, in Greek mythology, poet and musician, the son of the muse Calliope (see Muses) and Apollo, god of music, or Oeagrus, king of Thrace. He was given the lyre by Apollo and became such an excellent musician that he had no rival among mortals. When Orpheus played and sang, he moved everything animate and inanimate. His music enchanted the trees and rocks and tamed wild beasts, and even the rivers turned in their course to follow him.

Orpheus is best known for his ill-fated marriage to the lovely nymph Eurydice. Soon after the wedding the bride was stung by a viper and died. Overwhelmed with grief, Orpheus determined to go to the underworld and try to bring her back, something no mortal had ever done. Hades, the ruler of the underworld, was so moved by his playing that he gave Eurydice back to Orpheus on the one condition that he not look back until they reached the upperworld. Orpheus could not control his eagerness, however, and as he gained the light of day he looked back a moment too soon, and Eurydice vanished. In his despair, Orpheus forsook human company and wandered in the wilds, playing for the rocks and trees and rivers. Finally a fierce band of Thracian women, who were followers of the god Dionysus, came upon the gentle musician and killed him. When they threw his severed head in the river Hebrus, it continued to call for Eurydice, and was finally carried to the shore of Lesbos, where the Muses buried it. After Orpheus's death his lyre became the constellation Lyra.

Eurydice

in Greek mythology, a beautiful nymph, and wife of Orpheus, the master musician. Shortly after their marriage Eurydice was bitten in the foot by a snake and died. Grief-stricken, Orpheus descended into the underworld to seek his wife. Accompanying his song with the strains of his lyre, he begged Hades, god of the dead, to relinquish Eurydice. His music so touched Hades that Orpheus was permitted to take his wife back with him on the condition that he would not turn around to look at her until they had reached the upper air. They had almost completed their ascent when Orpheus, overwhelmed by love and anxiety, looked back to see if Eurydice was following him. The promise broken, Eurydice vanished forever to the regions of the dead.

Pluto

Pluto (mythology), in Roman mythology, god of the dead, the husband of Proserpine. The Latin counterpart of the Greek god Hades, Pluto assisted his two brothers, Jupiter and Neptune, in overthrowing their father, Saturn. In dividing the world among them, Jupiter chose the earth and the heavens as his realm, Neptune became the ruler of the sea, and Pluto received as his kingdom the lower world, in which he ruled over the shades of the dead. He was originally considered a fierce and unyielding god, deaf to prayers and unappeased by sacrifices. In later cults and popular belief the milder and more beneficent aspects of the god were stressed. Believed to be the bestower of the blessings hidden in the earth, such as mineral wealth and crops, Pluto was also known as Dis or Orcus, the giver of wealth.

Cerberus

in Greek mythology, a three-headed, dragon-tailed dog that guarded the entrance to the lower world, or Hades. The monster permitted all spirits to enter Hades, but would allow none to leave. Only a few heroes ever escaped Cerberus's guard; the great musician Orpheus charmed it with his lyre, and the Greek hero Hercules captured it bare-handed and brought it for a short time from the underworld to the regions above. In Roman mythology both the beautiful maiden Psyche and the Trojan prince Aeneas were able to pacify Cerberus with a honey cake and thus continue their journey through the underworld. Cerberus is sometimes pictured with a mane of snakes and 50 heads.

Narcissus (mythology)

in Greek mythology, a handsome youth, the son of the river god Cephissus. Because of his great beauty many women fell in love with Narcissus, but he repulsed their advances. Among the lovelorn maidens was the nymph Echo, who had incurred the displeasure of Hera and had been condemned by the goddess never to speak again except to repeat what was said to her. Echo was therefore unable to tell Narcissus of her love, but one day, as Narcissus was walking in the woods, he became separated from his companions. When he shouted, “Is anyone here?” Echo joyfully answered, “Here, here.” Unable to see her hidden among the trees, Narcissus cried “Come!” Back came the answer, “Come, come,” as Echo stepped forth from the woods with outstretched arms. Narcissus cruelly refused to accept Echo's love; she was so humiliated that she hid in a cave and wasted away until nothing was left of her but her voice. To punish Narcissus, the avenging goddess Nemesis made Narcissus fall hopelessly in love with his own beautiful face as he saw it reflected in a pool. As he gazed in fascination, unable to remove himself from his image, he gradually pined away. At the place where his body had lain grew a beautiful flower, honoring the name and memory of Narcissus.

Thespians

Thespis (flourished mid-6th century bc), Greek poet, who, according to tradition, is the founder of drama. Born in Attica, he wrote plays and won a prize for a tragedy about 534 bc. He is believed to have been the first playwright to introduce an actor, independent of the chorus, who delivered monologues and also engaged in dialogues with the leader of the chorus. The birth of

drama is generally dated from this innovation. Thespis is also said to have introduced the use of pigments and masks to disguise the performers. The word thespian, meaning “actor,” is derived from his name.

Gabriel

Gabriel, angel of high eminence in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim tradition. He is one of the four most often noted archangels (seeArchangel) in Judaism and Christianity, the others being Michael, Raphael, and Uriel. Gabriel is the heavenly messenger who appears in order to reveal God's will. In the Old Testament, Gabriel interprets the prophet's vision of the ram and the he-goat (see Daniel 8:15-26) and explains the prediction of the 70 weeks of years (or 490 years) for the duration of the exile fromJerusalem (see Daniel 9:21-27). In the New Testament, he announces to Zacharias the birth of Zacharias's son (see Luke 1:11-20), who is destined to become known as John the Baptist, and to Mary that she is to be the mother of Jesus Christ (see Luke 1:26-31). Among Muslims, Gabriel is believed to be the spirit who revealed the sacred writings to the Prophet Muhammad.

Gabriel is the prince of fire and the spirit who presides over thunder and the ripening of fruits. He is an accomplished linguist, having taught Joseph the 70 languages spoken at Babel. In art he is generally represented carrying either a lily, Mary's flower, at the annunciation, or the trumpet he will blow to announce the second coming.

Styx

Styx, in Greek mythology, a river, the entrance to the underworld. It was often described as the boundary river over which the aged ferryman Charon transported the shades of the dead. However, early Greek writers identified the river across which Charon ferried the souls of the dead as the Acheron. The River Styx was personified as a daughter of the Titan Oceanus, and Styx was the guardian of the sacred oaths that bound the gods.

The actual river, the modern name of which is the Mavronéri, is in northeastern Arcadia,Greece. It plunges over a 183-m (600-ft) cliff, then flows through a wild gorge. The ancient Greeks believed that its waters were poisonous, and the river was associated with the underworld from the time of Homer.

Ajax

Ajax, in Greek mythology, mighty warrior who fought in the Trojan War. He was the son of Telamon, king of Salamís, and led the Salaminian forces to Troy. An enormous man, slow in speech but unshakable in battle, Ajax was called “bulwark of the Achaeans” by Homer. Angered because he was not awarded the armor of the dead Achilles, Ajax resolved to kill the Greek leaders Agamemnon and Menelaus. To prevent this, the goddess Athena struck him with madness. In his delirium, Ajaxcommitted suicide by falling on his sword.

Gomorrah

according to the Old Testament (notably Genesis 18, 19), two ancient cities near theDead Sea. The Bible almost invariably speaks of them together. With Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar, they formed the five “cities of the plain,” all but the last-named of which are said to have been destroyed by a rain of brimstone, perhaps accompanied by an earthquake, because of the wickedness of their inhabitants. Some evidence indicates that they did exist, were destroyed, and that their sites now lie under the Dead Sea. The biblical story of the destruction of the cities is considered by many critics similar to tales found among the Arabs (and other ancient peoples) regarding the sudden disappearance of places; indeed, Lot, who in the biblical story survives the destruction, figures prominently in the Qur'an (Koran). Those who deny the literal accuracy of the narrative contend that the desolate character of the land around the Dead Sea, which is fatal to plant and animal life, would naturally suggest the thought of some catastrophe. Jesus Christ said that on the day of judgment God would be more severe with cities rejecting the gospel than he had been with Sodom and Gomorrah (see Matthew10:15, 11:20-24).

Edward Bond and his World

“All imagination is political”. In his definition of theatre, and of art tout court, Edward Bond does not contemplate ivory towers. Politics - in its widest sense of a network of social, economic and cultural relationships that determine not only the destinies of the whole community but the way in which individual subjective ideas are formed - cannot remain excluded from the domain of art.

Both iconoclastic and iconographic, visionary and paradoxical, the theatre of Bond, though founded upon an imaginary vision that is often haunted and always disturbing, that seems to distance itself from the canons of realism generally associated with political theatre, is thus deeply involved in present day themes, of which he speaks not so much with the intention of denouncing it, but by posing a problem and finding a real method of examining it, enabling Bond to lay claim to the description of being “post-Brechtian”. Born in London in 1934, after leaving school at the age of fifteen and working sporadically in factories and workshops, Bond became part of a group of young writers that gravitated around George Devine’s Royal Court Theatre. These were years of great turmoil for English theatre. The plays of Beckett and Pinter were being performed in London’s West End, while John Osborne’s Look Back in Anger received its premiere in 1956, followed by plays by Arden and Wesker, thus opening the period of the Angry Young Men. The influences of the London theatre scene could be felt above all in Bond’s earliest plays, which combine the “kitchen-sink” realism of the Angry Young Men with aspects of Theatre of the Absurd, with results that are quite different from either movement. Whereas Bond criticises Osborne and his angry friends for their lack of clarity and a barren approach towards romantic nostalgia, he contrasts the crude existential emptiness of Beckett’s absurdity with a more enlightened and “operative” position that already brings him closer to Brecht. The Pope’s Wedding (1962), the author’s first published work, mediates between these various aspects and at the same time carries evident signs of linguistic innovation characterised at times by scenes of violent imagery, by a freedom from naturalistic form and by the search (from the very title itself) for paradoxical situations. However, it is with Saved(1965) that the “unbearableness” of Bond’s theatre powerfully emerges, bringing him to sudden and controversial fame. Its vicious portrait of everyday suburban squalor scandalised the public and led to threats of censorship for the shocking scene depicting the stoning of a baby in a pram by a

group of young thugs. Far from being a mere exhibition of violence on stage and of a taste for scandal, this disturbing explosion of brutality - so absurd, indeed, as to become surreal – is consistent with Bond's poetic choice. On the one hand he examines reality, explores the nature of things with a pitiless eye and thus demonstrates the violence that conditions our society - "I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austen wrote about manners". On the other hand he has an unusual ability – as Maria Carmela Coco Davani observes – to "transform abstractions and symbols into pictures that are so concrete that they assume powerful dramatic force". Bond's drama does not seek in any way to unmask hypocrisy. It does not aim to denounce but to immerse itself, sink down into reality to throw out from its depths the underlying paradox, improbability, disturbance. "We have to show the mask under the face, not the mask on it" (The Bundle, XVII). In this way, the mask under the face - the intolerable – emerges in the form of disorientating, disturbing images with strong symbolic power. The power of the icon becomes iconoclastic desecration in Early Morning (1968), where Bond deals for the first time with the demysticatory re-writing of history (which reappears, for example, in The Fool and in The Woman). A vicious parody of relationships of power, the play uses popular forms of music-hall and black humour, together with the pictorial distortions of Bacon, to portray the court of Queen Victoria, steering its way through lesbian relationships, cannibalism and attempted suicide. However, in Lear (1971) and then in Bingo (1973), the author's vein of profanity is exercised against one of his undoubted sources of inspiration – Shakespeare. In the first of these plays, Bonds examines King Lear, considered to be Shakespeare's central and most political play in that it is based on the quarrel between those who have power and those who don't. In Bingo, a personal reconstruction of the Bard's last years at Stratford, he portrays the contradiction between art and economic power. The Narrow Road to the Deep North (1968) and The Bundle (1978) are decidedly more Brechtian in style, beginning with their mystical Eastern settings. Their writing is separated by ten years but both are inspired by the Japanese poet Basho and are based on the story of the child abandoned by the river who is destined to become, in the first play, a dictator and, in the second play, a revolutionary. The extreme experimentalism in the early works, the linguistic research, the contamination of styles and genres are increasingly developed into a method of examining reality that becomes a process of perfecting the epic drama. "Bond's theatre" in the words of Coco Davani, " crosses various levels of awareness (…) until it provides not a dramatisation of facts but of their analysis". From the 1980s until today, Bond's output therefore moves towards an "epic of analysis" with growing clarity. The Worlds (1979), on the bureaucratic empires of our times, Restoration (1981), which places the class conflict on stage against an eighteenth century backdrop, Summer (1982), based on the politically based conflict in human interaction and in emotional relationships, Human Cannon (1983), which deals with the relationship between individual and revolution in the Spanish Civil War, and finally the trilogy of War Plays (1984-85), which carries to extreme consequences the method of paradox applied to situations of limit, such as war and post-war society – each of these move in the direction of what the playwright himself called a "rational" theatre. If, in fact, Bond explains, "all forms of human control (…) are human", then the role of theatre can be that of rationalising chaos, of interpreting history by highlighting human force and the ways of forming and achieving personal subjectivity – in other words making people understand that they hold the instruments of change in their own hands.

"Hatch inhabits a world which is as illusionary as that of the play rehearsed in Mrs. Rafi's room." Elaborate. (P.U.2008)

The play of Orpheus arranged by Mrs. Rafi is significant as it symbolically reflects Rose, Colin and Willy in the given situation. The play is also an attempt to show supremacy of art over life and it also reveals some of the absurdities of social and religious people; but it is based on illusions and the world inhabited by Hatch and presented in the play from Mrs. Rafi is illusionary. These two illusionary extremes; one in the real world and the other in dramatic arts presents utter madness on part of Hatch and Mrs. Rafi. The illusionary world of both Hatch and Mrs. Rafi's Orpheus is the result of paranoia.

Bond shows madness and violence resulting from paranoia and illusions as one and the same thing in The Sea. Bond shows this message through the character of Hatch who is mad and is always paranoid by some alien attack and this madness of Hatch makes him violent when he attacks Colin's dead body and cuts it into pieces. Therefore, madness leads to violence and violence to annihilation of the world. Thus, the world inhabited by Hatch is illusionary, fictional, and not based on facts. What finally drives Hatch mad is not so much his sense of the unjust way that his society is organized, as the fact that he is forced to suppress his feelings about the real causes of these injustices -his aggression is directed not at Mrs. Rafi but at alternative scape-goats. As a result, his views border on the fascist; although this is not made explicit in the play, in interview Bond has made the point very directly: 'There is no doubt but that Hatch is a Hitleresque concept on my part.' While Willy works steadily, towards a view of his world, that allows grounds for hope and optimism, Hatch's inability to reach an intellectual understanding of his situation culminates in the futile intensity of his knifing of the corpse washed up on the beach. The significant point is that all this results from the illusionary world inhabited by Hatch. The same is the situation with Mrs. Rafi's *Orpheus*; the arranged by her in her room in which a dark and illusionary world is presented.

In scene, four Bond switches back from the beach to the unnatural climate of the town. With imperious authority, Mrs. Rafi presides over an event which — characteristically - represents a triumph of art over life - the rehearsal of a play on the subject of Orpheus and Eurydice, to be given by her group of local ladies in aid of the Coastguard Fund. The irony that this play within a play is on a theme which, according to one critic, contains strong correspondences with the remainder of the play (one only needs to substitute Colin, Rose, and Willy for Orpheus, Eurydice and Pluto) cannot be completely ignored. But thematic ironies of this kind are infinitely less important than what Bond shows in direct stage terms — the juxtaposition of Willy and Rose (the dead man's fiancee) with the arid inanities of the rehearsal.

The rehearsal scene is one of two comic highlights in *The Sea*. It is a wicked parody of the worst kind of village hall amateur theatricals. By the standards of, say, *Early Morning,* the comic effects are quite conventional- the scene is structured on one basic comic principle: the idea of constant interruption. As Mrs. Rafi struggles to inspire her cast, she is frustrated by a combination of external circumstance and individual recalcitrance. Mrs. Tilehouse questions the appropriateness of Mrs. Rafi's star turn- a solo rendering of 'There's No Place Like Home'. Therefore, the world in Mrs. Rafi's plays is also illusionary; like Hatch, she is also seeking refuge into her own self-created world of illusions. Like Hatch who is afraid of foreign invasions, she is escapist and paranoid by

her old age creeping and eclipsing her personality, the revitalization of which, she wants to see in the art. Again, the illusionary world of Mrs. Rafi and Hatch is evident as the same in nature but different in medium of expression.

It is Hatch and Mrs. Rafi who have harbored some unknown fears in their minds, which constantly torture their soul and mind. Obviously, there is no world for such people. The world is built for the sane people like Rose and Willy. That is why, Hatch is shunned and Mrs. Rafi frowned upon by all. Hatch appears in six of the eight scenes; the prominence Bond gives to this character underlines the importance he attaches to keeping Hatch's failure to cope with the social pressures exerted on him constantly in the audience's mind. There is no call for him to be involved in scene five (the rehearsal of the play Mrs. Rafi and her ladies are putting on), but far more telling is his exclusion from the last scene; clearly, he can have no part in the rational deliberations between Willy and Evens about the state of the world and Willy's best course of action.

In Short, Bond ends on a question mark here because Willy must now reconcile the advice given to him by the old hermit, Evens, with what he has seen in the conduct of Mrs. Rafi and Hatch. Mrs. Rafi's Orpheus drama - a play within a play - is fraught with more problems than Prospero encounters in presenting his masque for the benefit of the young lovers, whilst Mrs. Rafi's attempt to stage-manage Colin's funeral misfires as spectacularly as Prospero's wedding celebration. It is Evens, the wise old seer -- quoting from the Chinese poet Li Po - imparting his knowledge to Willy who more completely fulfils the function of the magus Prospero. In the final scene of the play he obliges Willy to observe the condition of the world with such a depth of rational analysis that the young man is encouraged to build on the foundations of his philosophical propositions. This also reflects back on that the world of Mrs. Rafi and Hatch is illusionary and escapist as contrast to the actual worlds possessed by Evens, Willy and Rose.

A Critical and Thematic Study - The Sea

Introduction

At first acquaintance, the distance from Lear to Bond's next play, *The Sea*, seems to be that from Shakespearian tragedy to Chekhovian comedy. Amid if the Chekhovian analogy proves on investigation to be as inadequate as the Shakespearian, the surface resemblances are worth nothing simply as indications of the enormous stylistic strides Bond is capable of making between one play and the next. Certainly, the period in which The Sea is set is almost Chekhovian –– that mid-Edwardian twilight of imperial assurance, when the sun, retrospectively, always shone, but, at the time, tidings of war amid industrial unrest disturbed all but the blandest of sensibilities.

Setting:

The Sea is set by the sea—sometimes, as in the opening scene, actually on the beach. By night, a young man, Willy, stumbles out of the lashing waves and calls in vain for Colin, his fellow victim of the storm, and for help. Neither time drunken beachcomber Evens nor the coast-guard Hatch come to his aid, and he despairs of Colin's life. By day, Hatch is a draper in the small East Coast town in which the action takes place, and in the second scene is serving the ageing Mrs. Rafi—

who aptly describes herself as ‘an emphatic woman’. Mrs. Rafi places a large order for curtain material in his shop, before asking her companion, Mrs. Tilehouse, to tap on the window and attract the attention of the passing Willy. It appears that the drowned Colin was to have been married to Mrs. Rafi’s niece, Rose. The old lady advises Willy to consult the ‘peculiar’ Mr. Evens about where the body might be washed up, and invites him to luncheon. After their departure, Hatch summons three associates—evidently his fellow coast-guards—from the back of time shop. All are convinced that Willy is a manifestation from outer space, whose own world is threatened by disaster, and who plans with fellow-creatures by the million to take our jobs and our homes’. Since ‘all these-ships in distress are really secret landings from space’, Hatch issues orders that no more help is to be given to them, and a close watch be kept on Willy.

Colin’s Death and its Impact

The remaining six scenes interweave the reality of Colin’s death, amid its impact upon the rituals amid rivalries of small-town society, within hatch’s fantasy-world of extraterrestrial plotting and counter-plotting. The clear implications is that, a few decades later, Hatch would have turned his attention to racist rabble-rousing, but there is compassion here for his warped mind –– and for the pressure of class which place him at the mercy of the whims of Mrs. Rafi Hatch’s frenzied cutting-up of the old lady’s expensive curtain material –– the order cancelled when she learns of his failure to help Willy on the beach –– makes an oddly moving stage picture, the consciousness commentary on his craft and his lot: ‘That’s the makings of the good draper: finesse, industry, and arm understanding of the feminine temperament. They stamp on you but they wipe their little boots first.’

Mrs. Rafi A dominating Jisure

The formidable Mrs. Rafi reigns over all –– over the amateur dramatics in aid of the coastguard fund, over the funeral arrangements for Colin and the scattering of his ashes at the cliff-top, and, ultimately, over the lives of men like Hollarcut, Hatch’s most devoted follower –– who finally allows himself to be pressed back into a conformist mould, and is to expiate his sins by hard work in Mrs. Rafi’s vegetable garden. (‘I dig for her,’ he tells Willy in the final scenic, laying ‘the side of his index finger against time side of his nose’ amid looking crafty, ‘but will anything grow?’) Yet Mrs. Rafi for all her imperious self-assurance –– as amateur theatre director she ‘sympathizes with God when he struggled to breath life into the intractable clay’ –– is well aware of what lies in store for her. Now, as Rose puts it, ‘ time town is full of her cripples’, but soon she, too, will be a cripple, entirely dependent upon others –– as she say’s, ‘old, ugly, whimpering, dirty, pushed about urn wheels and threatened. I can’t love them. How could I? But that’s a terrible state in which to move towards the end of your life: to have no love… I’ve thrown my life away.

Danger and Optimism

If this self-pity has not yet been transformed into Lear’s true pity, at least it has been provoked by a whish to prevent Rose and Willy from repeating her own mistakes: and time young couple do eventually escape from the town together. Willy’s farewell to Evens in the final scene thus elicits a highly complex response. The hermit’s declaration of belief in the wise rat catcher’ is a haunting image of his muted despair – and maybe Hatch’s fantasies were closer to the truth than he knew: ‘You see why he draper’s afraid. Not of things from space, of us. We’re becoming the strange visitors to this world.’ Events himself, perhaps, is a ghost of the Ghost of the Gravedigger’s Boy – his life as a recluse attractive, but of no help to Willy or Rose, who unlike

Lear, are young, and have time on their side. 'You must still change the world,' is Evens's parting plea.

Curiously, the image from which bond has said the play developed –– that of the dead Colin, washed ashore with his hands still raised up in the effort of freeing himself from an enveloping pullover –– proves only peripheral, an empty object for Hatch's hatred, amid a pathetic witness to the growing understanding between Rose and Willy. Hatch's fruitless attempt to 'kill' the corpse, which spurts water instead of blood, is the only overtly violent incident in the play, and for once Bond's description of it as 'a comedy' can scarcely be quibbled with. Social comedy proves, indeed, an entirely appropriate from to contain what The sea has to say.

Comic Effects

If the mock –– rehearsal stretches the comedy a little thin, time bizarre cliff-top scene –– an upright piano gaunt against time sky is Mrs. Tilehouse turns funeral hymns into self-advertisements for the art of descant, and the nearby' coastal battery shatters time vicar's new foolish words' –– heightens the comic reality in a manner that is uniquely Bond's. Thus, although Evens's predictions of what humanity will imminently do to itself are all too accurate, they serve strangely to affirm his own insistence on hope for the beachcomber's wise rat catcher... can bear to live in the minutes as well as the years, and he understands the voice of the thing he is going to kill. Suffering is a universal language and everything that has a voice is human.'

Conclusion

If The Sea provides lighter reinterpretation of the themes of Lear, and finally offers a more hopeful vision, Bingo –– although again less densely structured –– is Lear unredeemed. The Shakespeare of Bingo is a man of finely honed sensibilities, tortured by the knowledge of the pleasure his own audiences derive from torturing animals for sport –– yet, ultimately, he is incapable of responding humanely to his family or his community, or honestly to himself, expect in his final gesture. He commits suicide, while his daughter Judith rummages among the blankets in search of a later will that might have been kept from her.

Bond's Concept of Religion

Introduction

Edward Bond is an atheist and a humanist. These are facts basic to an understanding of what goes on in his plays. His work invariably embodies a tough critique of the unholy alliance between religion and political power.

Sometimes religious belief is shown to be poisonous soil from which grow cruel and destructive weeds, and sometimes its is seen to be appropriated, after the event, as a cloak to hide the real business of power. But bond's analysis searches deeper than the outward show of religious belief. In the end, he attacks a frame of mind, which hands over to gods (and even to men who try to transform themselves into gods) responsibility for what happens to human beings. His criticism of religious thinking from the vanguard of an assault upon all structures, political social, and psychological, that confine human freedom.

Religion a Paradox

Bond's plays are, nevertheless, haunted by religious ideas, images and characters, in much the same way that our irreligious and fragmented culture is still haunted by the ghosts of its believing. When he writes about religion, it is often as superstition, as a specific fantasy generated by a culture and consolidated in individual minds, whose function is to cope with material fears and anxieties. Bond has talked about the strong influence some Christian idea and images had upon him as a child. He remembers walking the streets of Crouch End in North London "terrified to think how God was love, and he killed his son for us and hung him up and tortured him and washed us in his blood." A theologian could perhaps explain that bloody paradox but the young bond could not, and it is reasonable to suppose that most kinds who encounter it cannot. That is remained with Bond as an unacceptable face of religion is shown even in his first performed play The Pope's Wedding. Here, Scopey, a young farm labourer, enters into a half-caring, half-dominating relationship with an old tramp Alen. He forces Alen to sing for him, and this bizarre hymn is the result; "Little babe nailed to the tree/Wash our souls in the pure blood/Cleanse each sin and let up be/Baptized in the Purple flood…" And so on, in a marvelous parody of Christian Hymnody, full of the legitimized violence that so offended Bond as a child. "What one can have as a child is religious fear, and I think I had a certain amount of this."

Military Effects or Bond's Concept of religion

Evacuation during the war made him, he says, "aware of all sorts of things that one wouldn't normally be… In Cornwall, you got all these curious religious sects –– I remember marching over the bills in an enormous crocodile of children, carrying this banner, struggling up the hills. God knows what it said." These vivid memories are, like fairy-otales, instinct with a sense of the unknown and the fearful. What offended Bond, and does so still, is the fact that these fairy-tales are still offered as truth.

Bond grew up in wartime, and knows what it is like to be bombed, so there were obviously violent threats enough to confirm at least the possibility of an event as dreadful as the Crucifixion. These must have been starling and impressive expenses, but is should not be assumed that there are unique to Edward Bond. Most infant and junior schools in the 1970's teach children about Jesus, and very many working-class children planning, disruption and unhappiness not so different from that experienced by wartime evacuees.

Bond's argument with religion, carried on consistently throughout Narrow Road to the Deep North, emerges in some from every one of his plays to date. In the quasi-naturalistic plays, eyed and The pope'sWedding Church institution are just the cayed outbuildings of modern bourgeois society, now only conceivable as the object of dirty jokes. Both plays envision worlds there a lifeless religious morality is violated by the true nature of the society it seeks to protect. As if wishing to home in on the history it has caused that morality to come into being, bond next embarks Narrow Road to the Deep North and Early Morning.

In all this plays, the clergy are satarised and presented as tools of the upper classes. The Supremacy of religion is always questioned and pragmatic affairs are given Jull significance. The character of vicar and Willy Rose relationship are an ample proof of the argument Vicar serves as a Cat's Paw in the hands of Mrs. Rafi who being a pragmatic woman symbolically dominate, religion. Willy Rose Union to confront against the adds of life without religion (as they seen its hollowness in Mrs. Rafi's play) in given move substance.

The World in Bond's Plays

Introduction

If, in Bond's human-centred vision, religion is a fantasy _____ evasion or a tool of power politics, then world into which we are _____ work, divorced from heir natural environment, like actors in Georgian theatre walking about in front of pained trees and aver much of the suffering and misery that his characters undergo _____ precisely because their social lives have somehow lost contact their existence as elements of the natural world. "We evolved biosphere," writes Bond, in the Lear preface, "but we live in _____ the way the world of nature the landscape, animals and the biological instincts of man –– is used to sharpen our awareness of the struck that limit human freedom.

Few modern dramatists create landscape quite as vividly Edward Bond. Most dramatists who criticise and analyse _____usually prefer to concentrate on a world dominated by technology and man-made objects. Pinter or Wesker, for example, will _____great care on interiors, detailing props, costume and furniture, Bond who can do these things, will more often be creating _____ outdoor settings. He is perhaps more than any of his contemporary an outdoor playwright, making of the English landscape, even cities, something individual and powerfull, possessed of its own Nature is important not as decoration for the action but because _____ sees there the objective evidence for his own moral sense.

Country Landscape

Apart from Saved, most of his plays take place in country, or in small towns, and they concern themselves with class politics of county communities. Saved, though certainly one of the classic plays of city life, is a play in which nature is conspicuous by its absence, or by the feeble imitations of nature invented people. Some of its most important scenes happen in a park bureaucratically- ordinated imitation of the country for the town _____. In the park there is a pond, an imitation river or lake, for people fish in. It's hardly surprising that his literally un-natural setting should become a place of menace and threat, where the un-nature boredom and frustration of the young men in the play finds its outcome in child-murder. (It was perhaps not accident that, following saved, Bond wad hired to script Antoonioni's Blow-up, a film which powerfully conveys the strangely menacing quality of English urban parks). Bond himself has spoken of the world of Saved as "The brick desert, and the feeling of being in the desert of bricks seemed to be absolutely right for the play.

Natural things in the plays are more than simply metaphors for something else. Images like a desert or a sea or a ditch do suggest other levels of experience, but they usually have an immediate physical reality too. When characters use these kinds of metaphors in speech, they are reacting to an environment that is sharply real for them.

Country life seems to occur frequently in Bond's work because of his family's history of farm-labouring, and also because of those periods of wartime evacuation which so sharpened his responses to the country. Since 1966, Bond has lived in a village nearCambridge, and his work now draws on that environment, just as Saved drew on his experience of the city: "I didn't choose to write Saved about a particular place or in a particular dialect. That was the way I talked, and the kind of setting I was familiar with, I now talk rather differently and live somewhere differently... so it would be artificial for me to write another play like Saved now."

I have claimed that few modern dramatists evoke landscape as well as Bond. Lear shows just how vividly he can draw a landscape without burdening the scene with a specific geography. Thirteen of the eighteen scenes take place out of doors. In the open air, outside man-made buildings, man and nature become part of the same system. Even in cities, it's difficult to avoid wind, rain or sun, and the less well off you are, the more you will feel the wet and cold and be grateful for the sun. Bond does not set up a man against-nature conflict, but man as part of nature against man as the slave of abstract social devices, such as money.

The landscapes of Lear are drawn with remarkable economy. The opening scene –– Near the wall––sketches in the physical setting.

COUCLILLOR. Isn't it a swamp on this map?

FONTANELLE. My feet are wet…

LEAR. Who left that would in the mud?… It's been rotting there for weeks… They treat their men like cattle. When they work they must be kept in dry huts. All these huts are wet.

Stage Directions

After Lear's fall, the stage directions shift from the muddy squalor of a building site to the woods, and the house of the Gravedigger's Boy; "Wooden house upstage… A well." Later scenes show "Prison convoy on a country road", "Near the wall. Open fields", "The wall. Steep earth bank." In other scenes, the landscape detail is still further refined. Both the rebel army led by Cordelia and the Royalists under Bodice and Fontanlle wander round the countryside, each as lost as the other. "We never come straight an, the maps is US", says one soldier. "I was born in the city. These fields are Chinat' me.

In a handful of stage directions and lines of dialogue, Bond creates in Lear a flat, open landscape, but on capable of sustaining life. It is, in fact, very similar to that East Anglin countryside in which he spent important parts of his childhood and in which he now live, indeed, the wall in Lear was suggested by the massive earthworks near his home called Fleam dyke and Devil's Dyke, thrown up by the East Anglins after the departure of the Romans to protect themselves from marauder, Stretched between forests to the east and fens to the west these huge walls are still visible for miles around, although they are cut through now by roads. The dykes have a hard grandeur, running for miles across flat, wet, rich-soiled farmland cross hatched by drainage ditches. Such a landscape, through which flow gentle rivers, is prone to flooding and one of its most common man made structures is the bridge.

Bridges and Floods

Both bridges and floods recur frequently in Bond's writing. Bridges carry people safely over danger, but they are structures vulnerable to attach both from nature and from Man. They are therefore symbols both of safety and threat. Bond's Characters often use a bridge to define some meeting point between safety and danger. In early Morning, Arthur's mental landscape, for instance, is fear-ridden: "I don't go near rivers when the bridges are burned. They look like the bones of charred hippopotamuses. "For Albert, they confirm his own despairing ideas of human nature: "Every time you open a bridge you know people will throw selves off it. "I once knew a man who drowned on a bridge in a flood." For the Old Woman in Bingo, a bridge is a way of mocking Shakespeare's evasive complacency: "Start building's bridges when your feet get wet," When Shakespeare is forced to decide about the enclosure issue, he thinks of the decision, as a

river. But the crafty Combe defuses the danger involved in river-crossing: “We needn’t build a bridge if there’s a ford downstream.” A ford is a bridge for cheats and Combe knows that moral cheating is what Shakespeare wants to hear.

Flooding, too, carries a similar ambiguous charge. Rivers swelling beyond their banks, transforming the landscape into inland seas and temporary lakes, are both threatening, and beautiful. The myth of the Flood in Genesis given to the natural event something of the historical force that popular thinking now sees in the idea of Revolution, a time of vast change, of revolution, and sometimes of widespread death. The Old Woman, for instance, thinks of the seven good years she had with her husband as “Time force the flood.” In The Sea, where huge elemental forces threaten to overwhelm a small, inward-looking community, Evens warns Willy that they body of drowned Colin might not be washed up again by the fickle tides: “Don’t count on it. There might be a flood. Then every thing goes by the board…” He goes on to tell a haunting little parable about a man drowned at sea and washed inland by a flood, which left him hanging in an apple-tree in his own garden, watched by his stranded family. Floods invade the cosy familiarity of things, leveling everything to a sea. But seas were once the source of all life. The Sea opens with a huge storm, which is as fruitfully violent as a difficult birth. The opening stage directions indicate: Passes of water swell up, rattle and churn, and crash back into the sea. Gravel and sand grind slowly. The earth trembles.” At the play’s end, Evens refers back to this tremendous natural event: “I believe in sand and stone and water because the wind stirs them into a dirty sea, and it gives birth to living things.”

Rivers of Water

If seas of water are the breeding ground of life, then that life is often sustained by rivers of water. Rivers occur in Bond’s plays as mute witnesses to all that human life undergoes. In Narrow Road to the Depth North, a river is a place where Basho ignores as abandoned baby, where, thirty years on, he makes his home, the place where Shogo drowns innocent peasants.

Beside another river in the deep north, Kiro and Shogo talk and beside the river in south, Basho regrets drowning the baby while the adult Shogo is publicity dismembered. Finally, a new man, wet as from birth, stumbles half-drowned out of the river to chide Kiro’s corpse for not helping him. A river is, as might be expected, a dominant image in the Opera Libretto. We Come to the River. It is a place where children and old people are murdered by soldiers, an imagined place of refuge for the inmates of an asylum, and finally the symbolic barrier to freedom that the oppressed victims have to cross: “We stand by the river/If there is a bridge we will walk over/If there is no bridge we will made/If the water is deep we will swam/If it is too fast we will build boats/We will stand on the other side. We have leant to march so well that we cannot drown, the living victims, mad men and women, cavort in white sheets, imagining than they have found rest and peace in a river” “O the water is clean and cold and pure! How beautiful I am! Beautiful! Beautiful!”

The river that has flooded and threatens to drown the peasants in the Bundle is seen to have a political meaning in that the landlord uses its natural power as a threat which he can appear to counter with paternalistic care.

A river is central to The Fool, but here it has a very precise economic reality, and therefore, plays an important political role in the action. Bond weds two pieces of history –– the life and madness of the Northampton shire poet John Clare, and the nineteenth-century food riots in Cambridge shire –– in order to seek out some origins of own culture and society. Linking these

two histories in the idea of culture, meaning both the creative work produced by a society and the organizing principles of that society. In the Fool, both sorts of culture are rooted firmly in the land, and the play shows the destruction of both. The old relationship of man to the land decays not merely because a new technology makes possible enclosure drainage and factories, but because industrialisation brings with it a new intensification of class relationships. For men and women living in the Fens of East Anglia, life before drainage was undoubtedly hard, but it was feasible. The fens provided food for all in the form of wildfowl and fish, and drier land wad owned by no-one, so cattle could be grazed more or less anywhere. When the common land was fenced in by the new landlords, and the fens drained to create more fields, landowners became possessed of a rich source of income. The poor were simply dispossessed. The justification for all this legalised robbery was Efficiency; and if yield per acre of crops in the only criterion, then enclosure and drainage probably were efficient. In practice, of course, the real results of the changes were that the poor became totally dependent on the land owners who paid wages. They became; in effect, slaves. The Parson, in his Christmas address to the Mummers, offers a landowners' policy statement in the opening scene.

…But we are entering a new age. An iron age. New Engines, new factories, cities, ways laws. The old ways must go. The noble house and the plough are so slow. Our land must be better used. Forest cut down.

Bond and Society

I do think freedom is Philosophically and actually possible. And my own judgement is that free societies will actually be created. I don't think people will be satisfied with anything else.

Letter from Edward bond to the author.

Introduction

Edward Bond has written much –– whether as introductions to the plays, programme notes, or other articles and journalism –– which sets out a 'deep structure' of ideas informing his theatre, and while his plays inevitably begin from an imaginative seed, an image or a cluster of words, there is nevertheless a consistent view of society and its discontents embodied in the plays, one that is best summed up in Bond's own phrase; "rational theatre". There are few more severe critics than Bond of the uses of modern scientific method. Bond presupposes, like a doctor examining a patient, that what happens in societies has identifiable causes, and that things can by done to effect change when that seems necessary. "The future choosable, and its' malleable, we can form it, we can have what we want", he said in one interview.' In the struggle to find a way of living that accepts 'the need to love, create, protect and enjoy", many of Bond's characters find themselves in more or less bitter Conflict with a society based on classes. Class oppression is fact of life even, it must be said, in the affluent liberal democracies of the West, where the mythology is that class conflict can be muted by reform to a point where it is nothing more than spice to the spirit of healthy competition. The reality of the myth is shown in a play like The pope's Wedding. Bond has explained that he saw the shape of a cycle of plays which was to end in The Sea, even before he began the pope's Wedding: "I would begin with a tragedy in which the old man would not talk. This boy called Scopey keeps saying, 'Why do this? And the old man can never say anything. He just drools. Scopey never gets an answer from him. I wanted to end the series of plays with two people sitting on a beach after the storm has died _____ talking to an old man. They try to come to terms with the problems that they have to face." The pope's Wedding is

set inEssex, the nearest area to London that could reach to research, and it seems to gain much of its conviction from his own experiences of the rural working class. From the outset, the play shows a world dominated by money. The characters are all young working-class people for whom the absence of money is one of the determining facts of life. The first scene takes place on Thursday, the day before pay-day, the low point of the week. There are few ways of escape from the situation, so Byo's reaction to the suggestion that Bill has been at it with the boss's wife is "You stan' a doo yourself a bit a good." Bill's Jokey and frustrated "Let's goo an' burn a yank" fills in the canvas by establishing the atmosphere of rural superstition and isolation (which, in the past. Would have led to witch-burning), as well as opening up the possibility of Alen's persecution. It is also a reminder that East Anglia has seen, from the Second World War on, mushrooming of US Air forces bases. The presence of all that thundering, destructive technology amongst closed and isolated communities must have been perceived locally almost as a kind of black art, practiced by affluent aliens, who were, in effect, twentieth-century sorcerers.

Class Conflict

The main class conflict in The Sea is between Mrs. Rafi and Hatch, and what brings it to a head is the corrosive influence of commerce on human relations. Hatch is already plagued by paranoid visions of men from outer space coming to invade the earth, but the continuing servility of his business relationship with Mrs. Rafi eventually drives him very much more mad. Her refusal to accept the velvet curtains she had ordered triggers the collapse of his sanity, but not before he has attempted to communicate to her the psychologically precarious position of the small businessman:

I'm in a small way of business Mrs. Rafi. I'm on the black list. I had to pay all this before they sent it. And I made such a fuss about delivery. All my capital has gone into it... it couldn't set up in the largest towns. No capital.

He belongs to that class which has often been the first to supports populist right wing politics, and Bond's writing analysis why.

The conflict between Hatch and Mrs. Rafi is won by neither Hatch goes off his head, trapped by the contradictions of his professional life, and Mrs. Rafi Comet to realize that it won't be long before she will be senile and heated, and therefore treated as if she were mad. Indeed, the only people who can escape madness are the two survivors of the storm that killed Colin. His friend Willy and his lover Rose are both open to change, and to learning. It is to Evens, the man outside society, that Willy turns for help, but the decision, does not turn to tragedy as it did of Scopey. One reason for this is problems, Evens warns Willy: Don't trust the wise fool too much what he knows matters and you die without it. But he never knows enough. "If Alen was a total dead-end for Scopey, Evens perhaps has something to offer Willy, Bond describes the ending as "a celebration of articulacy". It shows Evens, himself-conscious, dying outcast helping the unformed younger people to cope with a world in which speeches about the rat-catcher, but these speeches can never ring wholly true because Evens's life is, in its way, shallow and self-regarding. It is of the utmost importance to Willy that he admits as much: "I'm a wreck rotting on the search. Past help. That's why I live here out of people's way. It wouldn't help them if they lived here. We all have to differently." Bond does. However, admit some degree of naivete' in trying to make the play end differently for each member of the audience by finishing it in mid-sentence. In this sense, it is, formally, Bond's first participatory play!

Destructive effects on people

What we have seen so far are some of the ways in which Bond shows the destructive effect on people's happiness of a capitalism whose deepest values are non-human and whose methods of working are therefore unjust. However, both Narrow Road to the Deep North and Lear warn that pre-capitalist and post-revolutionary societies can destroy happiness just as effectively if they do not break fully with the inhuman values of the past. Hond's plays are about change, and how the need for change is to be recognised. Even's last world in The tea –– "Remember, I've told you these things so you won't despair. But you must still change the world" –– paraphrase these of the Chorus in Brecht's The Measures Taken: "Sink into at the speed and in the direction that Bond would want is a process of socialist revolution.

Social Changes Revolution

Talk of revolution in Britain these days invites paranoia are ridicule. There are many reasons why this should be, not last the vested interest of all the comfortable members of society (and the comfortable nations) in keeping things are, even at the expense of discomforting other people (or other nations). In view of the relative failure of countries like Russia to effect a socialist revolution, why should Bond still urge revolution of some kind in the affluent liberal democracies of the West? TheCambridge critic Raymond Williams in his book Modern Tragedy offer this forceful statement of the necessity for revolutionary change, and of its essential humanity:

A society in which revolution is necessary is a society in which the incorporation of all its people, as whole human beings, is in practice impossible without a change in its fundamental form of relationships. The many kinds of partial 'incorporation' –– as voters, as employees, or as persons entitled to education, legal protection, social service, and so on –– are real human against but do not in themselves amount to that full membership of society while is the end of all classes. Revolution remains necessary in these circumstance, not only because some men desire it, because there can be no acceptable human order while the full humanity of any class of men, is in practice, denied.

The statement expresses the spirit of Bond's desire for change. He might to add that it isn't only principles or desire that demand revolution. It is the threat of total human extinction poses by advanced weapons technology that makes the problem so urgent. In a newspaper interviews, he said: "The problems facing modern man have become simplified and austere. They amount to that question: Can the human species survive?"

Bond is not playwright of political tactics. A writer such as Trevor Griffiths by dramatizing the clash of different progressive ideals addresses himself more to the particular problems of how precisely to make a revolution. The comedians, for instance, it the scenes between Waters and Price, is a debate about two kind of left-wing thought in the language of debate about comedy. Griffiths says: 'May plays are never about the battle between capitalism and socialism. I take that as being won by socialism.' Bond's political debate, however, starts one step further back. His play tend to be set at moments in their characters' lives which ask the question. 'How do we decide that change in necessary? How do we even become aware of what is going wrong? They are concerned with how the conditions –– personal and social –– for change rare arrived at, and therefore all ideal in some way with the politics for learning and education, for its here that we are encouraged or discouraged to use reason to analyse the world, and imagination to

change it. If, as children or adults, we learn badly, social change might stagnate or go into reverse. If we learn will social change has a fighting change of being both radical and humane.

Social Education System

Bond's own experience of the education system was, to say the least, uninspiring. Considered too stupid even to be entered for School certificate at his secondary mod, in Croudh End, he left school at 15. "That was the making of me, of course", he writes, "You see, after that, nobody takes you seriously. The conditioning process stops. Once you let them send you to grammar school and university, you're ruined. He once rather flamboyantly declared: "I think that universal education is one of the worst disasters that has his Western society since the Black Death…", which he went on to justify: "I'm not against knowledge, I'm against training, against indoctrination, against regimentation. Our schools are like prisons. There's really no difference between our state prisons and our state schools. Bond mistrusts formal education because it is authoritarian –– We educate you –– and sets it part from the active process of learning. We learn form you, or about these things. As well as the implied criticism of our educational institutions to be found in Saved or The Pop's Wedding, many of the plays use the process of learning as a structural principle 'Education', writes the critic William Walsh, begins with the particular, goes on to theory in the widest sense, namely the study of structure and organization, and concludes against in a heightened sense of the particular.' That three-part structure occurs again in Bond's own description of Lear: "Act one shows a world dominated by myth. Act Two shows the clash between myth and reality, between superstitious men and the autonomous world. Act Three shows a resolution of this, in the world we prove real by dying in it." Lear is, then, a play about political education. It is in the gradual realization that his actions have consequences of him, as well as for his victims, that Lear's learning takes place. To use Walsh's description, his life while he is king, is governed by a very limited idea of the particular, then the sufferings of deposition and betrayal compel him to the study of the structure and organization of political power. Finally, his new perceptions give him a heightened sense of the particular with which he can finally take action to put things right. His tragedy is that it is then too late for him to do anything but each a handful of younger people and then face in evitable death.

Violence Society

Once of the most contentious issues in revolutionary argument must be the use of force first to make revolution and then to sustain it. This issue is tackled by Bond in Lear. The play is about the tragic nature of history, particularly revolutionary history, and it is tragic because they are unnecessary.' Those who oppose change, even for the noblest reasons, usually see the tragedy and the suffering only in the act of revolution. However, as Raymond Williams against points out, 'The violence and disorder are in the whole action, of which what we commonly call revolution is the crisis.' In other words, violence is woven firmly into the fabric of society long before revolution comes along to tear it apart. The peace enjoyed by Shakespeare in Bin to is full of violence because it cannot be separated from the violent society outside his walled garden. This whole action is seen at work in Lear. The King shares responsibility not just for the political situations which he sets tip. But also for the action of his daughters, who rebel against him, and for the revolutionary Cordelia, who rebels against all three. This structure of cause and effect operates throughout the play. The soldiers and labourers in the first scene are part of a machine created by Lear to protect his kingdom for attack. In so doing, he creates slaves by forcing men from their homes, families and livelihoods to build the wall. The wall that defends society becomes a prison wall that confines it, and this structure of oppression reaches back into

history: ‘I killed the fathers’, says Lear ‘therefore the sons must hate me. And when I killed the fathers I stood on the field among our dead and swore to kill the sons.’ Lear doesn’t understand that using terror to protect ‘his’ people from foreign injustice and aggression simply ensures that it thrives at home. His passion for isolation is born of a fatal, sentimental misunderstanding of his own power, which he passes on like some hereditary disease to his daughters. Even before Lear asks himself the question. “Were does their vileness come front?” Fontanelle has already suggested the answer. As she and her sister are left alone, their plans for the overthrow of their father’s regime hardening, she says: “Happiness at last! I was always terrified of him.”

Individual Society

The idea of actions being determined by their social and personal context is continued in the character of Cordelia. Faced with the violent disintegration of the old regimes of Lear and his daughters, she has to tight a guerilla war in order to seize power. During the fighting, she orders the execution of a captured soldier while one of her own guerillas lies dying from a stomach wound, declaring: “When we have power, these things, won’t be necessary. When she does have power, she uses terror to silence her enemies Bodice and Fontanelle, and she restarts work on building the Wall. Herself a brutalized victim, she sets out the guidelines which allow the carpenter to have Lear blinded. This dreadful measure is supposed to make Lear politically important. Its actual effect is to given him further insight into the political process: he becomes a nuisance to the new regime, a dissident who has to be stopped from talking to people. Cordelia tries to stop him involving himself in public affairs, and finally confronts him to ask him to back down. It is a very telling scene, with Cordelia, who watched the soldiers kill her husband and then rape her and who saw her child miscarry, defending the rebuilding of the Wall in order to create a just and free society: “I said we won’t be at the mercy of brutes any more, we’ll live a new life and help one another.” Lear is a threat to her vision of a just world, but he will not be silenced, and he pleads with her to restore humanity to the revolution: “You have two enemies, lies and truth. You sacrifice truth to destroy lies, and you sacrifice life to destroy death. It isn’t same… Our lives are awkward and fragile and we have only one thing to keep us sane; pity, and the man without pity is mad.” But Cordelia, whose won sufferings, heaven knows given her the right at least to argue, sees in this only self-pity (as do some left-wing critics of Bond’s position generally). There are things Lear doesn’t know about, and there is, after all, something rather comfortable about criticizing from the sidelines while others do the work. Nevertheless Lear, too has suffered, and in the end, he does what he can, knowing that Cordella with have him disposed of, by digging up the wall with a spade, in a symbolic gesture which may just act as an example to the younger people who have listened to him. Cordelia’s boast, “We’ll make the society you only dream or’, determined, courageous and principled in its way, but she will never make a revolution that will, in Lear’s words, at least reform.

Cordelia is, it must be remembered, the daughter of a priest, and she has always been defensive and unhappy when her own security has been –– threatened, so that she wants Lear turned away when he first takes refuges in the house. Bond shows us the social roots of the unhappiness in Coredelia as that we can begin to understand her decision to allow a limited terror. In his Preface to Lear, he cautions against the political activist’s tendency to vanguardism: ‘If your plant of the future is too rigid you start to coerce people to fit into it. We do not need a plant of the future, we need a method of change.”

Revolution & Importance of Education

The problems of revolutionary violence suggest another reason for the importance of education to Bond and his characters. This is the possibility that education affords to establish the widest possible consensus possible consensus that things are not right and need changing and that only humane socialism has any hope of doing so. The more people that see the necessity for change, and demand it, the less opposition there will be, and therefore the less chance that changes pacifist position. A new Preface to Saved, written for Volume One of the collected edition of his plays, emphasises and summarises three major points about violence and society.

1. There is no evidence of a human need for violence, and the idea that there is a myth perpetuated because it makes political control more easy;

2. Human nature is determined mainly by interactions between the individual and society. It is not innately 'good' or 'bad' but is a product of the culture that people live in;

3. There is violence in most so-called stable societies, as much as in unstable ones. (This is the principle behind that evocative invitation to a Sunday Times interviewer.)

"Walk out with me in the open air, and I'll show you something unforgivable." Audiences who see the plays have, like Willy and Rose in The sea, or Susan, Thomas and John in Lear, to confront the unforgivable things in society acceptable: violence of class, of authoritarian teaching and of the deprivation of human rights: "Reason is not yet always effective, and we are still at a stage when to create a rational society we may sometimes have to use irrational means. Right-wing political violence cannot be justified because it always serves irrational; but left-wing political violence is justified when it helps to create a moral rational society, and when that help cannot be given in a more pacific form." This action has to be the result both of necessity and of calculation. Wang has to bite his lip till blood flows to prevent himself crying out ineffectually against injustice. He calculates here that action would be ineffective. When Hecuba in The Woman hands the Dark Man a sword, on the united with the woman's understanding of political structure and design. "This is your only chance" She says, judging the moment but impotent to act because of her blindness." I only need this" says the under the protection of her tactics, to kill Heroes.

In The Bundle, Bond sets out to deal with some of the problems of revolutionary activity. "There is true morality," he says in an interview, "but in a class society like ours, that's not the one that becomes part of the law. One of the things. I've tried to d in The Bundle is to demystify the use of Moral argument so that we can't be morally blackmailed any more." They story of The Bundle springs from the same incident in one of Matsuo Basho's travel books that prompted Bond to write Narrow Road to the Deep North. In The Bundle, the baby left to its fate at the river's edge is rescued by ferryman, who cannot afford yet another mouth to feed, yet takes pity on the helpless child. The child grows up to be Wang, whose life in moulded by his experiences of injustice. When the rivers floods and traps his parents and neighbours on the high ground of the local graveyard, he is forced to sell himself into the landowner's service to buy himself and his parents a place in the rescue boat. When his enforced apprenticeship is over, he leaves the security of the court meets up with a gang of bandits and begins to teach them about the politics of the situation in order to mould them into a guerrilla army Eventually, the overthrow of the landowner's power is accomplished, and his natural ally in terror, the swelling river, is contained and controlled by cut-off channels and earth banks.

The play's moral pivot is the extraordinary scene in which Wang, now a young adult, finds another baby bundle by the river. He has to choose to leave it there, as Basho abandoned him, or to rescue the child as he himself had been saved by the ferryman years before. To rescue the child would mean that all his energies would be expended feeding the two of them. The abandon it, in effect, to kill it would allow him to work to change the society that condones that murder of children by neglect. "Is this all'?" asks Wang, "one little gush of sweetness and I pick up a child'? Who picks up the rest'? How can I hold my arms wide enough to hold them all'? Feed them? Care for them'? All of them'? All of the'? Must the whole world lie by this river like a corpse?" He calls the child a "little killer" which threatens to neuter him politically, and thus to condemn hundreds more babies to insoluble contradiction, Wang holds the baby in the air, and in a denial of one of his deepest instincts, hurls it into the river.

Wang's action is not offered to us for our moral appraisal. It is, rather, a theatre image, which illustrates with a terrible clarity the moral contradiction forced upon him, and on the plays' audiences, by unjust social systems. The babies rich Western society chooses to ignore strew the world, and Bond, through Wang, demonstrates the absurdity and danger of charity as a response to mass starvation.

"You have to change society structurally", says bond "and in order to do that, you may find yourself involved in doing what is wrong." This idea is embodied in The Bundle and contrasts with Cordelia's action in Lear. As a guerrilla soldier lies dying, she says, "When we have power, these things won't be necessary, "but when power is in her hands, her regime is repressive and cruel. This is not a pessimistic theatre statement, however, simply a cautionary one. The contradictions that face Wang and Cordelia can only be resolved by the exercise of critical judgement and analysis. "You can't lay down absolutes," says Bond, "and say 'Be guided by this,' It's also not a question of understanding that we are people in a process and we have to understand where we are in that process now in order to understand where we arrived from, if you understand the situation, then instead of saying "We want happiness and peace", you objectives. It's not a Utopian vision. It comes from understanding where you've been and what your situations now. That's why history plays have been very important to me.

While every bond play is in some sense political, all of the short plays and the opera libretto have been overtly so. The first fruit of his collaboration with the composer Hans- Werner Henze, the opera libretto We come to the River, is a reworking of some of the themes of responsibility and political power of Lear. Bond chose to use material with which he was familiar to leave himself free to script which the composer received is a remarkable condensed piece, set in "Europe; nineteenth century or later". It tells the story of a victorious general who is told by his doctor that he will go blind. The begins to subvert the ruling order. The governor of the province has him put in an insane asylum, where he is approached by both the respective movements. When the soldier assassinates the governor, the general is implicated and the emperor arranges for him to be blinded. The play ends with all the dead victims of state terror returning solemnly to the stage while the inmates of the asylum smother the general who, though blind, threatens their spurious peace. While the Mad People play in a fantasy world, the resurrected dead make their own claim for eventual victory through the strength and determination of all oppressed people. The sense of hope, achieved despite terrible suffering, in this final anthem, must answer those who query Bond's faith in the possibility of a successful revolution, or in the possibility of any human progress at all.

To date Bond has written five short plays on commission from various political and alternative Theatre groups: Black Mass, Passion, Stone, Grandma Faust and The Swing. Their range of subjects has not been so unusual for a left-wing writer –– racism, nuclear weapons, homesexual liberation, law and order –– but the range of styles and approaches is remarkable, as is the way that these specific issues are related to the wider political context. Indeed Stone, which Bond wrote for a company, which expressly uses theatre as a weapon in the struggle for homesexual liberation, makes no specific reference to homosexuality at all. In the programme note to the play, Bond emphasises the indivisibility of a politics:

I believe it was Einstein who said a society's level of civilisation could be judged by its attitude to anti-semitism. Later this was said about capital-punishment. We could now say it about homosexuality –– except that there are so many things it could also be said about.

A stone is given by a Mason in a business suit to an "eager and relaxed" young Man.The Man has to deliver the stone to the Mason's house, when he will be paid. The journey on which the young man embarks provides him with several strange encounters. Bunyanesque characters try to trick him out of the seven talents ––prudence, soberness, Courage justice, Honesty, Love and Hope ––– given to him by his parents, or to corrupt them into seven deadly sins. Once the commitment to the Mason has been entered into (and the Mason has a gun to consolidate the agreement), the Man's journey becomes. literally, more and more burdensome, because the stone grows and grows until it is a huge rock chained to his back: "I cry at the stupidity of my life. Wasted on dragging a stone to somewhere of don't know for a reason I can't understand." Having at last fulfilled the terms of his contract by dragging the rock to the Mason's house he is finally allowed to meet his employer, who answers his questions "Why did the stone grow?... Why did the coins change?" with evasions and the charge that he is a troublemaker. The Man then kills the Mason, who in the best capitalist tradition has attempted to buy off the Man's militancy: "–– the enterprise needs new management. You're our sort. (Wheedling) I applaud all this. Initiative. It's to me for a change. The new men are –– (The Man kills the Mason). "The stone symbolizes all the burdens, of which homesexual oppression is but one, that are the product of the master-slave (latterly employer-employee) relationship. Talents are corrupted and life mad miserable for the man until he takes steps (and in this play, note, violent ones) to rid himself exploiter.

Grandma Faust, the first of the two short plays in A-A- Americal, adopts a similar stylistic approach to deal with the subject of racism. The play is set in an unnamed southern state of America, and the literary model is more Brer Rabbit than Bunyan. Bonds sets the racism of the American deep south within the framework of a cheerful folk-tale that makes daring use of racial stereotypes, black and white. Paul, the black man, is a simple fellow, with reasonable needs: "I'm hungry, suh. That's how I know I'm alive. Day I stop feeling hungry I know I'm dead." Gran ("A cross between whistler's Mother and Grandma Moses') in her wheel-Chair is, in fact, the Devil, and wants the black man's soul. She sets Uncle Sam up to do the catching, but there's a problem. Paul is too simple, that is, he is generous, a little gullible and certainly at a great social advantage. As Gran says: 'He takes such pity on me –– bein old in a wheel-chair an putting on I'm hungry –– I keep getting these terrible waves of lovin kindness well over me. Paul is starving, and Sam's celebration of the loaf he uses as bait is mouth-watering:

Nigger, you're saliverin so bad my loaf is startin t'bluch. That's a white loaf, boy, with feelings... She's succulent. Like bread ought t'be. Sweet an wholesome as mother made it... You don't use t'touch no while a hand, you am never gonna tough no while woman –– but you can swaller my white loaf.

The play's action now develops into struggle between the native wit of the man, whose simplicity is now seen to be full of intelligence, and the devious manoeuvrings of Gran and Sam. Each time the bad guys seem to have the soul, the good guy slips out of their grasp. Finally, Paul and Sam fight a soul-fighting match in a cage. They use Paul's soul, represented by a doll, to hit each other with. Sam fortifies it with a lead truncheon supplied by Gran. Paul is nearly battered down, but at the last minute he hurls the soul out of the cage, and Sam won't chase it: "You know I am never been out of the cage my whole life! Git wind and everything' else out there." Gran wheels herself out in a frenzy of disappointment, and Paul is left standing fishing in the river where we first met Uncle Sam. He sings about his new freedom:

Little silver fish for my should an me

Dancin together in the bright blue sea

A golden apple bouncing on the tree

Pick it an eat it an' you will be free.

Grandma Faust is, in the best sense, an entertainment, a clever and witty—fable, which joyfully satirises white American philistinism and self-regard and the crude racism which they foster. It makes an effective, and rather necessary curtain-raiser to its companion piece, The Swing, one of the most appalling of Bond's plays, and one of his very best. It is appalling because it is written around a historical incident (the very word seems indecently feeble) described in the prologue by another Paul, who although not exactly the same character as that in Grandma Faust, is also the only black in a white world:

In the fall of nineteen eleven in LivermoreKentucky a black man was charged with murder. He was taken to the local theatre and tied to a stake on sage. The box office sold tickets according to the usual custom: the more you paid the better you sat. The performance was this: people in the pricey seats got to empty their revolvers into the man. People in the gallery got one shot. An pro rata in between. Course he died very easy compared t' the style of some lynchpin's.

Bond uses this incident to analyse the political roots of America (The Swing is subtitled "A documentary"), The inspired central image is the theatre building itself. An old vaudeville entertainer, Mrs. Kroll, has sold her theatre, a stop on the new defunct vaudeville circuit, to an energetic local merchant, Mr. Skinner. He intends to turn it into a store to catch the mining boom that is about to transform both the town, and everything else in the Wild West. Society is at a historical crossroads, moving from the old desperate individualism of the Frontier, into a new, expansionist stage of capitalism. The only future for culture and education here is a shotgun wedding to commerce, so Mr. Skinner persuades Mrs. Kroll's daughter Greta to take his son Ralph in hand: "I'd like him taught so's he can carry on like you did just how – bout civilization an so on. If he came out with that he could sell a real classy line of goods." Greta, full of academic high culture, uses her learning as a buffer between herself and the world outside (she is perhaps what Mrs. Rafi is later to become): "We life on the border between civilization and barbarism. Which way shall we go? Do we know the answer? ...Herein this quiet town, hidden behind the counter of a general provisions merchant, is a young should yearning to be touched, opened, freed." There is a taught in this, but it is not the one that Greta imagines. Ralph is not the dying Keats figure with the sensitive face that she sentimentalises, but Skinner's son, and therefore a personality wrecked by his father's over-bearing, philistine personality. Greta introduces him to Virgil, despite Skinner's insistence that he only needs fancy English to

sell goods. But what flows between them as they sit around the partout oil-lamp is not the wisdom of the ancients, but a vibrant current of sexual tension. In the frigid moral climate of small-town life, the spirits of the two young people are crushed by neurosis. In a scene alive with a suppressed and guilt-ridden tenderness Greta's reading of Virgil to Ralph stumbles into agonized silence as she takes her breast out of her dress for Ralph of see, but not to touch. Ralph is terrified, and fascinated, but the moment of fondness dies because there is no letter of the social code by which they live that will allow them to touch each other, physically or emotionally. Shortly afterwards. Paul comes in with a lamp, and his presence reinforces their guilt. Shortly after that, there is an explosion of activity. Skinner's shop is attacked, he is wounded in the arm. And in the general confusion someone, or so she claims, touches Greta on the breast in the dark backyard.

Earlier, a young white man, Fred, who has been introduced to the new technology of electricity by Paul, celebrates his new diploma. He plans to open up an electrical repair shop, and even, despite Paul's rueful cynicism to take his black friend on as a repairman. Because of the words of the prologue, and because Paul is the only black in the play it seems certain that when Skinner, his brusque humour now soured into righteous savagery, hunts for the culprit who broke into his store and attacked his daughter. Paul will be made the scapegoat. In the event, he seems to accuse both Paul and Fred of what has, in the sexually volatile moral climate, escalated into a brutal rape. The hysteria and moral fantasizing mount, and they lead, inexorably, into the acting out of the events described in Paul's prologue. With the actual audience as unwilling substitutes for the historical spectators Mrs. Kroll once against steps out on to the stage of her old theatre, temporality restored to its former glory, to warm up the audience with a sentimental song which she sings sitting on a garishly flower decked swing. She then leaves the stage to Skinner, who dominates it, a man of justice, invoking the spirit of morality and respect for the rule of law:

Fellow Americans. How we run the law's the same how we live our lives. The store, street, law: one. Let the law slip: You git bad measure in the store and the sidewalk end up death row for the good citizen. That's how it is!

The sentenced victim is brought on stage. It is brought on stage. It is not Paul, the expected black victim, but Fred, who is very, very white. They tie him to the flowery swing, and Skinner begins to wind the audience up into righteous fervour, setting Fred swinging out over the front stalls. A clown toys with Fred, squirting him with a water pistol, but finally it is the clown who shoots the first real bullets into Fred. The audience then explodes into gunfire, which continues for some minutes, while Fred twitches and jerks into death. The scene ends with his body pouring blood onto the stage while Skinner, "like a venerable senator urges the audience into 'The Star-Spangled banner'.

Conclusion

This, one of the most terrible acts of violence in Bond's work, shocks and moves so deeply because the whole weight of a society's morality has been mobilized to crush an innocent person publicly and proudly. It is not something that goes on in a corner, like the baby-stoning, or Lear's blinding Neither can we comfortably judge Skinner for cynical cruelty. On the contrary, he is terrifyingly sincere. A part from the skill with which it is constructed, the scene's most telling point is that the 'real' audience sit, presumably in awed silence, while their avenging counterparts (on tape in the first production) cheer, scream and empty their revolvers into Fred, so that complicity in the legal murder is shared, while the real audience observe and make their own judgement on what they see. By infecting the audience with some responsibility for the eve

events, and confronting them with their own potential for socially approved violence, the play generates anti bodies against the more immediate plagues that threaten progressive ideas.

There is a coda to The Swing played out in the theatre the next morning. Stagehands are clearing up, a photographer snaps the body, and Paul comes on to be met by Ralph. Paul announces that he is leaving Mrs. Kroll's service, not in protest at Fred's slaughter, but because he's had an application in at the mine office for over a month. He shows no emotion at the previous night's events, but he can't afford to. He is black man. The racist society, which has slaughtered his friend has now absorbed him into its body as a worker. Ralph is set fair to continue his father's brutalized life, and the stage-hands squabble over a coin that Paul, in a gesture of disgust; tosses at them. The Swing is a play that offers no way out. The only moments of love and friendship, between Greta and Ralph, and between Paul and Fred are quickly smashed, and there are no new young people in this play to build a new society. America, after all, has not built the new society in which the human need to love and to learn are respected. One of Bond's most potent contributions to a theatre of politics, is that, by constantly cutting back to the social and economic basis of life as he does in The Swing, he reveals the source of our reactionary ways. He is not fair to both sides', as is sometimes said, because although few writers create such vivid, yet transparent reactionary characters, they are placed in social contexts which show how their corrupt ideas have been arrived at.

Bond is a socialist, personally convinced of the revolutionary potential of the working class in this country. His criticisms of Stalinist approaches to social change in Lear should not obscure his belief that revolution can be made successfully. Lear's violence certainly does make that of Cordelia almost inevitable, but our society, it is suggested, is different. The preconditions for successful revolution, not present in Lea's society, are there in ours. "Our revolution", writes Bond, "has to be made at a much higher stage of social technological and economic organization that any previous one. For it to work, the majority of people must become concerned and articulate about the nature of our society."

The creating and spreading of a critical awareness is, of course, an important job for the committed artist. That process is also helped along by the very nature of modern capitalism, which relies heavily on advanced technology. As Bond analyses it, "technology needs a certain level of enlightenment in order for it to run, and for consumers to exercise choice (however limited). Capitalism needs a liberal façade and therefore a number of liberal practices. It can never shut this hole in its defences." So, with this combination of raised consciousness and the contradictions inherent in modern capitalism, a revolution is possible. It has to be worked for, "We have to destroy the image of man of primitive animal and replace it with the idea of socialist man, and the society, not merely of equal opportunity but of practical equality. I don't believe it would be possible to seize power by armed means till this is done."

Bond's plays are about the strengths, real and potential, of individuals in social situations. His politics insist that despite the compromises and failures, a commitment to human beings can take control of their lives, that they are, finally, rational.

Guilt and Madness in Bond's Plays

(Man) is not satisfied with being a separate individual; out of the partiality of his individual life he strives-towards a 'fullness' that be senses and demands, towards a fullness of life of which individuality with all its limitations cheats him, towards a more comprehensible, a more just world, a world, that makes sense.

Ernst Fischer, The Necessity of Art.

Introduction

Characters frequently go mad in Bond's Plays. Georgina, Hatch, Clare, Greta are all destined to end up in mental institutions in the grip of their own daft fantasies. Kiro and Shakespeare may not be clinically certifiable, but they both commit suicide in moments of acute despair.

Lear and Arthur both go through a time of extreme mental torment from which they emerge with the beginnings of a new sanity. The final stage picture of we Come to the River offers a bleak image of the world, one divided between sane but dead victims and living but mad inmates of an asylum. These kinds of overt madness in Bond's work occur when there is some violent rupture between the reality inside an individual, and the social reality he or she lives by. Georgina, for instance, goes made because her faith in God and man are simultaneously destroyed by the soldiers who kill the children she is caring for. Hatch, in The Sea, invests his life, not in God, but in small time capitalism and, as that is destroyed by Mrs. Rafi, his sense of oppression is diverted to mythical creatures from outer space. Clare, Shakespeare and Kiro likewise find that they have committed themselves wholly to absurdities, and the disappointment and shock of discovering the truth make them go mad. These are reasonably well-defined madnesses, but there are other sorts in Bond. R.D. Laing writes that 'the condition of alienation, of being asleep, of being unconscious, of being out of one's mind, is the condition of the Bond's plays find themselves. Cordelia and her ministers are mad, according to Lear, because they have no pity, "and the man without pity is mad". The mad heaven of Early Morning, where mutual cannibalism is the norm, is infected by what Queen Victoria calls Arthur's "lunacy", but her kind of normality, identified with polite ordered, static societies, turns out to be Vicious and cruel, despite the rhetoric of common sense it claims to live by. It proves too to be deeply irrational. The world of The Swing is just such normality, as is the post revolutionary kingdom ruled over by what Lear describes as "Good decent, honest, upright lawful men who believe in order." "I have lived with murderers and thugs," he tells the Old Councillor, "there are limits to their greed and violence with the essentially human pressure to he happy and sane and so the plays become battlegrounds between sanity-seeking individuals, and corrupt cultures.

Madness _____ to individuals

Bingo deals with different kinds of individual madness, and with the failure of an individual to oppose corruption in his own life, thus inviting madness. With characteristic irony, it is the Old Man (who has, his wife tells Shakespeare. "the mind of a twelve year old an the needs on a man") who probably Comes closest to fulfilling his human potential. He is, after all, the only person who takes care of the Young Woman after her first clothes and then money; but when Combe, the landowner with whom he is doing business, sets to have her recaptured, Shakespeare just complains irritably about the disturbance to his peace and quiet Judith's ungenerous propriety is outraged by the girl who is, to her, "dirty" in all senses. But then, she has been ground down by her father's self-absorption and the isolation to which he has unthinkingly condemned her. The Old Man is literally the victim of a violent culture, accidentally rendered subnormal by the blunt side of a fellow soldier's axe as he was chopping up a fallen enemy. His childlike nature is a sad burden for his wife, who also has to 'mother' Shakespeare, but there is in his enforced simplicity a new innocence. He plays in the snow like a child, he has to be given "a nice surprise" when he's upset, and he behaves with that attractive purity of emotional response of many mentally- handicapped people. When he realizes that the Young Girl will be hanged, his mind

fills with the images and sights of the hanging and he cries at their obscenity: “O dear, I do hate a hanging people runnin, through the streets laughing an’ sportin’, Buying’ and sellin’. I allus enjoyed the hangings when I were a boy. Now I can’t abide ‘em.” He is a simpleton, like King Lear’s Fool, and that gives ineffective, precisely because he is not ‘normal’. As Judith points out, he has ‘”no responsibilities, no duties”, Society, run by men like Combe and Shakespeare, excludes him. When he is accidentally shot dead by his own son, reality, crude and violent, muscles its was into other-worldliness.

The Old Man’s son represents another kind of madness, and another of Bond’s ironic but well justified conjunctions of different impulses. On the one hand, he is obsessively religious in a puritanical, fundamentalist way. On the other, he has an acute sense of injustice, so much so that he becomes the leader of the local peasantry as they fill in the ditches dug to mark out together, of course, and his vision of just world, where rich thieves won’t plunder the common land shades imperceptibly into a vision of paradise: “I looked across a great plain into his eyes. A sword were put yand. The lord god a peace arm us. We must go back an’ fill up they ditches agin t’ night.” The Old Man says of his son: “He rage up an’ down all hours… He’s allus talkin’ t’ god –– stands t’ reason he never listen to a word I say”, and indeed the young man seems to be close to hysteria much of the time. Nevertheless his real madness is exposed in his lack of human sympathy. Looking at the gibbeted body of the Young Woman, he observes: “Death bring out her true life, brother. Look, her eyes be shut against the truth. There’s blood trickle down the cornet a her mouth. Her teeth snap at her flesh while her die.’ His final decision to go away “where no one stand ‘twcen me an’ my go, no one listen when I raise the song a praise’ fits in which his religious obsession, but it is also a kind of self-imposed autism, another outbreak of Scopey’s disease.

Shakespeare s despair is also a kind of madness. His work is the evidence that he was under no crippling illusions about human nature, but he loses control because he won’t carry his insights into his day-to-day life. His refusal to oppose the enclosures is a public sell-out to his own financial security, but his final despair is brought on by the decaying of his close personal relationships. He makes no significant attempt to protect the Young Woman from yet another whipping or from hanging, and Judith’s reproaches seem quite justified: “You sit there and brood all day… I feel guilty if I dare to talk about anything that matters. I should shut up now ––or ask if it’s good gardening weather.” Shakespeare’s arrogant counter to this is-: “You speak so badly. Such banalities. So stale and ugly.” When his human responses have been so alienated that Judith’s desperate complaints are heard only for their literary, or whose, their nuisance value, some vital moral connection in Shakespeare has clearly been broken. Bond’s point is that if he had been stupid, he could be understand, if not excused, as an ageing reactionary. But Shakespeare was far from stupid, and Bond shows him monitoring his own alienation and ‘self-hate all the way to suicide. ‘ He has, like Bond’s Cordelia, an acute sense of Justice, which is not so much reduced as institutionalized (in his case in his art, in her in political ideology) and removed from any contact with life. And all the time, being Shakespeare, he observes the truth but does nothing to fight his despair:

I spent so much of my youth, my best energy… for this: New Place, Somewhere to be sane in. It was all a mistake. There’s a taste of bitterness in my mouth… I howled when they suffered, but they were whipped and hanged so that I could be free.

Judith Shakespeare doesn’t go mad, but her human responses are so ground down at the end of the play by her loveless existence in Shakespeare house that she might just as well be. Her

desperate scrabbling for a will as her father lies poisoned is, heartless and unnatural, but is, after all, perfectly attuned to her culture. Judith's another of Bond's damaged survivors, like patty. While Shakespeare expires in self disgust, she, because it is expected of women that they will always support and seldom be supported remains at her post supremely practical, tearing the bedroom apart for the money that will allow her and her mother to survive. But just as surely as Shakespeare dies, something human has died in Judith, too.

Madness culture and Truth

Bingo is a statement that, however terrible the pressures, it is necessary to live as close to the truth of one's own experience as possible. When that truth conflicts with the standards of the culture we live in, then an act of individual rebellion is called for. That individual action doesn't conflict with the need I act collectively in the case of social change because action, as opposed to religious self-purification of the kind that Basho went in for, involves other people. Shakespeare had the individual choice whether to oppose enclosure or not, but his decision not to made him part of the landowners' collective. If he had opposed it and joined the peasant's collective, he might have healed the broken connection between his sense of justice as a writer and as a man, and he would have had less reason to kill himself.

The Fool takes the dialectic between individual and collective sanity still further to show, how the accumulated weight of a culture, its history, belief and social mores, press on and distort the individual personality. The idea of culture is of great importance to Bond. It signifies both the character of a society, its ideas and values, and its artistic expression. In his introduction to The Fool, he talks about the interwoven relationship between individual human nature and social culture:

We don't have a fixed nature the way other animals do. We have a 'gap left by our freedom from the captive nature of other animals, from the tight control of instincts. The gap is filled by culture. Human nature is in fact, human culture.

That last idea makes the decisive link with Bond's ideas about religion and politics because if human nature is provisional, if it can be altered according to choice or circumstance, if we, and not some supernatural being, are solely responsible for our fates, then we have a responsibility to change society so that we may change ourselves. That is a responsibility, which Shakespeare evaded.

One deadly enemy of a unified, healthy culture is class. In The Fool Bond shows how a developing middle-class culture, the first shoots of modern capitalism begin to whittle away at the living working-class culture that had been able to survive under feudalism. On a winter's evening, a group of Mummers come to act out their traditional St. George and the Dragon play for their master, Lord Milton, and his guests. When their play has finished, both the Parson and Lord Milton use the occasion to lecture their workers on the need for pay restraint. It is an act symbolic of the changing nature of master/ man relationships, there goes a robbery by enclosure and drainage of the common land, which has always provided a minimal independence for the rural working class. This theft of land has immediate repercussions in the farm-workers riot. (There was in fact a wave of these food and enclosure riots in the nineteenth century. Bond's historical model is the rioting at Little port in Cambridge shire Several rioters were hung at Ely, and a plaque is to be seen still over the porch in Ely Parish Church showing where the bodies were dumped overnight before burial.) The result of the riots is death and deportation for the farm-workers, but the results of the loss of their culture are more fundamental and widespread,

and they find expression in the fate of John Clare. In the condemned and widespread, and they find expression in the fate of John Clare. In the condemned cell at Ely prison, the men who performed plays for their master at Christmas-time are visited by Clare and Patty. In their conversation, Patty tells her sister Darkie that John's "scribblin' come 't summal Gen' man bin. Talk 'bout a book." Miles asks him, "what you write boy? Write 'bout this place. What goo on", but Clare's answer "Who'd read that?" is an ominous forecast of his later predicament Walking inHyde Park with his patroness Mrs. Emmerson, the working-class poet is shown to have been taken up as a fad by precisely that class, which was destroying the economic base on which he depended for a living. Mrs. Emmerson's very silly nation of Clare the poet is as someone inspired to soar on wings of verse by grass and tress: "It is my ambition to be at your side when the muscle calls. I shall take down your words as you cast them on the air." The Admiral, who provides the financial muscle for Mrs. Emmerson's philanthropy, approves condescendingly of Clare's poetry: "Great charm there. True melody. Fine love of English landscape." But there are things he doesn't like: "I have one reservation. Not serious. The fault of a narrow horizon. Those remarks in –– poem named after your village –– which criticizes the landowning classes –– smack of radicalism." The pressure on Clare. Financial and political, begins to build. Mrs. Emmerson asks Clare naively. "How does it help to Shakespeare your Fist at heaven when some homeward wending swain perishes in the snow?" and Clare's brusque reply. "The had a winter coast they on't perish", suggests the growing gulf between the work Clare's rich Londonreadership want from his and his own creative drive. Scene Six that gulf has led to the beginnings of his madness, to bitter resentment from patty, and to state of near-starvation for to whole family. "on't goo back labourin'," Clare tells his wife. "On know what I'm at out in the fields. Goo sit hack the hedge an' write on me hat." For Mrs. Emmerson, Clare's art is decoration, and patty it is the fatal scribbling which stops him doing proper work and bringing wages in, but for Clare it is the only activity which it makes any sense for him to do: "Can't help what I ant' God know I wish I couldn't write me name! But my mind git full a songs an I on't feel a man if I on't write 'em down."

As guilt about his family increases, as polite society begins to reject his poetry with its occasional radicalism and its dialect words, Clare sinks into, illness and fantasies. He believes himself to be a boxer like those he saw in Hyde Park while Mrs. Emmerson was hovering in expectation of an "effusion". The black man and the Irishman, traditional victims of English exploitation, were able to earn money by knocking each other senseless for polite people to bet on, so why shouldn't he?: "Us'll hey t' git a proper job. Something drastic t' bring in proper money. Set up boxin'. They git paid for hem knocked about. I git knock about. Why on't I paid for it?" Clare realizes that his culture's highest values are money-values, and he gives in to them; but capitulation takes his mind with it. In the asylum, Lord Milton and Care, each wrapped in his own sense of failure, together locate the changes that have occurred in their culture. Clare sits in a bath chair, "a shriveled puppet". Mumbling, andMilton talks about the changes in the village, about his-wife's death, about his son "in love with his factories." Clare is the inhabitant of the asylum, but the dislocations in Milton's, and Patty's life, remind us of his cry of outraged common sense just before being taken away in a straitjacket "Hey the world gone mad? No. wonder they say I'm a clown!"

Art' Madness and creativity

Today art no longer holds central position in society, except as a palliative or diversion, whose effect, conscious or otherwise, is to soothe disc and discourage critical thinking. The fact that art now exists as either a part of the consumer leisure industry or as an embattled fringe activity

critical of society as a whole, is more than just as shame. It is evidence of a dangerous internal flaw in society.

In The Sea Bond uses Mrs. Rafi to show how creativity can be subverted and misused, and to demonstrate of Willy and Rose are a social embarrassment because they cause questions to be asked which reflect on the town. The divert that potential criticism, the death is sentimentalised and its meaning denied by the dishonest ceremonial of a bankrupt Christian morality. The ceremony bids fair to impressive enough, with its heavily embroidered church banner and fine funned hymns. But those hymns turn out to be the battleground over which Mrs. Rafi and Mrs. Tilehouse struggle for power, the vicar's sermon is full of a simplistic symbolism which obscures the real effect of Colin's death on those close to him and Mrs. Rafi's absurd encomium on Colin is a parody of Victorian tragic verse, whose laboured couplets enfeeble any pretension to gravity or sorrow.

Men who live out their little year

Are diamonds polished by their labour here

Fire has burned! It gives no ashes grey!

Diamonds only from this mortal clay!

The whole scenario, so carefully prepared by Mrs. Rafi is rendered overtly ridiculous by Mrs. Tilehouse's rebellion, and by Hatch's entrance. The whole funeral scene criticizes the use of art and imagination to smother thought, to mystify reality, and so evade responsibility for the life of the community. Written and directed by Mrs. Fari, the scene is part of a socially-correct death-rhythm opposed to the struggling life-rhythm of the growing consciousness within Willy and Rose. Mrs. Rafi's taste for grotesque celebrations of death is made still more explicit in Scene Four, which shows rehearsals for an entertainment to raise money for the coastguard including the unhappy figure of mad Hatch. The occasion will, by this irony, at best reinforce the tendency to self-destruction in the town, by maintaining Hatch in a position of influence. In the same way that Hatch's appearance on the cliff top undermines the pretensions of the funeral, so Rose, although grief-stricken and struggling to find some way to comprehend her loss, criticises by her very presence everything that takes place in the rehears room. Mrs. Rafi works away attempting to divert attention from the embarrassing tragic centre of Rose. The curtains are drawn, against Rose's wishes, so that she will be kept from the sight of the sea. Bond studs the actual rehearsal with jokes and comic business, which demonstrate the absurdity and lack of credibility of the art. Mrs. Rafi dominates everything and everyone. It's clear that the performance is for her gratification alone, and the others have to find their satisfaction within her structure. When Willy enters, his presence, complementing Rose's, is used by Mrs. Rafi to spur what she calls their "creativity" (in fact the opposite––the cheap exploitation of old cultural conditioning). Mrs. Rafi as Eurydice is about to cross the Styx "made from the tears of the penitent and suffering, which is interesting", and the nicely comic bathos of that last clause locates for us the level at which Mrs. Rafi's art deals with tears and suffering, which is interesting", and the nicely comic bathos of that last clause locates for us the level at which Mrs. Rafi's art deals with tears and suffering. When Jilly bursts into tears, moved by Mrs. Rafi's rendering of the bizarrely-cliched lines, "Eurydice let me clasp your marble bosom to my panting breast and warm it with my heart," She does so in the presence of Willy and Rose, who have real cause to weep. After Jilly has been dispatched with a servant for some comforting tea and cake, Mrs. Rafi bashes on

with her rehearsal, still imagining that she is uniquely close to the heart of things and Jilly is simply hysterical: “Never mind books now Vicar. We’re struggling with life.”

In the character of Hatch, Bond embodies an important irony. He is, in Mrs. Rafi’s words “over-imaginative for a draper”, and he reckons himself ‘more in the creative line”. But however appropriate these statements might be (and Hitch’s invention of creatures from space who come down in airships to take people’s brains out deserves some kind of recognition!), the maturity of his imagination is plainly stunted. Hatch, oppressed by Mrs. Rafi and repressed by himself, invents a fantasy of revenge and aggression, which enslaves both himself and men like Hollacrut. His imagination has been etiolated and made eccentric by the social stratification in the town, and by myths, but she can see no way out of them: “I’m tired of being a sideshow I!’ their little world. Nothing else was open to me…Of course I have my theatricals’ Her theatricals, and Hatch’s fantasies, actually grow out of the same alienated world.

With these two characters Bond is drawing a most important distinction between fantasy on the one hand –– the false inner world which people create when they have lost touch with reality –– and, on the other hand, imagination’ The imagination, and its denial, is what Bond’s work is about, not because he sometimes writes about writers, hut because the failure of his characters fully to realize their humanity is the result of a failure of imagination, which then leads on to a moral or a mental collapse. Imagination is out most essentially human faculty, because it allows us to predict the results of our actions, to see the connection between cause and effect. It thus has a vital moral dimension. A sense of responsibility is the result of a cultivated imagination, and a society which devalues the imagination or which allows it to develop in children in the wrong way, will have a greatly diminished sense of morality. That is the basic of reasoning on which, I believe. Bond’s moral force as a playwright rests, and these are the ideas which, as well as underpinning his arguments about the importance of art in a culture, are given vivid theatrical expression in the plays.

Conclusion

Thoughtlessness and cruelty, Bond shows, come about not because human beings are by nature thoughtless or cruel, but because their capacity for sympathy, their ability to imagine the feelings and the suffering of other, has been restricted and withered by the culture they live in. Given a culture where fantasies of aggression and the conservative ethic of individualism, competition and emotional self-suffering of other, has been restricted and withered by the culture they live in. Given a culture where fantasies of aggression and the conservative ethic of individualism, competition and emotional self-sufficiency are transmitted at every level –– in the home, at school, at work, in art, in political debate –– it is hardly surprising that is will produce a Peter, who is Scene Three of Saved, attempts to elevate his running down of a child in the road into a fantasy of deliberate child-killing. His mates support his bravado with their own defensive jokes, but Barry isn’t convinced that Pete acted deliberately. The others kid him, and he has to retrieve his status by claiming: “I done blokes in… More’n you ‘ad ‘ot dinners. In the jungle shoot in’ up the yeller-niggers. An’ cut em up after with the ol’ pig-sticker.” This, too, my be just a fantasy, but Barry could have seen Army service abroad in any one of a number o guerrilla wars. Either way, violence and, later, sexual hatred expressed in jokes are the tools in the culture with which its members have to back out some foothold of status and self-regard for themselves. What then takes place in Scene Six is a logical extension of this dehumanising process’ Len and Fred talk about Pam while they fish, but they make no effort to imagine her feelings. “I thought she was goin’ spare,” says Fred, s if she were a chair.

When Pam arrives with her baby to spoil Fred's pleasures with her demands, she is on some kind of pills, presumably tranquillisers, and she has also given aspirin to the child to get some peace from the crying, which she cannot understand. When the baby peace from the crying, which she cannot understand. When the baby and the young men are eventually left together, the combination is ominous. The baby has been drugged into senselessness, and so cannot trigger any protective instincts in the young men, who are themselves drugged by a culture which values aggression before tenderness. As their treatment of the baby escalates from mild teasing to spitting, punching and hair-pulling, the values of that culture surface in their words.

COLIN… Mind yer don't 'urt it.

MIKE. Yet can't.

BARRY. Not at that age.

MIKE. Course vet' can't, no feelings

PETE. Like animals… Cloutin's good for 'em. I read it… Yer got a do yer duty.

Similar words were very probably spoken at Fred's trial.

There are other symptoms of anaesthetized imagination throughout the plays –– for example in the Fourth Prisoner's blinding of Lear as a diplomatic manoeuvre to bring himself to the authorities' notice. The death of imagination and its replacement by fantasy conspire to destroy the human values of society, it is a process which Bond sees happening today, especially as technology grow more powerful, to fight these plagues, he finds antidotes only in a fully democratic, classless politics and vigorous cultivation of creative imagination, whether in art, technology, politics or education. Bond is an artist, someone who makes professional use of his creative imagination; art is there fore his main weapon in this struggle. In the programme note to We Come To The River composer and librettist together write:

But art isn't about itself, it's about how men relate to the world and each other; it's not a private or even individual experience, but one of the ways society creates its identity; it's not primitive and dark, but rational and constructive.

Because Bond's art has radical social change as a conscious goal, his art (and perhaps all art) is inseparable from politics: Asking artists to keep politics out of art is as sensible as asking men to keep politics out of society. Men without politics would be animals, and art without politics would be trivial.