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ART AND POLITICS: A STUDY OF THE MAJOR PLAYS
OF EDWARD BOND

by

Evie Globerman, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

September 14, 1984

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submitted by Evie Globerman, B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
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Abstract

Two lines of development are present in the major plays of Edward Bond. Through an examination of recurring themes, the evolution of Bond's political ideas becomes apparent. The major themes dealt with in this thesis are: the necessity for class-based individuals to become aware of the social forces which constitute reality, and discover responsible means of political action; the nature of political violence; the social role of the artist; and the relationship of the individual to society. The second line of development concerns Bond's dramatic methodology. Most significant is Bond's refinement of his realist theatre into what he terms epic theatre. The distinction between realism and epic is essentially seen in the way in which the playwright's realist principles regarding character, action and structure are adapted to foreground the social message of the play.

This thesis is dedicated to A. and N. Globerman,
and Edward Bond

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Preface

Edward Bond's first play, The Pope's Wedding, was produced at the Royal Court Theatre on 9 December 1962. In the twenty-two years since that opening, Bond's oeuvre has expanded to include thirteen major plays, seven short pieces, a ballet script, a libretto, five adaptations of plays and four as yet unpublished works.¹ This very prolific playwright was born to a working class family in Holloway, North London on 18 July 1934. Bond's interest in the theatre and its relation to politics began at an early age, when he attended a memorable production of Donald Wolfit's Macbeth at the Old Bedford Theatre in Camden Town:

. . . I remember this quite distinctly - I met somebody who was actually talking about my problems, about the life I'd been living, the political society around me. Nobody else had said anything about my life to me at all, ever. To begin with there was just this feeling of total recognition . . . And also out of the play I got a feeling of resolution - that there were certain standards. My reactions were absolutely naive, but I knew that if one could maintain these standards they could work in social situations and produce certain results.²

¹ This thesis is concerned with Bond's major plays. Many of Bond's short plays are commissioned works for political causes such as the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the CND anti-nuclear group. Orpheus is the ballet script, which Bond composed as a scenario for the Stuttgart Ballet Company in 1979. The Cat is the libretto and is published along with Restoration. The unpublished works are The Human Cannon, The Unknown Citizen, The Tin Can People and Red Black and Ignorant. Bond mentioned these plays in a letter to me dated 15 June 1984, but he did not indicate when they will be published.

² Edward Bond, "Drama and the Dialectics of Violence", an interview in Theatre Quarterly, 2,5 (Jan.-Mar. 1972) 5.

Deeply affected by the play, Bond could not understand how others could have seen it and not have found themselves altered by the experience.³ Bond had discovered in theatre something beautiful, exciting and socially relevant.

In 1955, after completing two years of military service in Vienna with the Allied Army of Occupation, Bond returned to England. He spent the next two years in London seeing many theatrical productions in an attempt to educate himself in theatre craft. Among the plays he saw were the Berliner Ensemble's 1956 productions of Brecht's Trumpets and Drums, The Caucasian Chalk Circle and Mother Courage.⁴

Bond was very impressed by the work of the Berliner Ensemble, and certain elements in his work, such as the episodic structure of many of his plays and the objective acting technique Bond demands for his "rational theatre", reveal that he was influenced by his early contact with Brecht.⁵

In the course of Bond's self-education, he was introduced to the work of many other leading playwrights of the time, most notably the

³ Ibid., p. 6

⁴ Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts, Bond: A Study of his plays (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1980), p. 16. All further references to this book will be abbreviated as Study.

⁵ This thesis will not examine in detail the similarities between Bond and Brecht. Hay and Roberts' Study mentions the Brechtian overtones in some of Bond's work. Peter Holland's "Brecht, Bond, Gaskill, and the Practice of Political Theatre", Theatre Quarterly, 8,30 (Summer 1978), 24-33 also discusses the similarities between Bond and Brecht.

plays of John Osborne, John Arden, Arnold Wesker and Ann Jellicoe. Bond was witnessing first hand the great changes that were taking place on the English stage, which previously had been monopolized by writers such as Noel Coward and Somerset Maugham. With the exception of the work of Bernard Shaw and Sean O'Casey, plays generally had tended to be drawing-room dramas about the personal lives of the upper classes. The working class were usually represented in patronizing vignettes, as foils to the grace, good taste and wit of their superiors. John Osborne's Look Back in Anger (1956), generally acknowledged as the landmark of the new British drama, was the first play to portray successfully working class experience and consciousness. Although Look Back in Anger is not an innovative play in terms of its formal structure, it led the way for other dramatists to express their own experiences as members of the proletariat. The language of the stage changed, and new accents and situations appeared that previously were unheard of on the English stage. English theatre in the late 1950's was being revolutionized as new writers arose from within the working class and addressed themselves to political and social realities.

During this period of artistic growth and change in the British theatre, the English Stage Company presented its first play, Angus Wilson's The Mulberry Bush, at the Royal Court Theatre.⁶ The policy of the Royal Court was to encourage and facilitate the production of new work: it took pride in being a "writers' theatre". The people at the Royal

⁶ Study, p. 15.

x

Court -- George Devine, Tony Richardson, Keith Johnstone, William Gaskill -- wanted to produce a "kind of renaissance of writing inside England".⁷ Bond could not help but be aware of the Royal Court's policy towards writers during his self-directed survey of the London stage. In 1958 he submitted two plays to the Royal Court, just when a Writers' Group was being formed there under the guidance of William Gaskill. Members of the group included many of the people whose plays Bond had been seeing. That same year Bond was invited to join the Writers' Group by Keith Johnstone.

The Royal Court Writers' Group gave Bond his first direct experience of acting techniques and stage craft. With the members he participated in workshops on improvisation, Stanislavskian and Brechtian methods.⁸ Bond wrote three pieces for the Group in 1959-1960, none of which has ever been produced. By 1960 the Group dissolved, and Bond became a playreader for the Royal Court. He did not become a full-time playwright until his second major play, Saved, went into rehearsal in the summer of 1965.

Two clear lines of development are discernible in Bond's major plays, beginning with The Pope's Wedding and ending with Summer. In each of the plays, the political ideas of the playwright are revealed in the thematic concerns of the drama. Bond explores in his plays the

⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

nature of violence, the relation of the individual to society, the quest for social awareness, and the necessity of political action and the social role of the artist. These themes appear continuously in Bond's work, and are developed in different ways through characters who are always set in a particular socio-political context. The action in the plays is structured upon the conflicts generated by the playwright's maturing political perspective.

In order to express his political ideas in a form appropriate to the theatre Bond experiments with diverse dramatic techniques. Bond's methodological developments do not constitute a direct, one-to-one correspondence with the evolution of the political concerns in the plays. As his ideas change and grow in scope and complexity, however, Bond's theatrical method adapts. Most notable is the development of the realism of the early plays into Bond's "epic theatre", the term the playwright has chosen to describe his later work. Bond defines realist theatre as drama which illustrates and criticizes the social forces that constitute reality. Realism, he states, reflects "the need for interpretation, meaning, order - that is for a justice that isn't fulfilled in the existing order".⁹ Authentic art is a record of reality and an interpretation of it through language that works on various levels of inference, irony and meaning.¹⁰ When art records and analyzes, Bond believes naturalism is transformed into realism, and the result is

⁹ Edward Bond, "Introduction" to The Fool and We Come to the River (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1976), p. xiii.

¹⁰ Edward Bond in "Edward Bond: The First Cycle", an interview with Glenn Loney in Performing Arts Journal, 1,2 (Fall 1976), 414.

a play with aesthetic and political value.¹¹ The analysis of society contained in drama must be revealed from within the work of art, through language, action, structure and character; the dramatic elements should not be subordinated to the political message of the play.

Epic theatre, according to Bond's definition, is an extension and refinement of realism.¹² Encompassing all of the principles of Bond's realism, epic theatre is distinguishable because of the precision and explicitness with which its imperatives are presented. Beginning with The Woman, one can discern the methodology that Bond articulates in "A Note to Young Writers":

An epic play tells a story and says why it happened. This gives it a beginning, a middle and an end joined together in a truthful way. . . . Epic plays don't need to cover centuries or have a cast of armies. The essence of epic theatre is in the way it selects, connects and judges. Even when it deals with two people quarrelling in a kitchen it draws its methods and values from the understanding of the history of all men.¹³

The epic playwright is a realist artist who is able to penetrate to the essence of reality and history, and show an audience the truth in a rational way. In his early plays, Bond utilizes characters located in specific socio-political contexts in order to analyze his political themes. In the epic plays starting with The Woman, character and action actually embody and demonstrate historical processes. Individual

¹¹ Edward Bond, "A Note on Dramatic Method" in The Bundle or New Narrow Road to the Deep North (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1978), p. xv.

¹² The first time Bond uses the word "epic" is in "The Activists Papers" in The Worlds with The Activists Papers (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1980), p. 198. Bond writes that the "form of the new drama will be epic".

¹³ "The Activists Papers", p. 108.

subjectivity is transcended but not obliterated by the historical pattern it represents. The general is seen in the particular in epic theatre. The power of history is shown through the human vulnerability and strength of those who live it.¹⁴ The development of Bond's epic mode will constitute one of the main subjects of this thesis, and will be discussed with respect to the methodological refinements accompanying this evolution.

The development of Bond's political ideas and dramatic methods as demonstrated in the plays reflects the dialectic inherent in the playwright's fundamental assumptions about art and politics. Although Bond's politics shape and influence his dramatic principles, he does not sacrifice the theatre to political dogmatism. Bond would state that art and politics are distinct concepts. They are, however, inter-related; art does not exist in a realm of pure aesthetics. Drama is understood by Bond to be an interpretation of political realities using artistic modes of expression appropriate to the theatre.

Many of Bond's political concerns are addressed in the Prefaces, Introduction and Author's Notes, which are published with the plays. These essays, which span a period from 1966 to 1977, are not always intended to be read as specific commentaries on the plays they accompany.¹⁵ Rather Bond would like the reader of the prefaces "to get involved in problems about the world, and then by a sudden reference, to transfer

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁵ In a letter to me dated 15 June 1984 Bond writes that a new preface will accompany the third collection to his plays. An interesting study of Bond's prefaces can be found in Terry Eagleton, "Nature and Violence: The Prefaces of Edward Bond", Critical Quarterly, 26,1 and 2 (Spring and Summer 1984), 127-35.

his roused interest to the play".¹⁶ Written after production, the prefaces discuss the artistic and political premises upon which the plays are based. The problems dealt with in the prefaces are the same as those analyzed through the thematic and methodological developments in the plays. Until 1976 the prefaces simply provide a gloss on Bond's political viewpoints, with regard to such issues as violence, religion, the injustices of the class system and the relation of the individual to society. Beginning with the "Introduction" to The Fool, discussion of these issues almost inevitably leads to Bond's articulation of the need for artists, workers and consumers to engage in cultural struggle in order to create a more just and sane society. Bond's concern with the social role of the artist extends in the prefaces to an examination of his own work, and in the later essays and "The Activists Papers" he sets out more clearly the methodological goals of his epic theatre.

Not surprisingly, at this time Bond began to direct his plays in England; The Woman was his début. Although the prefaces are interesting in themselves, they will be discussed in the thesis only when they provide a useful commentary on the form and content of the plays.

This thesis provides a close reading of each of Bond's major plays, in light of the art-politics dialectic inherent in his work. The playwright's maturing political consciousness will be revealed through an examination of reoccurring thematic concerns in the plays. An analysis of the evolution of Bond's characters and the dynamics of conflict are essential to an understanding of Bond's political theatre. The evolution of Bond's dramatic technique, the development of his

¹⁶ Edward Bond, a letter to Hay and Roberts, 24 March 1977 in Study, p. 22.

realist theatre into epic theatre, will be discussed as it overlaps with the progression of the playwright's political vision. An important feature of Bond's work is that each play leaves the audience with a sense of involvement in and responsibility for the political problems addressed on stage. The art-politics dialectic thus extends to the spectator, who is asked to engage actively with the performative text in the theatre and in daily life.

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The author wishes to thank all those who helped to make this thesis possible. Special thanks is extended to the following people: Professor J.D. Campbell, my adviser, for his commitment to and faith in this work; P. Browne for his moral support and criticism; E. Yallen and P. Bondy for typing; F. Andrew for cheerfully enduring the last stages of writing. A heartfelt thanks is also extended to C. Innes and P. Roberts who helped me to locate Bond. Lastly, my gratitude to Edward Bond for his encouragement and enthusiasm about the thesis is here acknowledged.

Chapter One

The Pope's Wedding, Saved and Early Morning: Early Experiments in Political Themes and Dramatic Methods

Edward Bond stated in 1972 that his plays are consciously written as a series:

As a writer one should sense that one is not writing separate plays but a series of plays, and it's very important that one should have a feeling that they belong together.

The Pope's Wedding, Saved and Early Morning are part of what Bond considers his first cycle of plays, which ends with The Sea.² In each of Bond's first three plays, there is a major character who struggles with a specific, albeit often unarticulated, social and personal problem. Even in his earliest work, Bond's implicit aesthetic assumption is that the theatre should be concerned with political and social issues. In an interview in the early seventies, Bond declared that "art must have a social function".³ Bond concedes that when he wrote his first plays he could not explain his political attitudes and artistic principles in conceptual terms,⁴ but he

¹ Edward Bond in "Drama and the Dialectics of Violence", p. 8.

² Edward Bond in "Edward Bond: The First Cycle", p. 44.

³ Edward Bond in "A Discussion with Edward Bond", Gambit 5,17 (1970), p. 37.

⁴ Edward Bond in Catharine Hzin, Stages in the Revolution: Political Theatre in Britain Since 1968 (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1980), p. 79.

intuitively felt that theatre should inspire people to become aware and active in the social sphere.⁵ Bond's early work contains the germ of the dramatic methodology and political themes explored in the later plays.

The Pope's Wedding was first performed as a Sunday night production without decor on 9 December 1962, at the Royal Court Theatre. As in all of his plays, Bond draws attention to the class and social relationships of his characters; in The Pope's Wedding the characters are members of the rural working class of a village in Essex. Scopey, the protagonist, is distinguishable from his fellow workers in that his innate curiosity motivates him to try to discover what he perceives to be some secret knowledge about the world possessed by Alen, the hermit. This search for awareness identifies Scopey as the first in a series of protagonists who also appear in Saved and Early Morning as Len and Arthur respectively.⁶ Each of these characters strives to come to a better understanding of the society in which he lives, and of his relation to that society. Social awareness is the first step toward affirmative, political action in the plays which follow Early Morning.

In the first scene of The Pope's Wedding, Scopey does not at first appear to be any different from the rest of his companions. Like them, he speaks in clipped monosyllables about sex, money, work and beer. What initially distinguishes Scopey from his friends is his offer to repair Pat's handbag after he has damaged it while teasing the girl.

⁵ "Drama and the Dialectics of Violence", p. 13.

⁶ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 37.

Although Scopey does not take responsibility for his prank until Pat and June leave, so as not to "lose face" in front of the girls, his willingness to help allows him to break free of the aimlessness of the group. Scopey's distinctiveness is stressed further in Scene Four, when he wins the cricket match for the workers against the masters. His performance in the game, described in detail in Bond's stage directions, wins Scopey the admiration of his friends, who believe that cricket is a game of "strength and skill and guts".⁷ Cricket is one of the few things in life that has meaning for the men. Interestingly, although the match is a victory for the working class, Bond does not extend the metaphor to the rest of the play. Scopey's triumph is a personal one. He is rewarded by the men with beer, and Pat shows her admiration through sex.

The first two scenes of The Pope's Wedding thus establish Scopey as being somewhat different from the others. His unique curiosity begins to be apparent in Scene Six, in which his interest in Alen first surfaces. Alen is initially terrified of Scopey, and hides behind his bed when the young man calls questions from outside the hut: "What yoo doo all day? What yoor 'obbies?" (260-61). Scene Seven further emphasizes Scopey's yearning for knowledge about the world. When Pat shows him the postcards she has received, he is dissatisfied with the pictures on the cards because he wants to know more: "Nothin's like that. No more yoo ent seen sky like that ...

⁷ Edward Bond, The Pope's Wedding in Edward Bond Plays: One (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), p. 240. All further reference to The Pope's Wedding, Saved and Early Morning are from this edition, and page numbers will be noted parenthetically in the text. All ellipses in the thesis unless otherwise noted are mine.

where's the people an' the corners?" (264). His desire to "stick postcards all over the room" (265) signifies Scopey's quest for knowledge and his dissatisfaction with surface appearances. He does not know exactly why he wants the postcards -- "That's what I'd like" (265) -- only that he wants to see and know what is not shown in the pictures.

As the play progresses from Scene Eight, there are alternating short episodes between Alen's shack and Scopey and Pat's house. Scene Thirteen is an exception in that it returns to the setting of the first scene to show the re-kindling of the affair between Pat and Bill, and the unchanging nature of the gang. As Scopey's relationship with Alen develops, his marriage with Pat deteriorates; he loses his job and becomes slovenly. In Scene Twelve, Scopey discovers that Alen has nothing to teach him about the world. The photographs which fascinated Scopey are from a junk shop, Alen's coat pockets are empty, and the hermit is nothing but a paranoid voyeur, standing on a pile of old newspapers so that he can stare through a crack in the wall. The reader and audience have known this about Alen since Scene Three, in which the recluse silently and aimlessly wanders about his shack, stacking papers, listening to outside noises, sitting and standing in a ritualistic parody of activity. Scopey's disappointment with the fact that Alen cannot reveal to him anything about the world does not cause him to reject the old man. Instead, Scopey takes on the old man's persona, signified by his wearing Alen's coat at the end of Scene Twelve. In his despair over the emptiness of Alen's life, Scopey reacts irrationally and violently. He murders the old man and completely assumes his place. Having lost everything that had defined him as

himself -- his job, his wife, his friends -- Scopey ends up isolated from society. Scene Sixteen finds Scopey sitting in Alen's shack, surrounded by tins of food and the hermit's corpse.

The Pope's Wedding is Bond's most pessimistic play. Bond explains that Scopey is asking for an invitation from Alen to something that cannot happen;⁸ that is, he hopes Alen will impart to him some understanding of society. What Scopey discovers is that Alen knows nothing about the world. His isolation is not a political statement, as he explains to Scopey: "I never stopped gooin' after people. They stopped gooin' after me" (296). Scopey's attempt to ally himself with Alen is an "impossible ceremony",⁹ a "Pope's Wedding". Alen cannot give Scopey what he wants, and the young man's frustration turns him into a murderer. The undercurrent of violence in the play, expressed mostly in the dialogue between the male characters, especially in their jokes and boasting -- "I just kicked 'er teeth out, kneed 'er in the crutch, set light to 'er 'air, an' she died beggin' me t'forgive 'er" (242) -- thus erupts through Scopey, who enacts and expresses the collective frustrations of the gang. In later plays, Bond further explores the theme of violence, and the ways in which victims of a class society become the oppressors of members of their own class.

The political context of The Pope's Wedding is implicit rather than explicit. Scopey's motives, for example, are not overtly political. He is not consciously striving to understand his social and class position

⁸ "Drama and the Dialectics of Violence", p. 13.

⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

through his relationship with Alen; Scopey just wants to learn more about the world in a general sense. The significance of Scopey's quest, however, extends beyond his personal experience because Bond places him within a definite class and social locale. Although Scopey is constructed as a distinct, subjective individual, at the same time he is also a representative of his class. His desire for awareness thus arises out of his class position and its limitations, as well as from his personal curiosity about the world. Bond's assumption that characters illustrate general truths about society through their particular actions is further developed in his later plays.

Bond technically establishes Scopey as a social being through language. His use of East Anglian working class dialect identifies Scopey and his friends as members of a specific class. Bond's distillation of working class speech patterns results in a stage language that authentically expresses the concrete reality of the rural proletariat:

BYO. Bloody work tmorra.

JOE. Yoo wouldn't know what a doo with yourself if it wasn't.

BYO. I'd know what a doo with yoo.

BILL. Fifty p. Forty p. Thirty p. A penny with a 'ole in .

SCOPEY. Put it on the slate.

BILL. I tried that yesterday.

JOE. Got a smoke?

BILL. Chriss, I'd sell my sister if I 'ad one.

LARRY. Yoo thirsty? (231)

Settings are established by stage objects which, although they do not create a naturalistic illusion of reality, reveal the social context of the play. In Scene Two, for example, an apple and scythes evoke the rural setting and the class position of the characters.

The episodic structure of The Pope's Wedding further illustrates

the dramatic methodology of Bond's early realist theatre. Although the play does not fully analyze the essence of rural working class society, the structure of The Pope's Wedding allows Bond to present what he considers to be truths about reality. In an interview given in 1970, Bond explains why he used an episodic structure: "... when I started to write I discovered I could only tell the truth in these short episodes and I felt those long scenes, those long developments aren't somehow true to my experience".¹⁰ Bond finds that short episodes allow for sudden reverses and changes, and enable him to keep track of action occurring in different places.¹¹ In The Pope's Wedding, Bond juxtaposes scenes occurring in diverse locations in order to demonstrate cause and effect. For instance Scene Ten, in which Scopey feeds and questions Alen in the shack, is followed by a scene showing the effects of Scopey's obsession with Alen on his marriage. No longer concerned with his appearance or interested in sexual relations with his wife, Scopey's preoccupation with the hermit causes his relationship with Pat to deteriorate. The first indication of Pat's re-kindled interest in Bill appears in this scene, a direct result of Scopey's neglect of her in favour of Alen. The emphasis in each short scene is on action rather than words, and the ordering of the scenes functions as a commentary on the action. Scene Three, for example, takes on strong negative connotations once the darkness of the hut and Alen's aimlessness are compared to the whiteness and purposiveness of the cricket match in Scene Four. The episodic structure of The Pope's Wedding anticipates the dramatic method the playwright employs in

¹⁰ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 28.

¹¹ "Drama and the Dialectic of Violence", p. 11.

later plays.

The Pope's Wedding is Bond's first attempt to present the quest for awareness about the world, a theme prevalent in his later plays.

Scopey intuitively senses that something is wrong with and lacking in his society's ethical and material existence. Although his inarticulate and frustrated search for some understanding of his social situation results in violence and a return to inertia, for a short time Scopey is able to extend the affirmative "YES" of the cricket match to a purposive search for knowledge. Len, in Saved, has more success than Scopey in attaining a degree of insight into his personal and social condition.

Bond submitted Saved to the Royal Court on 18 September 1962. In June 1965 the play was sent to the Lord Chamberlain, only to be returned a month later with a demand for cuts -- including the complete deletion of Scenes Six and Nine -- which Bond refused to make. As a result, like The Pope's Wedding, Saved was first performed as a club production for members of the English Stage Society on 3 November 1965; club performances were not subject to the licensing control of the Lord Chamberlain and the Theatres Act of 1843.¹² In spite of this exemption, the theatre was fined in April 1966 for performing an unlicensed play. The response of the critics and the public to the play was mostly hostile. The Pope's Wedding had not prepared audiences for the sensitive subject matter of Saved, namely the cold-blooded murder of a child, and the exploration of the kind of society in which such behavior is possible. Ronald Bryden, one of Bond's few defenders, praised the play's social relevance and its depiction of cultural

¹² Study, p. 41.

than Bond's first two plays. The playwright considers it to be a "kicking-off point for the rest of the plays that follow. . . .it makes the other plays possible".⁴⁰

Bond consciously constructed Arthur, the protagonist of Early Morning, as a direct development of his previous two protagonists:

"Scopey, Len, Arthur are of course the same person in different stages of development. Scopey commits the crime, Len witnesses it ambivalently, Arthur is legally involved in the court that tries Len".⁴⁰ Arthur and his Siamese twin, George, are another version of the series of opposites -- Scopey/Alen, Len/Fred -- seen in the previous plays.⁴² Like Scopey and Len, Arthur is essentially curious and a kind individual who wants to learn about his society, and perhaps improve his social situation. George, like Alen and Fred, is a negative character, who hinders the protagonist's struggle to become aware of the nature of the world in which he lives. Early Morning is written from the point of view of Arthur's experiences, and traces his development. The play shows that Arthur becomes fully human only when he cares to learn about others and rejects the false values of Victoria's government.

Early Morning consists of twenty-one scenes. In production,

8 April 1968, p. 6.

³⁹ Irving Wardle, "Upsetting our idols", The Times (London), 14 March 1969, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Edward Bond in Study, p. 76.

⁴¹ Edward Bond in Letter to Irene, 7 January 1970 in Companion, p. 43.

⁴² Ibid., p. 43.

should have to ask questions about the society in which the play takes place".¹⁷ Len, like Scopey, possesses an innate curiosity about society and his relation to it, a theme which Bond also explores in later plays.

Len's desire to learn about the society in which he lives becomes apparent in Scene Two. Pam begins to resent Len's persistent questions about her parents and home life (35). Because Len wants to create a better life for him and Pam, he examines her past so as to avoid making the same mistakes that destroyed her parents' marriage: "I won't turn out like that. I wouldn't arst yer if I didn't know better 'n that."

(34) Len's natural goodness and optimism, qualities initially seen in Scopey as well, allow him to envision a happy home for him and Pam in a house that he will decorate and repair (31); this desire to "fix things" foreshadows Len's mending of the chair in Scene Thirteen.

Len's goodness and curiosity set him apart from the other characters, as seen in Scene Three when he helps Mary with her shopping bags. This gesture is interpreted sexually by the group of men who, like Len, are members of the working class (42). Before Len's entrance, Pete brags about deliberately running down a child, Barry boasts about shooting and maiming "yeller-niggers" in British colonies, and the others joke about sex and violence. Len is an outsider to this group -- much as Scopey became an outsider in The Pope's Wedding -- although the fact that he went to school with Colin signifies that he is influenced by the same social forces, such as the educational system, that have affected the others. Although Bond presents the gang as aggressive, racist and ignorant, he does not offer in the play

¹⁷ "Edward Bond: The First Cycle", p. 44. See footnote 10 of the Preface.

any extensive analysis of why the men are this way.

In Scene Four, however, Bond shows a consequence of the kind of society in which these characters live. Throughout the scene, Pam's baby cries, screams, chokes and whimpers pitifully, but no one comforts the child, not even Len who says he wants to "take that kid out a this" (52). Len states twice that he will not abandon the baby, whom Pam claims is not his, but he actually neglects the baby as much as she does in this scene. The only difference between Pam and Len is that he recognizes the baby's humanity, while she refers to her child as "it", as a howling cat (48), and as "that racket" (50). In the next scene, Pam completely rejects the baby because Fred, the alleged father, has jilted her. Abandoned by her lover and uncared for by her family, Pam is a victim who becomes an oppressor. Nothing in her surroundings has taught Pam how to be a loving mother.

In the "Author's Note" to Saved, Bond explains that the characters in Saved are "morally illiterate" because "they have not been properly taught ... the nature of a moral consideration or the value of disinterested morals at all".¹⁸ The working class characters do not see themselves as a community, in which each individual is responsible for collective well-being. As a result, they lack a moral understanding of their society. In Saved, Len is the only character who desperately wants to create a community, as seen in his clinging to the family even after Pam has rejected him. Len, however, fails in his social obligations to the baby. Each of the characters, to varying degrees, contributes to the baby's death because they all lack any real sense of human community.

¹⁸ Edward Bond, "Author's Note" to Saved, p. 309. This "Note" was written for the original publication of the play in 1966.

The fishing scene, which precedes the stoning of the baby, illustrates the kind of attitude possessed by characters who allow material rather than human factors to determine their social relationships. Fred assumes a superior role to Len at the start of Scene Six because he possesses more objects. He takes a cigarette from Len -- even though he has his own, and knows the latter cannot afford them -- with the same unconcern with which he offers Pam to Len. In Fred's eyes, Pam is another commodity which, like a cigarette, is valueless except for the fact that it can be possessed and exchanged. Similarly, the baby is reduced to an object later in the scene. Its subjectivity is denied, and therefore it becomes an object that can be destroyed with impunity. The baby functions in the play as a signifier of the socio-economic factors which influence the behavior of its tormentors.

The characters, however, are not monsters. When Pam enters, Mike and Fred chide her for bringing the baby out so late at night (65), and Len scolds her for neglecting to put the brake on the pram. Pam has drugged the baby with aspirin to prevent it from making any noises that would remind her or Fred of its needs. She reduces the baby to an inanimate object, which she discards in the same way that Fred has rejected her. Len refuses to accept Pam's ~~lack of~~ interest, and insists on following her instead of taking care of the baby, whom she leaves behind. Len's abandonment of the child at this point makes him a passive accomplice to the murder; we learn in the next scene that he watches the murder from behind some trees (86).

The murder scene builds gradually, beginning with Colin and Pete's crude jokes and Barry's sinister lullaby (73). Barry, who had unsuccessfully attempted to impress the others in Scene Three by

bragging about killing blacks, initiates the physical violence after Pete "touches" him in jest (74). Even as the violence escalates, Fred does not at first participate. He lies downstage, while the others torture the baby and call out ruling class slogans such as "Cloutin's good for 'em" and "Sherker, Yer got a do yer duty" (77). Colin and Barry contribute racist slurs: "Looks like a yeller-nigger" and "'Onk like a yid" (78). Fred, however, does throw the first stone. Once they have smeared the baby with its own excrement, the gang ceases to think of the baby as a subject; it cannot remind them of its humanity because Pam has drugged it into silence. Pete pretends that he is at a fair: "Liven 'Ampstead 'eath! Three throws a quid! Make a packet" (80). Stoning the baby becomes a kind of game, which ends when the park bell rings. The sinister carnival atmosphere helps the men to forget the baby is human.

In his "Note" to Saved, Bond states that "the murder of the baby shows the Oedipus, atavistic fury fully unleashed" . . . This sort of fury is kept under painful control by other people in the play, and partly accounts for the corruption of their lives".¹⁹ Bond elaborates upon this cryptic and unexplained statement in "On Violence", stating that the fury stems from an unidentified discontent caused by an oppressive ruling class: "This persecution of victims by victims results from a culture which must surely be one of the most abject intellectual conditions the human mind could achieve; its most pitiable manifestation is working-class support of fascism".²⁰ In his "Preface" to Lear, Bond refers to the stoning as an effect of

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 310.

²⁰ Edward Bond, "On Violence" in Bond Plays: One, pp. 15-16. This essay prefaces Bond's first collection of plays which includes The Pope's Wedding, Saved and Early Morning.

a society in which people are "worn out by daily competitive striving" and "the weight of aggression in society".²¹ Children are battered because they are the weakest members of a society which has "the structure of a pyramid of aggression".²² Saved does not explicitly illustrate characters suffering under the oppression of a competitive, capitalist society, as do some of Bond's later plays. What is revealed in the play, however, is that children are the victims of individuals who see people as commodities which may or may not have value. Pam's re-entrance after the stoning emphasizes that the baby is only an object to her. She does not notice that it is dead, and exits chattering to herself in the clichés of loving motherhood (82).

In a published interview with Catharine Itzin, Bond discusses where the guilt lies for the murder of the baby:

I didn't think the kids who murdered the baby were guilty. I thought they themselves were victims, and I was clear about the moral relationship. But I don't think I could have analyzed it. If you look at the Preface you can see that I couldn't.²³

One of the flaws of Saved is that Bond does not clearly analyze and reveal the social forces which make up the class system that he claims, in the prefaces, is responsible for the murder. Bond recognizes the limitations of this early work, and explains that he had not yet found a way of conceptually addressing the problems of his class experience.²⁴

²¹ Edward Bond, "Author's Preface" to Lear (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1972), p. viii.

²² Ibid., p. viii.

²³ Edward Bond in Catharine Itzin, Stages in the Revolution (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1980), p. 80.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 80.

In his later plays, Bond is able to analyze violence and class injustice, showing how and why the events happen.

The murder scene is not the climax of Saved. Bond does not call for an interval until after the next scene, thereby shifting the emphasis from the violence of the stoning to the effect it has on those involved. Fred is outraged by the fact that women are upset by his crime: "Bloody 'eathens. Thumpin' and kickin' the van. . . . Bloody 'ousewives! 'Oo else? Ought a be stood up an' shot!" (83). Essentially Fred is unrepentant and unchanged by his crime. He even blames the police for not doing their job (85). Likewise, Pam remains the same, still clinging to Fred with uncritical adoration. When he accuses her of ruining his life she can only express an inarticulate yearning, her fingers fumbling at her mouth like a child: "I wanted a --" (83). Len is the only one who sees himself as somehow responsible, as an accomplice:

LEN. I was in the trees. I saw the pram.

FRED. Yeh.

LEN. I saw the lot.

FRED. Yeh.

LEN. I didn't know what t'do. Well, I should a stopped yer.

FRED. Too late now.

LEN. I just saw. (86)

The rest of Saved traces Len's growing awareness of the implications of the previous events. He is the only character who keeps trying to make life better even if he does not understand the society in which he lives. Bond agrees that Len lacks intellectual understanding:

Oh, I agree that Len was totally unaware, But I wanted that to be obvious, I mean what could you expect of him? What other opportunities were really open to him, given the

sort of life he was made to lead and the sort of future that was offered him?²⁵

Len senses that by helping others he can somehow "fix things". In Scene Nine, he assists Mary in mending the stocking she rips on a chair. Harry misinterprets this action -- he thinks his wife is trying to seduce Len -- and the ensuing argument results in Harry and Len engaging in a struggle with a knife; although Len is aroused by Mary in Scene Nine, he is more lonely than sexually attracted to her. Pam accuses Len of causing the fight, just as she blames him for her rejection by Fred and the baby's death. Len insists, however, that he is only trying to help: "'Oo else'll 'elp? If I go will they come back? Will the baby come back? Will 'e come back? I'm the only one that's stayed an' yer wan'a get rid a me!" (123). At the end of the scene Len agrees to leave, seemingly defeated by Pam's hysterical weeping and insistence that he go.

What helps Len to change his mind is Harry's gesture of friendship. The old man enters, dressed in "long white combinations and pale socks. . . His head is in a skull cap of bandages" (123). Harry's ghost-like appearance anticipates the ghosts that appear in Bond's later plays. Usually they represent a part of the hero that he must struggle to overcome. Harry convinces Len not to leave, but the reasons he gives for his own stay are spiteful: "I'll go when I'm ready. When she's on 'er pension. She won't get no one after 'er then. I'll be out. Then see 'ow she copes" (129).

²⁵ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 23

Len does ~~not~~ accept Harry's logic. He does not leave because he still wants to help. His mending of the chair in Scene Thirteen -- the same chair that ripped Mary's stocking and that Harry broke during the fight in Scene Eleven -- signifies Len's refusal to turn away from the family. What "saves" Len from becoming a person like Fred is his ability to live with people at what Bond describes as "their worst and most hopeless",²⁶ Len does not save the baby, but he manages to save himself by remaining loyal to the family. What Len has grasped from his experience as an accomplice to the murder is that when he abandons people he is implicated in any misfortunes that may occur. Scene Thirteen, therefore, is optimistic because Len "has not lost his resilience (he mends the chair)"²⁷ nor has he lost his hope that tolerable, if not loving, social relationships are possible. Bond admits that the family lapses into a "social stalemate"²⁸ at the end, but he claims that the play remains optimistic: "Clutching at straws is the only realistic thing to do".²⁹ Len's final gesture -- "His head lies sideways on the seat"³⁰ -- is intended by Bond to show potential strength: "The chair is broken not the mender".³⁰

Any performance of Saved must show the social inter-relationships between the characters as well as the emotional, personal relationships. The acting must be logical and clear. Jane Howell, who has directed several of Bond's plays and was Assistant Director to William Gaskill

²⁶ "Author's Note" to Saved, p. 309.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 309.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 309.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 309.

³⁰ Edward Bond in Study, p. 56.

for Saved, states that any of Bond's plays "requires the actors to put themselves at the service of the play; to be extremely logical, simple, and clear and not to allow the characterization to stand between the play and the audience".³¹ Bond believes that a concentration on the character's objectives defined in social and political terms will lead to a new style of spare, lucid acting. An actor is not expected to explore characterization in order to find and express psychological complexities, except when such elements help to communicate without ambiguity the character's social predicament.

As in The Pope's Wedding, one of the ways in which the characters are established as both social beings and subjective individuals is through the language of the play. Even critics who hated Saved praised its dialogue, which utilizes the accent and dialect of the working class of South London. Ronald Bryden points out that the blunt, concrete monosyllabic dialogue is limited to certain subjects; there are no words for tenderness, generosity, beauty or the future.³² The limitations of the language reflect the limitations of working class characters, who are not politically or emotionally conscious of their position in the world. In Scene Ten, for example, when Len questions Fred about the stoning in an attempt to understand why it occurred, the simple dialogue illustrates the characters' inability and unwillingness to analyze their situations:

FRED. I tol' yer.

LEN. No yer ain'.

FRED. I forget.

³¹ Jane Howell in a letter to Richard Sharine, 6 July 1971, in Richard Sharine, The Plays of Edward Bond (London: Associated University Presses, 1976), p. 25.

³² Ronald Bryden, "Obscenity", p. 12.

LEN. I thought yer'd a bin full a it. - I was -

FRED. Len!

LEN. - curious, thass all, 'ow it feels t' -

FRED. No!

He slams his fist on the table.

LEN. Okay.

FRED. It's finished.

LEN. Yeh. (114)

Fred's violent gesture signifies his inarticulate denial of his relation to the baby's death. Similarly in the last scene of the play, which is almost completely silent, Len's physical actions indicate an optimism about the world that he lacks the vocabulary to express. Len cannot verbally explain why he is mending the chair, and only announces, rather than analyzes, his activity through gestures, noise and an unanswered request for a hammer. As an acting problem, this scene demands the visual and physical precision that comes from an understanding of the significance of the action. As in Alen's wordless scene in The Pope's Wedding, silence can reveal much about a character. The wordless action of Scene Thirteen in Saved is the only indication Bond gives the audience that Len is able to repair anything within the family.

A balance between the emotional and class-based sources of conflict in the play must always be maintained in performance. This dialectic is inherent in the structure of the play, and is typical of Bond's early realist theatre. On one level, Saved is constructed as a series of inter-personal triangles: Len-Pam-Harry; Len-Pam-Fred; Len-Pam-Baby; Mary-Harry-Pam; Mary-Harry-Len, and so on. The set design, for the interior scenes in the house, is correspondingly triangular: "The living-room. The front and the two side walls make a triangle that

slopes to a door back centre", (21). The social context of the play, that is, the limitations of the characters' working class language and experience, however, helps to determine how the characters respond to each other within these triangles. The action never becomes merely emotionally-based, because the episodic nature of the play does not allow for extensive character development. Instead Bond offers brief situations, where the emphasis is on a character's actions, rather than on his feelings. Even in Scene Twelve in which Pam breaks down in tears of frustration and rage, the actress must keep her emotions in check in order to convey Pam's limited vision of both her personal and social situations: "Why don't 'e /Len/ go? Why don't 'e go away? All my friends gone. Baby's gone. Nothin' left but rows. Day in, day out. Fightin' with knives"(122). Director William Gaskill claims that Bond's plays, if acted exactly as written, produce a certain strictness of style, which keeps the actors and the audience detached so that the social and political questions posed in the play can be taken up by the spectators.³⁴ In later plays Bond perfects his technique of dealing with emotions in such a way that the political message of the plays is revealed through subjective class-based individuals. Before he could do this, Bond had to break completely with the conventions of naturalism. Early Morning is a turning point in Bond's dramatic development in that it reveals the playwright's early attempts to find a theatrical form that could present political ideas unconstricted by naturalistic characters and plot developments.

Bond's third play is a surrealistic work, which caused even more

³⁴ Ibid., p. 62.

controversy than Saved. Problems began in November 1967 when the Lord Chamberlain's office sent the play back with a single comment: "His Lordship would not allow it".³⁵ Subsequently the Arts Council decided to withdraw its grant from the Royal Court, while plans for the January 1968 production proceeded.³⁶ Early Morning was produced at a club performance on 31 March 1968; this was a risky venture considering that Saved, which had also been presented as a private performance, had been prosecuted in spite of its club status. After the opening of Early Morning police questioned William Gaskill and Alfred Esdaile, the licensee of the Royal Court, resulting in the latter's unsuccessful demand for the former's resignation as Artistic Director.³⁷ Early Morning and Saved were awarded the George Devine Award that same year. Theatre censorship was abolished on 28 September 1968, less than twelve months after the Lord Chamberlain's decision to ban Early Morning.

After its first performances, Irving Wardle felt that Early Morning was unworthy of the battles engaged in on its behalf: ". . . what I regret is that the Royal Court's just and necessary fight for theatrical free speech should be conducted on behalf of a piece as muddled and untalented as this".³⁸ A year later, Wardle slightly modified his position, although he still considered the play to be a "solipsistic muddle, confusingly plotted and projecting a wrathfully infantile view of existence".³⁹ Early Morning is a more difficult and ambitious piece.

³⁵ Study, p. 67.

³⁶ Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts, Edward Bond: A Companion to the Plays (London: Theatre Quarterly Publications, 1978), p. 14. All subsequent references to this book will be abbreviated as Companion.

³⁷ Companion, pp. 14-15.

³⁸ Irving Wardle, "Muddled fantasy on brutalization" The Times (London),

than Bond's first two plays. The playwright considers it to be a "kicking-off point for the rest of the plays that follow. . . . it makes the other plays possible".⁴⁰

Bond consciously constructed Arthur, the protagonist of Early Morning, as a direct development of his previous two protagonists: "Scopey, Len, Arthur are of course the same person in different stages of development. Scopey commits the crime, Len witnesses it ambivalently, Arthur is legally involved in the court that tries Len".⁴⁰ Arthur and his Siamese twin, George, are another version of the series of opposites -- Scopey/Alen, Len/Fred -- seen in the previous plays.⁴² Like Scopey and Len, Arthur is essentially curious and a kind individual who wants to learn about his society, and perhaps improve his social situation. George, like Alen and Fred, is a negative character, who hinders the protagonist's struggle to become aware of the nature of the world in which he lives. Early Morning is written from the point of view of Arthur's experiences, and traces his development. The play shows that Arthur becomes fully human only when he cares to learn about others and rejects the false values of Victoria's government.

Early Morning consists of twenty-one scenes. In production,

8 April 1968, p. 6.

³⁹ Irving Wardle, "Upsetting our idols", The Times (London), 14 March 1969, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Edward Bond in Study, p. 76.

⁴¹ Edward Bond in Letter to Irene, 7 January 1970 in Companion, p. 43.

⁴² Ibid., p. 43.

the intervals may be held after Scenes Five and Fifteen, thus dividing the play into three parts corresponding to Arthur's process of maturation. Scenes One to Five establish the Albert-Disraeli plot against Victoria, Victoria's counter plot and the George-Victoria alliance. Arthur, the subjective idealist, tries to remain outside of all of this political intrigue; he feels that "[t]he trouble with the world is it's run by politicians" (141). All Arthur wants is to be happy, but this is impossible because he is attached to George, who literally and metaphorically lacks a heart (145), and who upholds the false values of Victoria. Not until the trial of Len and Joyce in Scene Four does Arthur realize that he can no more ~~exclude~~ himself from political action than he can ignore George's upcoming marriage to Florence Nightingale.

③ Bond describes the trial scene as "an interlude in which Saved appears in the play".⁴³ Arthur does not really get involved with the trial until he notices that Len and Joyce are handcuffed together. First the stage directions indicate that "It is seen [Len and Joyce] are hand-cuffed together" (153), and then George and Arthur's attachment is stressed by the following stage note: "[Arthur] goes towards them. George moves reluctantly" (153). Arthur recognizes that there is some affinity between himself and Len, and he exclaims: "You're hand-cuffed together!" (153). At this point, Arthur asks Len four times the question that the protagonist of Saved could not ask Fred: "Why did you kill him?" (153). Len resents these questions, and kicks the dead man's clothes at Arthur exclaiming: "They're 'is! 'Is! I got a right a be guilty

⁴³ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 14.

same as you! An you next, matey! You ain' out a reach!" (153).

Bond explains that this moment is an indication that not only is there an identity between Arthur and Len-Early Morning,⁴⁴ but Arthur is still tied up with Len-Saved⁴⁵ in that he does not know what action to take when confronted with murder. There is also a connection made here between Arthur and Scopey, who wears a dead man's clothes in The Pope's Wedding. Arthur is thus identified as both a potential aggressor and a potential victim. His statement, "I've solved the riddle" (154), signals his decision to participate in political action, that he hopes might overthrow Victoria's unjust and tyrannical government. Arthur knows that Victoria plans to use the trial to justify more oppression: "Mother will ban queues" (154). He suspects that her rule is somehow to blame for the death of the men in the queue; he realizes that his acquiescence in her system makes him feel as if he had eaten the innocent man: "I feel as if I'd eaten too much" (154).

Scene Five shows the interchangeability of the political systems offered in the play, as power shifts from Victoria to Disraeli and back again. Arthur discovers that the revolution he supported is meaningless. He still clings to the socialized, Victorian aspects of himself -- he will not allow George to be cut off -- because he does not yet see any effective political or personal alternative. Albert rises from his grave in the mock-Hamlet episode in Scene Seven because Arthur's clinging to old political systems keeps his father alive:⁴⁶ "That's the

⁴⁴ Letters to Irene in Companion, p. 43.

⁴⁵ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 14.

⁴⁶ Letter to Irene in Companion, p. 43.

pit. I lie there and you tramp round and round on top of me. There's no peace. The living haunt the dead" (167). Although Albert kills George, Arthur does not immediately discover a political ideology to replace the Victorian values represented by his Siamese twin. In his quest to understand the world, Arthur is frustrated and disappointed by the corruption he sees around him. In Scene Eight, for example, Gladstone spouts the rhetoric of a liberal, democratic government, while supervising Len's lynching: "The proper procedure is vote an amendment. 'Ands up for castration" (170). Gladstone's "Workers' Government" is no different from Victoria's rule. Arthur saves Len's life and again asks him: "Why did you kill that man?" (174). Receiving no answer, Arthur begins to despair. By Scene Ten, he yearns for death and escape from a world in which four exchanges of power can occur in ten minutes -- or four pages of script -- but nothing changes. After the second interval Arthur's despair turns to madness.

Arthur's nihilistic monologue in Scene Eleven leads him to assume the role of the "great traitor" who kills everyone. Finding that he can no longer face human suffering, Arthur decides that all human life must end; people hate life, he reasons, and therefore civilization is "just bigger heaps of dead" (186). Victoria, of course, agrees with Arthur's nihilistic plan because she has based her power on the assumption that people are innately evil and worthless, and therefore can be eliminated. The consequences of Arthur's mad acquiescence in Victoria's politics is made clear to him when he finds that even in death people are not free. All of the ghosts are "joined together like a row of paper cut-out men" (196), and George, who represents the socialized, Victorian side of the brothers, re-attaches himself

to Arthur.

The second trial in Early Morning takes place in Heaven. What distinguishes Arthur from the others is that he is still human and alive; Victoria smells burning flesh when Albert sticks his sword into Arthur. This humanity accounts for Arthur's physical and emotional pain in a capitalist Heaven, in which people cannibalize each other without suffering the consequences. Arthur refuses to participate in the cannibalism, and just as he felt George's pain in Scene Five, so now George feels Arthur's hunger pangs. The difference is that Arthur's pain is caused by moral anguish, while George's pain in Scene Five is the agonizing death rattle of a false ideology. Arthur's conscience makes it impossible for George to digest human flesh (204), and his vomiting causes the mob to fear they have been poisoned. Thinking that he is causing even more unhappiness, Arthur makes the same mistake as earlier. He opts to "Eat and be good" (206) in the hope that he will die; once again "he swallows the Victoria line" by literally eating Albert.⁴⁷

This act of cannibalism changes Arthur. In Scene Nineteen he is an old man in pain, who refuses to eat anyone except himself. Arthur explains his transformation to Florence:

My beard grew overnight. The night I ate my father. . . . When I woke up I was old. My hair was white and I had a beard. It was white when it came, and wet - I must have been crying. I felt very tired, as if I'd been born with a beard. (209)

Arthur has become a messiah-figure to his companions, who follow his example of rejecting cannibalism. As recognition of her humanity, he

⁴⁷ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 47.

asks Florence not to eat. Believing his love for her is a sign that he is not dead, he kindles feelings in her, such as pity, that she thought were impossible in Heaven. Arthur's desire to be happy is finally realized after he is eaten by Victoria and her followers: "This is the first time I've been happy. I'm not hungry now" (214). Speaking as a disembodied head in Florence's lap, Arthur cannot articulate the exact nature of his freedom -- "I don't know. I can't tell you, you must find out" (215) -- but his final laughter celebrates his escape from the society of the play. In spite of Victoria's distortion of his death, Arthur rises from the coffin, thereby affirming his rebirth, his "early morning" of freedom.

In its complete rejection of naturalism, Early Morning emphasizes visual pictures and action, rather than emotional developments and the psychology of characters. Like Saved and The Pope's Wedding, the structure of Early Morning is episodic, which allows the playwright to juxtapose situations in order to reveal cause and effect. The many short scenes trace Arthur's progress from childlike irresponsibility to adult awareness. Each episode objectifies Arthur's point of view, and comments on the preceding scene by showing the consequences of Arthur's actions. The multiplicity of the action in each scene reveals the interchangeability of oppressive governments. The use of historical anachronisms within the scenes foregrounds the relevance of the Victorian era to the present.

The acting method required for Early Morning is similar to the clean, objective style demanded by the earlier plays. When William Gaskill directed Early Morning, he focused on precise juxtapositions of the real and the impossible in order to convey the surrealistic

style of the play.⁴⁸ The director found that if the acting was realistic, the surrealist quality of a dream was created.⁴⁹ The temptation to play the historical personages as outrageous parodies must, therefore, be avoided. Because the plot is so complex, each moment of the play must be presented with intense, directed concentration. Working as an ensemble, the actors must know exactly where and when to direct the audience's attention. In later plays, Bond uses this kind of acting to demonstrate the analysis of the play.

In his stagenotes, Bond states that very little scenery should be used: "... whenever possible the place should be suggested by clothes and actions" (138). The throne room at Windsor Castle, for example, may be indicated by the official uniforms of those present. The old pile of clothes in Scene Eleven more subtly sets the context for Arthur's death-mill speech in the clearing; the audience remembers these clothes from the trial scene. Bond does not want the setting to distract from the action. The first production of Early Morning was presented with a minimum of scenery and costumes,⁵⁰ and the only additions made to the second production were a skycloth and a pair of drapes for the interior scenes.⁵¹ As in The Pope's Wedding, Bond uses stage objects to signify place and situation. The gallows in Scene Twelve, for instance, comments upon the setting at the Long Walk at Windsor. Like Brecht, Bond insists that stage objects reveal the attitudes of class-based characters.⁵²

⁴⁸ William Gaskill in Study, p. 84.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 84.

⁵⁰ Martin Esslin, "Early Morning", Plays and Players, 16,8 (May 1969), p. 26.

⁵¹ Study, p. 84.

⁵² cf. John Willett, ed., Brecht on Theatre: The Development of

The black hanging cap that Victoria wears instead of her crown in Scene Four, for example, comments upon her capacity as a judge. Each object makes a statement about its user and the society in which it is found. Lord Mennings' silver flask anticipates the fetishism of the privileged classes in Scene Five. Victoria's flyswatter implies that she kills people in the same gleeful manner with which she disposes of flies. George's dead birds in Scene Five indicate his social status; he is allowed to hunt in the royal forest. These stage objects are not symbols as much as indices to a character's position in society.

Bond claims that Early Morning is a social realist work because the play is analytic rather than symbolic.⁵³ The playwright's intention is to portray and analyze on the stage real political problems, rather than create a simple allegory. The problem with Early Morning is that the surrealistic elements often undercut the political ideas conveyed in the drama. The ending in particular presents not only technical but intellectual difficulties. Arthur's apotheosis, his escape from the societies on earth and in Heaven, is an inadequate solution to the political problems posed in the play. Arthur's ascension suggests that his rejection of Victoria has cleansed him, but there is not any indication that he has found a way to re-enter or change society.

Early Morning, however, shows a more advanced stage in the

an Aesthetic (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1978), p. 231.

⁵³ Edward Bond in "Edward Bond: From Rationalism to Rhapsody" an interview with Christopher Innes, Canadian Theatre Review 23 (Summer 1979), p. 109.

development of Bond's political ideas and dramatic method than Saved or The Pope's Wedding in that its form and content illustrate the nature of a society and the political awareness of a hero. In the earlier plays society is in the background, and the protagonists have only an inarticulated yearning to know and improve it. Early Morning does not yet show the hero engaging in cultural struggle or in purposive revolutionary action, themes explored in later plays. In the plays that follow, Bond shows that awareness and suffering are not enough; political responsibility requires both awareness and action. Bond also insists in his later work that political solutions must be offered if art is to have any aesthetic value: "to say 'x is wrong' . . . in the perpetual crisis of political necessity isn't enough. The right course or emphasis must be illustrated".⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Edward Bond, "Introduction" to The Fool, p. xiii.

Chapter Two

Narrow Road to the Deep North and The Bundle: New Narrow Road to the Deep North: The Question of Political Responsibility.

Narrow Road to the Deep North is the fourth work in Bond's first cycle of plays, which ends with The Sea. The Bundle, subtitled "New Narrow Road to the Deep North", belongs to Bond's third and most recent series of plays, referred to by the playwright as his "answer plays"¹. Although Narrow Road and The Bundle belong to different series, Bond's obvious pairing of the plays makes a comparative study of them useful in tracing the developments and changes in Bond's political ideas and dramatic methods. In both plays Basho, the seventeenth century haiku poet, plays an important role in that he is the representative figure by means of which Bond analyzes the role of the artist in society. Basho is a false artist in both plays because he fails to criticize and actively resist an oppressive ruling class either in his poetry or in his life; in "The Rational Theatre", an essay which prefaces the second collection of Bond's plays which includes Narrow Road, Bond states that the artist must make society self-conscious by expressing the need for "a justice that isn't fulfilled in the existing social order".² Kiro

¹ Edward Bond in Study, p. 266.

² Edward Bond, "The Rational Theatre" in Bond Plays: Two (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1978), p. xiii.

and Wang represent alternative responses to the society perpetuated by Basho. Kiro's passivity and despair, in Narrow Road, render him incapable of taking political responsibility for the injustices in the city when he becomes aware of them. As opposed to Arthur in Early Morning, Kiro's awareness does not allow him to escape and find happiness. Wang, a politically enlightened version of Kiro, is set in direct opposition to Basho in The Bundle, and illustrates the method whereby political consciousness can be translated into social change through revolution. In the two plays Bond extends his examination of the relation of the individual to society, seen in the earlier plays, by also looking at the social role of the artist. The playwright argues, in Narrow Road and The Bundle, that aesthetic value is determined by political motives, and that every individual should engage in some form of responsible cultural struggle.

Narrow Road was commissioned by Canon Stephen Verney in 1968 for the Peoples and Cities Conference in Coventry, England. The play, written in less than three days, was inspired by Matsuo Basho's travel sketch, "The Records of a Weather-Exposed Skeleton".³ Bond was outraged at the first incident in the story, in which the poet finds and abandons a child on the bank of a river. In the original version, Basho gives the child all his food, expresses his pity in a haiku, and explains the situation as follows:

How is it indeed that this child has been reduced to this state of utter misery? Is it because of his mother who ignored him, or because of his father who abandoned him? Alas, it seems to me that this child's undeserved suffering has been caused by something far greater and more massive - by

³ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 11. The book Bond looked at was Matsuo Basho, The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel

what one might call the irresistible will of heaven. If it is so, child, you must raise your voice to heaven, and I must pass on, leaving you behind.⁴

In Bond's version, the playwright's contempt for a poet who would do and say these things is immediately apparent. Basho introduces himself to the audience in a self-praising, direct address, and proceeds to give an example of the "greater range and depth"⁵ he feels he has brought to the haiku:

Silent old pool
Frog jumps
Kdang ! (173)

The original version of the well-known haiku is much different and contrasts sharply with the discordant poem Bond composed for his Basho:

Breaking the silence
Of an ancient pond,
A frog jumped into the water -
A deep resonance.⁶

The historical Basho wrote this haiku after a long meditation.⁷ His poetic

Sketches, Nobuyuki Yuasa, trans. (England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966).

⁴ Matsuo Basho, p. 52.

⁵ Edward Bond, Narrow Road to the Deep North in Bond Plays: Two (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1978), p. 173. All further references to Narrow Road are from this edition and are noted parenthetically in the text.

⁶ Matsuo Basho, p. 9.

⁷ Nobuyuki Yuasa, "Introduction to Matsuo Basho, p. 32.

ideal was that the poem should express the fact that the object and himself had become united: "However well phrased your poetry may be, if your feeling is not natural - if the object and yourself are separate - then your poetry is not true poetry but merely your subjective counterfeit."⁸ A disciple of Basho rhapsodized about the first two lines of the haiku: "It is only he who has dug deep into the mystery of the universe that can choose a phrase like that".⁹

Bond's obvious parody of the haiku indicates his contempt for a poet who could aspire to oneness with nature yet deny his relation to the world by abandoning a child. In Narrow Road, the peasant explains to Basho the reason he and his wife are leaving the baby by the riverbank: "We're poor and there's no food. We have five other children and if we let this one go perhaps the others will live" (173). The historical Basho did not consider the economic situation of the parents nor the kind of society in which such tragedies occur. Bond's Basho acknowledges the peasants' misery -- he knows they have had to abandon other children in the hope that they would be adopted as potential workers by others -- but he rationalizes leaving the child for the same reason given by the original Basho: "It hasn't done anything to earn this suffering -- it's caused by something greater and more massive: you could call it the irresistible will of heaven. So it must cry to heaven. And I must go to the north" (174). Basho is portrayed as being somewhat sympathetic to the child, when he gives it his food and adjusts its rags, but his physical gesture of turning away from the eyes of the baby signifies the false nature of his search for enlightenment. Bond

⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

explains that "p_7eople like Basho never get enlightenment where they are because. . .enlightenment should have come in the first scene where he found the child.¹⁰ By leaving the child in the care of heaven and thereby denying the reality of the situation, Bond believes Basho invalidates his art; authentic art is a record of reality and an interpretation of it.¹¹ Basho's lack of social responsibility sets in motion the disastrous events of the play, as Bond explains: ". . .if society is based on that sort of disregard for fundamental. . .human instincts, then I think that society must end up in some sort of disaster".¹²

The introductory scene of Narrow Road thus introduces the themes of social responsibility and the authenticity of art. Part One begins with Basho returning to the riverbank thirty years later and finding that a city has grown in his absence. Because each scene in Narrow Road is a self-contained unit, time-lapses such as this can be used to demonstrate cause and effect. By deliberately interrupting the plot and making the action disconnected, Bond forces the audience to examine the associations between the scenes. This method, a development of the episodic structure seen in Bond's earlier plays, emphasizes the analytical quality of the drama, and encourages the audience to judge the consequences of the action in each scene. The quality of Basho's enlightenment after his thirty years' journey is thus indicated by his inability to remember clearly the incident with the baby in the previous scene (175). Instead of an abandoned child Basho finds Kiro, who, unlike the baby in the introductory

¹⁰ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 9.

¹¹ Edward Bond, "Interview with Edward Bond and Arnold Wesker" an interview with Karl-Heinz Stoll, Twentieth-Century Literature, 22,4 (Dec. 1976), 414.

¹² "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 9.

scene, was adopted by a priest after his parents starved to death rather than abandon him. Kiro asks Basho if he can become his disciple in order to gain enlightenment, but again the unenlightened poet refuses to help. Basho states that he learned in the North that "You get enlightenment where you are" (176), and therefore it is ironic that he rejects Kiro because the latter knows only about men (177). The false poet is oblivious to his surroundings and to others, as is made clear when he frets about his house and orchard while Shogo's prisoners march to their deaths; his offer to comfort them comes as a casual afterthought, taking second place to his morbid curiosity (178).

Quickly losing interest in the prisoners, Basho attempts to isolate himself from reality by moving farther down the river, away from the place where Shogo's soldiers throw their victims. Basho selfishly resents the grieving relatives of the victims: "...they ran around looking for somewhere quiet to cry, and they always ended up behind my hut, crying on my vegetables and treading on them" (179). Bond presents Basho as a monster because the playwright believes that one's humanity is formed by social relations.¹³ Basho's self-centeredness and lack of self-consciousness are evident in his haiku about the man who drowns his horse when it is no longer useful as a worker (179). This poem parallels the introductory scene, where the wife grieves that her child will drown because he will not be useful as a potential worker. The poet's blindness to the applicability of the haiku to himself -- he helped drown the baby, as the passers-by in the poem did, by not rescuing it --

¹³ "The Rational Theatre", p. xi.

signifies the degree to which he is a fraud as an artist. The soldiers, who have come to the poet's cottage, enjoy Basho's next poem because it reflects the ruling class values they uphold:

The soldier leant his spear on the wall
 It fell
 Clatter
 They took him in for idleness (180)

Basho's poetry degenerates from descriptions of military discipline to simple narrative statements when he surrenders to the soldiers without a fight. His art and his demeanor indicate his acquiescence in oppressive social structures.

When Basho next appears he is with the soldiers, and again he is asked for help by Kiro, who has a sacred pot stuck on his head. Basho's only advice is to "Think small", and he contemptuously dismisses Kiro for being unable to "make the pot think big" (187). The poet-priest's proposed solution to Kiro's problem is reminiscent of his statement to the baby in the first scene, that it hope for some sort of divine intervention. Basho's faith in religion is a symptom of his self-centred blindness to the nature of society, and is used by him as a way to challenge Shogo's power in I.iv. Shogo, however, does not believe in mystical powers. He has faith in his own political power, which he abuses through tyranny.

Similar to Basho in the introductory scene, Shogo is initially portrayed as an oppressor who also possesses humane qualities. He feels compassion for the Emperor's son, and manages to force Basho finally to take responsibility for a child. Shogo saves Kiro's life by breaking the pot, yet at the same time he sentences a man who he knows is innocent, to death. Basho is oblivious to Shogo's

atrocities because he is unaware of his material environment. He is, however, outraged by the tyrant's lack of respect for religion: "

He knew the pot was sacred. Of course, that's only a symbol, but we need symbols to protect us from ourselves. If he destroys them, there's no future. A fool destroys men but a fanatic destroys their hope -- and he's a fanatic. (193)

Basho's solution is to overthrow Shogo by using someone who understands magic and is more ruthless and powerful (194). The poet's idea of political responsibility -- "I don't like meddling in politics, like most people I have more important things to do" (194) -- is to instigate a system of stronger power, oppression and mystification.

At this point in the play, two diverging lines of action begin to develop. As Basho plots to overthrow Shogo in the North, the ruler remains in the South explaining to his new friend Kiro that his city is perfect because it has "the best drains, schools, churches, water, houses, food, laws, hospitals -- but most important it has a purpose: perfection" (194). In contrast to Kiro, who is a passive observer, Shogo is a born leader; "I can't help shaping history -- it's my gift, like your piety" (195). Kiro is paralyzed by problems which have no solutions (195); Shogo rejects mysticism and religion in favour of the city, which he identifies with himself (195). Kiro and Shogo decide to stay together, while in the second line of action Basho joins forces with the Commodore and Georgina. After his initial instigations, Basho becomes a pawn in the Commodore and Georgina's schemes. Kiro remains a bewildered outsider to all of the political manoeuvrings that take place during the rest of the play. His single, directed action is to convince Shogo to escape with him from the

imperialist takeover by the Victorian "barbarians". Kiro is unaware that by helping the tyrant escape he is becoming an unwitting accomplice to more deaths. In Kiro's eyes, the deep North is a place where confrontations and action may be avoided. Neither Basho nor Kiro, both of whom look to the North for the solution to their problems, realize that enlightenment consists of taking responsibility for one's environment through political action which works towards overcoming oppressive regimes. Shogo discovers that the North is an ideal place to plot a political comeback once Basho, the Commodore and Georgina have replaced him in the South: "Look, I came to this wilderness with nothing and an army fell in my doorstep!" (213). Neither Shogo nor Basho, however, expect the kind of government set up by Georgina in Part Two.

At the beginning of Part Two, Georgina explains to Basho what was wrong with Shogo's government:

Well, Shogo ruled by atrocity. . . It didn't work, because it left people free to judge him. They said: he makes us suffer and that's wrong. He calls it law and order, but we say it's crime against us -- and that's why they threw spears at him. (208)

Instead of atrocity, Georgina bases her government on a Victorian morality reminiscent of that portrayed in Early Morning:

I persuade people -- in their hearts -- that they are sin, and that they have evil thoughts, and that they're greedy and violent and destructive, and -- more than anything else -- that their bodies must be hidden, and that sex is nasty and corrupting and must be secret. When they believe all that, they do what they're told. (208)

Basho had underestimated Georgina's power. She does not care that the people are not happier under her rule as long as they are more obedient.

Basho's statement to Georgina, "people who raise ghosts become haunted" (208), is his first and only truly prophetic remark; the ghost of Victorian repression will haunt Georgina at the end of the play. Basho's actions have brought Georgina to power, and therefore his awareness at this point is ironic. Basho is described by Bond as a ghost, a "hollow zombie" who appears cultured but is empty and uncaring.¹⁴

Basho's actions associate him with Georgina and the Commodore. Kiro's passivity, on the other hand, removes him from the political activity in the South. In the North, Shogo tries to force Kiro to stop thinking and learn to fight. Shogo's interest in this activity stresses the difference between the two characters; each possesses the quality that the other lacks to complete his personality and make him politically progressive. Bond had this idea in mind when he wrote the play: "Shogo and Kiro are really one person. The tragedy is that they couldn't use each other's powers".¹⁵ The dialectic between the characters is most apparent in II.ii during the conversation over the water, which begins with a restatement of the active-passive duality:

SHOGO. It [water] goes fast.
KIRO. But there are no waves. (211)

Bond's stage directions indicate the conversation is calm and reflective, much like the water into which they gaze. Shogo tries to tell Kiro about the guilt he feels, not for the murders, but for something else that he cannot articulate. He feels his life has been determined by forces

¹⁴ "Edward Bond: The First Cycle", p. 43. See footnote 10 of Preface.

¹⁵ Edward Bond, in a letter to Hay and Roberts, 14 April 1972, Study, p. 101.

beyond his control: "But my life goes on and on like a finger reaching out to point . . ." (211). Shogo and the audience are not yet aware that the social conditions represented by Basho's abandonment of the baby resulted in Shogo's becoming a tyrant; human actions determine history and character in Narrow Road. Kiro is unable to respond to his friend's remarks except to repeat Shogo's phrase from I.iv: "The circle gets smaller and smaller" (188 and 211). Shogo's reply, "Yes. . .and the shadow gets bigger. . ." (211), implies that he does not know how to break out of the trap he is in. His past tyranny and his unawareness of his own evil place him in a position of guilt from which he cannot release himself. Although Shogo freed Kiro from the relic that became tighter and tighter on his neck, eventually leaving a round mark, he cannot escape from his own circle, which "gets smaller and smaller". When Shogo returns to the South, he discovers the extent to which he is a victim of the city he created, as well as the oppressor.

In II.iii Basho, who has tried to avoid caring for children, is ironically the Minister for Orphans, and has abandoned the Emperor's son among a group of identical children. Because Basho is the only one who can identify the child whom he used to overthrow Shogo, the latter is forced to kill all the children in order to regain the only kind of power he knows. Throughout the scene Georgina and Shogo call for Basho, who does not answer. The execution of the children takes place only after Shogo's desperate, agonized cry: "Which one of you's the Emperor's son? Please! D'you want to make me do something terrible? (shouts). Basho! Basho! Help me! Help me! Help me!" (217). Basho's refusal to help and his acquiescence in the Commodore's government result in the execution of the children. Unlike the life-like

doll used to represent the baby in Saved, in the original production of Narrow Road the children were signified by Japanese rag dolls.¹⁶ This departure from naturalism is consistent with the analytical style of the play. The use of stage objects to portray the children functions as a powerful metaphor of the dehumanization of children under tyranny. As in Saved, children are shown to be expendable commodities in a hierarchy of aggression. Shogo's grief over his killing of the children is genuine because he too was figuratively killed as a child when Basho did not rescue him from the riverbank. The tyrant is caught in the circle that is getting smaller, the cycle of the victim who becomes an oppressor. Bond explains this concept in an interview:

. . .in fact the child was actually left there, probably drowned. So this play is about a non-existent child. What I am saying is that if the child does survive. . .it will have been taught that the world in which it finds itself is not an uncomfortable world, but an absolute enemy that it must fight, because it has had to be fighting for its life. . .In fact you could say, Basho didn't save the child and so the child grew up dead.¹⁷

Georgina is trapped in a situation similar to Shogo's in that she becomes the victim of the government she created, a system passed on to her by her ancestors: "I learned all this from my Scottish nanny. She taught our Prime Minister, the Queen, the Leader of the Opposition, and everyone else who matters. They all learned politics across her knee" (208). After the massacre of the children Georgina goes mad. She is haunted by the ghost of her government, which helped to cause the atrocity. Her hysterical babbling is a demented version

¹⁶ Scharine, p. 155.

¹⁷ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", pp. 10-11.

of the Victorian morality she used to control the people in the city:

Naughty boys...~~Dirty~~ hands...Nasty hands...Keep your hands still! Tight together!...Stop playing with your sins!...What comes to naughty boys?...(She dances, plays the tambourine and sings.) He gave them snow in winter...and lips that we might tell...all things bright and...dead...(She plays and dances a few steps)...All dead. (218, Bond's ellipses)

Kiro returns to the South in the next scene, and finds that after his escapist inactivity in the North, he is completely unprepared to deal with the society he encounters. The two lines of action come together at this point as Kiro, expecting a city with Shogo in control, discovers his friend is about to be executed, and Basho is Prime Minister. Kiro watches as Georgina and Shogo fling handfuls of Basho's poems in the air. The fluttering pages fill the stage, and create a visual association between the poet's false art and the trial that is about to take place. This connection is further developed at the end of Part Two, when Kiro sits alone on stage reading Basho's poems while voices from the trial are heard through microphones. Again Bond utilizes a visual image -- Kiro sitting by himself on a bare stage -- to demonstrate the significance of the action. In this instance Kiro's isolation from all political activity is emphasized.

During the trial Basho first describes Shogo in mystical, and therefore false, terms: "Dogs howl at him. —If his shadow fell on a tree it died. —Stone flinched. —Coffin breath —" (221). As a counterpoint, Kiro reads a poem about desolation and isolation that appropriately describes his response to the events on stage. As Basho reveals the "truth" about Shogo's past, Kiro reads another poem about how hard it is to live in the world of the play. Basho, the writer of the poem, has helped to create the scene of desolation described in

his work:

The soil was dry
The flower bent its petal mouth
To drink from the soil
The soil was still dry (221)

Basho emphasizes his complicity in the situation described in the poem when he states that Shogo's parents abandoned him because they saw that their son was a monster. At this point the audience realizes Shogo is the child from the first scene and that, as Kiro points out, the "upturned boat knocks against the pier" (221). Because Basho did not rescue the child, it grew up to be a tyrant; Shogo had to become a tyrant to survive in the world Basho perpetrates. The poet claims that he would have drowned the infant Shogo had he looked into his eyes. In the introductory scene, however, Basho does gaze into the child's eyes -- "He stares at me as if I was a toy. What funny little eyes!" (174) -- and afterwards he turns away from the responsibility of caring for it; Basho figuratively drowns the child. The poet's gesture of denial causes these eyes to reappear in the play as the accusatory gaze of Shogo's victims and potential assassins (188).

As already discussed, Bond's parody of the historical Basho's haiku in the opening scene anticipates the poet-priest's lack of social conscience, a flaw in his character that invalidates his art. Similarly, in the last scene Basho's acquiescence in the Commodore's government is signified by a haiku:

I drain the cup
At the bottom
Flags (222)

The hollow patriotism of this poem locates Basho politically, and

identifies him finally as a false artist. The mock crucifixion and dismemberment of Shogo is used by Basho to mystify the people; and make them believe that he has saved the city: "This is your Prime-Minister addressing you! Shogo is dead! The sin is broken! Let the new city live for ever!" (222-223). The re-assembled body of Shogo represents the warped view of man upheld by Basho and the Commodore. That the genitals are intact is an ironic comment on the sexual nature of Georgina's madness.

The play ends with Kiro and Georgina left on stage unaware of each other. As Kiro prepares to commit hara-kiri, Georgina hysterically fantasizes that she is being raped. Each ignores the other's sufferings -- Georgina because she has been driven mad by her false social morality, and Kiro because he does not know how to respond to the world. No longer able to cope with the city, which although it has changed hands several times is still run by tyrants, Kiro seeks the ultimate escape. His lack of responsibility for the society in which he lives is commented upon by Bond through the presence of the drowning man, who chides Kiro for his self-centeredness. Kiro neglects to help the man just as Basho does not help others who need him. The man manages to save himself, thereby symbolically triumphing over the river into which dead bodies are being thrown by oppressive governments, but this optimistic note is tempered by Kiro's death. As in The Pope's Wedding, Saved and Early Morning, Bond does not offer a method whereby society can be changed. The man's survival, however, presents the possibility that there are other people left who may take responsible political action.

Narrow Road argues that artists and other individuals must be socially responsible. Through a demonstration of cause and effect

in short self-contained scenes, the play shows the results of political decisions. As in Early Morning, the actors must demonstrate Bond's analysis by playing each role with calm accuracy and physical precision. Bond sets up visual pictures created by the actors to convey diverging lines of action, and to comment on the events on stage. The trial scene, already discussed, is a good example of how Bond illustrates a dialectic between characters through physical juxtapositions. Jane Howell, director of Narrow Road at the Royal Court, used a wide stage in order to "set part of the action on one side and part on the other. . . The picture-book element in the play was thus brought out in the right way - the actors were able to work in demonstrated relationships".¹⁸ Bond's use of temporal and cultural anachronisms in properties (guns and spears), costumes (loin cloths and uniforms) and setting (Japan in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and Victorian England) emphasizes the causal connection between the past and the present, foregrounding the relevance of past decisions to present political reality.

Bond has argued that the dramatic techniques found in Narrow Road are the same as those employed in Saved.¹⁹ Narrow Road, like Early Morning, however, firmly breaks with naturalism in that the interpretation of reality in the play is more analytical than descriptive. We do not know, for example, how Kiro feels about being passive, only that the consequences of his passivity are disastrous. Similarly, Basho's self-centredness is given as a political fact which causes certain

¹⁸ Jane Howell in Study, p. 99.

¹⁹ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 35.

events, and is the assumption underlying his false conception of art as existing in a realm of pure aesthetics. In The Bundle or "New Narrow Road to the Deep North", Bond allows his characters to verbalize the analysis of their actions, to explain cause and effect. Although Basho remains unenlightened, and is even more dangerous in The Bundle, Wang replaces Kiro and shows why in Bond's view violent political action is often the only logical, responsible method of social change; political responsibility is inextricably associated with revolutionary action in The Bundle.

In "On Violence", Bond writes that "Right-wing political violence cannot be justified because it always serves irrationality; but left-wing political violence is justified when it helps to create a more rational society".²⁰ Later in "The Activists Papers", written after The Bundle, Bond tries to elaborate upon this idea, stating that the struggle for rationalism may have to be violent and use irrational means because it is a fight against irrationalism.²¹ Bond believes that societies in which institutions, language, morality and property all serve the interests of the ruling class must be destroyed through revolution: "That is the good use of weapons. They're used to create a society in which consciousness doesn't have to be distorted. . . It's not merely a struggle to take power and wealth from some and give it to others. . . it must be put into new hands before we can recreate humanity."²² The Bundle deals with the problem of violence as well

²⁰ "On Violence", p. 20.

²¹ "The Activists Papers", p. 91.

²² "The Activists Papers", p. 114.

as examining the moral nature of political activities which, at first, may appear wrong:

One of the things I've tried to do in The Bundle is to demystify the use of moral argument so that we can't be morally blackmailed any more. In order to change society structurally, you may find yourself doing what is, in quotes, wrong.²³

As in Narrow Road, The Bundle begins with Basho finding an abandoned child. Unlike the earlier play, however, the discovery of the child is delayed in order to establish the class-based social relationship between the Ferryman and the poet, and to indicate Basho's moral nature. This difference between the two plays is the first indication of a developmental change in Bond's dramatic method. Although the poet's first statements remind the reader of the first Basho -- both characters consider their personal searches for enlightenment to be more important than their social responsibility -- the dialogue between Basho and the Ferryman is less an argument than a definition of their social existence in terms of the baby. An element of Bond's epic theatre, which grows out of the realism of the earlier plays, is apparent in the fact that the characters represent diverse world views through their individuality. As in Narrow Road, the focus is not on a psychological conflict between the characters. The poet refuses to take the child in The Bundle essentially because he is only interested in people who are of use to him: "If the child had been big it could have carried my bundle. Then heaven's purpose would have been clear".²⁴

²³ Edward Bond in Study, p. 267.

²⁴ Edward Bond, The Bundle or New Narrow Road to the Deep North (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1978), p. 2. All further references to The Bundle are from this edition, and will be noted parenthetically in the text.

This statement recalls the mother's comment in Narrow Road, that only children who can work later are rescued from riverbanks (Narrow Road 174), and anticipates Kung-tu's attitude towards his children, when he sees them merely as bearers of his sacks of grain during his attempt to escape Wang's revolution (Bundle 72).

Basho's haiku is placed directly after his denial of his social responsibility to the child, a decision based on religious rationalizations and selfishness, in order to reveal the nature of the priest's search for enlightenment and his inauthenticity as an artist. The "narrow road/ That leads to enlightenment" in Basho's haiku (2) is a false ideal because the poet, like the earlier Basho, cannot see beyond himself: "One can take ~~nothing~~ into the mirror of eternity but the vision of oneself" (3). His advice to the child, to learn to be patient, is commented on in Bond's Bundle poem "Virtue":

In our world only the evil are clothed in virtue
And a good deed arouses suspicion

Then be hard!
Be unforgiving!
Do not be patient!
How else shall we find justice?²⁵

Basho exits, leaving the Ferryman struggling between his feelings of pity and humanity, and his realization of his economic situation. The Ferryman initially decides to leave the child: "You're a poor man's child -- you must learn to understand. . . the poet was right: patience" (3). The call of the curlew, however, brings him back to the child. His concern for it is indicated by his gesture of arranging the baby's wrappings; Basho, in Narrow Road, makes the same

²⁵ Edward Bond, "Virtue" in The Bundle, p. 93; my underlining.

gesture, but Bond shows later on in The Bundle the consequences of isolated moments of kindness in an unjust society. Because the ideas expressed by the Ferryman are more important than his emotions, Bond uses the sounds of the curlew to signify the feelings that the man tries to repress.²⁶ The Ferryman finally justifies keeping the child for the same reason that Basho rejected it: "A mouth to feed now, two hands to work later" (3). He knows, however, that the feelings of kindness inspired by the curlew are sentencing his wife to a life of hunger and deprivation. Basho's refusal to take the child, in Narrow Road, is an action that proves he is a false artist because he is socially irresponsible. In The Bundle, Basho is shown to be a fraudulent poet-priest because he does not really think about the child at all; his interpretation of the situation is invalid. Contrary to the ideas expressed in Narrow Road, however, in The Bundle accepting responsibility for the child is not presented as a solution to social problems. Bond shows in the later play that saving one baby is not enough, in that it does not change the system that causes such atrocities. Social responsibility, therefore, comes to involve more than the kindness and pity called for in Narrow Road to the Deep North. The social duty of the artist and the individual is to understand the forces that make up an unjust society and refuse to perpetuate them.

As in Narrow Road, each scene in The Bundle is self-contained and functions as a discrete unit which can be juxtaposed with other scenes. This structural technique facilitates Bond's development of his argument by enabling him to illustrate cause and effect. As in

²⁶ Edward Bond in Study, p. 270.

Narrow Road, the audience is forced to make the connections between scenes that sometimes are disconnected. Scene Two, which opens fourteen years after Scene One, is an example of how the playwright uses a time-lapse to demonstrate the consequences of political decisions; a similar technique is used in Narrow Road, as has already been shown. Through the conversation between Wang and his father, we learn that the class-based society of the first scene has become even more oppressive; single acts of kindness do not change the world. The Ferryman explains to Wang why they must steal fish, thereby articulating the basis of the feudalistic society in which they live:

The landowner owns the river and the fish. We can't afford a license to fish. . . You could say he owns us -- he owns the only way we can live. In return he keeps us safe... We're his property. (6)

This kind of verbal analysis of their social situations is typical of Bond's epic characters, and is an extension of the realism of the earlier plays. In Narrow Road, for example, the characters' situations are revealed through physical actions and visual juxtapositions.

In The Bundle, the characters articulate their perceptions of the society in which they live. Thus Wang is shown to recognize the contradictions inherent in the feudalistic system explained to him by his father: "We steal the fish to stay alive to pay taxes so that there'll be no more stealing and the --" (6). Bond intends the river (and therefore the boat and the fish) to represent industrialism.²⁷ In this scene Wang is beginning to grasp the notion that until workers own and control the means of production, that is, the river, society will not change, and all work will serve the ruling class.

²⁷ Edward Bond in Companion, p. 26.

Basho's return from the deep North interrupts Wang's political musings, and acts as a counterpoint to the boy's growing socialist awareness. The poet discovers that he has been walking in circles. Wearing rags picked from graveyards, a symbol of his attachment to dead and reactionary ideas, Basho claims he has found enlightenment after Wang throws water in his face to revive the fainting poet. The water owned by the landowner does not startle Basho into an awareness of true enlightenment. Basho's explication of his enlightenment illustrates his continuing self-centeredness. In Scene One, Basho states that "One can take nothing into the mirror of eternity but the vision of oneself" (3). At this point Basho claims, "Now I am on the other side, on the mirror of eternity" (9). Similar to Basho in Narrow Road, who ironically claims that one finds enlightenment where one is -- meaning that he only sees himself -- the poet in The Bundle is dazzled by his own reflection. Neither Basho remembers the abandoned baby he encountered because neither is conscious of his environment; this is why they are false poets.

Basho's statement to Wang and the Ferryman in Scene Two, "I have found the little stone that holds the laws of the world in your hand" (9), introduces a pattern of images which runs throughout The Bundle. What Basho means in this instance is that his enlightenment enables him to comprehend the laws of the universe. Because Basho is a false poet-priest, his perception of these laws is grounded in an inauthentic interpretation of society. Wang, the eventual stone breaker, recognizes at the end of this scene the power Basho yields as a member of the ruling class; the poet's laws of stone represent the principles of the landowner, who owns the river. The poet's assumption in his haiku

that men are innately evil -- "What is knowledge/ Except that the world is evil" (10) -- coupled with his intimidation of the keepers when he tells them he is a judge, and his concern for his arm rather than for the social conditions in the village demonstrate the kind of principles Wang will have to overcome.

The flood mentioned by the keeper in Scene Two becomes an actuality in Scene Three. In this scene Wang reluctantly acquiesces in the system that Basho represents by selling himself to the keepers in order to save his parents. Bond explains in "A Note on Dramatic Method", the essay prefacing the play, that Wang's cry of "Buy me!" (21) is a moment when the analysis of the play is dramatized.²⁸ Wang does not want to be owned by the landowner, who he suspects is the cause of the flood, but his feelings for his parents compel him to make the same sort of decision as the Ferryman's in Scene One. His is both a personal and a political decision, and his resistance to it is indicated by the stage direction: "He stands stiffly, rooted to the spot" (21). The Ferryman's gesture, he "reaches. . . up as if holding off the sky" (21), shows "how much the situation weighs on him, and how much Wang's decision cost him".²⁹ That Wang becomes Basho's servant reinforces the differences in the political views of each character, and emphasizes that their differences are class-based.

Scene Four opens with Basho writing poetry, much as he does in Scene Two of Narrow Road. The first haiku contains ruling class symbols --

²⁸ "A Note on Dramatic Method", p. xviii.

²⁹ Study, p. 273.

"Army banners" and an arrow -- and describes a moorhen that does not ask questions. Still ignoring the child he spotted when he entered, Basho writes another poem describing his writing brush turning grey from his poetry (22). The poet's art reflects his attitude that "the times [are] so dark, that it is not possible to see what we can do to help ourselves or change the times" (23). This complacency contrasts with Wang's desire to leave Basho and change his life. The poet tries to convince Wang to "stay and seek peace" (24) much as Kiro told Shogo to escape to the deep North. Basho has turned away from the world because, as his seventh haiku states, he thinks arrows and axes are superior to nature (24). Believing that people are innately evil and ignorant, Basho raises himself above the world and "administer[s] law for the good of heaven not the good of man" (24). He does not see any way to change his laws of stone, nor does he want to: "There's no help I can give to those so poor they can only seek self. They must live in ignorance - just as a stone must fall" (24).

Bond has structured The Bundle so that the analysis is revealed in the ordering of the episodes. The playwright deliberately makes certain events in Scene Four parallel those in Scene One. In contrast to Basho in Scenes One and Four, Wang does not ignore the abandoned child; unlike Kiro he is not incapable of action, rather he is wondering what is the correct action. Like his father in Scene One, Wang tells Basho to take the child, but the poet ~~only sees~~ the baby as a way to trap Wang in his house and way of thinking. Wang recognizes the rigidity of the narrow road of Basho's conceptions: ". . . you talk of the way as if it was laid down in an iron map. You must leave the road from time to time -- to ask if it's the right road you're on". (25).

As in Narrow Road, Basho's justification for neglecting the infant is a religious rationalization: "The priests take too many infants. The old suffer....When the temple is neglected, its image no longer works with the people" (25). In both plays Basho interprets social responsibility as the maintenance of the status quo.

Wang's inner struggle over whether or not he should take responsibility for the baby is complicated by the appearance of the mother. In Narrow Road, the peasant's wife explains to Basho that she must leave the baby because of her economic situation. In The Bundle, Wang is in a position of privilege, and the woman echoes the peasant's position. She tells him she sees no way out of her situation, and that she is a victim of society. Her social paralysis is signified by her terror when Wang asks her: "Tell me . . . tell me . . . how I should live?" (28, Bond's ellipses). Wang buys the child from her with Basho's writing equipment, establishing a connection between their transaction and Basho's ruling class poetry. Left with the child, Wang realizes that he cannot save it without selling himself again to Basho. He throws the child into the river because he knows he must sacrifice the child to prevent himself from symbolically drowning in the river that victimizes the village. Saving one child will not stop the water "that goes on devouring even when it's dead"³⁰ (29). Wang does not rescue one child because that action cannot save others: "Is this all? --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?" (29). In Narrow Road Shogo executes the children to maintain the river; Wang sacrifices a child to change it.

³⁰ The theme of sacrifice is further developed in The Worlds, and will be discussed in Chapter Five.

By seeing the world through the eyes of his class, rather than through Basho's poetry, Wang challenges the unjust society in the play. The stage directions indicate that Wang holds onto a corner of the baby's shroud after he has thrown it into the river, thus signifying visually that the child's death is his responsibility. Wang's action is wrong unless he has freed himself to change society. The Bundle examines the moral nature of political action, a more complex investigation than that offered by the simple dialectic between political action and passivity put forth in Narrow Road.

Wang's growing political consciousness is developed in Scene Five. In spite of his despair, Wang is not paralyzed like Kiro by problems that have no solutions; nor is he unable to articulate his problems as are Scopey and Len. Although Tiger, the leader of the bandits, brags that he lost his hand killing an evil landowner, his missing hand signifies he lacks the wholeness of conceptual understanding that Wang can provide.³¹ Tiger's energy, expressed in clipped sentences and abrupt actions, must be directed by Wang.³² Under Wang's leadership, the bandits begin their struggle to create truthful laws, as opposed to Basho's laws of stone:

WANG. Two stones, Hard, dry.. No moss. I strike --
thus! (He strikes them.) A spark! We have met --
I will tell the truth. (37)

Wang explains to the bandits that the landowner has made the river a servant, which destroys the people. The play-within-the-play, another

³¹ Edward Bond in Study, p. 281. In The Woman Ismene lacks a wholeness of understanding, as signified by her amnesia.

³² Study, p. 281.

instance in which Bond dramatizes the analysis,³³ illustrates Wang's comprehension of the problems he posed to the Ferryman in Scene Two. Wang's enacted parable in Scene Five anticipates one of Bond's epic techniques, the use of public soliloquy.³⁴ Through the parable-play, Wang teaches the bandits an understanding of their social situation:

You see how well the landowner works. Everyman must open his mouth and drink to live. He uses the means by which men live to fill them with ignorance. They live by being condemned to death. (39)

Part One of The Bundle ends with Wang's recitation of a poem that contrasts with the false poetry of Basho in that it interprets society, and accurately defines enlightenment in terms of political awareness:

The great thief
Like little thieves
Works in darkness

The poor are ignorant
They live in darkness
What is enlightenment?
Understanding who is the thief
And what is the great light (39)

The poem is read as the house lights come up to emphasize the connection between the action, its political message and the audience's role in analyzing the events shown on stage.

In Part Two Wang does not act alone any longer. He is a founding member of an outlawed, revolutionary collective; in fact he is the

³³ "A Note on Dramatic Method", p. xvii.

³⁴ Public soliloquy will be discussed in Chapter Five. It is a technique that enables Bond to let a character speak with historical and political hindsight without obscuring his individuality.

exact opposite of Kiro. Wang's activities jeopardize his parents, whom Basho visits in Scene Six. The poet tells the Ferryman that Wang and his followers are dangerous because they are threatening the social order: ". . . those who stand the river on end, drown the country" (43). Wang is helping the poor by sending money tied to stones; Wang's stones represent justice, whereas Basho's stones represent rigid and false laws. The soldier, who verbally attacks the Ferryman and his wife, illustrates the position of the ruling class, who view the poor as worthless and sub-human. It is this attitude that Wang wants to oppose by using armed force; he believes that the landowner can only be overcome through violence. Wang will not be satisfied with passive resistance because he feels that patience perpetuates injustice. The peace-loving Ferryman accepts Wang's rifles only after his wife concurs with Wang's argument that a distaste for violence must not hinder social change. That Wang's mother should say this indicates the degree to which she is aware that her hardships have not been in vain. When the bundle that was once Wang is transformed into a revolutionary, the mother's suffering takes on a greater moral and political significance. Her words to her son and husband indicate that she is conscious of the worth of Wang's actions:

The night /Wang's father/ brought you home I shut the door. He sat with you in the boat . . . You started to cry so he cried too . . . You were a greedy child. Always after more. We gave it - when we could. You are right, that's why I've lived like a cripple and can't fight this sickness. And now - strange - you come over the river - hiding for your life - and ask for more - not with a gun - but something stronger - even stronger - as you've shown. Father, do what he wants. (48)

Bond writes, in "A Note on Dramatic Method", that the following

scene, Scene Seven, is intended to interrupt the story in order to dramatize the analysis.³⁵ In this scene Wang and Tiger enter disguised as priests, just as Shogo and Kiro do in Narrow Road. Unlike Shogo, who wants to fight the soldiers because of aggressive pride, Tiger wants to kill the soldier and break the woman's stone cangue because "People who did this -- they made your Wang's parents leave you by the river. Ha! Show them change coming. Tonight their feather pillows like stones" (53). Kiro prevents Shogo from acting in Narrow Road in order to escape from political confrontation. Wang, however, does not help the woman in spite of the pain his passivity causes him -- indicated by the blood spilling from his mouth -- explaining to Tiger that "We have not yet earned the right to be kind. I say it with blood in my mouth. When the landowner is no longer feared then our kindness will move mountains. That is our morality" (54). This moral stance explains why Wang is willing to use violence to overthrow the landowner. Not until he hears that the landowner has fled is he morally able to help the woman, because individual acts of kindness will no longer perpetuate an unjust social structure:

The landowner's run. We worked underground at the foundations. No one saw. But the walls shook. Now -- suddenly -- a brick falls from the top! The first sign of weakness. The people see it -- a sign of our strength! The wall cracks! Now pull it down! (57).

Note that Wang verbalizes the analysis of his actions. The character's motivation in this scene is political rather than purely psychological. The actor playing Wang would have to make this clear by playing Wang's emotions as the expression of a person who identifies himself as part

³⁵ "A Note on Dramatic Method", p. xx.

of a collective. The public nature of the characters in The Bundle is another example of how Bond's dramatic method develops from the earlier plays. In Narrow Road the characters demonstrate political problems. Wang not only illustrates these problems, he embodies them in his individuality.

Wang breaks the stone cangue at the end of Scene Seven, thereby destroying the symbol of Basho's false laws: "Now see - who is the stone - on the people's neck! And who is the stone breaker" (58). Looking at the broken pieces of stone, the water sellers and rice cracker man realize that their world has changed. By offering the man and woman some water without expecting to be paid, the merchants are freed from the laws of capital. As a result they handle the water and treat the action of pouring it for the thirsty strangers with a certain reverence:

SECOND WATER SELLER. (observing himself in amazement, watching the running water as if it were the first time he had seen it, handling the water can as if it had just dropped from space) I pour the water . . .

FIRST WATER SELLER. (staring at his own hand as it moves; almost whispering). I take the cup and. . .

The First Water Seller hands the cup to the Woman. He stares at his hand holding the cup of water. (60)

The broken stones are seen by them as a symbol of their newfound freedom, which enables them to share. They decide to run to the village, and show the people the broken fragments.

Scene Eight resumes the line of action begun in Scene Six. Basho enters with a few soldiers, and accuses the Ferryman of helping Wang to carry the rifles over the river. Tiger has become Basho's prisoner, and when the Ferryman denies his complicity in his son's revolution,

Wang's friend is brought in covered with blood. Seeing that Tiger has been tortured--his tongue has been cut out by Basho's thugs--the Ferryman offers him a bowl of water. After this act of kindness, the Ferryman realizes that individual gestures are not enough to overthrow Basho's world. Holding the bowl of water in front of his chest, as if to invite the audience to share in his realizations, the Ferryman announces his awareness that Wang is morally correct in his attempts to overcome an unjust society:

Why are our lives wasted? We have minds to see how we suffer. Why don't we use them to change the world? A god would wipe us off the board with a cloud: a mistake. But as there is only ourselves shouldn't we change our lives so that we don't suffer? Or at least suffer only in changing them? (64)

Like the water sellers, the Ferryman is now ready to change his social behavior and join his son.

Scene Eight (b) illustrates the transformation of the bundle from Scene One, the abandoned Wang, into the bundle of rifles.³⁶ The victim of society is shown to be an instrument of social change as he plans the revolution with the ex-bandits. Scene Eight (c) and Scene Nine contrast with Scene Eight (b) in that Bond illustrates how the ruling class, unlike Wang's group, are isolated individuals who only seek their own selfish ends.³⁷ Much of the action in Scene Eight (c) is viewed through a window, "a black hole shaped like a TV

³⁶ Cf. "A Note on Dramatic Method", p. xix.

³⁷ This kind of portrayal of the ruling class is also seen in The Worlds.

screen" (67), which emphasizes the self-interest and lack of community of the ruling class;³⁸ only one individual is seen at a time as they cross the stage. Basho's final haiku in Scene Nine indicates the extent to which the poet represents the interests of this social order. His poem serves as the Ferryman's death sentence, proving once again that Basho is a fraud as a judge and an artist. His haiku are, as Basho states in Scene Nine, "official documents" (70):

The ferry pole fell
Deep in the dark water - poked
In the eye of God

The ferryman's son knows he could not drop the pole in mistake.
Throw him in the river. To warn the rest. (68)

Scene Nine also demonstrates the consequences of the Ferryman's decision to help Wang and not betray him. His drowning is heard off stage, accompanied by "splashing and the sound of a wet bundle being hit" (69). That the Ferryman is described in the stage notes as a bundle signifies the identity between Wang (the bundle in Scene One), his father and the rifles (the bundle in Scene Eight (b)). This association, however, could probably not be made in a production of the play. It is doubtful whether an audience would recognize the sound of a wet bundle being hit. What is clear is that the Ferryman is the first person in the play to die in the course of cultural struggle, a situation which shows the difficulties and dangers accompanying the solution to the problem signified by the bundle in Scene One.

The last transformation of the bundle is into the shovels used by Wang's collective to change the river (73 and 75). The second

³⁸ Edward Bond in Study, p. 285.

person to die in the process of political change is Tuan. In "The Rational Theatre", Bond explains that even in a socialist society there "will be untimely loss and the vicious caprice of accident, the old will die and the young still stare uncomprehendingly at the world".³⁹ Although the landowner is still alive, and their society is not yet a socialist utopia, Wang and his friends have managed to overcome the past by taking back the river. Basho cannot take a part in the new society because, like the man in Wang's funeral oration, he is carrying dead ideas on his back; the stage directions describe Basho as "bent, black and as old as time" (77). All that remain of his poems are a few charred manuscripts. Basho has become the "lost child" he abandoned in Scene One, a victim of the society that he perpetuated; Shogo and Georgina also are victims of societies they help to create.⁴⁰ Basho's angry call to the audience to show him the way to the deep North fades to a cry that is both "old and feeble as a child" (78): "Where is the way . . . the way . . . the way . . . ?" (78) Wang's final statement to the audience as the house lights come up is in the form of a request that they judge the morality shown in the play, rather than look for heroes and villains (78). Bond wishes to direct the spectator's attention to the issues presented in the play, rather than to the psychology of individual characters.

In Narrow Road and The Bundle Bond intends to "make the analysis of politics part of the aesthetic experience"⁴¹ The earlier play condemns

³⁹ "The Rational Theatre", p. xiv.

⁴⁰ The pattern of oppressors who become victims and vice versa will be shown in my discussions of The Sea and Bingo.

⁴¹ Edward Bond in Study, p. 287.

unjust societies and argues rather simplistically that political responsibility consists of caring for other people. Kiro is a failed hero because he is incapable of acting. Basho is a fraudulent artist because he does not respond to his environment in an honest way, and he perpetuates the injustice that paralyzes Kiro. The Bundle is an overtly Marxist play that attempts to examine more fully the nature of social responsibility, political action and morality. Unlike Kiro's Wang's dilemma is not whether to act but how to act. His growing political consciousness results in his leading a revolution that produces a socialist society in which the workers control the means of production. Basho, in both plays, is a perpetuator of the old oppressive order and is, therefore, a false artist. The historical motives of an artist, according to Bond, determine the aesthetic value of his art: "An artist cannot create art, cannot demonstrate his objective truth, in the service of reaction or fascism; because art is not merely the discovery of new truth or new aspects of old truth -- but also the demonstration of ^{the} human need for the rational".⁴² Narrow Road poses questions about political and artistic responsibility. The Bundle, one of Bond's "answer plays", indicates the kind of political action that is responsible and analyzes the social role of the artist as an interpreter of reality. In Lear and The Sea, the plays that follow Narrow Road and complete the first cycle of Bond's work, the playwright examines further the necessity for the socially-conscious individual to find a way of responding actively and purposively to social injustice.

⁴² "The Rational Theatre", p. xv.

Chapter Three

Lear and The Sea: Awareness and Political Action

Lear and The Sea, a tragedy and a comedy, complete Bond's first series of plays, and continue his examination of the relation of the individual to society seen in the earlier plays. In The Pope's Wedding, Saved and Early Morning, the protagonists struggle to understand the world in which they live, but are unable to offer methods whereby unjust societies can be changed; Kiro, in Narrow Road to the Deep North, is incapable of confronting the world, and his despairing solution is rejected by Bond. Lear and Willy, precursors to Wang in The Bundle who understands the dynamics of revolution, experience pain and suffering as they are forced to become aware of the oppressive societies of which they are members. Once cognizant of their social situations, Lear and Willy strive to find effective means of struggling against cultures founded on injustice, aggression, fear and socialized morality; the "Author's Preface" to Lear describes the process inherent in destructive cultures whereby aggression dictates morality, which in turn evolves into a form of violence.¹ Cultural struggle, in Lear and The Sea, begins when the protagonists become aware of the forces that constitute reality. This objective awareness also necessitates a subjective, personal rejection of false social myths, and eventually leads in the two plays to action in support of alternatives to unjust political systems. Bond presents these final acts of rebellion as

¹ "Author's Preface" to Lear, p. vii.

symbolic and open-ended because he wants to force the audience to share the problems presented in the plays, and encourage them to work towards solutions.

Bond wrote, in his preliminary notes for Lear, that he wanted to depart from the "Scopey-Len-Arthur Odyssey" because it suggests "the myth of the innocent destroyed by the guilty, the wicked - but this isn't good enough".² Lear is different from the protagonists of the earlier plays in that he, himself, has created the destructive society which he must come to understand. One of the reasons Bond decided to rewrite King Lear was because of his fascination with Shakespeare's Lear who, as he learns how to live again during his self-exile, must "come to some sort of terms with the world that he lives in".³ Bond, however, objects to what he describes as "the worshipping of that play by the academic theatre",⁴ an attitude he feels is artistically lazy: ". . . /it is, nice and comfortable. You don't have to question yourself, or change your society".⁵ Although Bond greatly admires Shakespeare's Lear, he attempts to make the play more relevant to a modern audience by criticizing and reinterpreting what he considers to be the myths in the play;⁶ Bond defines "myths" as the forces and assumptions that shape people's lives.⁷ Bond thinks the endurance and

² Edward Bond in Study, p. 107.

³ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 25.

⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

⁶ "A Discussion with Edward Bond", p. 24.

⁷ "Edward Bond: The First Cycle", p. 40. Bond tends to use the word "myth" as a synonym for "value". Generally speaking, when Bond refers to myths there is a pejorative connotation to his statements.

resignation of Shakespeare's Lear are no longer appropriate responses to political mistakes: "I wanted to explain that Lear was responsible, but that it was very important that he could not get out of his problems simply by suffering the consequences, or by endurance and resignation. He had to live through the consequences and struggle with them"⁸. Bond creates a Lear who engages in cultural struggle leading to political action.

Act One, according to Bond, shows a world dominated by myth.⁹ The myths created by Lear are the assumptions upon which he bases his false perception of reality and his government. In Scene One, Bond reveals the nature of Lear and his society by showing the King's arbitrariness and inhumanity towards those who are constructing his wall, a central image in the play. Throughout the play the wall, as well as cages and maps, function as metaphors of Lear's destructive social structures. Although Lear builds the wall to protect his people and make them free, his intentions are subverted by his false myths, such as the assumption he uses to justify killing an innocent man to hasten the work: "I must do something to make the officers move. That's what I came /to the wall/ for, otherwise my visit's wasted".¹⁰ Bodice and Fontanelle oppose the wall, but not because they have any more compassion for the workers than Lear does. They simply

⁸ "Drama and the Dialectics of Violence", p. 9.

⁹ "Author's Preface" to Lear, p. xiv.

¹⁰ Edward Bond, Lear (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1972), p. 4. All subsequent references to Lear are from this edition and will be noted parenthetically in the text.

want to overthrow their father and set up their own government with Lear's enemies North and Cornwall. His daughters' betrayal surprises Lear because he is unaware of the pernicious influence he and his wall have had on them; he has taught them that power should be acquired at any cost. Ironically, Lear genuinely believes he loves and cares for his people, even as he murders them (7). His declaration in I.i, "I have no daughters!" (6), and his question in I.ii, "Where does their vileness come from?" (9), emphasize that the King sees no connection between his daughters' behavior and his own. Bodice and Fontanelle's final lines in I.i, however, stress their similarity to Lear. Bodice's assessment of the events in the scene -- two workers have died because of the wall -- has her rival Lear for self-centered insensitivity: "As it happens, no harm's done" (8). Fontanelle's claim that she has always been terrified of her father (8) implies her personality has been warped by Lear's false values and aggression.

The civil war has ended by I.iv, Lear has lost and we quickly discover that the government of Bodice and Fontanelle will be no more compassionate than Lear's. Their father could endure "armies on their hands and knees in blood, insane women feeding dead children at their empty breasts, dying men spitting blood at me with their last breath, our brave young men in tears" (7), as long as his wall remained and his name was venerated. His daughters are equally capable of bearing the sufferings of others in order to maintain power. Their torture of Warrington, evidence of their moral degradation, is clearly associated with Lear. Fontanelle, during her hysterical enjoyment of Warrington's agony, calls out for Lear:

O yes, tears and blood. I wish my father was here. I wish he could see him. . . Kill all of it! Kill him inside!

Make him dead! Father! Father! I want to sit on his lungs.
(14)

Bodice displays the sort of arbitrary justice administered by Lear in I.i, in which he sentenced the third worker to death, when she tells Soldier A to beg for Warrington's life in order that she can refuse his pardon. She deafens Warrington with her knitting needles -- Fontanelle has already had his tongue cut out -- and orders him released to set an example of what happens to people whom they consider traitors. This scene, one of the most graphically violent in any of Bond's plays, illustrates Bond's analysis of one of the ways in which aggression receives the sanction of being law and order: "... an unjust society causes and defines crime; and an aggressive social structure which is unjust and must create social disruption, receives the moral sanction of being 'law and order'".¹¹

Lear's exile to the woods in I.v, a situation reminiscent of King Lear on the Heath, establishes a second line of action in the play. Blind to his responsibility for his daughters' atrocities, Lear indulges in self-dramatizing self-pity: "I am a famished dog that sits on the earth and howls" (17). He laments that he is too "old and weak to climb out of this grave" (17), yet he is quick to accept the Boy's offer of food and shelter. At the Boy's home, he envisions an idyllic retreat from the misery which he attributes solely to his daughters: "No daughters! Where he lives the rain can't be wet or the wind cold, and the holes cry out when you're going to tread in them" (18).

In a singular departure from the episodic technique used in the

¹¹ "Author's Preface" to Lear, p. vii.

earlier plays, in which self-contained episodes are juxtaposed in order to demonstrate cause and effect, Scene Six continues the action of the previous scene, and gives the audience a closer look at the pastoral life of the Boy and his Wife. As in Bond's other plays, the setting is established with a minimum of props: a housefront, a well, a bench, wooden bowls. What distinguishes the Boy's home from the world of the rest of the play is the Boy's way of life. Instead of digging graves, the metaphor chosen by the Boy to describe working on the wall (25), Lear's host digs wells (18). His life is simple, happy and he can be kind to others because all of his needs are met. His wife, however, does not share her husband's contentment, and chides him for allowing strangers to share their retreat (21). Educated by priests, upholders of social morality as is seen in I.ii when the Bishop supports Lear, the Wife cannot understand the Boy's way of life, which is a pastoral alternative that Lear embraces in order to escape the reality of his fear and pain (25). Like Lear, the Boy's Wife is a wall builder, and wants to "put a fence round her and the Boy" and shut everyone else out" (26).

Cordelia metaphorically constructs her wall, when she hangs her sheets on the clothesline in I.vii: "The Wife takes some pegs from the wall and starts to peg out a line of white sheets" (26).

Appropriately Lear instructs her in the method of building walls while Cordelia tries to convince him to leave the idyllic retreat:

WIFE (taking the pegs). I'm not having any dirty old tramps about. I'm carrying. I mustn't let myself get upset.

LEAR (adjusting a sheet. Becoming angry).. You don't hang the sheets straight.

WIFE (pegging). I could easily make him send you away.

LEAR. Straight. (27)

The King's dream of the howling fountain that becomes a desert upon which lie a helmet and sword (26) foreshadows the obliteration of the Boy's ideal world by instruments of Lear's political structure. Lear is unaware that wall building helps to destroy the possibility of an idyllic life in the woods.¹² Although he accuses Cordelia of "destroying this place" (27) because she wants to build a wall to protect herself and her husband from strangers, his fastidious help in hanging the wall of sheets makes him an accomplice to the events that follow the soldiers' entrance. When the Boy is killed the sheets become his shroud, symbolizing the violence and destruction caused by "protective" structures which, in reality, imprison people. Lear watches as the Boy's world is plundered by the soldiers. He is not only incapable of halting the carnage which his rule made possible, but his final speech reveals that Lear still dissociates himself from the action. The exaggerated poetry he spouts signifies Lear's incomprehension of his relation to the events he has witnessed; "You've murdered the husband, slaughtered the cattle, poisoned the well, raped the mother, killed the child -- you must burn the house! My daughters expect it! O burn the house!" (30-31). As long as Lear remains in the Boy's woods, he does not gain insight because he is not required to face reality. In Act Two, which shows "the clash between myth and reality",¹³ Lear is forced to confront and

¹² "Drama and the Dialectics of Violence", p. 8.

¹³ "Author's Preface" to Lear, p. xiv.

struggle with the culture he created.

The trial scene, with which Act Two opens, is a travesty of justice designed by Bodice to dispose of Lear. She explains her intentions to the corrupt judge: "This is a political trial: politics is the higher form of justice. The old King's mad and it's dangerous to let him live. . . . I've arranged to call the people who upset him most. . . . Let him rattle on and condemn himself. Goad him if it helps - but not too openly" (32). At the trial Lear denies three times that Bodice and Fontanelle are his daughters (33). Fontanelle tries to jog her father's memory with a story of how as a child she wept when Lear ordered the horse he found on a battlefield to be shot after it had broken its leg (33). All of her childhood memories concern war, death and the wall: "Another time I asked you how high the wall would be" (33). Lear refuses to acknowledge Fontanelle, and he does not recognize Bodice's voice: "That's not my daughter's voice. It sounds like chains on a prison wall" (34). Bodice, in her eagerness to condemn Lear, cannot wait for the Usher, and rushes to give Lear a mirror, hoping his reflection will terrify him and prove he is mad. At first Lear does not recognize his reflection. Instead of his face, he sees a "little cage of bars with an animal in it" (35). The horror he feels for the image, however, soon turns to bewildered pity: "Who shut that animal in a glass cage? O God there's no pity in this world. You let it lick the blood from its hair in the corner of a cage with nowhere to hide from its tormentors. . . . Let that animal out of its cage!" (35). Lear in fact is seeing his own reflection, but only that aspect of himself which he considers to be the victim of his daughters' cruelty. He still does not accept any responsibility for his condition, nor does he understand why he is in

this situation. The only progress Lear makes in this scene is to sense that others besides himself also suffer: "I can't live with that suffering in the world . . . I hear all their victims cry, where is justice? . . . [the animal's] blood's on the steps where the prisoners come!" (35 and 36). Although this realization is only the beginning of Lear's progress towards a more complete understanding of his relation to society, this spark of awareness takes Lear beyond Scopey and Len's incomprehension of the world, and suggests that he may be able to discover a way of dealing with his knowledge later in the play; Lear's awareness at this point is reminiscent of Arthur's vision of the suffering of others in Early Morning. Bodice and Fontanelle take perverse delight in Lear's mad suffering, and sentence him to death. When the sisters are left alone, however, Bond shows they are not secure in their power. In addition to their natural distrust of each other, Cordelia has started to organize a rebel army to wage war against those who raped her, killed her unborn child and murdered her husband.

Bond states that the actor playing Lear should consider the scene just discussed and the next (II.i and ii) as one continuous line of action.¹⁴ Again one sees Bond's technique of continuing the action from one episode to the next in order to focus more clearly on the protagonist's experiences. In II.i and ii, Lear is looking for ways to escape the image of the caged animal he saw in the mirror. His first impulse, as in Act One, is to escape from reality. Lear's cry, "I must forget! I must forget!" (37), invokes the Ghost of the Gravedigger's Boy, who tries to offer him comfort as he did in Act One. To Lear's disappointment,

¹⁴ Edward Bond in Study, p. 127.

the Ghost does not share his terrifying vision of the caged animal because the Boy no longer participates in life. The Ghost is able to conjure up the ghosts of Lear's daughters, spectres of their past selves before they were corrupted by their father. Sitting with his daughters' ghosts, Lear regresses into his fantasy of peace and forgetfulness, the same escape he sought at the Boy's house in Act One: "And we'll pass each other in the street without shuddering at what we've done to each other . . . The animal will slip out of its cage, and lie in the fields, and run by the river, and groom itself in the sun, and sleep in its hole from night to morning" (40). His daughters' ghosts, however, are from a dead past and cannot stay. Lear's earlier imprisonment of them in his wall, his social structure, has "already murdered them, and replaced them with an older and crueller Bodice and Fontanelle".¹⁵ As his daughters vanish, so does Lear's peace. His vision of the animal returns, and Lear imagines that the animal finds him buried in the ground (41). The horror of this image causes Lear to faint. When he revives, Lear has changed. He realizes he is a "stupid old man" (42) who knows nothing about life because he has never taken responsibility for his victims. His vision frequently forces him to associate himself with those he harmed in order to preserve his oppressive and unjust wall. Touching the Ghost for the first time, Lear offers it comfort and pity (42), a marked departure from his previous self-centeredness. Although Lear is beginning to be more aware of others, he is still far from understanding the consequences of his past political decisions. While he remains isolated in prison, Bond shows in II.iii and iv the

¹⁵ Perry Nodelman, "Beyond Politics in Bond's Lear", Modern Drama, 23,3 (Sept. 1980), 273.

political momentum of the civil war. As in his earlier plays, at this point Bond interrupts the flow of the action in order to present short episodes which demonstrate the effects of the protagonist's past deeds.

Cordelia's rebel army is immediately distinguishable from the other military organizations in the play because her soldiers have individual names¹⁶ and do not wear uniforms. Cordelia believes that "To fight like us you must hate, we can't trust a man unless he hates" (44), and uses this reasoning to justify the execution of Soldier I. Although Cordelia does show compassion for the Wounded Soldier, she rationalizes that violence is justified when used to eliminate undesirables. Her statement regarding the shooting of Soldier I -- "When we have power these things won't be necessary" (45) -- is reminiscent of Lear's explanation to his daughters in I.i that they can be kind and merciful when the wall is completed (4). Both Cordelia and Lear misunderstand the nature of power. In contrast Bodice, in II.iv, does not harbour illusions about power:

War. Power I don't decide anything. My decisions are forced on me I started to pull the wall down, and I had to stop that - the men are needed here . . . the map's my straightjacket I'm trapped. (48).

Bodice realizes the map imprisons her just as Lear's wall did. Her awareness of what has happened to her is limited, however, as implied in Bond's stage note: "She thinks about her life, but not reflectively" (48). Although she concludes, "Now I have all the power . . . and I'm a slave. Worse!" (49, Bond's ellipsis), she still hopes to triumph: "War is so full of chances! I only need a little luck" (49). Both

¹⁶ William Gaskill in Gregory Dark, "Edward Bond's Lear at the Royal Court", Production Casebook No. 5, Theatre Quarterly, 2,5 (Jan.-Mar. 1972), 26.

Bodice and Cordelia are making the same mistakes Lear has made. Cordelia thinks goodness can result from violence,¹⁷ and Bodice envisions freedom but refuses to surrender the map which is her straitjacket. Like Lear, she is trapped in social structures which she creates.

The map appears again in the next scene (II.v), in the hands of the lost soldiers leading the prison convoy of which Lear is a part. In spite of the exchange of power that takes place when the rebels overcome the soldiers, nothing changes; the chains of the prisoners are not removed because Cordelia's government will not free the people. Lear is once again oblivious to reality, and yearns for the Ghost, who allows him a peaceful escape from the world. The extent of Lear's withdrawal from reality is seen when he does not recognize Fontanelle when she is shackled to the convoy. The Ghost later finds this calm and remote Lear in the cell where they originally met. As in II.ii the Ghost cannot follow Lear into the world or understand worldly suffering because the winds of reality are too strong (55). Lear tells the Ghost of his latest perception: "There was so much sky. I could hardly see. I've always looked down at the hills and banks where the enemy was hiding. But there's only a little strip of earth and all the sky" (55). His realization that there is more to the world than a narrow strip of enemy territory is another of Lear's flashes of awareness of the existence of a reality external to himself. Lear's new discovery, however, does not enable him to respond to Fontanelle. He may see the sky, but he does not understand his responsibility for what his daughter has

¹⁷ As seen in my discussion of The Bundle in Chapter Two, Bond advocates the use of violence for social change only in certain revolutionary circumstances. Cordelia's revolution, as will be shown, does not represent a genuine social alternative.

become. Not until Fontanelle's autopsy is about to begin does Lear start to see where he is and what is happening around him. The Ghost cringes in fear at the preparations for the autopsy because reality frightens it. For the first time, Lear rejects the Ghost's offer of escape, and consciously opts to stay and be a witness: "I ran away so often, but my life was ruined just the same. Now I'll stay" (58).

The autopsy scene illustrates the clash between myth and reality that Bond refers to in the "Author's Preface", and which has already been seen in Lear's temporary moments of consciousness of a world outside of his myths. Lear is amazed at the beauty of his daughter's body; until this point, he has believed his own myth that she was innately evil. The reality of her viscera contrasts with Lear's false assumptions about her nature:

She sleeps inside like a lion and a lamb and a child. The things are so beautiful. I am astonished. I have never seen anything so beautiful . . . Her body was made by the hand of a child, so sure and nothing unclean. . . If I had known this beauty and patience and care, how I would have loved her. (59, Bond's ellipsis)

Lear begins to wonder about his culpability for what his daughter became: "Did I make this - and destroy it?" (59). His guilt and grief intensifies, and he tries to explain his realizations to Bodice, who denies everything because power is more important to her than self-knowledge. Holding Fontanelle's viscera aloft, Lear announces his responsibility for his daughter's death: "Look! I killed her! Her blood is on my hands! Destroyer! Murderer!" (60). Instead of seeking escape, Lear wants to begin again, to be re-born: "I must become a child, hungry and stripped and shivering in blood, I must open my eyes and see!" (60). Lear's statement that he wants to face

reality is immediately put to the test during the drawn out execution of Bodice with a bayonet. By the end of that violent and gruesome episode, the stage notes indicate "Lear is immobile. He is completely withdrawn" (62). As in Act One, Lear's bold claims of self-knowledge do not yet indicate fundamental or lasting changes in his nature; he has a tendency to make grandiose pronouncements about becoming a new man, but he cannot sustain his intentions in moments of crisis.

Lear's stated desire to see the world clearly is rendered ironic in the second half of II.vi, when he is blinded by the Fourth Prisoner. Lear is locked into a straitjacket, and crowned with the blinding device. This episode, as Leslie Smith points out, comments on Lear's kingly state, and "continues and extends the image of power imprisoning and hurting those who wield it".¹⁸ The modern "scientific device" that removes Lear's eyes contrasts with the bayonet that kills Bodice. Anachronisms in the play are often associated with different forms of violence; Bond seems to be implying that acts of violence permeate history. Blinding, as Bond suggests in his "Author's Preface", is also a dramatic metaphor for insight in the play.¹⁹ Lear, as seen in the autopsy scene, is almost ready to see or understand the world.

The blinding scene stresses that the King, who has tentatively begun to accept reality, must "grope painfully and awkwardly"²⁰ towards a full comprehension of his role in the world. II.vi concludes with Lear helpless and dependent on the Ghost, who can relieve his pain. He

¹⁸ Leslie Smith, "Edward Bond's Lear," Comparative Drama, 13,1 (Spring 1979), 81.

¹⁹ "Author's Preface" to Lear, p. xiii.

²⁰ Ibid., p. xiii.

is now fulfilling a prophecy which he uttered before he understood its implications: "I must become a child . . . shivering in blood, I must open my eyes and see!" (60).

The return to the wall, immediately following the autopsy-blinding scene, reveals some of the real changes starting to occur for the King. Spurning the Ghost's suggestion that they "hide in the scrub" (65), Lear humbly begs for food from the farmer; in Act One his request for food from the Boy was much less respectful (17). Unlike the Boy in Act One, the peasants have no food or shelter to offer Lear. He learns from the Farmer that although some good came to the people once work on the wall ceased -- "The ol' king cleared a good strip a land both sides his wall So we took a plow an' built ourselves homes" (65) -- Cordelia has resumed building the wall that oppresses the people. Seeing that nothing has changed, Lear feels genuine sorrow for the plight of his people. In Act One Lear could bear to see his people victimized as long as his wall was built and his name venerated. At the end of Act Two, Lear's position is almost reversed: "I could learn to endure my blindness with patience, I could never endure this!" (66). He tries to convey to the peasants his knowledge of his past mistakes, hoping they will learn from them:

They feed and clothe you - is that why you can't see?
All life seeks its safety. A wolf, a fox, a horse - they'd
run away, they're sane. Why d'you run to meet your
butchers? (66)

The Farmer and his Wife cannot understand Lear's warning, as Bond explains in the "Author's Preface": "People who are controlled by others . . . soon lose the ability to act for themselves, even if

2

1.0

1.1

1.25

1.4

1.6

1.8

2.0

2.2

2.5

2.8

3.2

3.6

4.0

4.5

5.0

5.6

6.3

7.1

8.0

9.0

10

their leaders do not make it dangerous for them to do so".²¹ Lear's proposed solution to the situation is non-aggressive resistance:

"Cordelia doesn't know what she's doing! I must tell her - write to her!" (67). Because Lear is not yet fully aware of the extent of the political corruption, he believes letter writing is an effective method of cultural struggle. Act Three shows the limitations of this approach.

Predictably, in Act Three, Lear is upset because Cordelia is ignoring his letters. Back at the site of the Boy's home, Lear lives with Thomas and Susan who take care of him. Thomas is protective of Lear and of the small community they have established. Like Cordelia he resents visitors, partly for practical reasons such as there not being enough food (69). Thomas' resistance to strangers also stems from fear: "But we'll all be responsible. They'll say we encourage /deserters/! They'll blame us for everything! It's insane!" (73). He is also aware, however, that Lear's benevolent gesture of allowing strangers to join them, just because the Boy was kind to him when he first came to the woods, is futile, dangerous and politically ineffective; he asks Lear in exasperation, "How can you be so obstinate, how can you be such a fool?" (74). Lear's conclusion that Cordelia "means well, she only needs someone to make her see sense" (74) reveals an arrogance on his part; he thinks he can change the world through an act of will. During rehearsals of the Royal Court production of Lear, and stated that the only reason Lear says "I'm not a king" (74) in this scene is because he thinks he is God Almighty.²²

²¹ Ibid., vii.

²² "Production Casebook", p. 26.

Lear's new role as a "guru" to a cluster of adoring followers in III.ii contrasts with Thomas' growing interest in more revolutionary activities. The King is content to tell long parables about the dangers of building walls or cages, and to explain that the oppressor experiences the pain he inflicts on his victims. The parable of the bird in the cage parallels Lear's personal experiences, but does not propose a method to change the conditions that allow for walls to be built and people to suffer. Thomas recognizes the limitations of Lear's approach. Bond's stagenotes, always important clues to the significance of the action, indicate that Thomas leads Lear away from the strangers who, because their focus is Lear rather than a common political purpose, break into small groups or leave (75). Ben and Thomas propose a more effective though dangerous way of solidifying their support:

THOMAS. Hundreds of people come to hear you now. The government can't let this go on, and they could crush us like that! We need support. We must infiltrate the camps.

BEN. Has he told you? I'll give myself up. They'll put me in a punishment squad. I'll be beaten and starved and worked like an animal. I may not survive - but at least I'll use what time I've got left. I'll help them to organize and be ready. I can bring them hope. You must give me a message to take. (75-76)

Much to their disappointment, Lear's response to their plan is to reject the idea as one man sacrificing himself for others: "If I saw Christ on his cross I would spit at him" (76). Ironically, however, his preaching has turned Lear into a Christ-like figure, whom the people look to for solutions. Lear has offered his followers nothing except charity, a few parables and a dangerous situation. Thomas realizes this and tries to impress upon Lear the danger of their situation:

"We talk to people but we don't really help them. We shouldn't let them come here if that's all we can do. It's dangerous to tell the truth, truth without power is always dangerous. And we should fight!" (76). Cordelia, in Act Two, bases her rebel army on hatred (44). Thomas' incentive for revolution is more positive: "Freedom's not an idea, it's a passion! If you haven't got it you fight like a fish out of water fighting for air!" (76). Lear sees the consequences of his passive revolution when Cordelia's soldiers, who no longer have separate names, arrest the Small Man. Lear's kindness only increases the Small Man's suffering by offering him false hope: "Then I should stay an' be shot like a dog. I lived like a dog, what did it matter? It'd be finished now. Why've I suffered all this" (79). Ben is also captured, and except for his line "Let them take me!" (77), he is conspicuously silent; for him, the revolution has just begun. Lear, however, is defeated emotionally by the soldiers and the Old Councillor, whose actions he should have expected. He is still trapped in his wall because he has not discovered a way to destroy it; telling parables merely explains, but does not change the situation. The King's awareness and suffering are not sufficient to make his cultural struggle effective. He laments that he has no one who can explain to him how to live (80), but he refused to listen to Thomas and Ben, who offered an active, political alternative.

The Ghost, who from the beginning of Act Three has been rapidly deteriorating, encourages Lear's nihilistic thoughts, and offers to poison the well. This solution is regressive and escapist because the Ghost advocates withdrawal from reality, rather than cultural struggle. Too exhausted to oppose the Ghost, in III.ii Lear sleeps

while Susan and John re-enact a version of the love scene between Cordelia and the Carpenter in Act One. Susan and Thomas are reconciled at the end of III.ii, and Thomas' ability genuinely to comfort her signifies that their way of life is not fragile and doomed as the Boy and his Wife's was. The hopeful image that ends III.ii, as Susan and Thomas go into the house together, sets the tone for Lear's new energy in III.iii after his sleep. The Ghost is disappointed about Lear's renewed desire to learn how to live (82). Lear can hear the owl, the "symbol of wisdom",²³ but he cannot hear the fox; Bond explains that the fox represents "a primitive, intuitive way of life, the life the Boy led before his death".²⁴ The Ghost weeps for the life Lear destroyed (83), but the latter must finally reject the pastoral alternative offered in Act One. Bond considers the Ghost to be dangerous to Lear: "I think the ghost becomes a destructive thing in the play. He starts off as a very innocent person, but what he wants to do is live in a small community, in his own private world, in which he ignores certain problems".²⁵

If Lear is to understand the world he helped create, he must not succumb to the Ghost of a "golden past", a way of life to which one can never return;²⁶ to live in the past is to uphold reactionary, dead and therefore dangerous ideas, according to Bond. Lear's ability to face reality is shown in III.iii in his confrontation with Cordelia, who

²³ Edward Bond in Study, p. 23.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 136.

²⁵ "Interviews with Edward Bond and Arnold Wesker", p. 420.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 420.

genuinely does not want to hurt Lear. The dialogue between them begins with Lear's reiteration of his awareness of the identity between himself and his daughters (83), an acknowledgement of his responsibility for the political situation.. Cordelia tells Lear he must stop speaking against the government which she believes is creating a new life for the people (83). Bond intends the turning point in the scene to be when Cordelia is forced to admit people are listening to Lear: "... the one thing she can't do is remove Lear from people's minds. At that moment, Lear realizes he is stronger than she is".²⁷ Cordelia refuses to pull down the wall for the same reasons Lear gave in Act One, and she does not listen when he tries to convince her that unless she does so, nothing has changed. Lear's long speech in III.iii indicates the extent to which he has matured. He has stopped listening to the Ghost, who keeps trying to interrupt his conversation with Cordelia, and finds in himself the "arrogance of truth and simplicity".²⁸

... I've suffered so much, I made all the mistakes in the world and I pay for each of them. I cannot be forgotten. I am in their minds. To kill me you must kill them all. Yes, that's who I am. . . . But I've learned this. . . . If a God had made the world, might would always be right. . . . But we made the world - out of our smallness and weakness. Our lives are awkward and fragile and we have only one thing to keep us sane: pity, and the man without pity is mad. (84)

Cordelia rejects Lear's statements because she does not want to understand them; he may be "the voice of her conscience" (83) but she refuses to listen. Lear sees himself in the above speech as

²⁷ "Production Casebook", p. 27.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

a social being, as an intrinsic part of the people. His realization that people make the world and are capable of changing it gives him the strength to decide to transform his passive cultural struggle into action. He wants to learn how to live so that he can teach the others more than parables (85). His knowledge that he is in the minds of the people makes him responsible to show them a method whereby an unjust government can be toppled. Lear's revolutionary zeal and his authentic confrontation with reality allow him to let go of the Ghost. As the Ghost dies in his arms, Lear surrenders false myths of the past and escapism in favour of a world he will "prove real by dying in it".²⁹ The still pond speech, which concludes III.iii and describes Lear covered in his own tears, serves as his epitaph. His tears of suffering become rain, the source of new life.³⁰ This positive image sets the tone for the final scene, in which Lear's action offers new hope for those he leaves behind.

When Lear says good-bye to Susan in III.iv, he tells her Thomas will understand his actions. He is confident that what he is about to do is not an isolated gesture; the others will comprehend its social significance because he is in their minds. Bond deliberately has several people watch Lear try to take down the wall, which the audience now sees for the first time. A boy, a group of workers and the Farmer's Son, who has become socialized by Cordelia's government, are witnesses to Lear's act of rebellion. In the first edition of Lear (1972), Lear

²⁹ "Author's Preface" to Lear, p. xiv.

³⁰ "Beyond Politics in Bond's Lear", p. 275. Perry Nodelman offers a different interpretation of the ending of Lear than the one offered in this thesis. Professor Nodelman suggests that Lear's final actions are a final repudiation of political action.

is winged by the Farmer's Son's bullet," continues to shovel earth and then, with the second shot, is killed instantly. In the later edition (1978), Bond shortens the ending by combining the lines "I'm not as fit as I was. I can still make my mark" (1978 edition, 102), and deleting Lear's final shovelful of earth. What is significant about the revised ending, the only noticeable change from the original, is that the shortened version results in the shovel being left upright in the wall, as if waiting for the next person to assume Lear's position. In both editions Bond has the workers move towards the body with curiosity, with one worker lingering to look back as the Farmer's Son shepherds them off stage. We already know that Ben, Thomas and Susan will consider Lear's actions as a signal to organize active resistance to the wall; the worker who looks back and the boy may also join them. Lear is not a martyr, rather he is a socially-conscious individual who could no longer be satisfied with passive opposition. Because there are others who will follow his lead, Lear's final act is public rather than private. His action would be ineffectual if it were presented as that of an isolated individual, but the other characters, who represent "the character of a society"³¹ are left to carry on Lear's political struggle against false social myths. In his ending Bond did not want to create a sense of false optimism, but "wanted very much to maintain the feeling of strength and moral resolution, purpose, in the play. . . ."³² Lear succeeds in finding a way to express actively his political opposition,

³¹ "Author's Preface" to Lear, p. xiv.

³² Edward Bond in Study, p. 136.

a development that moves him beyond Scopey, Len, Arthur and Kiro, who are unable to translate moral awareness into political action.

Lear's growing awareness and his increasing ability to confront reality are built into the dramatic method of the play; Bond believes the structure of a play must be expressive of the fact that "what is vital to human beings is their relationship to society and the sort of society in which they live".³³ The King is often separated from other lines of action in a scene, and this emphasizes the protagonist's inability to understand his relation to the world. In Act One, after his overthrow, Lear's tenuous hold on his sanity makes him unable to participate fully in the action or to communicate with others. In I.vi, for example, Lear's cryptic, poetic responses illustrate his introverted isolation: "The mouse comes out of his hole and stares. The giant wants to eat the dragon, but the dragon has grabbed the carving knife" (18). Not only does Lear's language set him apart, but his self-centredness renders him unable to share any activity in Act One other than to help Cordelia build the wall of sheets, the significance of which he is not aware.

In Act Two whenever Lear and the Ghost appear together in a scene, their actions are set apart from the other activity around them. Lear's brief glimpse of reality in the mirror results in his constructing an imaginary world inhabited by ghosts, in order to escape the image of the caged animal. Lear's is a false reality, which separates him from the harsh world of soldiers and prisoners. As long as Lear is with the Ghost, he can avoid involving himself with his people, whose lives

³³ "Interviews with Edward Bond and Arnold Wesker", p. 419.

constitute the other lines of action. These lines of action illustrate the effects of the world created by Lear and perpetrated by subsequent governments. As already shown, Lear's preoccupation with the Ghost is a way of escaping his culpability for the violence and horror around him. Bond does not link the Lear-plot to the episodic progression of the action until the autopsy-blinding scene, in which Lear chooses to look at reality, and some of the myths are shattered. II.vii, in which Lear begs the farmers to rebel, marks the first time the King participates actively and voluntarily in an episode demonstrating political consequences. Act Three traces Lear's growing awareness of the need for action, and his recognition of his social identity in his speech to Cordelia finally binds him to the society of the play. With the death of the Ghost, the lines of action finally merge; to use Bond's terminology, myth is subsumed by reality. Lear's death might be considered tragic in the sense that he dies striking at the wall, the symbol of oppression.³⁴ The play itself is not a tragedy, though, in the way that King Lear is, where we pity and admire the King but are relieved that order is restored. In Bond's Lear, we deplore the necessity that forces Lear to sacrifice himself in order to show others how to change the world; Cordelia has left him no choice.

In his next play, The Sea, Bond stresses "the strength of human beings and their ability to deal with the difficulties of changing the world".³⁵ The Sea looks at the same issues dealt with in Lear: the need for individuals to become aware of their relation to society, to struggle against injustice and to act in opposition to false cultures.

³⁴ Richard Scharine, p. 214.

³⁵ Edward Bond in Companion, p. 55.

Bond does not, in The Sea, present a more advanced analysis of methods whereby unjust societies can be overthrown, rather he looks at the problem from a different perspective. Unlike the timeless world of Lear, The Sea is set in Edwardian England (1907), in an isolated community on the East Coast. In the context of a rigid class structure which defines the cultural life of the town, Willy and Rose go through a process of confrontation with their society, and eventually realize they must seek an alternative.

Lasting between two to three minutes of playing time,³⁶ Scene One is intended to shock and disturb the audience, forcing them to ask questions about the kind of society in which two men refuse to help Willy rescue his drowning friend. Bond's stage notes call for the scene to be permeated with darkness and the sound of a raging tempest: "Darkness and thunder. Wind roars, whines, crashes and screams over the water. Masses of water swell up, rattle and churn, and crash into the sea. Gravel and sand grind slowly. The earth trembles".³⁷ The playwright acknowledges his indebtedness to Shakespeare's The Tempest in this scene, but as with Lear his chief concern is the difference between his and Shakespeare's intentions:

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.³⁸

³⁶ Study, p. 144.

³⁷ Edward Bond, The Sea in Bond Plays: Two (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1978), p. 105. All subsequent references to The Sea are from this edition and will be noted parenthetically.

³⁸ Edward Bond in Study, p. 145.

Whether or not Bond's interpretation of Shakespeare's play is accurate is not the issue, and the similarity between The Sea and The Tempest essentially ends here. Just as walls and cages are the central images in Lear, the sea is the controlling metaphor in The Sea. According to Bond, the sea suggests "the infinite capacity for human beings to adapt and survive", and it is an appropriate image of the "restlessness . . . softness and adaptability" of those who strive for social justice and happiness.³⁹ In Scene One, however, Willy and Colin are overwhelmed by the sea, which can also connote social chaos. Evens cannot help Willy, and drunkenly advocates resignation: "'Ss too late f'ss thass. 'Ss sea 's'l finish all'ss thass" (105). Hatch does not come to Colin's aid because the former has distorted his relation to the world to such a degree that he considers Willy, whom he has never met, to be an enemy: "I knew you were coming. We'll fight you, you filthy beast" (106).

Hatch's paranoia is partly explained in Scene Two, which takes place in the quiet interior of his shop, a sharp contrast to the storm scene. The class difference between Mrs. Rafi and Hatch is immediately apparent, and ~~he~~ never allows him to forget it: "You offer only shoddy! How can you attract a discriminating and rewarding class of client?" (108). Mrs. Rafi's capricious shopping habits have nearly ruined Hatch's business, only one example of the way she victimizes and bullies her social inferiors. The only person whom Mrs. Rafi treats with respect and kindness in Scene Two is Willy, but even this gesture is marred by her authoritarian manner. In light of the oppression and humiliation Hatch experiences daily from Mrs. Rafi, it is inevitable that he would

³⁹ Edward Bond in Companion, p. 55.

seek somewhere to direct his aggression and frustration.

In the second half of Scene Two the effects of Mrs. Rafi's behavior towards Hatch are revealed. He has invented a myth of invading aliens who he fears will come and enslave the community, much as Mrs. Rafi's class already has: "They come from space. Beyond our world. . . . They'll take our jobs and our homes. Everything. We'll be slaves working all our lives to make goods for sale on other planets" (114). These aliens have habits strangely similar to those of upper class Englishwomen such as Mrs. Rafi: "They build formal gardens for a hobby" (114). The comedy inherent in Hatch's delusions is undercut, however, by his rationale for ignoring ships and sailors in distress: "They aren't sailors, they aren't even real storms. These people come millions of miles - they know how to whip up a storm when they get here. We might lose a few innocent men. (Shrugs.) That's a risk, but they're guilty, not us" (115). Hatch's willingness to let innocent men die for the sake of his illusion of protecting the town is similar to Lear's execution of people to speed up the work on his protective wall. Like Lear, Hatch does not have an accurate perception of reality. His cry of "St. George for England" (115), which is accompanied by a gesture of defiance directed at outer space, comically signifies the extent of Hatch's delusions.

In Scene Three, Bond contrasts the genuineness of Willy's grief over the death of his friend to the madness of the draper. Evens, in spite of his initial unwillingness to communicate with Willy or witness his emotions, offers the young man some comfort. The old man also gives Willy a place to express his sorrow without shame. Hatch, on the other hand, is so far removed from reality that he interprets

Willy's tears as a signal to the aliens: "Crying: bad news. That's us. Those devils are up there watching. He's telling them we're onto him" (117). Ironically, Hatch, identifying Evens as an alien, accuses him of living in a fantasy world: "This isn't your sort of sea. This is real sea where you drown. It's not governed by your fancy, twisted laws of gravity" (117). Hatch's inability to experience authentically the world outside his illusions makes him, as Evens suggests, dangerous to himself (117). Hatch's madness, a product of his being deprived of justice, has turned him inwards; he lives in a fantasy world of aggression and threat.

Evens understands what has happened to Hatch, because he too has experienced the oppressive forces in the town. His response, however, has been to withdraw into isolation on the beach. After the loss of his wife, the old man's perception of humanity grew increasingly grim (118). During his explanation to Willy of where Colin's body might surface, his understanding of society, represented by his knowledge of the tides and currents of the sea, is seen to be boring and obsessed (118): "They hate each other. Force. Make. Use. Push. Burn. Sell. For what? A heap of rubbish" (118). Hatch's experiences in this capitalist society have driven him insane. Evens has fled from this society, but he realizes that his understanding is limited. He can only see the "main currents" of life (118), rather than being able to "live through the details" that make life meaningful (118). Willy perceives that Evens's inability to face the "details" of life and his refusal to participate in society resulted in his drunken incapacity to help save Colin. The younger man's exit constitutes a wordless condemnation of Evens' solution. Evens has told Willy that he is "sated with life" (120).

an excuse he uses to avoid cultural struggle and action based on his insights into the world. After Willy leaves, Evens has no more patience for Hollarcut, an illiterate and stubborn believer in Hatch's myth of space invaders. Having complained earlier, "It's hard work talking to you" (119), the old man dismisses the worker's first real question, "What you get up to in there?", a query remarkably similar to Scopey's to the hermit in The Pope's Wedding. Evens' answer is comical but irresponsible: "I shrink little men and put them into bottles. Then the Martians stand them over the mantelpiece" (121). To his credit, Hollarcut does not believe Evens. His contented response, "Thass a tall story, I doo know" (121), is a comic line which Bond uses to show that Hollarcut, the working-class character, is more curious and misguided than stupid or dangerous. Evens' negligence in relation to Hollarcut -- he does not help him come to a more authentic view of the world -- underlines the limitations of the older man.

The most comic scene in The Sea is the rehearsal of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice by the ladies' coastguard auxiliary, directed by Mrs. Rafi. Before the rehearsal begins, Rose enters grief-stricken to look at the sea in which her lover drowned. Mrs. Rafi demands the curtains be pulled to "Shut it out" (122), creating an artificially lit environment suitable for the theatrical travesty about to occur. In Mrs. Rafi's version of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, she plays the male lead, and sings "There's ~~No~~ Place Like Home" while surveying Hades, "the dismal scene" (123); Mrs. Rafi's choice of song and play comments ironically on the hellish world she has created for the other people in the town. Believing the other ladies to be "the intractable clay" (124) into which she, like God, must breathe

inspiration (124), Mrs. Rafi bullies the other women into obedience using questionable logic to quell Mrs. Tilehouse's protestations: "Don't you aspire to be an artist? Think of the miners who spend their lives crawling through darkness so that you may have light. That also, in its way, is the task of art" (124). The false sentiments of the rehearsal are epitomized by Jilly's school-girl gushing over Mafanwy's rendition of Cerebus swimming: "It's so real, Fanny. I can feel the water. I want to put on my overshoes and open my umbrella" (125). Juxtaposed to the artificial environment created by Mrs. Rafi is the genuine grief of Willy and Rose, which is stifled by Mrs. Rafi so that it does not interfere with her inauthentic version of the crossing of the Styx, the river in Hades made from the tears of the penitent and suffering (126).

Although Rose and Willy are silent for most of the rehearsal scene, their presence stresses the parallels between their "real life" situation and the action at the rehearsal, where Mrs. Rafi's Orpheus attempts to rescue Eurydice from Pluto's "iron sea" (129). There is an obvious reference here to Willy's endeavors in Scene One to rescue Colin from the sea. At the same time, Willy's desire in Scene Four to "save" Rose, who plays Eurydice, from a grief that isolates her from the world also parallels the play-within-the-play. Rose's first words as Eurydice emphasize the sadness that threatens to alienate her from reality:⁴⁰ "I am queen of this dark place. My heart burns with a new cold fire. Your love, your fear, your hope - What are they to me now? dust scattered over the sea" (130). Unlike the other women, Rose expresses truth throughout. The sound of the guns signals an end to

⁴⁰ This point is also made in Study, p. 153.

Mrs. Rafi's rehearsal -- reality interferes with her "art" -- and reminds Willy of the events in Scene One. His recollection of Colin's drowning frightens Rose. Although she offers some comfort to Willy she is more comfortable in the sheltered world of the rehearsal where she is alone with her grief. By the end of Scene Four, Willy is determined to face and understand what happened on the beach, the first step towards his eventual awareness of the nature of the society in the town:

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. (131)

Scene Five is the only scene in which Willy does not appear; he witnesses the effects Mrs. Rafi has on Hatch, rather than the actual process of his humiliation.⁴¹ The causes of Hatch's increasing paranoia are made more clear in this scene by his direct association of the alien invaders with the class system. Hatch explains to Thompson, Carter and Hollarcut that the aliens want to prevent marriages between "nice, clean, well-brought up members of the gentry. . . .The fewer we are the easier we're overcome" (133, my emphasis). The draper's use of the pronoun "we" signifies his identification with the gentry, and his sentimental description of them shows that Hatch's madness is partly a result of his being a victim of socialized morality. In the "Author's Preface" to Lear, Bond explains that social morality is a product of a ruling class moral code based on false notions of law and order, class and human nature, which allows people with unjust social privileges to

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 40.

maintain their power.⁴² Those members of the working class who accept the judgements of the ruling class are in conflict with what Bond sees as their basic need for justice: "Their social morality denies their need for justice, but that need is so basic it can only be escaped by dying or going mad".⁴³ Hatch's insanity is a result of his acceptance of Mrs. Rafi's morality, a situation that causes him to fight against his own repressed need for justice: "By calling the unjust world good they recreate it in themselves and are condemned to live in it".⁴⁴ Hatch confides in the others that he can recognize aliens "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" (134). This statement reveals that the draper's instability is caused by a capitalist system which he upholds even as it destroys him. The second part of Scene Five, in which Mrs. Rafi refuses the velvet she ordered in Scene Two, shows the systematic destruction of the draper by the representative of the ruling class in the play.

Mrs. Rafi's stated reason for refusing to accept the fabric is a "moral" one: "Mr. Hatch, you cannot expect me to patronize a tradesman who ignores his duty as a coastguard" (136). We learn, however, that Mrs. Rafi has in the past cancelled purchases so habitually that Hatch's business is on the verge of financial collapse. Hatch tries to remain calm, explaining to Mrs. Rafi that all his capital has gone into purchasing the velvet, but her rigid moral posturing drives him to the

⁴² "Author's Preface" to Lear, p. vii.

⁴³ Ibid., p. ix.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. ix.

breaking point: "My name, my goodwill, my whole life's work is at stake. I'm on the edge of a terrible disaster" (137). No longer able to live the double life of a draper and a self-appointed St. George, defender of England, Hatch tries to convince Mrs. Rafi that Willy is an enemy spy. As he watches his life's work being destroyed by Mrs. Rafi, his attempts to salvage his shop by flattering and begging Mrs. Rafi are interrupted by bouts of hysterical paranoia: "D'you want me to crawl, Mrs. Rafi? . . . 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 . . . the welfare and livelihood of the whole town! He's tricked you. Only I spotted him" (137). Mrs. Rafi's response to Hatch's ranting indicates the power she has in the community. She chides him for being "over-imaginative for a draper" (137), and informs him that he has not found his proper place in the community, and therefore should leave (137). Her words are not idle threats, as seen in her physical removal of Thompson immediately following her exile of Hatch.

The tension in Scene Five continues to build when Hatch picks up the shears and starts cutting the fabric for Mrs. Rafi's curtains. The material becomes the object of Hatch's aggression, and he slashes at it with the shears and tears it with his hands. His violent cutting of the velvet, an action he refers to as "the gesture of my soul" (140), is a physical correlative of the anger generated in him by social injustice: "They stamp on you but they wipe their little boots first" (139). The climax of the scene comes when Hatch hits and wounds Mrs. Rafi with the shears. His paranoid fantasies spill over into reality, terrifying both of them. At this moment the audience must cease to

sympathize with Hatch. Although he is clearly a victim of Mrs. Rafi's society, his madness now makes him dangerous to others, especially to Willy, who is not even a member of Mrs. Rafi's community. Once Hatch has attacked Mrs. Rafi with the shears, his previous threats to Willy take on a sinister aspect: "I'll take my shears to that little swine. I'll snip him. I'll improve his outline" (138). The frantic activity of the scene, punctuated by the doorbell,⁴⁵ slows down after Mrs. Rafi is cut. The scene ends with her reasserting the system that destroyed Hatch. More concerned with the scandal than with the fact that she has ruined the draper, Mrs. Rafi chides Carter: "And your superiors, they'll certainly be pained by these excesses. . ." (143). Mrs. Tilehouse, hopeful at first that Mrs. Rafi had apologized to her with her last breath, also reaffirms the class system by telling Carter she is grateful for his help, as long as he will not take her arm when they are walking in public places (144). Only Hollarcut shows any concern for Hatch. The last speech before the interval is Hollarcut's offer to Hatch of food and tea; himself a victim of the class system, Hollarcut empathizes with the draper.

The image that opens the second half of The Sea is based on a story Bond heard as a youth:

. . . 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 the jumper, and his hands were stretched upwards, still caught in the thing, and he drowned like that.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Study; p. 157.

⁴⁶ "Drama and the Dialectics of Violence", p. 14.

For unexplained reasons this story fascinated Bond, and it became the starting point for The Sea.⁴⁷ When Willy and Rose enter in Scene Six, they do not at first notice Colin's corpse. Their discussion of Colin precedes their discovery of his body, and prepares Willy and Rose to face the reality of his death. Willy describes Colin in human terms, as a brave lad who was afraid of losing his girlfriend (146). Rose compares him to an eternal flame, and her memories of Colin idealize him: "I was always happy with him. There was nothing mean and selfish in it. It seemed perfect. Now I have nothing to live for . . . He was the only person who could understand me now" (147). Rose's grief causes her to reject Willy's offers of comfort. Like Evens, or Lear at the Boy's home in Act One of Lear, she is happier on the beach, where she is isolated from society. Willy refuses to accept this approach to life; he has already experienced the consequences of Evens' escapism. Willy concurs with some of Evens' criticisms of the world, but he comes to a different conclusion:

If you look at life closely it is unbearable. What people suffer, what they do to each other, how they hate themselves, anything good is cut down and trodden on. . . . It is all unbearable but that is where you have to find your strength, What else is there? (148)

Willy urges Rose not to turn away from the world. She must struggle to live in society and not give up, because "if you do you lose everything" (148). Rose's acceptance of Willy's speech -- "How just. How sane" (148) -- prepares her for the discovery of her lover's body. Their calmness when they discover the corpse comes from an acceptance

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 14.

of the harsh realities of life and death.

The quiet rationality of this scene contrasts with the frantic activity and noise of the previous scene in which Hatch's delusions overcome his sanity. Similarly, the second half of Scene Six, in which Hatch attacks the corpse, juxtaposes Hatch's hysterical madness with Willy and Rose's calm and growing awareness. Like Lear, who had to surrender the ghost of an idyllic past, Rose is beginning to let go of her idealized memories of Colin and align herself with Willy. Bond describes Colin as "an ideal figure who would have been impossible to live up to".⁴⁸ Both Willy and Rose are striving to "look into the fire" (148) of truth. Hatch, on the other hand, is submerged in his fantasy world, as seen in his "innocent murder" of Colin, who he thinks is Willy. Unable to analyze his social situation, Hatch lashes out at the body in the same vicious and blind way that he attacked the material. His madness makes him incapable of authentic cultural struggle.

Like the Ghost in Lear, Colin thus undergoes a second death in The Sea. The Ghost's second death marks Lear's rejection of reaction and escapism, and frees him to take political action. Although horrifying to Rose, witnessing Colin's second death forces her to relinquish her idealized memories of the past. This confrontation with the objective reality of death links Rose to Willy, who opposes Evens' policy of escapist noninvolvement. Bond's stage notes for the end of this scene emphasize the differences between the men: "Evens and Willy stand some way apart. They face half upstage and wait in silence. The body lies upstage" (150). The final visual image is of a triangle.

⁴⁸ Edward Bond in Study, p. 157.

Willy and Colin represent the poles of life and death, and Evens is the wise Fool who does not know how to act.

The clifftop funeral in Scene Seven rivals the rehearsal in Scene Four for comic intensity. Once again Mrs. Rafi creates a situation of false sentimentality set in the context of an authentically sad event, the scattering of Colin's ashes. The rivalry between Mrs. Rafi and Mrs. Tilehouse for the most elaborate descant during the hymns mocks the solemnity of the funeral service. Mrs. Rafi's self-dramatizing, Under-the-Chestnut-Tree version of a poem results in the desecration of Colin's ashes, while Mrs. Tilehouse competes for attention with her conspicuous search for the smelling salts. As the funeral degenerates into a petty quarrel between the two ladies, Hatch, thinking it is Willy who is dead, enters "in a frenzy of excitement and triumph" (156). His misapprehension of the situation is similar to that of Mrs. Rafi and Mrs. Tilehouse's. Mrs. Rafi's accusation that Hatch has no respect for the dead, as she throws handfuls of Colin's ashes at the draper (157), ironically emphasizes that the woman prefers her own world of false theatrics to reality. In his madness, Hatch has also constructed a surrogate version of the funeral, but his powerless position in the class society of the play results in angry frustration. Willy attempts to calm Hatch, who becomes violent; the former wants to ground the latter in reality by telling him he has nothing to fear (157). Hatch, however, is beyond Willy's help. Hollarcut stresses that Hatch's condition is a product of his victimization by people such as Mrs. Rafi: "He only stopped yoor spoutin' for a little while. Not even so much. Take more'n a few whacks t'shut her up. How hev the likes a him ever harmed yoo? Look on him now, if yoo can" (157-8).

Hollarcut's limited understanding of what happened to Hatch is not sufficient to change Mrs. Rafi. As in Scene Five Mrs. Rafi remains to reassert the superiority of her way of life. She assures the ladies, "Our behavior was as usual an example to the town" (159), and explains that the "high emotionalism of the occasion" merely shows "the depth of our feelings" (159). Significantly Rose is not present during Mrs. Rafi's articulation of her social myths. Having taken control of the situation by assigning everyone including Evens a task or a punishment, Mrs. Rafi makes a Bodice-like confession to Willy about the nature of power. She tells Willy people expect her class to bully them, and that she gives the town "a sense of order and security" (160). Like Bodice Mrs. Rafi concludes that no other path is open to her because of her upbringing and social position. She is also aware that when she is old and helpless, her victims will exact their revenge (161). She bids Rose, who enters after the speech, to leave the town with Willy to avoid being caught in this trap.

Mrs. Rafi evokes some sympathy until Rose sets her remarks in perspective: "Don't feel sorry for aunt Louise. She's such a coward. Haven't you noticed? It's safer to stay in the garden and shout over the wall. Don't feel sorry for her. She's a bully and only the weak ones like being bullied. The town's full of her cripples. They're the ones she's nicest to" (162). Rose, however, is not yet ready to act upon her awareness of the nature of Mrs. Rafi's society, partly because she still clings to memories of the past. When Willy, a life-affirming character who has escaped death twice in the play, kisses her, Rose is not sure if she will be able to see him as an individual independent of Colin. Her hesitation towards him causes Willy to accuse her of being like her aunt:

"You talk and have no courage" (163). In answer Rose covers the piano with a sheet, which according to Bond's stage notes is the colour of the one covering Colin's body in Scene Six (150 and 163). Rose thus completes her mourning, and lets go of the past. Her placing of the chair in which Mrs. Rafi sat for her "confession" by the covered piano symbolically groups her aunt's statements with other ideas she leaves behind as she exits with Willy towards the sea.

The last scene in The Sea takes place on the beach. Evens is now more understanding towards Hollarcut, who tells him the draper was the only person ever to be kind to him or to treat him with respect. Although Hollarcut incorrectly blames Evens for Hatch's madness, at least there is enough communication between them in the scene to neutralize the young man's aggression, a progression from The Pope's Wedding, in which "the young man kills the old man because there is absolutely no possibility of any communication between them. Not just words, not even feelings".⁴⁹ The society in the town, however, remains unchanged in spite of Hollarcut's sabotaging of Mrs. Rafi's garden. Evens too remains essentially the same, still shunning the town and drinking to dull the harshness of reality. Evens retains his sanity in the midst of his despair only because he has faith in the tenacity of the dialectic of life and death:

I believe in the rat because he has the seed 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. . . . All destruction is finally petty and in the end life laughs at death. (168)

The old man, in spite of his faith in evolution, fears a future in which

⁴⁹ "Edward Bond: The First Cycle", p. 45.

tragedy will be replaced by discipline and madness, a condition that will exclude joy and laughter. Evens's vision of the world and his certainty that something must be done to prevent disaster is passed on to Willy, whom he exhorts to build a better world: "Don't give up hope. That's always silly. The truth's waiting for you, it's very patient, and you'll find it. Remember, I've told you these things so that you won't despair. But you must still change the world" (169).

The Sea ends with Rose and Willy on their way to catch the train, a hopeful sign that their resistance to Mrs. Rafi's society may be translated into political action. Although their departure may appear to be an escape from rather than a confrontation with Mrs. Rafi's world, Evens's farewell exhortation "But you must still change ^{the} world" (169), lends an unmistakably affirmative resonance to their exit. In Lear the protagonist engages in a physical act of revolution by taking down his wall, and the shovel is left upright as a signal to others to continue his fight. Similarly, in The Sea Bond leaves Willy's final sentence open-ended in order to force the audience to complete the struggle for a society that is more sane and just. In both plays Bond wants his political message to extend beyond the worlds of the plays; his dramatic technique of emphasizing the social and class identities of the characters helps him to accomplish this goal. The characters themselves struggle in the plays to understand their relation to society, and this awareness is the first stage in the process of political change. As in earlier plays, Bond structures Lear and The Sea in such a way that social causes and effects are illustrated. In a departure from the use of self-contained episodes, the playwright sets up lines of continuing action which allow him to probe in detail the sources of the political problems

examined in the plays. In his next two plays, Bingo and The Fool, Bond turns to history in order to continue his examination of the role of the artist in cultural struggle. The Woman, which completes Bond's second series of plays, uses epic characters to present a public dialectic between opposing cultural values.

Chapter Four

Bingo, The Fool and The Woman: The History Plays

When Edward Bond first started to write plays, he speculated that his life's work would consist of the series of plays ending with The Sea.¹ Upon completion of The Sea, however, Bond embarked upon a group of history plays, which continued to deal with the problem of cultural struggle already introduced in Lear and The Sea. According to Bond, culture is not something independent of material reality;² rather it is "the implementation of rationality in all human activity".³ Ideally technology, science, political and economic structures work together in a culture, and are related to the environment in a way that enables people to continue their lives and broaden them socially and humanely.⁴ Culture is not, therefore, merely a synonym for "art" or "cultivation". It is a characteristic of human reality that tells an individual how he or she can and ought to live so that there is a future.⁵ In Bond's view, culture today is a socio-material condition that is predicated upon

¹Edward Bond in Companion, p. 74.

²"Edward Bond: From Rationalism to Rhapsody", p. 110.

³Edward Bond, "Introduction" to The Fool, p. xii.

⁴Ibid., p. xii.

⁵Ibid., p. xii.

a set of socialist ethical imperatives. The role of the artist and of every individual in society is to monitor and contribute to the struggle to create this culture; as seen in Lear and The Sea, awareness of the injustices of society is a necessary prerequisite for the overthrowing of false myths. Creative imagination is a necessary and useful element in a culture when the artist interprets the world rationally,⁶ thereby revealing and criticizing the social forces that constitute reality.

In Bingo, The Fool and The Woman, Bond freely reconstructs history as if the cultural values he upholds in the present applied in the past. Shakespeare fails in his social obligations by refusing to participate in the cultural struggles of the victims of the Welcombe enclosures. His passivity amounts to acquiescence in the false myths of a class society, and contributes to the destruction of himself and those around him. Shakespeare's artistic insight eventually enables him to perceive the consequences of his political decisions, and the discrepancy between his art and his life drives him to despair. The Fool, loosely based on the life of the nineteenth-century romantic poet John Clare, shows how the working class artist becomes a victim of the false culture of a class society. Because he does not completely devote his life to the cultural struggles of his own class Clare ends up in a cultural limbo, rejected by the ruling class but isolated from the working class. This situation encourages his tendency to live in a fantasy world, a predicament he repudiates in his old age. The Woman, written after Bond

⁶ Ibid., p. xiii.

finished a series of short commissioned works,⁷ looks at the theme of culture from a different perspective. Rather than using an artist-figure to analyze the cultures of past eras, the The Woman Bond creates public characters who in the context of ancient Greece enact a confrontation between opposing cultural assumptions. As will be shown, The Woman demonstrates some of Bond's epic methods.

(i)

Bingo and The Fool: The Artist's Role in Cultural Struggle
as seen from an historical perspective

As in The Sea, Bond locates Bingo in a specific historical time frame, Warwickshire in 1615 and 1616. Historical accuracy, however, is not the playwright's main concern, because Bond selectively examines the past in order to help the audience evaluate the present. The simple setting is dominated by a hedge running across the top of the stage, which later in Scene One serves as a reminder of Shakespeare's role in Combe's plan to enclose the common fields: "We're going to enclose--stake out new fields...and shut them up behind hedges and ditches".⁸ In spite of his

⁷ Edward Bond's A-A-America (London: Eyre Methuen, 1976) consists of Grandma Faust: A burlesque and The Swing: A documentary, and was written for Inter-Actions' "American Connection" season at the Almost Free Theatre, London, in 1976. Stone, published with A-A-America, was commissioned by Gay Sweatshop, and was performed at the ICA Theatre, London, in 1976. Passion, published with Bingo, was written for the CND anti-nuclear group in 1971.

⁸ Edward Bond, Bingo: Scenes of money and death (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1974), p. 5. All further references to Bingo are from this edition and will be noted parenthetically in the text.

conspicuous silence and refusal to respond to the other characters in Scene One, Shakespeare is not completely unaware of what is going on around him. The Old Woman tries to impress upon Shakespeare that Combe's plan will "ruin whole families" (4), but Shakespeare is already conscious of the implications of enclosure, as evidenced by his questions and statements about the consequences of changing from corn to sheep farming (5), the inevitable increase in poverty among the peasants (6), and his anxiety about his private lands (7); unlike Lear and Willy, Shakespeare initially possesses some understanding of his society. The paper Shakespeare carries when he enters in Scene One is not a poem or a play, as the audience might expect, but a list of figures he has prepared to guarantee his income after enclosure (7).

Shakespeare's insight into enclosures is limited, however, as indicated by his belief that his desire for security for himself and his investments constitutes a neutral position. Even Combe recognizes that Shakespeare's support of enclosures is implied in the latter's position, and he advises the artist to avoid the tenants' requests for help: "Stay in your garden, I'll pay for that" (6). Shakespeare submits to the insult of bribery with an ease that suggests moral emptiness. What Shakespeare does not realize is that staying in his garden implies acquiescence not only in Combe's plans to enclose the fields, but also in the false myths the judge uses to justify his actions. Combe's values, the assumptions underlying the irrational culture in the town, are dictated by capital: "Everyone listens to money" (5). According to Combe, "[m]en are donkeys, they need carrots and sticks" (6), and he illogically employs

this philosophy to justify creating new poverty and starvation in the short run so that he and the other landowners can eventually grow more wheat (6). The "law and order" Combe represents is also illustrated in Scene One by his treatment of the Young Woman. Assuming her class is innately immoral and evil--"Lie when they learn to speak. First time they say father it's a lie" (9) -- Combe sentences her to be whipped for begging; he claims that he is protecting the public(9). The Scene ends with the juxtaposition of two actions, which illustrate that Shakespeare is accepting Combe's culture. The woman is dragged off to be whipped for being hungry, and Shakespeare sits in his garden, not opposing Combe's false justice.

Scene Two takes place six months later, and demonstrates the effects upon individuals of a society formed by the cultural values of men like Combe. As seen in Narrow Road and The Bundle, Bond uses time-lapses in order to demonstrate his analysis through an illustration of cause and effect. The Old Woman tells Judith that her husband was forced to fight in a ruling class war, which left him with "the mind of a twelve year ol' an' the needs on a man" (11). Because Shakespeare does not oppose this kind of exploitation and oppression of the poor, he is disturbed by the peasants who are rebelling against the enclosures: "I didn't sleep last night. So many people on the streets. All that shouting. And the sky-like day" (12). Like Basho in Narrow Road, who worried about his garden, Shakespeare is more concerned about his private property than for the causes of the social unrest around him. The rebels, the Old Man, his wife and the Young Woman who is still shaking from the whipping, are victims of the society Shakespeare upholds by not rejecting

Combe's proposal. In the face of the hardships and injustice perpetrated upon them, the Young Woman and the Old Man help each other to survive and be happy. Likewise, the Old Woman lives without bitterness, and pities rather than resents the girl who has befriended her husband (18).

Juxtaposed with Shakespeare's passivity, the working class characters' resilience is commendable, even noble. Shakespeare's complicity in the suffering of these people is made official when he signs Combe's document (16). Ironically, before meeting with Combe, he offers the Young Woman food, money and clothing. Shakespeare's extension of private charity to the Young Woman contrasts with his public action of signing a document that will keep her in need of charity.

Shakespeare's blindness to the human cost of his political decisions is also evident in his relationship with Judith. His daughter is corrupted by Shakespeare's lack of sensitivity to those around him. Shakespeare's refusal to acknowledge or communicate with Judith leads to her unwitting betrayal of the Young Woman. Judith tries to confront Shakespeare with the truth about his treatment of others, but her father's response is cruel and sneering: "Stop it, Judith. You speak so badly. Such banalities. So stale and ugly" (18). This is the first time in the play that the audience is deliberately reminded that Shakespeare is a writer. His criticism of Judith's lack of eloquence reveals that although his artistic instinct may be to see the truth and express it in beautiful language, his economic self-interest blinds him to the truth about his relations with others in society; this blindness is apparent in his signing the document for the enclosures. At this point in the play a gulf is

apparent between Shakespeare's aesthetic instincts and his actions as a property owner. Shakespeare's skill with words is not being used to understand his society; his art and his politics are mutually exclusive. Bond's commentary upon an artist who does not use his poetic insight to monitor and create culture is contained in his having Judith remove Shakespeare's pen and ink: "You don't need them? You sit, and brood all day" (18). Shakespeare's creative powers appear to be sapped by his inauthentic response to reality.

The first indication that Shakespeare is starting to think about his relation to the world is in Scene Three, in which he sits with his back to the gibbeted Young Woman. Hanged for begging for money and destroying private property, the Young Woman is a visual image of the subtitle of Bingo, "Scenes of money and death". Joan and Jerome contrast with the other figures in this scene as they happily enjoy a rest from working in the field (22). Not yet thrown off their land, they seem to uphold Combe's justice. The Son, like Joan and Jerome, believes the woman deserved her death, but his reasons are based in his puritan outlook, which accepts everything as the work of God.⁹ Shakespeare's exit during the son's prayer is carefully described by Bond: "Shakespeare has stood up and walked slowly away. His movements and face express nothing (23). His re-entrance, however, signifies that Shakespeare is trying to

⁹ John Worthen, "Endings and Beginnings: Edward Bond and the Shock of Recognition", Educational Theatre Journal, 27, 4 (Dec. 1975), p. 475.

understand the events occurring around him. To his bewilderment, Shakespeare discovers his long silences have caused him to forget the questions that must be asked about society (25) although something in him insists that he ask them anyway. Ignoring Judith, Shakespeare uses his poetic skill to construct an extended metaphor of a baited bear and a trained ape in a speech that describes the cruelty individuals inflict upon each other (25). Ironically, Shakespeare is terribly unkind to Judith by not acknowledging her presence, even as he states: "I'm stupified at the suffering I've seen" (26). Like Bond's Lear, Shakespeare makes grandiose poetic statements which do not necessarily signal the kind of awareness that leads to action. He states, for instance, that his theatre does not prevent the cruelty he sees in the world (26), and that as an artist he has "usurped the place of god, and lied...." (27). These recognitions, along with his brief concern for his daughter later in the scene (27), do not help Shakespeare discern what he must do: "Where shall I go? London? Stay here?" (28). The Old Woman who tries to comfort her master cannot afford the luxury of asking questions she does not know how to answer (27). The juxtaposition of Shakespeare's insights and the Old Woman's pragmatic simplicity with regard to both the Hangman's coin and the Young Woman's corpse signifies the extent to which the poet has reneged upon his responsibility to help others oppose a culture of money and death; his capacity for understanding makes him responsible to teach others.

The first three scenes of Bingo thus relate Shakespeare's offence against the peasants. The next three scenes present his retribution,

in the sense that, like Lear, he suffers from his awareness of the effects of his political decisions. Scene Four, which opens the second half of the play, confirms that Shakespeare can no longer write. Jonson persistently asks Shakespeare what he is writing, and the latter's negative response indicates that the discrepancy he saw in Scene Three between his art and his life -- "I quietened the storms inside me. But the storm breaks outside" (27) -- has rendered him artistically mute. Jonson has always resented Shakespeare's past ability to remain aloof from social reality (32), but he now senses the changes taking place in his companion: "You aren't well, I can see that! Something's happening to your will. You're being sapped. I think you're dying.... Are you getting hollow?" (32). Receiving no response, Jonson tries unsuccessfully to provoke a reaction from Shakespeare:

I hate. Yes--isn't that interesting? I keep it well hidden but its true: I hate. A short hard word. Begins with a hiss and ends with a spit: hate...I hate you, for example. For preference actually. Hate's far more jealous than love. You can't satisfy it by the gut or the groin. A terrible appetite. Interrupt me. Speak. Sob. Nothing? I'm not afraid to let myself be insulted. (33).

Jonson's hatred, however, does not inspire Shakespeare to respond to his environment.

The peasants who enter after Jonson's confession constitute another line of action in Scene Four. Their way of life is juxtaposed with Jonson's hatred and Shakespeare's passivity. The rebellion of Jerome, Joan, Wally and the Son against the enclosures, which threaten their food supply, ironically contrasts with Jonson's request that Shakespeare, an upholder of enclosures, teach him: "How have they made you so good?"

(34). Shakespeare's inability to teach Jonson anything is dramatically underlined when the playwright falls across the table in a drunken stupor. Shakespeare remains in this position while Combe enters.

Jonson and Combe, speaking simultaneously, articulate two false cultural assumptions. Jonson rhapsodizes about an idyllic golden age (36), a concept that Bond believes is dangerous, as seen in Lear.

Combe warns the peasants to "keep to the law" which is destroying their livelihood. In answer to the arguments of the workers, Combe elaborates upon his justification for the enclosures, by presenting a set of false myths:

We're not just fighting for land. Listen. I've seen suffering, I've caused some of it - and I try to stop it. But I know this: there'll always be real suffering, real stupidity and greed and violence. And there can be no civilization till you've learned to live with it. I live in the real world and try to make it work. There's nothing more moral than that. But you live in a world of dreams. (36)

Combe's false reasoning quickly degenerates into aggressive threats, because his underlying premise is "there can only be one master" (37). In contrast to Shakespeare, Wally and the Son respond to Combe by renewing their efforts to oppose him, even though the Son agrees with Combe's assumption that man is innately evil (37). Rousing himself, Shakespeare realizes, when Jerome and Joan join his table, that the peasants cannot trust him any longer: "Lie to me. Lie. Lie. You have to lie to me now" (38). Jonson's final lines in Scene Four emphasize Shakespeare's association with a culture of money and death. Receiving a loan from Shakespeare, Jonson states: "In paradise there'll be a cash tree, and the sages will sit under it...I had to borrow to bury my little boy. I still owe on the grave....I suppose you buried your boy in best oak"

(38 & 39). Unlike Shakespeare's son, the Young Woman suffered a slow death, because she had no money to pay the Hangman to swing on her legs (22). In a culture controlled by men such as Combe, money and property determine the quality of life and death.

Scene Five continues the action of the preceding scene. Shakespeare enters in a drunken state, clutching Jonson's bottle of poison. The setting is an open space which is "flat, white, crisp, empty" (39), everything covered in smooth clean snow. Bond explains that he chose this setting because the snow resembles a sheet of white paper on which Shakespeare, during his crisis, writes out his discoveries and self-knowledge.¹⁰ The audience may not grasp Bond's intentions regarding the snow, because this image is more literary than theatrical, but Shakespeare's isolation is clear when he says: "How clean and empty the snow is. A sea without life....No ruts. No marks of weapons' or hoes dragged through the ground. Only my footprints behind me - and they're white..." (39). Shakespeare half-heartedly talks to the Old Man, and does not notice the dark figures of the rebels (40). He is still looking for answers: "I wanted to meet some god by the river. Ask him questions" (41). He knows he has made mistakes, but sees no way to change what he has done (41); Jonson's hatred and anger are alternatives that he rejects.

¹⁰ Edward Bond in Study, p. 195.

Judith's entrance in a green cloak, a visual reminder of the vitality her father has corrupted, allows Shakespeare actually to articulate the way in which a culture of money has destroyed his relationship with her; Bond feels that today money forces certain kinds of behaviour on people.¹¹ Shakespeare explains to Judith that after he left his wife he thought he could make his daughter forgive him by loving her with money: "I started to collect for you. I loved you with money. But money always turns to hate...I made you vulgar and ugly and cheap. I corrupted you" (42). His hatred of Judith is cold and formal, and can only be satisfied by telling her the truth (42). Seeing no way to be kind to Judith, Shakespeare at least understands what has happened to him. The rebels' gunshots and the flame force Shakespeare to the further recognition that as an artist he should have analyzed human suffering: "Every writer writes in othermen's blood.... But only a god or a devil can write in other men's blood and not ask why they spilt it and what it cost. Not this hand, that's always melted snow..." (43). Shakespeare's awareness culminates in a question, "Was anything done?" (43), which Bond borrowed from the diaries of Leonardo da Vinci.¹² Because he has not helped to alleviate the suffering of the victims of an unjust culture of money and death, Shakespeare envisions himself as "sit[ting] in a wound as large as a valley. The sides are smooth and grey. I sit at the bottom and cry at my own death" (43).

¹¹ Edward Bond, "Introduction" to Bingo: Scenes of money and death, p. x.

¹² Edward Bond in Companion, p. 21.

Although Shakespeare continues in Scene Six to ask his persistent question, "Was anything done?", he is incapable of acting in opposition to the culture he perpetuates. The Old Woman sums up what catalyzed Shakespeare's despair over the misery he sees in the world: "That all come out a closin they fields. I told yo' long ago in the garden: that'll cause trouble. Yo' yont listen. Sign a piece of piper an' that's all yo' thought on. Call that 'elp?" (45). The extent of Shakespeare's inability to change is revealed in the episode between him, Judith and the unseen wife in Scene Six. All he can offer them is his money and property, even though he knows that they have come for other reasons (47); the women want Shakespeare to acknowledge their needs and love them. Distracting and dismissing his wife and daughter by passing them his Last Will and Testament, Shakespeare pronounces judgement on himself as an artist, using words very similar to Jonson's:

Jonson...I hate writing. Fat white fingers excreting
dirty black ink. Smudges. Shadows. Shit. Silence. (31)
Shakespeare...I must be quiet. White worms excreting
black ink. Scratch. Scratch. (47-48)

The difference between Jonson and Shakespeare is the latter's refusal to stop condemning himself for not having done anything to stop the suffering of those around him. The death Jonson only talks about begins to become an actuality for Shakespeare when he confesses to the Son the discrepancy between his art and his life:

I could have done so much...Absurd! Absurd! I howled
when they suffered, but they were whipped and hanged
so that I could be free. That is the right question:
not why did I sign one piece of paper? - no, no,
even when I sat at my table, when I put on my clothes,
I was a hangman's assistant, a gaoler's errand boy. (49)

Bond is not really interested in whether the historical Shakespeare felt this guilt or not: "...I admit that I'm not really interested in Shakespeare's true biography in the way a historian might be."¹³ In Bingo, Bond uses Shakespeare, one of England's cultural icons, to demonstrate the necessity for the present day artist to assume a rôle in creating a just and sane world. This is why Bond has Shakespeare admit that as an artist and as a landowner he has betrayed those around him by not insisting on truth and justice in his art and in his life. Shakespeare, in Bingo, realizes that he separated his theatre from society. His plays "howled when they suffered", but in reality he helped to cause people's suffering because of his complicity in the enclosures. Bond seems to suggest that in a vacuum art is no more relevant than a game of Bingo, hence the title of the play.¹⁴

Shakespeare differs from Lear in that knowledge of his failures makes it impossible for him to continue living in the world. Combe's entrance enables Bond to have the chief representative of a corrupt culture administer to his accomplice the first of the poison tablets. As Shakespeare continues to swallow the pills throughout the last scene of the play, the Son, who earlier confessed to shooting his father

¹³"Introduction" to Bingo, p. vii.

¹⁴Edward Bond in Study, 197. Bond is quoted in Study as stating that the title is a comment upon certain kinds of cultural appreciation: "Art has very practical consequences. Most 'cultural appreciation' ignores this and is no more relevant than a game of 'Bingo' and less honest" (197).

accidentally (49)', is revealed to be unequal to the task of defeating Combe. He chooses instead to escape with his Bible and his plough, abandoning his opposition to the enclosures. Shakespeare's last words, "Was anything done?", stress that Bond offers no easy solution to the problem of opposing a false culture. Money and death are given the final word in Bingo. Judith is now less concerned for her father's death than with finding out whether Shakespeare has changed his Will. After her final desperate attempt to communicate with her father, Judith has finally given up hope that meaningful relations with him are possible.

The self-critical quality of Shakespeare's suicide prevents Bingo from being a completely pessimistic play; unlike the death of Kiro in Narrow Road, his death is not merely an escape from the world. The six scenes in Bingo trace the development of Shakespeare's awareness of his relation to society. As has already been mentioned, the first half of the play demonstrates Shakespeare's offence against society, a situation caused by his blindness towards the significance of his political decisions. The second half of Bingo illustrates the artist's acknowledgement of his mistakes, and his inability to find a method to change the injustice he has perpetuated. Bond sets Shakespeare and all of the other characters in the play in a class context in order to emphasize the social role of the artist in a corrupt culture. As in the earlier plays, the socio-political context of the drama determines the characters' actions. Each scene furthers Bond's analysis of the action by demonstrating cause and effect. The death of the Young Woman,

as has already been shown, is a striking example of how the playwright reveals the consequences of political decisions; the woman's death is presented as a visual image of the culture of money and death that Shakespeare upholds by signing Combe's document.

As a realist playwright, Bond intends to record and analyze in his dramatic literature the social forces that constitute reality. Although Shakespeare is unable to destroy the culture that oppresses the peasants and corrupts his relationship with his family, Bond has presented minor characters who might be able to change their society. Joan, Jerome and Wally are not present in the last scene, and their absence points to the difference between them and the puritanical Son. In the final analysis, however, Bond presents problems which the audience rather than the characters must resolve. According to Bond, the contradiction in Shakespeare, "he was a corrupt seer", also extends to present day society: "We are a barbarous civilization."¹⁵ In The Fool, Bond looks at the problem of culture from a different perspective, showing the effects of "a barbarous civilization" upon the poet John Clare.

Scene One of The Fool immediately establishes the social world of the play. The Mummers' play perceived by the farm labourers is an expression of the folk traditions of a specific class. Bond stresses that the Mummers' play "shouldn't be gauche....We should feel they have

¹⁵"Introduction" to Bingo, p. xiii.

their own expertise....They should be very competent dancers and singers...it is their culture, and they can still express themselves in it".¹⁶

As in Bingo, there is a definite class structure in the world of The Fool. Both Milton and the Parson lecture the labourers on the changes about to take place in their society. The Parson gives a brief summary of the social situation in 1815, the year in which the play takes place: "...we are entering a new age. An iron age. New engines, new factories, cities, ways, laws. The old ways must go. The noble horse and the hand are slow. Our land must be better used".¹⁷ The enclosures, which threaten the labourers in Bingo, are a reality to the workers in The Fool, who realize their way of life is being destroyed. Darkie -- appropriately named because he goes to work and comes home in the dark (7) -- is the spokesperson of those opposing Milton's false culture of "economic science" (6) and the Parson's faith in ruling class law and order. Clare does not stand out in this first scene any more than Lawrence or Miles do, except for his preoccupation with women. He is more concerned with Mary's charms than with social injustice.

In Scene Two Darkie and Patty explain to Clare, whom they find wandering in the woods with a poem in his hand, that the common fen

¹⁶ Edward Bond in Companion, p. 63.

¹⁷ Edward Bond, The Fool: Scenes of Bread and Love (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1976), p. 6. All further references to The Fool are from this edition, and will be noted parenthetically. We Come to the River is included in this edition.

and forests are being appropriated. Like Shakespeare, Clare initially grasps some of the implications of his social situation: "We'll lose our fishin' - our wood - cows on the fen common" (11). He is not, however, outraged about the situation as is Darkie. Conversely, Darkie's impetuous behaviour is not guided by Clare's capacity for calm reflection as is seen when Clare calms Darkie's anger (7). Their meeting with the Keeper should have demonstrated to Clare the consequences of enclosure, but he is still more interested in Mary than in the social upheaval taking place around him. Clare romanticizes his relationship with Mary in a brief scene of bread and love:¹⁸

Clare. (touches her breast while he eats).
Well built gall. Never seen a gall like
you. Like to live in this forest. The
two on us. Tread the reeds an' creep in. (14)

The Keeper has just explained to Clare that the forest now belongs to Milton (12). Mary's pragmatic response to Clare's suggestions further emphasizes that the poet is indulging in a romantic fantasy: "Damp. Gypsies know better than that" (14). Even though in Scene Two he is bombarded with the reality of the enclosures, Clare does not plan to join Darkie's struggle against an unjust culture; rather he commits himself to Mary whom he has placed outside of reality. Clare's romantic vision prevents him from clearly seeing the world and his relation to it.

¹⁸ At this point in the play, one begins to realize the significance of the subtitle, "Scenes of Bread and Love". More will be said about bread and love later in this chapter.

Clare's preoccupation with Mary becomes more pronounced in Scene Three, when he deserts the labourers' uprising and his wounded friend in order to look for her. In contrast Betty sacrifices her linen sheet to make a bandage for Lawrence (18). Clare is also conspicuously absent from the stripping of the Parson, a powerful episode instigated by Darkie, who proves to the others that "it's possible to take things off the Parson without being struck by lightning...".¹⁹ As Lawrence's weeping and writhing provide an image of the suffering of the working class, the others slowly come to the realization that the Parson's wealth and privilege have been acquired at their expense. Mary, who is concerned only with the value of the Parson's clothes rather than with his role in an oppressive culture, runs out while the labourers confront the naked man with their suffering. Betty accuses the clergyman and his class of stealing the flesh of her starving child (23). Darkie strengthens Betty's accusations: "When you laugh you use our voice. When you go straight you took us backs. Thass why we're bent" (24). The Parson's guilt is demonstrated visually when he is wrapped in the blood-stained sheet of one of the victims of the society he upholds. The only response the Parson gives to the labourers is to re-affirm the culture in his society: "I cannot betray the life I've lived till now" (25). His only wish is for death (25), and this desire implies that he has become even more corrupt because he does not want to change. Milton and the gentlemen rescue the Parson, kill Lawrence

¹⁹ Edward Bond in Companion, p. 65.

and arrest the labourers, thereby illustrating the injustices so aptly described by Darkie:

You steal from us. Parson steal from us. What we doo t' parson? Make a mock. Took - what? Trinkets! When I steal from parson what you doo t' me? Law hang us! Thass the on'y difference 'tween you an' me: you on't think twice 'fore you use violence.. (25-26)

Patty and Clare visit the imprisoned rebels in Scene Four.

In ironic contrast to the men who fear they are to be hanged by the upper class, Clare has acquired a gentleman patron who wants to publish his poetry. Clare's first fit of laughter in the cell is perhaps a reaction to the ludicrous injustice of their different positions.²⁰ Darkie mistakenly interprets Clare's responses as an indication that the hangings will not take place (29), but Miles is made uneasy by the incongruity of laughter in a death cell. The rising laughter of the unseen people outside the cell, the relief of reprieved prisoners, follows Clare's outburst, and has an even more unsettling effect upon Darkie's companions. Bond describes the scene in his stage notes: "Outside the laughter goes on and on. Screams, shouts, peals, groans - of laughter. No one laughs in the room. Their hysteria is dry....They stare at the door" (30). After the Governor announces that all of them have been given alternative punishments except for Darkie, Clare's reaction is once again to laugh. Bond's stage notes indicate the outburst is "easy, not hysterical" (33), as opposed to the laughter of those left in the prison: "Off, there is a short burst of laughter. It becomes hysterical - like sobbing" (34). Clare does not know how to deal with the reality of the situation; Bond even

²⁰ Study, 208,

has him hide under a blanket, ostensibly to muffle the sound of his laughter (33). In the previous scenes, Clare's preoccupation with Mary prevents him from concentrating on or taking part in situations which demonstrate the nature of the society that now condemns his best friend. Confronted with Darkie's impending death Clare avoids reality, and again concentrates on the object of his fantasy. His last words to Darkie concern Mary. Clare's inability to face the world and oppose injustice shows his limitations as an individual and as an artist; earlier in Scene Four he tells Miles that no one would be interested in reading poems about what is happening in their society (28). Because Clare lacks Darkie's commitment to cultural struggle, he is unequipped to endure the blows he receives from an oppressive culture in the second half of the play.

The first half of The Fool is dominated by Darkie's rebellion and appropriately is played in semi-darkness; Scenes One and Four take place in the evening, and Scenes Two and Three are set at night, stressing the fact that Darkie's conflicts with the ruling class are covert. Scene Five, which opens the second half of the play after the interval, is played in bright light (35). The focus of the play shifts to Clare, and the change in lighting emphasizes this alteration. Clare's conflicts with the ruling class and his own class take place in bright, open spaces, demanding close scrutiny.

In Scene Five there are two lines of simultaneous action: Clare and his patrons discuss art downstage, and the boxing match takes place upstage. This dramatic technique of having two events occur simultaneously

on stage is also seen in Scene Four of Bingo, when Jonson and Combe articulate their false myths at the same time. By forcing the audience to concentrate on two lines of action, Bond is able to establish the complexities of the societies in the plays, as well as stress the similarities between the actions and statements of diverse characters. In The Fool, the parallels between the fight and Clare's conversation with his patrons also function as a signifier of the victimization of the artist by a culture controlled by an oppressive ruling class. During Rounds One and Two, Mrs. Emmerson babbles about inspiration and the need for poets to be secluded from society (37). She recounts to Clare the misfortunes of Charles Lamb, who must work as a clerk because he cannot support himself as an artist (37). As Mrs. Emmerson speaks, Jackson is knocked down in the boxing match. Sponsored by rich patrons, the fight provides a visual illustration of the way in which an artist is abused in a class society. Mary Lamb reinforces this image of a corrupt culture by complaining that even the food in London is spoiled (40).

Admiral Radstock's entrance corresponds with the increasing violence of the boxing match. He sternly chides Clare for writing poetry that is critical of the landowning classes. His speech is deliberately juxtaposed with the Backers' instructions to Porter to deal Jackson the final blow (43). Clare is as much a victim of his patrons as the boxers are, a point made clear by the simultaneous defeat of Jackson and the Admiral's imperious censorship of the poet's work (44-45). The boxers injure each other for the amusement of their rich patrons; Clare writes poetry that is read only by those who can afford books.

The poet attempts to oppose the conviction of the Admiral and Mrs. Emmerson that art should not contain ideas that undermine authority: "Ont see no nymphs in our fields but I seen a workhouse" (44). Although not all of Clare's poetry has been socially conscious, as soon as he starts to analyze his society in his work he is censored by the ruling class. At this point Clare's art is authentic in that it puts forth rational images of the situation in his society. He refuses to falsify his poetry by adding false elements to heighten or sensationalize his art.²¹ Clare, however, is as powerless as Jackson, who extends his fight because he is controlled by the ruling class. The identity between Clare and Jackson is further emphasized by their standing together at the end of Scene Five.

Scene Six, which takes place five years later, demonstrates the consequences of the events of Scene Five. As predicted by the Admiral, "polite society" is no longer interested in Clare's work. Defeated and ill he devotes his imaginative energy to writing poems about Mary, a situation infuriating to his pragmatic wife, who wants him to help feed his family. In conflict with members of both classes, Clare feels physically ill: "No grip left in me hand! Pain in me head! Gut burn!" (50). Bond demonstrates Clare's psychological state, a direct result of his social relations, through the poet's physical deterioration. Caught between his own culture and that of his upper class readers, the isolated Clare finds solace in his fantasies about his "other wife" (52). In doing this, Clare ceases to articulate the dynamics of his society in his poetry. His art no longer contributes to cultural struggle.

²¹Cf. "Introduction" to The Fool, p. xiii.

When Mrs. Emerson informs Clare that he must buy his own books (53), Clare is again associated with boxing: "They git paid for bein' knocked about. I git knock about. Why on't I paid for it?" (54). He suddenly realizes that he is a fool for not having seen the way in which the ruling class has treated him and his friends: "Hev the world gone mad? No wonder they say I'm a clown" (53). Although Clare still clings to his image of Mary, with whom he still believes he can find peace, he is not yet insane as the others believe. On the contrary his description of the reactionary Parson, who with Lord Milton plans to commit Clare to the asylum, is perceptive: "Parson aren't you old! Lie in your churchyard soon stead a lyin' in your church. An ol' man's hair's the colour a bone. Seen 'em stack outside the slaughter house" (57). Clare's defiant response to Lord Milton signifies his awareness of the culture that silenced him: "on't write for you. On't be a poet then...An' what I wrote was good. Yes. Worth readin'. Shall I step in line now? No" (57). Reminding Milton of the enclosures, Clare assumes Darkie's outrage: "I on't labour in your fields n'more. Labour in my fields...I had more out the stones in your field than you had out the harvest" (57). Sanity is implicitly defined in the play as the ability to perceive reality clearly. Ironically, after Clare's most lucid expression of cultural oppression, he is committed to the asylum. The ruling class considers his perceptions to be dangerous rantings. The shocked silence following Milton's pinning of Clare underlines the extent to which the former is threatened by the poet; Clare is not aggressive, but Milton uses unnecessary force to subdue him. Patty cannot help Clare because she does not understand his

suffering. Like the Old Woman in Bingo, she is firmly grounded in her community, where her only concern is survival.

Clare's escape from the asylum in Scene Seven is the only episode in the second half of the play to take place in semi-darkness. The poet imagines a reunion with Mary and Darkie, and the dim lighting signifies that this encounter takes place in Clare's mind. Mary is revealed to be a grotesque tramp, who has forgotten about her lifelong admirer. Darkie begins the scene in the pose of The Thinker (60) but ironically turns out to be a blind boxer, a reminder of the limitations of his aggressive rebellion in the earlier scenes. Mary and Darkie participate in a version of the bread and love episode already discussed in Scene Two. Contrary to the poet's romantic fantasies in the earlier scene, in Scene Seven bread and love are associated with the injustices of a class society, which forces Mary to risk her life for food (63) and makes love an extraordinary luxury. Darkie cannot swallow the bread because of the burn mark on his neck; those who hanged him stole the bread from his mouth. Significantly Clare is unconscious throughout this episode, having been knocked out by Darkie. Within his dream, Clare is not fully aware of the culture that oppresses him. He needs to incorporate Mary's ability to survive and Darkie's rebellious energy with his own understanding of social injustice.

Clare's dream is interrupted by the Irishmen, who reiterate the social situation of the play. The First Irishman complains about the machines that are replacing them on the land, and one of his companions

hopes he will not be forced into harsh labour on the railroads (63). Upon awakening Clare cannot initially distinguish between the world of his dream and the reality of the Industrial Revolution represented by the Irishmen. His starvation leads him to sell Mary to the Irishmen in exchange for bread and cheese. This concession on the part of the poet to the immediacy of survival releases him from romantic illusions about bread and love. Clare's failed romantic love is transformed into a vision of reality, and he admits that Mary and Darkie are only figments of his imagination. Bread is seen to be the currency of survival rather than part of a romantic delusion. The juxtaposition of reality--the Irishmen, the Keeper, Clare's hunger and the enclosures--with Clare's dream startles him into a rational articulation of his limitations. In Bingo Shakespeare realizes at the end of his life that he is the Hangman's assistant, and that his art had done nothing to prevent social injustice. Similarly Clare sees that his lack of full participation in the cultural struggle instinctively initiated by Darkie and half-understood by Mary prevented him from fulfilling his role as a poet who can teach people how to live: "We (Mary, Darkie and Clare) should hev come t'gither. She git the bread. He crack the heads when they come after us. An' I - I'd hev teach them how to eat. I am a poet an' I teach men how to eat" (66). Affirming his sanity and the need for collectivity in cultural struggle, Clare rationally decides to re-enter society by returning to his village.

The last scene of The Fool is set in the asylum, which in the stage notes is referred to as "Home" (67). Bond does not give any

indication of what happens upon Clare's return to the village, perhaps leaving the audience to assume that like the historical Clare the poet did not succeed in re-integrating himself in society. Bond's omission of the details of Clare's return does not detract from the play, because the playwright's focus is always set only on those events which contribute to the analysis of the social problems explored in the drama. Although Clare has demonstrated a more thorough understanding of his role as an artist in society in the previous scene, Bond suggests, by placing Clare in the asylum immediately afterwards, that the poet's awareness is not sufficient. The economy of Bond's play foregrounds the arguments with which the playwright is concerned, and does not distract the audience with unnecessary details, which in other plays, would enhance characterization.

Lord Milton visits Clare in the asylum, and tells him that his (Milton's) son is a vicious product of the culture which helped to destroy the poet: "He hates. Flicks his wrist as if he's holding a whip....In love with his factories" (69). Bond stresses here that Clare's awareness has not changed the world. When Milton exits to fetch Patty, Bond's stage notes call for the door to catch the sun as it swings open, causing a brilliant flash of light (69). Following a silence, an owl is heard calling in the trees (69). The only other reference to an owl in the play is in Charles Lamb's description of truth and wisdom: "The goddess of wisdom is a bird of prey, the owl. But the fools have hunted her and put her in a cage" (39). As Hay and Roberts point out, an audience probably would not make the connection

between the owl and Clare, nor would spectators understand the significance of the flash of light, which these critics argue "represents the light still shining inside" Clare.²²

Hay and Roberts suggest that the light indicates that Clare's awareness is still extant. Because the audience would not grasp the meaning of either the owl or the light, however, Bond's intentions as perceived by Hay and Roberts are lost. Furthermore, in Scene Eight, Bond does not give us any further evidence that Clare is still struggling to understand the world. The sound of the owl is an example of the infrequent over-literariness of Bond's texts. An audience would not understand the significance of the sound because they would not be able to trace the image of the owl in the script. The flash of light poses a more difficult problem in that it is not supported by other elements in the scene. As a result Bond may unnecessarily confuse his audience at this point in the play.

In Scene Eight, Clare cannot communicate with anyone other than Mary Lamb, and he does not write poetry any longer. Similarly, in Bingo, Shakespeare's creative powers dry up and he cannot speak to his wife and daughter. The protagonist of Bingo kills himself once he admits his culpability in the unjust society which destroys those around him. Unlike Shakespeare Clare is not solely responsible for his final condition. Clare tries to combat a corrupt culture in his poetry,

²²Study, p. 214.

but because he does not commit himself fully to Darkie's rebellion he is not equipped to change the world. Although Clare has fleeting moments of consciousness during Patty's visit in the last scene, he is not able to accept reality unconditionally, as is seen in his repeated denial of his sons' deaths.

The survivor in The Fool is Patty, the pragmatic proletarian who, like the Old Woman in Bingo, struggles to live the best she can: "Us hev t'make the most of what there is. On't us, boy? No use lettin' goo....Learn some way t'stay on top. I'd be a fool t'cry now" (71, my emphasis). Patty has the strength to confront what is, even if she does not fully understand what she sees. In Scene Five, Lamb speaks of fools who believe in false ideas which masquerade as truth (39). For much of the play, Clare is that kind of fool because of his obsession with Mary. He is, however, also "another sort of fool" (39) mentioned by Lamb, in that he dares briefly to let the owl of truth out of her cage: "If you try to let [the owl, the goddess of wisdom] out she savages your hand. Only a wise man tries to do that--or another sort of fool" (39). Clare discovers that the class society of London savages him when he tells the truth in his poetry. In spite of the fact that Clare relinquishes his illusions about Mary in Scene Seven, and acknowledges that his role as a poet is to teach men how to live, he ends up a "shrivelled puppet" with a nodding head (48). Like Shakespeare, in the final analysis Clare cannot act upon his poetic insight into the human condition. Once again the audience is left to solve the problems that the protagonist cannot overcome.

(ii)

The Woman: A public dialectic between
opposing cultural values

In Bingo Bond examines the cultural values of the Renaissance through a contemporary eye, focusing on Shakespeare and his relation to his society. The Fool also utilizes an artist-figure to illustrate nineteenth-century class society, and the destructive effect of a false culture upon individuals who do not consistently oppose it. In both plays Bond freely reconstructs history as if the cultural values he upholds in the present applied in the past. Written after completion of Grandma Faust, The Swing and Stone, three short commissioned plays about racism and oppression, The Woman is the last of Bond's history plays, and looks at the culture of ancient Greece.²³ The playwright "wanted to go back and look at that world, re-examine it, and see what was real about it and how moral and rational it was, and whether or not it would be a valid example for a society like ours. I came to the conclusion that it wasn't."²⁴

Unlike his practice in Bingo and The Fool, in The Woman Bond chose not to use an artist as a vehicle to analyze a past culture. For the first time, he introduces a woman as the central character, supposedly to reveal the "woman's side of culture".²⁵

²³The Woman was written before, but performed after The Bundle.

²⁴Edward Bond, in Study, p. 239.

²⁵Ibid., p. 239.

As in earlier plays, the characters in The Woman are full-fledged individuals, who are defined by the social and political context of the play. Clare and Shakespeare are also presented in relation to their societies, but the subjective experiences of the characters in The Woman are more directly mediated through their social experiences. More so than in Bingo and The Fool, in The Woman character is based on the premise that "[h]uman subjectivity is a response to the objective".²⁶ The poetic and sometimes cryptic introspection of the artist - figures in Bingo and The Fool is replaced by objectified subjectivity in The Woman: "...the character is always forced onto the surface, so that it's always put into a social situation...you never have a secret subjectivity in the character....His subjectivity is all the time made objective - it's the texture".²⁷ The overtly public nature of the characters is one indication that Bond is beginning to experiment with an epic method in his play. Conflict in The Fool and Bingo arises out of the tension between social individuals and unjust cultures, and personal struggles are seen to be predicated upon political decisions. In The Woman, the source of conflict is found in the opposition of diverse cultural values, which are embodied in the characters. Epic theatre enhances realism by foregrounding historical tensions through characters who are essentially determined by social forces.²⁸

²⁶Letter received from Edward Bond, 15 June 1984.

²⁷Edward Bond in "Interview with David Roper", Gambit, 9, 36 (1980), 41.

²⁸"The Activists Papers", p. 128.

The public, epic nature of Bond's characters allows for classical ideals -- as defined from the playwright's Marxist perspective -- to be represented by Heros, and the aspirations of the proletariat to be embodied in the Miner. Neither Heros nor the Miner, however, are reduced to one-dimensional figures in this process. Hecuba functions in the play as the expositor of the action,²⁹ and her growing awareness of the nature of war and freedom forms the structural and narrative spine of the play.

As implied by the subtitle, "Scenes of War and Freedom", The Woman is divided into two parts, which deal respectively with the Trojan War and its aftermath. Based very loosely on Euripides' The Trojan Women, the play opens with Priam's death and the Greek's conference on the best plan of action to defeat Troy. Instead of Helen, the prize sought by Heros is the goddess of Good Fortune stolen by Troy. Heros believes that the goddess will help them to win the war:

Well, no man's hand can be more impious than the Trojans': to hold what all men call the supreme goddess against her will! On such men the greatest misfortune must fall. What is their greatest misfortune? That we should win the war. This proves we must.³⁰

Heros' culture is grounded in this sort of superstition and specious logic. When he and his followers enact what they imagine is taking place in Troy, their version of events portrays Hecuba as an "aristocratic

²⁹George Savona, "Edward Bond's The Woman", Gambit, 9, 36 (1980), 30.

³⁰Edward Bond, The Woman: Scenes of War and Freedom (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), p. 15. All further references to The Woman are from this edition, and will be noted parenthetically in the text.

whore" who will not surrender the statue because of an oath to Priam (17). What Heros does not realize is that he is imputing to Hecuba the only position she could logically take in light of the aggressive stance of the Greeks: "What would the Greeks have to lose once they had [the statue]? We must hold on to it -- that's the only way to save our lives" (17). Only Ismene challenges the distorted masculine view of Hecuba, and volunteers to accompany Thersites to negotiate a peaceful surrender. Ajax and the others, however, want to loot and burn Troy before they withdraw. Heros cannot deny to Ismene the aggressive nature of Greek society, even in the privacy of his bedroom. He is, as he describes himself, "a dummy on Athens' knees" (21). Ismene, a naive, feminine outsider to the Greeks' political structure, still hopes she can single-handedly change the course of history.

Bond interrupts this line of action in order to show the attack of the plague-stricken Trojan women on the Greek soldiers. By showing the effects of the long siege on both the Greeks and the Trojans, Bond makes Heros' obsession with the statue appear even more irrational and grotesque. Thersites and Ajax want to move their soldiers out of the plague zone, but Heros insists that they remain: "One loophole -- and they'll take the statue out of the city and hide it in the mountains. We'd never find it" (26). The plague, he insists, is the goddess' way of ensuring a Greek victory (26). By inserting this episode, Bond implies that the war culture of Heros is itself diseased and corrupt.

When Hecuba is introduced in I.iv, she is the opposite of Heros' depiction of her in I.i. She is a dignified public figure (26), who is

prepared to do anything to save her city (27). Unlike her son ^{and her} deceased husband, Hecuba recognizes that "victory would now cost...more than defeat at the beginning" (27). Her interest in the statue, moreover, is purely pragmatic as opposed to the superstitious attitude of Heros, her son and the priests: "We have the statue. You say what luck has it brought us? If we give it up what luck could we hope for? That would be [the Greeks'] best reason to break [their] word and destroy us" (28). Finding Thersites a rigid reactionary, Hecuba persuades him to let her converse with Ismene, in the hope that as women they can end the war (29). Their conversation begins on personal terms, with the Queen and the younger woman discussing their families. Rather than undermining the significance of the political situation in the play, the inclusion of mundane details such as Priam going fishing with his children emphasizes the toll war takes on every individual. Touched by Hecuba's honesty about the futility of war, Ismene exclaims that Greece will leave Troy in peace if the statue is returned. She innocently asserts that her husband "makes good decisions" (30) within the republic.

Juxtaposed with Ismene's naivety is Hecuba's understanding of the hollowness of Heros' republic: "As to Athens a republic. Well, your husband's family is the riches in Athens and money buys power" (31). The Queen knows that the Greeks will burn Troy to the ground, and uses her grandson Astyanax to drive home to Ismene the reality of the potential victims of a Greek invasion. The conflict between Hecuba and Ismene thus takes place on two levels. First they are political enemies, which is why Hecuba tries to draw Ismene's attention

to the reality of her husband's republic. Secondly, the two women are in conflict on a personal level. Hecuba's inclusion of her grandson in the negotiations stresses the differences in the personal situations of the two women. Hecuba, the Queen, is also a concerned grandmother. Ismene, a woman who cares for the plight of children, is married to a man who will destroy Trojan youth. Hecuba tries to force Ismene to admit the truth about her husband's culture, and in response Heros' wife offers herself as a hostage to ensure the safety of the Trojans, still outwardly asserting the virtues of her husband.

The speciousness of Ismene's faith in her husband is made clear by Bond's juxtaposition of her innocent logic at the end of I.vi -- "What does the country want? The statue. Now they can have it" (35) -- with Heros' vow to destroy Troy in I.v: "What I'll do to Troy will be the first of the seven crimes (of the world)" (36). I.vi reveals that even if the Greeks were to conform to Ismene's plan for peace, Hecuba's son and the Trojan priests would not return the goddess (39). With the help of the priests, the Son seizes power from Hecuba, and throws Ismene in prison, where the latter finally admits the truth: "I knew when I came here my husband had lied, but I pretended I didn't. Now he'll build his great new city -- but if I lived in it I'd have to pretend all the time. I can't pretend now....In prison you're free to tell the truth" (39). As the Trojans and the Greeks fight among themselves and with each other in Scenes Eight and Ten, constantly scheming and switching allegiances, Ismene continues her campaign for peace on the walls of Troy. Ismene's scenes (I.ix and xi) are

deliberately alternated with Scenes Eight and Ten as a rational counterpoint to the irrationality of war. On behalf of Heros, Nestor tries to drown out Ismene's cries: "Priam's city has nothing to give you but a grave and rubble to fill it!" (45 and 47). The women in the play strive for peace; the men are shown to uphold aggression and war.

The climax of Part One comes in Scene Twelve, when the Son, who aptly describes himself as "the man who stands on the street corner of history with a rope round his neck and beckons the spectators to come and be hanged" (47), is assassinated. The wounded, starving, plague-stricken inhabitants of Troy clash with the "respectable Bystanders", and a member of the crowd stabs the Son. The Son's death strengthens the unity of the crowd of poor people -- he has oppressed them as much as Heros has by continuing the war -- and they carry the goddess out of the temple to the Greeks in the hope of ending their suffering: "We're throwing the goddess out! No more Bitch! Bitch out! Plague out! War out! Famine out! Out! Out! Out! To the Greeks!" (49). When he directed The Woman at the National Theatre in London, Bond blocked the movements of his actors to indicate the changes the mob goes through in this scene:

I tried to show their common purpose through their hands. First their hands are flat and extended, the hands of beggars; when they come closer to their enemies their hands become fists; when they carry out the statue their hands are weapons, claws, flails; and when they're united in one moment of choice (to give the statue to the

Greeks) their hands swing in the direction of the harbour like the leaves of a tree turning in the wind.³¹

The hope of the crowd in I.xii, that giving back the statue will end the culture of war, is shattered in I.xiii. At Ismene's trial for treason, the Greeks insist upon their "right" to loot and destroy Troy. Ismene's curse on every Greek who plans to enter Troy finally condemns her in the eyes of the court. Heros, like Lear and Cordelia, tries to justify his present atrocities by explaining that his new city will honour virtue and simplicity (54); he claims they must destroy Troy because they have made the Trojans hate them. His wife, however, sees Heros' cruelty: "Troy's like a wounded animal. It can't run away. Yet you'll bend over and watch it while you mutilate it " (54). Blind to the corruption of his society, all Heros can offer Ismene is a quick death. She, in turn, can only continue her ineffective cultural struggle by listening to the fall of Troy "so that the truth is recorded on earth" (55). Ismene, like Shakespeare and Clare, cannot translate her awareness into political action that changes society.

The last scene in Part One records the aftermath of the Greek invasion. As Heros praises the goddess for their victory, within the wall Ismene recounts the violence the Greeks perpetrate upon Trojan civilians: "I heard children running to warn their parents: Greeks!

³¹Edward Bond, "Us, Our Drama and the National Theatre", Plays, and Players, 26, 1 (Oct. 1978), 9. Also cf. "Hands", a poem published with The Woman, pp. 129-30.

Then soldiers running after them. Racing to get the first child.

Seeing who threw him highest....Then the soldiers kicked in the doors and threw loot down to the priests from the windows" (56-57). Hecuba adds to Ismene's account of Greek atrocities, and bitterly asks Heros to teach her the difference between right and wrong: "No one would license so much murder and not know the answer" (58). Heros' notion of justice is simple and inadequate: "Troy would have done the same!" (58). He orders Astyanax, the heir to the Trojan throne, to be thrown from the walls of Troy -- the same walls from which Ismene called for peace -- explaining that the child must die for the sake of all the fallen Greek soldiers (60). Heros sees killing the child as a gesture symbolic of the defeat of Troy. The horrors of the war are summed up when the little boy is taken from the women, who join Ismene and Hecuba in pleading for mercy: "Don't kill our son, you'd kill hundreds of children at one blow. Make a hundred women childless!" (59). Astyanax's death represents all of the innocent people who had perished in the war, and Cassandra's grief is articulated in universal and individual terms: "If the whole sky was a cloth and I wrapped it round my wound the blood would soak through in one moment. I cannot bear this. I don't know how" (60). Driven to despair, Hecuba blinds herself in one eye, so that she will not witness any more atrocities (61). Heros proves that he will see "death...from every angle" (59) by ordering the burning of Troy (61). The degeneracy of Heros' culture, foregrounded by the juxtaposition of his aggression and the weeping women, is further emphasized when Nestor and his drunken soldiers brag about looting Troy and raping the remaining

women. Nestor's impotence -- "if I didn't have loot on my back...I'd have had strength for the women too." (62) -- is an appropriate comment on a culture that is aggressive and acquisitive rather than life-affirming. Although Ismene and Hecuba oppose this culture, they are not yet able to overcome Heros' power.

Part Two of The Woman takes place on an island, where Hecuba and Ismene are shipwrecked; Ismene was "rescued" by Greek soldiers who opened her grave to steal her jewels. Both eyes covered, Hecuba has vowed never to see again (68). Ismene has lost her mind, and cannot remember her past struggles. Bond explains that "her mind is no use to her, because it couldn't allow her to fulfill her objectives...I had to wash out the ideas and the intellectual concepts she had so that she could go back to square one".³² The islanders allow Hecuba and Ismene to stay on the island, although they quickly become suspicious of the women when the Greek ship approaches (69). Offering Hecuba sanctuary in Athens in exchange for the goddess, Nestor describes to Hecuba Heros' new city. In spite of external improvements, Athens is still built on false cultural foundations, as evidenced by its leader's stubborn preoccupation with the statue; Heros has learned nothing from the atrocities he caused on his previous quest for the goddess. Nestor's visit foreshadows Heros' arrival on the island and his subsequent enslavement of the fishing community. His words bring back bitter memories for Hecuba who, like Lear, seeks an escape from her suffering in what she considers to be an idyllic community: "Let me

³² Edward Bond in Study, p. 257.

die quietly here, in dignity....I listen to the sea and it washes all my anger and so I'm at peace" (72). Nestor's appearance makes her fear "there's a storm blowing up" (72), and she seeks the calm she found in the centre of the waterspout during the storm which shipwrecked them (67 and 72). Hecuba, however, does not realize the significance of the reflection of her chained hands, that she saw in the calm water (67). The peace she cherishes on the island is really an enslavement to a false sense of security, which she creates by avoiding the past. As in the waterspout, Hecuba's peace is only temporary.

The arrival of the Miner, in II.ii and iii, introduces the other side of the cultural and class dialectic in the play. His opposition to Heros is immediately established by the villagers' fear of Greek retaliation for his escape from the Athenian mines (74-75). Hecuba aligns herself with the Miner at first because she trusts him to look after Ismene when she dies; she also knows, however, that she is unable to change the world alone. Although the relationship of Hecuba and the Miner at this point is essentially based on the older woman's concern for the younger woman's safety, the Greeks are Hecuba's enemy as much as they are the Miner's, a fact that establishes a natural political alliance between the characters.

Heros' arrival in II.iv substantiates the Miner's reasons for fleeing from Athens. The new city which Heros claims has replaced "fear with reason, violence with law, chaos with order, plunder with work" (79) has metaphorically been built on the backs of slaves in the silver mines:

Athens of marble and silver!The people say that soon the doors of our poorest will hang in silver.... The walls of the inner shrine are covered in silver. The bowls and knives and chains for the sacrifice are silver. The priest carry silver rods. The centre of the shrine is a floor of beaten silver where the goddess will stand. (79, my emphasis)

Heros' Athens is based on fake cultural foundations of imperialism, aggression and enslavement, a situation that reflects Bond's Marxist view of Greek history.³³ Heros' association of silver with the goddess stresses the destructive nature of his obsession with the statue. His search for the goddess is a symptom of corruption of his society.

Heros' desire for the statue disrupts the life on the island. The fishermen are forced to become slaves to Heros' obsession, much as the mine slaves already are. Ismene notices the changes in the village, and demands that Hecuba help her to understand the present, by making her remember the past: "I look at you and think I'm going to remember; I stare at your face -- but it stays blank! If we looked at each other my mind would come back!" (81-82). At first Hecuba protests: "Let me sit patiently in my darkness. I've earned this happiness" (81). Eventually she realizes that she cannot escape from history by refusing to face reality. Like Lear, Hecuba decides to take control of her role in the world:

If I were a priestess a god would come down now and tell me what to do. Instead my enemies come -- and I must be ready again. Yes, ready for all my old anger to sweep through me, like the fire in Troy. Help me to take [the eye-plug] off. (82-83)

³³"Edward Bond's The Woman", p. 28.

Hecuba's limitations, however, are signified by her discovery that she is indeed completely blind (84). Neither she nor Ismene can fight Heros' false culture on her own. This further explains the alliance between the women and the Miner in the play.

The Miner in II.v describes to Hecuba the irrationality of Heros' search for the goddess: "[The fishermen] catch netfulls of fish and tip them back in the sea. If fish could think they'd say men were mad . . . [The soldiers] keep shouting orders that don't mean anything. The nets aren't even tight. If it was there he couldn't find it" (185). Heros admits that the statue is a "millstone round his neck" (86) and that his search for it is "[n]ot all that rational" (86). On Hecuba's request, Heros pardons the Miner, his true class enemy, because the Greek leader is convinced that the women are the only obstacles preventing him from attaining the statue. Claiming he wants to cure Ismene by reminding her of the past, Heros talks to his ex-wife in the hope that she will reveal the location of the statue. Impatient and angered by her mad innocence, Heros reveals to Ismene the cultural assumptions under which he must operate, hoping to shock her into helping him. He tell her that "[a] good ruler knows how to hate" (89), and that "the people must be afraid -- not of him but of each other -- or the city falls apart" (89). If he does not find the statue, the irrationality of his society demands that Heros raze the village to prove he made every effort to find the goddess. Unlike in Part One, Heros admits to Ismene that he will destroy an entire population in the name of Greek "freedom" (90). Although Ismene cannot stop Heros, Hecuba is already conscious of his plan and she firmly establishes her

alliance with the Miner in order to overthrow their mutual enemy.

Three months later in II.vi, Heros has become more irritable, irrational and obsessed with the statue. Rather than demonstrating the psychological process of Heros' increasing obsession, Bond uses a time-lapse in order to show the inevitable effects of Heros' superstitious preoccupation with the goddess on those around him. This dramatic method shifts the focus from characterization to the political significance of the action. Nestor comes to tell Heros that while he has been searching for the goddess the citizens of his new city are fighting among themselves: "Our property -- even our lives -- need protecting. Ajax and Thersites quarrel through every council....We need you, my son, not the statue" (95). Heros ignores Nestor's requests to leave the island. He refuses to listen to Hecuba's suggestion that "[a]n empty temple would have great dignity" (95) and he ignores her advice to "worship the force, not the image" (95). Convinced that there is not any other way to stop Heros from destroying the island, Hecuba challenges him to a race against the Miner. To stress that this contest is between opposing cultural and class values, Bond has the Miner describe in detail the exploitation and suffering of those born in Athens to mine slaves (97). Afterwards in a stichomythic exchange, the Miner refuses to accept Heros' promise to improve the conditions of the miners if he wins: "You'll go away and forget. Every second of my life -- till I ran -- was watched by people like you -- holding a whip with a silver handle. If you could count our crumbs, you would" (98). Referring to the race as "the last day of the war that destroyed my city" (98),

Hecuba emphasizes that the race is not simply between two individuals, but represents a struggle between an imperialist war society and those who struggle for freedom. The conflict between the Miner and Heros is therefore defined in relation to their class and political positions.

In order to convey the political and public nature of the action, Bond demands a certain kind of acting which stresses exposition over emotion:

A concept, an interpretation (of the situation, not the character) must be applied to an emotion, and it is this concept or interpretation or idea that is acted. This relates the character to the social event so that he becomes its story teller. When this is done emotions are transferred to the surface....they go to the hands, feet, face, head, and become living, creative energy.³⁴

The actor playing the Miner, for example, should not relive in II,vi the hardships of the character's life in the mines. Rather, by recollecting the experiences in the mines, the actor converts the emotional energy of the monologue into a rational telling of a story.³⁵ By maintaining a certain objectivity, the actor enables the audience to analyze the political significance of the Miner's speech. The monologue becomes more than the articulation of one person's misfortunes. Each of the characters in The Woman must be presented in this rational and objective way, otherwise the play will become "weighed down with emotion, trapped in too much detail".³⁶ Every scene must "reach forward to the

³⁴"Us, Our Drama and the National Theatre", p. 9.

³⁵Edward Bond, "Notes on Acting The Woman" in The Woman, p. 128.

³⁶Ibid., p. 126.

next scene" (126) so that cause and effect are revealed.

In Bond's earlier plays, structure and characterization are conceived of in a similar manner. What defines the techniques in The Woman as epic is the explicitness and precision with which Bond presents his aesthetic imperatives in the play and in the essays accompanying it. Bond's epic techniques are an extension of his realist method. Characters, for example, are constructed as self-conscious members of objective social collectives in all of Bond's plays. What distinguishes Bond's epic characters is the way in which the playwright overtly and explicitly demonstrates the public nature of the characters through their individuality. Likewise, although the choice and ordering of scenes in the earlier plays present the causality of political activity, in The Woman the deliberately stressed objectivity of the characters foregrounds the social analysis in the play.

The effect on Hecuba of the political defiance she and the Miner direct at Heros is illustrated in I.vii. No longer seeking the calm centre of the waterspout, Hecuba goes out into the storm. Her desire to withstand the elements symbolizes her determination to struggle against Heros' powerful irrationality even if she must use irrational means. In II.viii, both she and the Miner claim the latter won the race. Hecuba resorts to Heros' mysticism to explain her verdict in the race, claiming the goddess held him in a trance under a tree (105). The Miner simply asserts his victory (103), because Heros is his class enemy. Bond seems to think that the liberation of a slave is more important than Heros' being granted a fair judgment in the race. The

moral ambiguity of the play at this point may present certain difficulties to an audience, who might feel that Hecuba's methods are as corrupt as Heros'. Because Bond has presented the characters as individuals who represent certain cultural values, however, the morality of individual action takes second place to the political significance of Heros' defeat. When it is clear that one can disprove Hecuba's verdict, the Miner takes the opportunity to kill the Greek leader, thereby fulfilling the terms of the race. Hecuba prevents Nestor's retaliation by reminding him of Troy, and the havoc that followed the Greek invasion (106). Nestor's limitations prevent him from responding adequately to Hecuba's arguments: "There's too much truth in this story. I can't find the loose ends" (107). The Miner's triumph is not over one man, but over a cultural ideal which has at its base aggression and enslavement. Freed from Heros' tyranny the villagers turn in a united movement to the sea, then turn back to face Hecuba (106). Like the crowd at the temple in Part One, the villagers find a common purpose when their enemy is destroyed. Confused by Hecuba's words Nestor agrees to leave the island; Nestor's faith in Heros had already weakened, beginning with the former's return to the island in II.vi.

Although they are now free the villagers and the Miner know they will face future hardships and invasions from the Greeks; Heros' imperialism is not so easily defeated. Hecuba's death in II,ix shows the cost of cultural struggle much as the worker's death at the end of The Bundle does. She is swept up and mangled by the waterspout that earlier symbolized the chaotic irrationality of the Greek Empire. Bond

explains Hecuba's death in terms of the public nature of her character:

You see it's not her job to survive, it's her job to struggle and fight. It would be meaningless if she were to survive because I'm not dealing in personal terms anyway. Why should I reward her with happiness? She rewards us by disposing of that menace and pointing out, a conceptual understanding of history which could become part of human practice.³⁷

The survival of the Miner and Ismene's clearing mind indicate that although their enemies still exist, they may be able to continue opposing unjust cultures.

Like Bingo and The Fool, The Woman does not offer easy solutions to the problems inherent in oppressive societies. The optimism of the ending, however, leads Bond to conclude that the play is an appropriate culmination of a cycle of work, and an "affirmation of values":

"What I wanted to do was to face all the problems and the destructive things that I'd looked at in plays such as Saved or Lear and to end with an affirmation of life which proved itself".³⁸ By looking at the cultures of the past in Bingo, The Fool and The Woman, Bond attempts to encourage his audience to re-examine present cultural assumptions, and deal with the problems posed in the plays. As in all of Bond's plays, the "aesthetic imperative is yoked to a political one and the overriding objective is to so deploy the resources of the stage as to reflect a truthful image of society which may promote in the spectator

³⁷ Edward Bond as quoted in Tony Coult, "Bringing Light Back to Earth: Edward Bond's The Woman", Canadian Theatre Review (Fall 1977), 102.

³⁸ Edward Bond as quoted in Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts, "Edward Bond: Stages in a Life", Observer Magazine, 6 August 1978, p. 13.

an awareness of the need for social change".³⁹ The action in The Woman is more public and overtly political than that seen in Bingo or The Fool. This development anticipates Bond's identification of his theatre as epic, that is, as a dramatic mode which he claims puts historical forces on the stage as a dramatic reality.⁴⁰ As seen in The Woman, epic characters are constructed to reveal social forces through their individuality. Conflict, therefore, arises not from within the souls of isolated individuals, but takes place on an historical, social plane: "In epic theatre dramatic development doesn't come from the individual coming to terms with himself but from his changing society so that everyone in it may be more human".⁴¹ The essence of epic theatre, according to Bond, is "in the way it selects, connects and judges".⁴² The plays which follow The Woman, the "answer plays", demonstrate the ways in which Bond refines his dramatic techniques in order to reveal the ways in which social problems arise and can be resolved.

³⁹"Edward Bond's The Woman", p. 29.

⁴⁰"The Activists Papers", p. 128.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 129.

⁴²Ibid., p. 108.

Chapter Five

The Worlds, Restoration, Summer

The Bundle, already discussed at length in Chapter Two is the first of Bond's "answer plays",¹ the playwright's third and most recent cycle of work. Written after, but performed before The Woman, The Bundle introduces several themes and techniques that Bond develops in The Worlds. Like The Bundle, The Worlds examines both the moral problems inherent in aggressive political activism, and the necessity of knowing who one's class friends and enemies are. As in many of Bond's earlier plays, The Worlds presents the argument that the unjust myths which constitute society must be understood by socially conscious individuals in order to be overcome. Conflict, in The Worlds, does not arise out of personality clashes, but is the result of an epic character's confrontations with reality and with other class-based individuals. Characters are constructed with the intention of showing that historical, social and class forces can be embodied in individuals, without reducing them to one-dimensional stereotypes.² Bond's epic characters, in The Worlds, Restoration and Summer, not only exist "in history", their subjective qualities are used to "transcribe history."³

¹Edward Bond in Study, p. 266.

²"The Activists Papers", p. 128.

³Ibid., pp. 128-9.

The playwright's notion of "public soliloquy", a dramatic device which develops out of Bond's techniques of parable-telling and dramatizing the analysis in The Bundle, is an important example of how Bond creates a dialectic between the personal and the political in his characters; Bond's first use of this technique is seen in The Worlds, and will be discussed later in this chapter. The essential function of public soliloquy is to allow a character to speak objectively with historical hindsight and greater political consciousness than he has in the immediate context of the play, while still remaining a complete subjective self. Closely related to The Worlds in theme and techniques, in Restoration the songs are public soliloquies, which also relate the situations in the play to the present. Whereas The Worlds analyzes violent political action and calls for an accurate, rational perception of one's relation to the world, Restoration explores the consequences of non-action, which is the result of ignorance of one's social and historical identity; these themes have already been explored in some of the earlier plays, such as Narrow Road, Bingo and The Fool. As in The Worlds, character and conflict in Restoration are "epic in analysis but not necessarily in size".⁴

Summer, the fourth "answer play" and Bond's most recent full-length work,⁵ continues the playwright's exploration of the importance

⁴ Ibid., p. 129.

⁵ Bond has informed me, in a personal letter dated 15 June 1984, that he has recently completed two new plays: The Tin Can People and Red Black and Ignorant. The Human Cannon, written in 1983, will also be published; a production of this play at the National Theatre

of political awareness. The play extends the theme of epic characters learning to understand their relation to society by showing individuals struggling to accept and take responsibility for their class heritage. Like The Worlds and Restoration, Summer deals with epic characters and conflicts. The plays set historical and social problems on stage as dramatic realities.

(i)

The Worlds: "But if you know what sort of world you're in
you have to change it"⁶

The Worlds is set in the present, and opens with four businessmen drinking wine in a country hotel. Trench praises his companions, the "team" at TCC, for "making a new world" (12). The sort of individual valued by Trench as a builder of this world is one who is a humane capitalist:

⁵(Continued)...has been postponed. The Unknown Citizen, a short piece about nuclear war, was performed in January 1983 in London; Bond does not mention in his letter whether the play will be published. Derek and Choruses from After the Assassination (London: Methuen London Ltd., 1983) is Bond's most recently published work. Derek is a short play with songs, and concerns a stupid aristocrat who exchanges brains with a working class genius.

⁶Edward Bond, The Worlds with the Activists Papers (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1980), p. 83. All further references to The Worlds are from this edition, and will be noted parenthetically in the text.

He respects and judges you as he does himself.
 What you invest in a man is what you get out of
 him. Yes, at times we do harsh things. But we
 do it cleanly. For the good of the customer.
 With no malice. No pleasure. We push a man
 overboard and we sail on. But we throw a lifebelt
 in the sea behind us. We're all brothers. Big
 brothers and little brothers. (13)

In spite of Trench's conviction that his attitude leads to successful relations with those on "the shop floor and [in] the directors' suite" (13), we learn that TCC has been paralyzed by a strike for two weeks (14). This information immediately establishes the class structure, which is the source of conflict in the play -- bosses and workers -- and indicates the speciousness of Trench's belief that he possesses a profound, all-encompassing understanding of human relations. Trench and Kendal's inability to answer coherently the latter's question, "how does a chap judge himself" (14), underlines the fact that none of these builders of a so-called new world understands the moral complexity of his class position. Trench's blindness is complete because he is not yet aware that his "team" is plotting against him in spite of their sycophantic fawning; this information is revealed later in the play, but Hubbard's refusal to participate in the conversation anticipates the mutiny. JT's perception of himself as a kind of capitalist poet-priest -- he dismisses Kendal and Harris with a gesture of benediction and fancies himself a member of the literati -- is thus completely ironic because he does not show any insight or understanding at all. I.i ends unexpectedly with Lisa and Michael kidnapping Trench, who has fallen unconscious after drinking a drugged nightcap served to him

by the Perfect Waiter.

The corrupt values of the builders of Trench's new world are revealed in I.ii. Hubbard admits that he does not know what the obligations of a rational person are in the face of a kidnapping, and sees the situation as a choice between Trench or the company's profits: "If we cough up [the ransom] our profitability would take a nasty dent" (19). The terrorists are also demanding that the strikers' terms be met or Trench will be shot, thus placing the situation in the context of class struggle. Far from being concerned for JT's life, Hubbard urges that they "[e]xploit the situation" (21), and use Trench's absence to put the company on the stock exchange, a move opposed by his boss in spite of the opportunity for larger profits. The implicit conflict between the men and Trench reflects the consequences of the kind of individualistic capitalist ethic advocated by Trench in I.i. As he did in Scene Nine of The Bundle, when Basho and Kung-tu are abandoned and betrayed by their own class, Bond shows in The Worlds the lack of loyalty and collectivity inherent in the capitalist ruling class. Kendal, Harris, Hubbard and Trench are subjective individuals, who embody the dynamics of capitalism, and constitute one side of the complex class dialectic in the play. Through them, Bond introduces the audience to the world the terrorists will strive to overthrow.

Both sides of the dialectic meet in conflict in I.iii, when the terrorists enter with Trench. Although Trench is able to understand the RRA's ultimatums, he is bewildered by the group's reasons for its action. Bond conveys Trench's confusion by having him read the RRA's

prepared speech in such a way that it is rendered incomprehensible; the punctuation for Trench's reading is indicated in the script to ensure a garbled presentation. Trench tries to reason with the terrorists, using the logic of individualist capitalism: "Why d'you do this? You've got everything you want" (24). Because he is an epic character who exists within and embodies the ruling class, Trench sees nothing wrong with the world that cannot be rectified by working within the already existing social structure: "You should be helping to run the world. Not pull it apart. You must have reasons for what you do. Then explain them. Make us listen" (25). Anna explains that changing society is almost impossible when people such as Trench are in power: "Even our language is owned by you. We have to learn a new language. Even our morals. We have to be different people" (25). Anna's clear reading of the speech which Trench stumbled through earlier sets the struggles of her class in opposition to Trench's "new world":

Industry and science have made a sane and contented world possible. Yet it becomes increasingly irrational. Resources are wasted and poorer countries plundered while their people starve. People are forced to seek their own ends without regard for the common good. Human relations are destroyed. Organization breaks down. Western society no longer works (26).

The terrorists believe that if the working class controlled production, distribution, information, and education, a peaceful, rational society would develop (26). In "The Activists Papers", which accompany The Worlds, Bond provides a gloss on this idea: "In a time of capitalist irrationalism a rational culture can be created only by the expression of working class experience, and the working class must obviously take

the major part in creating it. This rational culture will need new political and social forms".⁷ The revolution required to attain this goal may involve violence, a problem also explored in The Bundle. Anna, like Wang, states that she and the other revolutionaries will not be patient. They must fight because "the relationships between classes are based on violence" (27).

Although the terrorists have aligned themselves with the strikers as class allies against TCC, Bond shows in the next scene (I.iv) that the reality of the situation is not simply a matter of the united working class versus the self-interested capitalists. Each of the strikers in I.iv has his or her personal opinion of the terrorists, and their arguments constitute an analysis of some of the varying ideologies inherent in the working class. The source of conflict among the strikers concerns what position they should take regarding the terrorists' violent revolutionary activism. In their discussion about the morality of political violence, the characters present a commentary that comes out of their class experience; the playwright defines his characters as epic because "in consciously being members of their class they're also fully themselves".⁸

Bond uses his technique of public soliloquy in the strikers' scene in order to extend the workers' arguments beyond the immediate

⁷"The Activists Papers", p. 108.

⁸Ibid., p. 141.

context of the play:

A large part, perhaps all, of Scene Four (Part One) of The Worlds would be acted as a group public soliloquy. Whole characters or groups could be permeated with public soliloquy so that we feel they're both in and outside their time and aren't eternal prisoners of the present appearance of things.⁹

The public soliloquy begins when John and Terry set up a kind of parable-play-within-the-play. They want to illustrate to Ray, who thinks they should give in to TCC because "you don't fight for money while some poor bleeder's fightin' for his life" (29), the position that the working class should adopt on violence in a world run by men like Trench; similarly Wang, in The Bundle, sets up a parable play to enlighten the band of robbers. The strikers' public soliloquy is divided into three sections. In the first part, John assigns the roles of a terrorist, the police and a worker, and tries to show that the workers' conflict with Trench is separate from the terrorists' revolutionary activity (30-1). The second parable is initiated by Terry, who illustrates the inevitable relationship between the police, who support the ruling class, the terrorists and the strikers: "Terrorists didn't bring the law into it. The law's there all the time only it don't show up. Till someone breaks the rules: the terrorists or the workers" (32). The third section of the public soliloquy further illustrates Anna's notion that "the relationships between classes are based on violence" (27). The rhetorical question asked by Terry's

⁹Ibid., pp. 146-41.

audience at the end of the public soliloquy summarizes the argument conveyed in the scene:

BERYL. Why didn't Trench have to use force when he took your three quid but -
 BERYL } -you [the working class] had to use it when you
 JOHN } want some of it back? (33)

According to Terry, Trench relies on force as much as the terrorists, but he calls it law and order; this means that giving in to TCC at this point would perpetuate ruling class power. Although the strikers may not agree with the terrorists' methods, Terry hopes his friends will at least recognize who their class enemies are. Terry realizes, like Wang, that only when the workers start to identify the forces of oppression will they stand a chance of defeating ruling class injustice.

Although the audience is not given specific details, in I.v we discover that the terrorists have released Trench; as in the earlier plays, Bond's focus is on the effects of actions. As foreshadowed in I.ii, Trench's colleagues have ousted him from his own company. Because JT is blind to the consequences of the individualistic capitalist ethic to which he adheres, he is shocked by the disloyalty of his "team". He compares their duplicity to the straightforwardness of the terrorists: "Those people told the truth: they said they were my enemies! But here! -What's here?....I say you cannot do it not because it's against the law...but because it's against common humanity" (37). Trench unwittingly reiterates Terry's comments about how the ruling class is able to victimize people with impunity: "My god terrorists stand things on their head. Turn values upside down. But the police go after

them! You do it and vote yourself a rise!" (39). In spite of Trench's diatribe -- he calls his colleagues hypocrites and cowards (39) -- his experience does not change him. Rather than recognizing and condemning the immoral injustices of his "new world", Trench only mourns the loss of his personal power; he sees his former colleagues' cruelty as a personal affront, not as a symptom of a corrupt culture. His dinner invitation to the others emphasizes Trench's desire to preserve his class position: "Please cancel any other invitations you may have. I intend to go out as if I had been working with gentlemen" (41).

During the dinner party scene in I.vi, there are a few hints that Trench may have penetrated the appearances of his class, an awareness which Terry and Anna tell us is the first step towards destroying the false myths of the ruling class. Rather than maintaining a polite, social façade, Trench tells the others exactly how he feels about them. For example, he no longer tolerates Kendal's syncophantic gushing: "One advantage of being chucked out of my organization is that I don't have to put up with your inane toadying" (44). The portrait commissioned by Trench in I.i has been exchanged for a seaside photographer's prop, which depicts a man and a woman on a tropical beach; both figures are outrageous caricatures, and have holes on the tops of their necks for heads to be pushed through (46-7). Trench uses the prop to condemn the others for presenting false versions of themselves: "...[The photographer's prop] reminds you of yourselves. That's important after all. If we knew what we are the world would change very fast" (44-5). The source of their hypocrisy, according to Trench, lies in their ability to ignore the

truth about themselves, and the consequences of what they do: "You trip over the truth and get up and brush it off your knees" (45).

Harris' reponse to Trench's challenge that they see themselves for what they are is to burst into tears. He feels humiliated, yet is powerless to change the system against which the strikers and the terrorist fight, and which destroys its own members. Hubbard simply refuses to accept Trench's statements, claiming JT's behaviour justifies their ousting of him from the company (47). Kendal is completely unaware of the significance of the portrait. He watches without interest as his wife performs an hysterical striptease from behind the picture, an action which ironically reveals little except that Pru is very silly. The entire scene in fact merely confirms the corrupt class nature of the guests, who learn nothing in spite of Trench's cries of "Show us what you are! Then we're warned!" (49). Unlike the terrorists who have a plan to effect radical change, or the strikers who belong to an organization which can oppose the boss' world, Trench's condemnation of his own class degenerates into hysteria and chaos. This is why he mutters "I'm afraid" (50) at the end of Part One. He has started to reject the system that he helped to build, but offers nothing in its place.

Part Two opens with Trench once more confronting the terrorists in the derelict house. Although the group had been betrayed by someone in their own ranks -- the reason for Trench's release in Part One -- Lisa and Michael are still determined to continue their struggles. In contrast, Trench has responded to the treachery of TCC by withdrawing from society; unlike Lisa and Michael, Trench does not have a political purpose that transcends individual defeats. As a result JT's view of

mankind has become extremely negative:

It's strange not meeting people. But then, I'm no longer soiled by them... Their horizons is the end of a pig trough. They tear the clothes from the living and the rags from the dead. Till they die and go in a plastic coffin to be burned. They have violence on their faces as if they'd been painted by a savage. (55, Bond's ellipsis)

Because he now despises the world and believes that men are essentially beasts, an attitude held by a ruling class,¹⁰ Trench is not willing or able to work towards social change, choosing instead to wallow in bitter self-pity. When the terrorists return in II.ii with another hostage, he does not align himself with those who want to build a better world even at the cost of doing violence to accomplish their ends. The class conflict between Trench and the terrorists continues because JT still adheres to ruling class ideology in spite of his isolation and inaction; as seen in Bingo, non-action can perpetuate an unjust system.

The meeting between TCC, Lord Bigdyke and the Police Chief in the first half of II.iii demonstrates the accuracy of Anna's statement in I.ii, that modern strikes create great tensions. "(Strikes) are a seedbed of revolution. We can therefore expect restrictions to be placed on them. This will increase conflict" (26-7). Lord Bigdyke

¹⁰ In many of his prefaces Bond addresses the question of whether man is innately violent. Bond consistently states that people do not need to be violent. According to the playwright, the ruling class constructs the myth of "original violence" in order to justify its use of power to keep the working class under control. Cf. "Author's Preface" to Lear, "Introduction" to The Fool, "On Violence", and "The Activists Papers", pp. 114, 123-5.

explains that the police must break the terrorist group in order to prevent it from harrassing TCC and supporting the workers. To do this, he advocates increased security: "From now on whenever there's industrial unrest at TCC precautions must be even more stringent" (61). TCC uses its allies -- the police and Lord Bigdyke -- in order to preserve its power. The businessmen's relief that Kendal's chauffeur, rather than a TCC executive, is the hostage underscores that the conflicts between TCC and the workers, TCC and the terrorists are class-based.

The segment of II.iii entitled "A Negotiations Speech" continues to reveal that the tension between the strikers and TCC is grounded in class differences. Hubbard begins negotiations with the strikers, trying to use the concept of class solidarity to blackmail the workers into ending the strike:

When Mr. Trench was taken the hostage was what you'd call a class enemy. A boss....This is different. The chauffeur earns less than you.... An elderly man who never harmed anyone. Noted for his kindness. Mr. Kendal tells me he didn't like to blow the horn even at lady drivers. Only last summer he rescued a little boy from a boating pond....The wife's poorly. There's a daughter.... But this time it's not an exploiter. It's one of your own. -(63-4)

Ignoring the fact that the strikers are not directly associated with the terrorists, Hubbard and Harris argue that unless the workers accept less than management originally offered, they will be "taking money with blood on it" (65). Gate and Terry, spokespeople for the strikers, discern what the TCC executives are doing; they are aware of the way the ruling class constructs false myths to justify its power. They

refuse to accept responsibility for violence caused by the injustices of a society which they do not control: "Mr. Hubbard you're not just bosses here. Your class is boss out there. Terror's your responsibility. Don't hang it round your neck" (65).

When Terry and Kate are left alone in the boardroom, Terry speaks a public soliloquy, which begins with the statement that the working class could create a rational and just society: "If we were here the brotherhood of man would not come overnight. But it would be harder for inhumanity to prosper. Why? Because in everything we did we'd seek only for the welfare of mankind" (66). Bond writes in "The Activists Papers" that in this speech he "tried to push the character...forty years ahead in time":¹¹

His age stays the same but he speaks with historical hindsight, with greater political consciousness and stronger political presence than he yet has. Because of this his language changes. But this is essential: the audience mustn't feel that the character has suddenly stopped being himself.... What the character says must still be right for his character.¹²

Bond uses Terry's individuality to explain the truth of his objective statements: "...in the future these things will be because there are now people like him."¹³ Speaking as his potential self in a public

¹¹"The Activists Papers", p. 139.

¹²Ibid., pp. 139-40.

¹³Ibid., p. 140, Bond's emphasis.

soliloquy, Terry provides a commentary on the class-divided world of the play. Like the terrorists, he blames the ruling class for creating a violent society: "All their trading was based on competition, aggression and inequality. Under the pressure of daily life these things turn into conflict, violence and injustice" (66). In contrast to Trench's claim in Part One that he is creating a new world, Terry argues that the ruling class tries to maintain an old order: "One half the effort and struggle needed to hold it together would make a new world" (66-7).

Terry's soliloquy ends when Ms. Linnel enters with Hubbard's tea. Unlike the secretary, who automatically serves Terry because he is sitting in the place of authority, the strikers have begun to recognize who their class friends and enemies are. The workers' doubt as to the sincerity of TCC's concern for the hostage is shown to be justified when Hubbard bluntly complains that the ransom is too high for a chauffeur (67). Terry's emotional response to Hubbard's reluctance to pay is an appropriate reaction when seen in the context of the situation in the play at that moment: "Common humanity? Decency? Brotherhood? Well what's he worth? How much? How much? (A moment's silence. He gives an inarticulate shout...)" (68). The rational voice of historical and political hindsight, heard in the public soliloquy, shows the direction in which this emotional response will develop; in a sense, the public soliloquy functions as a foreshadowing of the potentialities of the character. Terry exits with a comment that anticipates his future views, which have already been presented in his public soliloquy:

"I'll tell you when there'll be common humanity: when the driver's worth as much as the passenger" (69). The extent of the businessmen's inhumanity is seen at the end of this scene, when Hubbard decides to use the release of the chauffeur as a publicity stunt to boost sales: "With the right publicity. Something beautiful: bird flying out of a cage. What's a hundred thousand pounds to the future of the company? Just when we're going public. Couldn't have chosen better timing ourselves" (70).

In H.iv Terry's maturing political consciousness is apparent when he addresses the strikers, who are still uncomfortable with the terrorists' unsolicited solidarity with the strike. Like Wang, Terry recognizes that individual moments of kindness -- such as feeling sympathy for the chauffeur -- will not contribute to social change. Although some of the strikers still feel that it is indecent to continue the strike when a man's life is in danger, Terry argues that giving in to TCC would be a backward step:

They got the money: let them give! Yes sir no sir was good enough for our fathers. Well it's not good enough anymore. What good did it do them? We always climb down at the crunch. Where will that get us? Are we suddenly so powerful we can change the world by being kind? It's been tried. It didn't work. (73)

Like the terrorists, Terry will accept the chauffeur's death as a necessary sacrifice to the building of a new world. He believes, as Wang learns in The Bundle, that violence is an inevitable part of the revolutionary process:

You're in a fight. So stand there! That's the only way to give anything any value anymore. You do anything else and it's wasted. Kindness? Humanity? Decency? They destroyed all that! (73)

Bond pursues his analysis of political violence in the next scene (II.v), in which the terrorists once again engage in a dialogue with Trench. Anna explains that violence is more effective than ideals in revolution:

I have visions -- but to change the world you come down. Not because we want to. You only change things on the terms in which they're able to change. Not by the visions. The struggle in the dirt. I don't want to kill [the hostage]. The world's mad. We're trapped in it. I'd do anything to change it. I'd kill him. (75)

In opposition to Anna's activism, Bond gives us Trench's philosophy of despair: "The world's already ended except for the crying" (75).

Trench's nihilism is based on the ruling class myth that men are innately violent, thereby emphasizing the class dialectic which determines the conflict in the scene:

Mankind through the ages. A clown with a gun. An idiot with a stick. Little men plotting in tiny corners. Hunting for a uniform to cover themselves in. Or a mob to hang on to. The human species. Homo mob. (76)

As in I.i, Trench still claims to "see things as they are" (76), but his nihilism makes his vision absurd and hollow. JT's rigid despair isolates him. Like the Parson in The Fool, he can only wait for death rather than try to improve the world he helped to build: "The human voice still gives me pain. That's all. One day the world will be silent. Peace after the last shot" (77).

Throughout Trench's speech, Anna feeds the white hooded hostage

juice from a bottle. Bond describes her movements as maternal: "She cradles the white figure and pushes the end of the tube through a hole in the hood. It feeds. She nurses it and tidies its clothes" (76).

The juxtaposition of the positive image of Anna's wish to preserve and improve life with Trench's negativity illustrates the fundamental difference between them. Anna's speech entitled "A Lecture" and Lisa's repetition in "A Lecture Repeated" constitute the terrorists' rebuttal to Trench, and contribute to the political dialectic in II.v.

Anna's lecture introduces the idea of two worlds, a concept already hinted at through the class divisions in the play:

There are two worlds. Most people think they live in one but they live in two. First there's the daily world in which we live. The world of appearance. There's law and order, right and wrong, good manners. How else could we live and work together? But there's also the real world. The world of power, machines, buying, selling, working. That world depends on capital: money! (77, Bond's emphasis)

Although all classes live in both worlds, the ruling class tries to control the "real world", which according to Anna determines the quality of life for everyone in the "apparent world". The paradox, however, as seen in Bingo and The Bundle, is that "whoever owns money is owned by it" (78). TCC and its members are, therefore, enslaved to "the law of money" (78), which is amoral. A consequence of the "real world's" lack of morality, according to the terrorists, is a contradiction between appearance and essence. Although society appears prosperous and just, underneath this façade lie "violence, fascism, weapons" (78), the tools that maintain power for a select few. Similarly, the

civilized veneers of the businessmen in the play are shown to disguise a corrupt and powerful reality. According to Lisa and Terry, revolutionary cultural struggle involves attacking the forces which constitute the real world, not just making changes in the world of appearances (78). In refutation of JT's conception of mankind as a "homo mob", Anna explains why people are violent, using the model of the two worlds: "We're not violent because we're born with the need to hate. It's because instead of changing the real world we merely do good in this one" (78-9). Revolution is defined by the terrorists as the process by which the worlds of appearance and reality are joined through a moral vision that would not allow the unjust social forces presently operating in a corrupt culture to exist (79). Bond talks about this morality in "The Activists Papers":

When the two minds and two conducts are one there'll
be reason and justice
A good act will be good in both worlds
Not good in one and evil in another.¹⁴

Anna admits that the struggle for a rational society may have to use irrational means: "It's a matter of weapons. Using them causes suffering. But when appearance and reality are one there'll be less suffering. Men will know themselves -- and the world will last in peace and prosperity" (79).

Trench does not grapple with Lisa and Anna's arguments: "I didn't listen. I've heard it before. Better said. There are two worlds:

¹⁴"The Activists Papers", p. 162.

your's and mine. We're in mine" (79). Isolated in "his own world" (79), Trench anticipates the destruction of mankind, in terms which unmistakably suggest a nuclear explosion: Trench thus unwittingly illustrates his complicity in a society that would use weapons irrationally to destroy itself:

The sky will turn bright. There'll be a roar.
A great wind will blow open the windows and
doors. Dust will come down on everything like
a white sheet. It will blot out the horizon. I
shall go blind. The world will begin to shrivel.
A great noise will come from under the sheet.
Then it will be silent. (79)

Anna and Lisa repudiate Trench's nihilism, and therefore the conflict between them is not resolved. The terrorists have devoted their lives to opposing the forces of the "real world", and to trying to make people understand that change is possible, even if it must come about through violence. Ironically, at the end of II.v, when the police find the house, Anna does not fire her gun. The only act of violence is committed by Trench, who murders the chauffeur while standing behind the photographer's prop. By having Trench shot with his head poking through one of the holes in the picture, Bond implies that JT still belongs to a world in which appearances conceal a violent, irrational reality. Unlike Terry or the terrorists, who would have killed the chauffeur only if it would have furthered their efforts to make the world more just and sane, Trench's act appears to be unmotivated. JT's isolation and nihilism prevent him from joining the worlds of appearance and reality in a rational way, and the consequence of his philosophy is seen to be a pointless act of terror.

In the last scene of The Worlds, the workers discuss the past events. Just as Bond sets his characters in conflict in order to present the various arguments in the play, here the epic characters are the vehicle through which the playwright completes his analysis: the characters, however, do not lose their subjective distinctiveness. Beryl is resentful of the media's inevitable distortion of the situation, an indication that the "real world" has not changed. Her feelings about the media are expressed in terms of her daily life: "The papers'll have a go. Not nice when you're called an animal. The kids read it" (83). Although the strikers have received their pay rise, and appear to be content as they sit in the park with Beryl's baby,¹⁵ Terry does not allow them or us to lapse into complacency. He knows, as Anna explained earlier, that appearances can conceal a harsh and oppressive reality: "We can go home happy. What good's that? If you're ignorant that's your excuse. But if you know what sort of world you're in you have to change it" (83). Ignorance of the nature of the "real world" and "of what we are or what we do" (84) in relation to the world results in the perpetuation of the old world: "We're all terrorists. Everyone of us. We live by terror. Not even to make a new world: just to keep one that's already dead" (84). Terry's final lines constitute a challenge to us to examine our lives in light of the

¹⁵ The baby in the pram is a positive version of the pram scene in Saved. In The Worlds the working class characters express a confidence in their ability to survive and fight that is absent from the earlier play.

arguments presented through the drama:

How long can we go on like this? Yet we sit here
as if we had all the time in the world. All of us:
we sit. When they ask me to condemn terror
I shall say: no. You have no right to ask.
You are a terrorist. (84, Bond's emphasis)

As in his earlier plays, Bond hands the problems and solutions explored in the play to his audience, in the hope that the spectator will struggle with these issues in life, just as the playwright has grappled with them in art.

(11)

Restoration: "Man is what he knows -
or doesn't know"¹⁶

Restoration, like The Worlds, examines the necessity for each individual to see the "real world" clearly, and adequately respond to it as a politically conscious being. As in many of the earlier plays, in Restoration the first step towards revolutionary cultural struggle is seen to consist of an awareness of who one is in relation to class, society and history. Public soliloquy, a technique used in The Worlds, is evident in the songs, which often allow the characters to articulate their understanding of the world with greater political and historical insight than they have in the immediate context of the play; the songs also help to relate the events in the play to the present. Set in

¹⁶ Edward Bond, Restoration and the Cat (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1981), p. 100. All further references to Restoration are from this edition, and will be noted parenthetically in the text.

"England, eighteenth century -- or another place at another time" (3), Restoration associates the injustices of the class hierarchy of the eighteenth century with the class conflicts of the present. By applying the principles of his epic theatre to some of the conventions of Restoration comedy, Bond is able to dramatize an analysis of the still relevant problem of working class submission to ruling class injustice. The character types of Restoration comedy are thus constructed as epic characters, who exist within and embody a specific relation to a social and political milieu. The tensions between the rural and the pastoral, and between the country and the town -- identifying features of Restoration comedy -- are used to foreground the conflicts between these class-based, epic characters. The main thrust of the action in Restoration consists of the working class characters' struggles to understand and act upon the class dialectic in the play, a process which becomes necessary to their survival.

The poem which serves as an epigraph to Restoration, "It's a Big Broad Fine Sunny Day",¹⁷ introduces the idea of opposition to ruling class aggression and injustice, a theme that runs throughout most of Bond's plays:

¹⁷ In the National Theatre School production of this play at Harbourfront's Premier Dance Theatre, Toronto (March 1984), this poem was set to music composed by Ted Dykstra, who also played Bob. The song opened the show, and was sung by the entire cast and crew. In the Methuen edition of Restoration, this poem is not considered to be a song. All the music for the original production was composed by Nick Bicât, and is published with the Methuen edition.

3 3

OF / DE

It's a big broad fine sunny day
 And the sky gets bluer all the time
 From now on we'll live in the way that we say
 And we won't be told, not this time
 This is our world and it's staying that way
 This time we're gonna say no
 Today we'll live till tomorrow
 And tell the bastards where to go. (4)

Although the first scene of Restoration does not address this issue directly, as in The Worlds, Bond immediately sets up the class structure of the play. Lord Are is readily recognizable as an aristocratic Restoration fop "engaged in a typical bit of fop's business".¹⁸ The man is arranging himself and his scarf against a tree in an effort to create a pastoral picture, which he hopes will snare a rich bride. When Bob, the country bumpkin, enters and expresses confusion over Lord Are's activities, the familiar town/country tension of Restoration comedy is utilized to reveal the social hierarchy of the play: "Why sir 'tis Bob -- come of age and sent up to serve as your man, as laid down in the history of our estate: eldest Hedges boy hev the right to serve his lord" (10). Lord Are's attitude towards Bob is contemptuous and sneering, and he sends him away "to graze", as if Bob was an animal. Ever eager to please his master, Bob says in an aside: "I'll chew three stalks t'show willin'" (10).

The differences between the aristocracy and the servants are underscored later in I.i, in the juxtaposition of the courtship scenes between Are and Ann, and Bob and Rose. Are can barely hide his greed:

¹⁸Katharine Worth, "Bond's Restoration", Modern Drama, 24, 4 (Dec. 1981), p. 480.

"I'll take her, as she comes with money" (11). Ann and Hardache, members of the entrepreneurial class, appear to be interested only in grabbing Are's title. Ann's father is quite blatant about this:

"Hussy you're fit for nowt but an errand boy but you're my daughter and you'll marry an earl" (11). In contrast, Rose and Bob go through the simple rituals of a sincere courtship, in which the rose earlier despised by Are becomes a touching gift for the maid. Bob's lovesong "Roses" provides a commentary on the artificial courtship of Ann and Are. The song is full of sensual images of nature, the world disdained by the upper classes:

Your breath is a breeze that blows
In the silent world where the ice walls tower
And melts the snows to sparkling streams
And brings the swallows home from the south...
(15, Bond's ellipsis)

In a departure from the conventions of Restoration comedy, the servants are shown to be more in harmony with nature and sensitive than the upper classes: "A true pastoral has been achieved by the lower orders who are supposed to know nothing about it. This is Bond's revolutionary revision of the Restoration convention".¹⁹ By sharply differentiating the social spheres in the play, and locating the characters in definite class contexts, Bond sets the stage for the class-based conflicts which follow.

As in The Worlds, where scenes are constructed to reveal the complex

¹⁹Ibid., p. 481.

relations within different classes, I.ii further illustrates the nature of the servants' society. This scene also expands upon the problem of being blind to class injustice introduced in Are and Bob's exchange in I.i. Like her son, Mrs. Hedges is a firm upholder of a class hierarchy which she does not fully understand. Bond subtly shows how Mrs. Hedges' and Bob's blind acceptance of their roles interferes with their human relationships; when the parcels Bob is carrying for Ann prevent them from embracing (16). More explicit is Mrs. Hedges' recitation of the house rules to Rose, a speech which confirms her loyalty to the master-slave relationship (17); Ann, the authoritarian mistress, is shown in I.ii to be completely unworthy of the attentions she receives from the servants. Frank is more critical of his subservient position, but he still adheres to the servant hierarchy: "I'm the outdoor servant. Bob's indoors...If this was London an' his lordship stood on that line I'd have to clean the front of his boots an' Bobby'd have to clean the back" (19). Rose, who tells Mrs. Hedges "I like to know where I am" (17), is the only one of the servants who places her relationship with her husband, a member of her own class, ahead of her duty to her mistress: "Let the cow wait. I haven't had five minutes with Bob all day" (18). The song with which Frank concludes I.ii, "Song of Learning", picks up on Rose's as yet understated defiance, a foreshadowing of their future resistance to class injustice.

The song describes a modern revolution, in which wealth, factories and literature are taken over by the working class:

For fifty thousand years I was governed by men of
wealth
Now I have learned to make the laws I need for
myself. (20)

Frank sings the "Song of Learning" as his potential self. The song functions as a public soliloquy, revealing a revolutionary zeal which the character does not yet possess in the immediate context of the play. Bond intends the song to comment on the action in the scene by indirectly criticizing the acquiescence of Bob and his mother in the world of "men of wealth" described in the lyrics (19).

The next scene, I.iii, gives the audience a closer look at the aristocracy so respected by the Hedges. In contrast to the loving relationship between Bob and Rose, Ann dreams of her husband's death (20), and Are is outrageously insulting to his equally miserable wife. When Ann complains about being left in the country, taxing Are with his pre-marital promises, "a standard line of thwarted wives in Restoration comedy,"²⁰ Are launches into a long speech in which he comically reveals the immorality and dishonesty of the aristocracy:

Why ma'am if a gentleman kept his promises society
would fall apart. I promised? Forsooth and
is that not enough? Have ye not had the
pleasure of the promise?...I am a christian.
I go about the world scattering promises on the
suffering and destitute...I promised! Ungrateful
gal was that not enough but that now you must have
the promises kept? What fool doesn't know that
promises are better not kept?...I shall not be so
cruel to any man that it can be said I kept one promise
I made him...Ma'am I wonder that ye can live in this
world at all with a mind so unschooled in polite
society. (23-4)

²⁰Ibid., p. 484.

Outraged by her husband's words, Ann tries to manipulate Rose into functioning as an instrument of revenge. Rose refuses to be used in this way, realizing that as a member of the lower classes she would be the victim if the plot were discovered. In her song, "Dream", suitably titled because Rose is not yet ready to act out the defiance in the song, Bond associates racial conflict between blacks and whites with Rose's growing and future resistance to her masters:

And the song of freedom is sung
I am black
At night I pass through the land unseen
Though you lie awake
My smile is as sharp as the blade in my hand
The venom does not kill the snake. (26)

Unlike Bob and Mrs. Hedges, Rose recognizes who her class enemies are. Her opposition to Ann is not a matter of a petty quarrel between a master and a servant, but is a consequence of their class positions. Similarly, in The Worlds, Trench and the terrorists' conflicts are social and historical, rather than psychological or personal.

"The Thieving Scene" in I.iv continues the theme of awareness of social and class oppression. Frank enters "dazed, exhausted and filthy" (27) from the unaccustomed harshness of farm labour. Mrs. Hedges does not have any sympathy for Frank. To her the work is a natural part of life: "Yoo London folks are a proper laugh. Bit a hard work hev him cryin' like a babby" (27). Rose, however, understands Frank's situation: "He don't mind working with his hands but that's all he does now. Likes to use his brains" (27, Bond's emphasis). Unlike Mrs. Hedges, Rose does not uncritically uphold a system which enslaves people. The "Wood Song", sung by Mrs. Hedges, initially emphasizes

the characters' fatalistic view of her class position:

The iron chain the brass locks
The human toil the earthly span
These are the lot of everyman
The winds that drive the storms that blast
For everyman the die is cast. (28)

The last few lines of the "Wood Song", however, move the song into the realm of a public soliloquy:

All you who would resist your fate
Strike now it is already late. (28)

Mrs. Hedges' call for action is articulated by her potential self, and comments critically on her acceptance of her fate within the context of the play. Mrs. Hedges' rigid adherence to the social structure depicted in the play is emphasized after her song by her rejection of Rose's suggestion that they eat off the silver cutlery.

When Bob enters, he is as unsympathetic as his mother towards Frank's exhaustion. As a practical joke, he binds Frank to a chair, a gag which quickly takes on a sinister cast when Mrs. Hedges discovers the missing spoon. Rose intuitively dislikes Bob's treatment of Frank -- he becomes quite aggressive and threatening -- because his behaviour is similar to their masters'. After Frank surrenders the spoon, he and Rose try to reason with Bob and his mother, who again act like masters by wanting to turn Frank over to the authorities. Frank explains how the social hierarchy created by the upper classes forces him to steal:

Yer have to steal in my job if yer wanna live.
Yer fetch an' carry for 'em, pick 'em up, get 'em
upstairs, put 'em to bed, clean up the spew. Stands
to reason they drop anythin' -- it's yourn. That's
only right. Chriss! Yer go through their
pockets out of self-respect! (33)

Rose reminds Bob that "They hang yer for stealin'" (33), and argues "That lot can afford a bit of silver. Chriss the work they've got out of him, he deserves it" (33). Bob and Mrs. Hedges, however, are rigid upholders of what they believe to be justice, law and order. Bob will not let Frank escape because he adheres to ruling class law: "Question of law. Ont break it us-self, an' if someone else do: we stay on the right side an'tell" (33).

Rose is shocked and dismayed by Bob's treatment of his own class, behaviour that comes from his lack of understanding of history and society. When Bob and his mother exit to fetch the Parson, Rose relates to Frank the method of escape used by black slaves; again Bond makes the connection between the exploitation of the blacks and the enslavement of the servant class. Frank's reaction when he is freed -- he grabs the rest of the silver and runs -- reveals that his rebellion against the aristocracy is essentially individualistic. In contrast, Rose fights on behalf of all those who are enslaved. When he returns, Bob does not understand Rose's actions. He cares less for solidarity with his class than for the safety of his immediate family, an attitude which betrays his fellow workers, even though Bob means well: "We think of us, can't afford to think of no one else. Hard times but we got jobs, we could be happy -- but we ont if we meddle" (36). As expressed in his "Song of the Calf", Bob believes that the weak are inevitably overpowered by the strong, and therefore he aligns himself with his powerful class enemies without understanding the consequences of this decision. As in the "Wood Song", however, the last line of the "Song of the Calf" expresses a call for an awareness that the character

does not possess: "Do you know -- do you care -- who will get away?" (37). Because Bob does not recognize who his oppressors are in the immediate context of the play, he is willing to help the butchers, about whom he sang, to catch their victim.

Rose's development during "The Thieving Scene" is evident in her conversation with Bob at the end of I.iv. Chiding Rose for feeling happy that she helped Frank escape, Bob tells her that she must learn "to think like white folk" (38) and be "guided by me" (38). Rose angrily refuses to take orders and to "do the things I grew up to hate" (38). She will not accept Bob's faith in ruling class law, nor is she willing to think and act like her historical enemies. Bob is not even aware of his class disloyalty. His innate goodness is seen in his taking the blame for Frank's escape; on a personal level, Bob knows where his loyalty lies. ¹⁹ Social naivety of Bob and his mother contrasts with Rose's growing consciousness of the nature of the upper classes, represented in I.iv by the Parson, whose morality reaffirms the class system: "Ten commandments! That's all that are asked of us. One little law for each finger, to bring peace to the lord in his palace and the goodman in his cottage" (39). The song "Man Groans", sung by Rose and Mrs. Hedges, follows the Parson's speech, and emphasizes the difficulty of knowing which values to uphold in a corrupt culture. Again the song functions as a public soliloquy, allowing the characters to speak with greater clarity and political hindsight than they yet possess:

You to whom the answer is easy
 Do not live in our time
 You have not visited our city
 You weep before you know who to pity
 Here a good deed may be a crime
 And a wrong be right
 To you who go in darkness we say
 It's not easy to know the light (40).

Because Bob is essentially "in darkness" with regard to his class relationships, the deeds he thinks are morally correct merely perpetuate the system which enslaves him.

I.v reveals the nature of the justice and morality which Bob and his mother uphold. In a hilarious scene, Lord Are accidentally murders his wife, who has dressed herself up as the family ghost in order to persuade her husband to take her to London. Lord Are's reaction to his deed is to look for a way to avoid the blame and especially the scandal. Bob's entrance and his past obedience inspire Are to manipulate events so that it appears the servant murdered Lady Are. Taking advantage of Bob's shock, Lord Are easily convinces Bob that he has murdered his mistress, but that his master will protect him: "We have a difficult road ahead. Turn to me at all times. I shall lead you to the promised land. Hold no conference with others, who will mislead you" (47). Bob's trust in the aristocracy, already established in I.iv, results in his becoming a victim of the system of justice he defended in "The Thieving Scene". His obedience and ordinariness, qualities which his mother thinks will save him (49), are used by Are to entrap Bob. Because he does not recognize his enemies, Bob is easily tricked into believing Lord Are's vows of protection; the audience, however, has heard Lord Are's opinions on the value of his promises!

Part Two of Restoration opens in the Peterborough Gaol, where Bob is shackled to the floor. Unlike Mrs. Hedges and Bob, Rose does not believe Are's version of the murder. She quickly ascertains that Ann had already been stabbed before Bob's entrance, and reminds her husband that there are different rules for servants and masters: "They have accidents, we make mistakes" (53). Frank, who is in the next cell, joins Rose in warning Bob against aligning himself with Lord Are: "Trust that fox an' yer deserve t'hang! Bang the door in his face! Yer no friend of mine Bob Hedges but I don't wish him on yer!" (54). Rose confronts Lord Are with Bob's innocence, and even Bob has to admire her courage: "Bless you Rose. You're the brave one here" (55). Initially taken aback by her challenge, Are quickly takes control of the situation, and in the process reveals the nature of the justice system Bob supports, and of which he is a victim:

What you or I say is no matter. Truth is what the lawyers say it is. You have none, whilst I... (Gesture.) If Bob confesses, the killing is an accident. If he accuses me -- well, have ye ever listened dumbfounded while ye contradicted yourself ten times in a minute? My lawyers will torment him till he runs to the scaffold... Would ye give evidence against me Bob. A lord dragged down by a working man? 'Tis against all civil order, (55, first ellipsis Bob's; second ellipsis is mine).

As Bob's chains rattle, Lord Are ironically tells him that they "May talk freely together" (56). He urges Bob not to challenge him, "the symbol of authority" (56), but rather to plead guilty so as to avoid anarchy; almost as an afterthought, Are promises to buy the jury (56). This scene clarifies one of the sources of the class conflicts in the play: the upper class defines law and order, which it uses

to maintain class divisions, a situation then labelled "civil order" (56). Similarly in The Worlds justice is controlled by those who want to maintain their power. Are's offer to help Bob to be acquitted, even as he admits his servant's innocence, is therefore specious.

The song which follows, "The Gentleman", sung by Rose and Bob comments on the sort of kindness offered by those in power to their victims:

What politeness he shows the stranger!
In his hand there's a rifle
At the door to the gas chamber
He hands the child back to her arms (57).

Bob's unquestioning obedience to Are and his values is also criticized in the song. Once again, Bob sings about insights which he does not possess. In contrast, the song parallels Rose's growing consciousness of the dangers of Bob's blind faith in his master:

Who would raise a whip when an order is obeyed?
Why lift up your fist when a pointing finger will lead?
.....
When you have the mind why bother to chop off the head? (57)

After the song, Bob wants to put his life in Are's hands, even though Rose argues that the judge and Lord Are are their enemies. Still believing that Are "is the law -- so I must obey him" (57), and that "this way we got a chance" (58), Bob agrees to trust his master. Rose refuses to conform to Bob's decision, just as she earlier rejected his statement that she learn to behave like white people. Frank's response to his fellow prisoner's choice is to rave and thrash about in anger. Bob and Frank's "Song of Talking", which concludes II.vi, comments on the action by examining how the working class is victimized by the ruling class. In the song, an injured factory worker is killed

by a press-hammer, but the foreman will not stop the machines (61).

Likewise, in the play, Bob is a victim of a destructive culture which does not care if he lives or dies. The song describes the injured man's friend trying to help him, but he is too late. Frank and Rose attempt to prevent Bob from sealing his own fate, but they are unable to change Bob's social conditioning.

Rose's efforts to help Bob, even if he will not help himself, begin in II.vii. Gabriel, Bob's father, is introduced in this scene, and his unwillingness to intervene on behalf of his son partly explains why Bob grew up to obey his master unquestioningly: "Then best howd your row...People allus fuss over what they can't mend" (62). As content as an animal with his life -- "wife, roof, dry sty, eat an' sleep like an old boar" (62) -- Gabriel is literally and metaphorically blind to the injustices of the world. Like Hecuba in *The Woman*, he sees his sightlessness as a way of living peacefully: "Sight's a curse laid on them who lead me, feed me, thatch the roof an' hang the door...I hev the fruit of the world without its pains" (62-3). Mrs. Hedges agrees with her husband's policy of non-involvement in the affairs of the aristocracy. When Rose summons Hardache, in the hope that he will help Bob, Mrs. Hedges tells Rose, "jist ont stand in my boy's way when he hev his chance to goo up in the world" (64); the Mother is unaware of the dark foreshadowing of hanging implicit in her words. Like Bob she genuinely thinks that Are will be grateful for her son's loyalty (63), and appears to be more concerned about her master's reputation than for her son's safety (64). Rose is more conscious of the class nature of Bob's victimization, as seen when she redefines

Bob's position: "It's not between Are and Bob. It's between two bosses" (64). She knows that, according to the law, if Hardache discovers Are murdered his wife, all Ann's money will revert to her father. Rose, however, in her desperation makes a similar mistake to Bob's by trusting Hardache, whose concern is money not justice: "I'm right glad I came to pay respects to my daughter's grave: you run into business anywhere" (66). The Mother's song, "Legend of Good Fortune", is a response to Hardache's powerful exploitation of those who are weaker than him:

Men lived in peace and plenty
When the world was as young as the day
But a god came down from heaven
And took the good things away. (66)

The insights of the song are beyond the Mother's intellectual and emotional capacities in the play; she and her husband slavishly adhere to the values of Are and Hardache, without understanding the consequences of what they do.

II.viii reveals that Bob's innate intelligence has been abused and neglected, one of the reasons why he is so blind. The sentence Bob is learning to read -- "Man is what he knows" (68) -- comments on Bob's situation; the reason he is in gaol, trusting Are, is because he is not aware of the injustices of the class society in which he lives. Bob's naivety prevents him from seeing what even the Parson does not deny: "The child is a simpleton. Lord Are promises a pardon to comfort him, but heaps coals of fire on his head" (68). Bob's kindness to the Hangman is another example of the way that he blindly helps those who will harm him. Although Rose is aware of who her

enemies are, her plan to set Are and Hardache against each other backfires in II.viii, when the two masters sign an agreement which condemns Bob (75). The song, "Hurrah", sung by all those on stage comments ironically on English "freedom", expressing the pitiful manner in which the working class perpetuates its own victimization by not fighting against injustice:

They think they walk in freedom? -- they are sold
To the butcher!
They run to fetch the tackle and hook
They write their names in his invoice book
They whet the blade and hand the knife
They stretch their neck and give their life
Hurrah! for every Englishman is free
Old England is the home of Liberty (77)

Rose's growing despair over Bob's plight culminates at the end of II.viii, when her husband shows her that even though he is not shackled, he is not trying to escape (77). Bob's problem is that he thinks he is free, although his freedom is of the sort described in "Hurrah". As the daughter of a black slave, Rose is aware that until Bob sees that he is enslaved by his collaboration with Are, he will never be free:

Your're a slave but don't know it. My mother saw
her chains, she's had marks on her wrists all her life.
There are no signs on you till you're dead. How can
yer fight for freedom when you think you've got it?
...Yer won't go, if there was a chance he'd put yer
a mile underground an' chain yer to the wall. Then
yer'd be free: yer'd know what yer are.

(78, Bond's emphasis)

Her speech jars Bob into a realization of where he went wrong: "I know what yoo tell me now. Long ago I should hev put my boot in their teeth every time the bastards smiled at me" (78). This awareness does not

lead to action, however, because Bob draws the wrong conclusion from his knowledge: "I've left it late...I must trust the clown an' hope for my reward" (79). As the "Song of the Conjuror" indicates, when one voluntarily puts oneself in bondage, the choice of determining one's freedom is lost (79); a similar situation involves Hecuba, when she tries to see after she has voluntarily blinded herself..

In spite of Rose's frustration with Bob's acceptance of his situation, she still continues to act on his behalf in an attempt to secure his release. In II.ix Rose visits old Lady Are to request that she use her influence at court to obtain a pardon for Bob..

Protesting her husband's innocence, Rose tries to dissuade Lady Are from believing that if Bob is freed it will cause "a riot or open a revolution" (82); Are also holds this view, as has already been seen in the gaol scene (56). Having no success with Lady Are, Rose exits cursing the old woman; she finally accepts that the upper classes will not help bring about justice. Left alone on stage, Lady Are decides to grant Bob's pardon, not because he is innocent, but in order to torment her loathed son. In the confrontation between Lady Are and Rose, Bond juxtaposes the hollowness and corruption of the aristocracy with Rose's courage and struggles for justice. Although Lady Are plans to grant Bob his reprieve, her "good deed" is meaningless because it will not alter an unjust society. The audience, however, is left at the end of II.ix half-expecting and hoping for a last minute reprieve for Bob. This optimism is encouraged by the melodic "The Fair Tree of Liberty" sung by Rose and Frank, which poetically describes the tenacity of man's struggle for freedom:

And so the fair tree grows
 As tall as the pine and strong as the oak
 Wreathed with the climbing honeysuckle
 The wild rose and the hanging vine
 As our forefathers spoke. (84)

The audience's hopes for Bob's reprieve are shattered in II.x, when Are bribes his mother's messenger and obtains the pardon. The shift in the tone of Are's speech once he has the pardons stresses the frightening power and arrogance of Bob's enemy:

Now sure I am looked on by a guardian angel --
 though from whence I know not! I hold in my hand
 his pardon. I shall not deliver it. What, no
 lightning stroke? No thunder? The sun does not
 stop its course! Lookee Are: thou art a strange
 soul. I begin to like thee, and I might worship
 thee. Ye have talents, nay powers I knew not of! (88)

Until this point in the play, Lord Are's wit has managed to hold some of the audience's sympathy, in spite of the horrible things he does and says. The man's cruelty is here shown unadorned by verbal cleverness, just as we now see Are for the first time wigless, in a plain shirt and breeches (84). The most vicious moment in the play comes in II.x, when Lord Are with mock kindness hands Bob's illiterate mother the pardons:

Are. ...Lookee, light a fire against my return. The
 day might yet be cold. Warm thy old hands
 at the blaze. Here is a paper to start it (He
 gives her the pardons)

Are goes.

Mother. Kind on him. Save me fetch the kindlin'.
 Official. Pretty crown on top. Cut them out
 for Christmas decoration. (Shakes her head)
 Best do what yoo're tow'd. Bob was learnin' to
 read. (Tears the papers) Ont start that doo yoo
 ont git the work out the way.

Mother starts the fire. (89)

Bond's stagenotes indicate that after the Mother has set the fire, she becomes much older (89). Her unquestioning obedience to Lord Are's ignorance result in her condemning her own son to death, a situation which Bond expresses in terms of a physical deterioration. In Early Morning a similar thing happens to Arthur when he eats his father. Clare's aging in the last scene of The Fool is another example of how Bond uses his actors' bodies to illustrate the effects of the ruling class on those who do not oppose it.

Are's vicious tantrum over the missing button, at the end of II.x, further reveals the pettiness and inhumanity of the man whom Mrs. Hedges serves with unwavering loyalty. Although Are's tirade results in the Mother's first vague murmur of discontent -- "Can't sew it on. Ont give me the button" (90) -- Mrs. Hedges remains unchanged. She is only slightly resentful that the man who has caused her son's death now berates her for being ungrateful because she forgot to sew a button on the jacket he plans to wear to Bob's hanging: "You ancient hag must I sew it on myself? I give ye the roof over your head, the ground under your feet, the food on your plate -- for a gaping hole with two black spots and a white thread like the lower-anatomy of a mouse!" (90). The song, "Suddenly", which concludes the scene, foreshadows Bob's death. By associating the hanging with images of a nuclear explosion, Bond stresses that death comes unexpectedly to all those who like Bob and Mrs. Hedges do not take control of their destiny:

So sudden was the disaster
So swift the moment of fate

It fell at the time of the midday meal
When the fork was halfway between
The mouth and the plate. (91)

When II.xi begins, Bob is still convinced that a pardon is coming;

Mrs. Wilson, the hangman's wife, has nurtured these false hopes. Rose, however, is weeping because she knows that Bob is doomed. As the Parson intones Psalm 39 from The Burial of the Dead, Bob eventually realizes that he has been betrayed:

Curses! That a man dies so! Git Are here! That
blackguard! Why doo he doo this? When was
I angry at him? When did I raise my fist?
Touch cap -- work quiet -- bow -- ont that
enough? Now he want my head! (95)

Bob's "Drum Song" reflects his newfound awareness of how he let himself be destroyed by Are:

And other men are silent
When they labour them
About the head (97)

Frank cares little that Bob now realizes his past mistakes. He blames Bob for his fate, arguing that if the latter had not acted as an accomplice to Are and the Parson, he would not have taken the rest of the silver: "I'd have been careful then. No drinkin' an' whorin'. Made my way to London like a sane man. Gone round a corner forever" (97). Although Frank's accusations are not completely fair -- Rose gave him a chance to escape without stealing the silver-- Bond stresses here that one of the consequences of Bob's ignorant cooperation with the upper classes is his betrayal of other members of his own class. As he and Frank are led to the gallows, Bob is still somewhat bewildered in spite of his belated awareness. His last words are

directed to the audience -- "I ont believe this" (98) -- and invite us to think about the events which led up to Bob's death.

In the last scene of Restoration, Rose reiterates the necessity for the audience to realize why Bob died: "What have I learned? If nothing, then I was hanged" (99, Bond's emphasis). Her song "Man is What He Knows" reviews the major themes in the play, beginning with a rhetorical question about freedom and slavery:

Does the judge say
I send your arms to prison today
But your feet are free
To walk away? (99)

Throughout most of the play, Bob mistakenly thinks he is free because he has aligned himself with those who enslave him. On the other hand, Rose not only learns to recognize her enemies, but tries to teach Bob that his ignorance of class relationships will destroy him. In spite of the fact that Rose fails to save Bob, the song demonstrates that her husband's death strengthens her defiance and faith in her ability to overcome her enemies:

But they do not own the earth
Sooner believe I could strike it a blow
With my fist and miss! (100)

Rose's song ends with a plea for awareness and action, potentialities which distinguish man from other elements in nature:

Geese fly over the moon and do not know
That for a moment they fill the world with
beauty

.....
Wind and rain cannot tell where
they blow
But we may know who we
are and where we go (100)

Like The Worlds, Restoration concludes with a direct address to the audience, which summarizes the central theme of the play: each individual must see himself in terms of social, historical and class relationships in order to be fully human and capable of opposition to injustice and tyranny. Rose's final lines indicate that, like Terry, she will continue her struggle to forge a new and better world:

I must have one hand of iron and the other of
steel...I cross the bridge and go into the
streets. (100)

Summer: "Each generation must create its own humanity" ²¹

Summer, Bond's last full-length play published to date, further explores one of the central themes in Restoration and The Worlds: the necessity for individuals to know "who we are the where we go" in relation to class, society and history. Just as Bob is reluctant to face the reality of his class role in the social structure which oppresses him, Xenia, in Summer, resists Marthe's efforts to force her to accept and take responsibility for her social role in history. Marthe, like Anna and Rose, insists that people delve beneath appearances, and confront the often harsh and painful elements of political reality. As in The Worlds and Restoration, Bond illustrates this process of growing awareness through the lives of epic characters, who embody and exist within a particular class and social milieu. The actions of the characters, as in the two earlier plays, not only define subjective individuality, but also reveal the characters' formal historical and social relationships; the general is seen in the particular. The main

²¹ Edward Bond, "If" in Summer and Fables (London: Methuen, 1982). p. x. All further references to the poems in Summer or to the play are from this edition, and will be noted parenthetically in the text.

conflict in Summer arises from Marthe's efforts to make Xenia come to terms with her socio-historical self, a confrontation that Bond sets in a definite class context. As in The Worlds and Restoration, the characters' struggles for a clear vision of their relation to society and history is seen to be the first step towards the creation of a new world. The poem "Summer", which serves as an epigraph to the play, anticipates Bond's intentions in Summer:

Here is a simple story
Of war and its aftermath
Which shows that as we live in history
We cannot learn to bear the unbearable but seek justice
And praise those who share the earth (vii)

Scene One immediately establishes that Xenia is a "strange survivor of the past",²² an alien to the present world of the play. She complains about the "hideous new hotel" (1) and the discotheque (2), changes which have come to her birthplace. Marthe, who enters only after Xenia has gone upstairs, emphasizes the latter's association with a world now gone: "When I hear her voice it's as if I'm back in the past" (2). Xenia's longstanding tradition of visiting the house is altered by Marthe's impending death, a situation used by Bond to foreground the theme of being conscious of how one lives one's life: "Any play about death must be to do with what you do, and what you ought to do, with your life...the approach towards death must be a greater turning towards life".²³ By setting the

²² Edward Bond as quoted in Philip Roberts, "Edward Bond's Summer: 'a voice from the working class'", Modern Drama, 26, 2 (June 1983), 130.

²³ Ibid., pp. 129-30.

play in a time of crisis, Bond facilitates the conflict between Xenia and Marthe, which in the first scene appears to involve simply a tension between the past and the present. What quickly becomes apparent, however, is that Xenia's insistence on the undeniable truth of her explanations for even the most trivial events -- her lost keys, for example -- foreshadows a close-mindedness that extends to more important realities.

Xenia's willful insistence on interpreting events in her own way is seen in Scene Two, when she disregards David's instructions, and tries to convince Marthe not to be resigned to die (9). Rather than being sensitive to Marthe's rational acceptance of her terminal illness, Xenia transfers her own discomfort with death to Marthe: "I'm glad I didn't know you were ill before I came. I can see what's happening with a fresh mind. You're all so apathetic. You've resigned yourself as if you were meeting fate. It's not like you. A doctor's word isn't law" (10). When Ann enters, Xenia's tendency to reconstruct reality is shown also to apply to the past. Although Xenia honestly believes that she has told Ann the truth about her family during the war -- just as she truly thinks she is helping Marthe by telling her she will not die -- Marthe gently reminds her guest that her association with the past is artificial:

Wipe our dust from your feet. That's good advice. This isn't your home anymore. You're a stranger here. Some of the flats have changed hands eight or nine times since you left. Most of the people in them have never heard your family name (11).

Likewise, Marthe bids Xenia not to construct a false version of the present. She appeals to Ann, who unlike Xenia directly confronts the

prospect of Marthe's death, to ensure that she and her mother do not create a false environment:

This is my last chance of happiness. We all share our lives. If your lives go on in their normal way, so will mine for a little longer. If they don't, I've already started to die. I don't want to do that till I have to. So let's go on as we did before (12-13).

Xenia's limitations are demonstrated in her response to both of Marthe's statements. With regard to the past, Xenia insists on a quasi-mystical connection with the trees and lizards in the garden (11), an indication that her relationship to the past is self-created. Her reaction to Marthe's request that she behave normally also reveals Xenia's self-centredness, a quality that prevents her from directly confronting objective reality: "I can't. David says you're dying. that changes everything. I don't know what to-do yet -- or what to think" (13).

David, who enters after this exchange, immediately notices the unsettling effect Xenia's false versions of reality have had on his mother. In an attempt to counteract Xenia's attempts to cultivate impossible hopes in Marthe, David launches into a long, detailed explanation of his mother's illness, the possible treatments, and the inevitable causes of death (13-15). When Xenia exits, David justifies his speech to Marthe:

It was necessary for you not her. She will tempt you, Marthe. Don't fall. You are going to die. If I hadn't told you you could pretend. But you know. As long as you are alive you must choose how to live -- even though the end's inevitable. You must agree to die. Otherwise you can't die in peace. (16)

David's insistence upon the truth contrasts with Xenia's avoidance of harsh reality. His fear of the destructiveness of Xenia's fictions is substantiated when Marthe asks David to end her life, exemplifying the bitterness of those unprepared to die (16).

By Scene Three, Marthe has recovered from her depression. In conversation with Ann, she begins to construct a different picture of Xenia's past in terms of class and society:

[Her family] owned half the town. That isn't a figure of speech. Factories, a bank, the local paper, the farms in the hills. Your grandparents expected to be bowed at in the street. (19-20)

Although Xenia's family tried to be kind -- Xenia too thinks she is being kind -- Marthe, like Wang in The Bundle and Anna in The Worlds, explains that individual virtue is rendered meaningless under the laws of capitalism:

Factories and banks aren't run by kindness. They run on their own laws. The owners and owned must both obey them. The kindness of one person to another can't change that. If it could the world would be a better place. After all, we all mean well. (20)

Xenia's family, according to Marthe, confused justice with kindness, and in this way corrupted those who respected them: "You can live without kindness, you can't live without justice -- or fighting to get it. If you try to you're mad" (20).

As if to confirm her association with her upper class past, Xenia enters after having visited an old friend who is a bitter survivor from the pre-war era. Xenia feels sorry for the woman, who lives in isolation:

"To go on living after the world's been taken away from you....A

disgraceful neglect of an old woman" (21). Marthe, on the other hand, has a different perspective of Xenia's friend: "I used to call on her. It became too tiring. She hates so many things. She's thrown her life away" (21). Xenia's connection and sympathy with the fallen aristocracy is further illustrated by her gift to Marthe of a waiter's crumb brush, an object from the old regime when Marthe was Xenia's family's servant. The brush sets off a chain of associations in Xenia's mind, and she recounts an idealized version of her childhood, that contrasts sharply with Marthe's harsh criticisms of the family and its class:

When I was a girl we went to the islands almost every day in the summer...There was always some young man who could play the mandolin. The women sat under silk sunshades and the men rolled up their trouser-legs and stood in the shallows to fish. I expected an old Chinaman to come out of a cave and kneel to pray or draw a map of the sky in the sand (22).

Marthe has already told Ann of the moral consequences of Xenia's family's possession of everything, including the farms. Xenia, however, remembers the farmers as a kind of pastoral tableau vivant:

Then the farmers sang in the hills. I expect my father paid for their songs. We listened in silence. The farmers worked hard and yet they created that beauty. (22)

Unlike Marthe, Xenia cannot understand "that men who sang so beautifully could hate so deeply" (22). She blames "the fanatics" in their foreign uniforms for the war which destroyed her way of life: "We were foolish. It will never be given back. I hope those who have it are happy" (23).

Xenia's selective and romantic vision of the past provokes Marthe to continue telling Ann her version of history, including

certain important details which Xenia has neglected to mention. For example, Xenia has never told Ann that Marthe was going to be shot during the war, but that Xenia persuaded the German commandant to release her. Marthe's association of Xenia with the Germans, as a common enemy, is immediately established when she tells Ann that the prisoners were taken to the islands owned by Xenia's family, the same place which Xenia earlier described as a delightful picnic grounds. In contrast to Marthe's view, Xenia portrays her family as heroic examples of opposition to the Nazis:

The irony was that father passed information to the partisans through Marthe. That's why he had the Germans to dine. They trusted us and we overheard many things that helped the partisans. You see what a brave grandfather you had. If the Germans had found out they'd have shot him and his family. (24)

The central conflict in this scene, therefore, grows out of Marthe and Xenia's different perceptions of the past. Ann, the neutral observer, is caught in the middle of this dialectic, which, although it is expressed in individual voices, is epic in nature. The tension between Marthe and Xenia does not arise simply out of a personality clash, but is grounded in conflicting class values. Marthe believes that the corrupt culture of the ruling class allowed fascism to flourish. In her long speech in Scene Three, Marthe demonstrates, through the story of the old woman, the unwitting association of Xenia and her class in Nazi atrocities:

She'd lost everything - her family and her room. When I told them the name of the woman I worked for she said 'If I could live to spit in her face' and spat in the dirt. (25)

Marthe continues her identification of Xenia with the Nazis, when she describes her release from the camps:

MARTHE. ...The soldier saluted. You nodded.

XENIA (defensively): To identify you.

MARTHE: The officer clicked and saluted you. (26)

Xenia's refusal to accept Marthe's accusations is, on one level, consistent with her already established tendency to reconstruct reality selectively according to her personal preferences. Because Bond sets her so firmly within a social context, however, Xenia's denials also reveal an attitude characteristic of her class, that is, the belief that individual acts of heroism define history. Sidestepping Marthe's version of history as a struggle between classes, Xenia focuses on what she sees as the real injustice of the past:

I can't understand why you punished him. [Xenia's father]. I understand why you took his house, money, clothes, cattle, land, books, pictures, umbrella - but why punish him? He was an old man who wasn't used to manual work ...He had faults... But he didn't choose the bed he was born in' (26).

Speaking as a member of the ruling class, Xenia like Treach still believes "Someone must run the world. If you do it better, fine" (26-7). Marthe condemns the assumption that people must be controlled and led, one of the reasons why she gave evidence against Xenia's father; she also sees Xenia and her family as one of the forces that put her in the prison camp.²⁴

The image of the islands concentrates the conflict between the women. Xenia, who remembers the islands as an idyllic picnic spot, sees them in the present as symbolic of the hatred directed at her family after the war:

²⁴ Ibid., p. 130.

Once those islands were one piece of rock. Then the sea tore them in two. I've seen men and women who could have torn them apart with their bare hands their hatred was so great. (27)

Denying any responsibility for the atrocities that occurred on her family's property, Xenia again shifts her focus to the personal effect the war had on her relatives. In contrast, Marthe gazes at the islands daily, without rancour: "In the evening they're dark. They're called the eyes of the sea. Why should I mind them? They're not my life" (27). Marthe explains to Xenia that she is living her "second life" after her near-death in the camp, and her feelings about the islands convey the rational understanding she now has of the past: "I have no memory of the islands to drive me out of the sun to cry in my cave" (28). Because her class did not create a world in which fascism could flourish, Marthe experiences no guilt or denial regarding the islands: similarly, in The Worlds, Terry will not take responsibility for the ruling class violence that exists in a world controlled by businessmen.

Xenia's meeting with the German on the island in the next scene confirms Marthe's version of history and Xenia's historical and class connection to the rise of fascism during the war. Bond writes in his notes for Summer that the association of Xenia and the German is not "a connection between individuals...but between 'classes', and it's meant to penetrate Xenia's cultural disguise, because she believes she stands for everything that [the German] is against".²⁵ The German's

²⁵ Ibid., p. 133.

memories of the camps are reminiscent of Xenia's recollections of the islands as a lovely place for a family outing: "Even in the end - till the very last days - we went to the bars in the evenings to drink a glass of wine and sing the old songs. I carried my accordeon all through the war till I got back to Germany" (30). Although Xenia tries to dissociate herself from the German -- "You destroyed our lives" (30) -- his nostalgia for the old world is remarkably similar to hers: "No, no, the old days were over. No one was strong enough to save them. Now we must learn to live in a new world" (30). His long speech describing in terrifying detail the camps and the shooting of prisoners contrasts sharply with Xenia's idealized memories of the islands, thereby confirming Marthe as the true interpreter of history. Although Xenia desperately wants to believe that she, and therefore all those of her class, opposed the Nazis -- "We killed as many of you as we could" (34) -- the German illustrates, through the story of the girl in white, that Xenia, as Marthe has already told her, was a part of the destructive forces of fascism:

XENIA: I know what happened. (She points) I lived over there.
 GERMAN (laughs): We were that close?...You see that big house? Our officers dined there. In the war there was a young girl; the daughter of the house. We called her the girl in white. She stood on the terrace and pretended to stare at the sea...We loved her, we were young soldiers. She never smiled or waved. She dared not. The partisans would have shot her. But she was our friend. She stood there as a sign. It was all she could do. (34-5)

Xenia realizes to her horror that she is the girl in white, whom the Nazis looked to for inspiration. In spite of her protestations -- "She

didn't stand there for your sake!" (35) -- the German proves Xenia's formal relationship to history, an association which the woman thinks can be denied because she and her family possessed feelings of charity and kindness. By having the German retell the story of Marthe's release from the camp, Bond confirms the culpability of Xenia and her class for the war, an historical reality which overrides the fact that the upper classes did include individuals who possessed heroic attributes:

The girl had a right to ask for anything. We were at war for her. What happens to our culture, our way of life, when people like that go? She came from the same class as our officers. She knew that - and what it meant. She needn't have asked, she could have given an order! I wish I could meet her and thank her for all she did for us. It was not to be. When we left her class were shot or chased out. (36)

Xenia is bewildered by the German's words, and runs offstage to avoid any further evidence of her similarity to those she thought were her enemies. The woman's blindness to her relation to history results in her being shocked and defensive even about ideas that she, herself, had expressed earlier, such as the German's belief that men must be controlled and led: "The animal wants to be on top. If that happens we're lost. The apes come out of their jungle. That's why we went to war" (35).

The entrance of David and Ann relieves the tension in the scene. Juxtaposed with the destructive values of the soldier, Ann and David introduce an element of rational hope for the future, which is grounded in Marthe's true relation to history. The island, which for the German and Xenia is now filled with associations of death, becomes a place of love

and life for the young couple:

DAVID: This island is sacred to us. I won't make love to another girl here. Why am I so happy? From now on we have a secret power: whenever we're angry or sad we'll think of this and it will make us happy. We have fallen in love. You won't stay here. Instead I shall plant a pine in the place where we were today. (37)

David has inherited Marthe's calm acceptance of history, an awareness which makes his comments about the island more poignant and meaningful. He recognizes that once the islands were death camps, but as in his attitude towards his mother's terminal illness, he sees death as a reality that can make one live more rationally and happily: "When life sees death, it becomes strong itself, it will be strong. While we cry our distorted mouth reaches for one that smiles" (39, Bond's emphasis). Ann, in Scene Four, appears to be adopting David's positive perspective. Until this point, she has been a listener, a witness to the historical and class dialectic enacted by Xenia and Marthe. Her cautious optimism, at the end of the scene, anticipates her eventual alliance with David and Marthe's plans for a better future.

Xenia's distress as a result of her meeting with the German tourist is evident in Scene Five, when she insists on talking to Marthe even though it is late at night. In an attempt to absolve herself of the guilt established in the earlier scenes, Xenia again tries to vindicate her family: "My father sent clever children to the university whatever their background. Paid their tuition fees, bought their books, clothed some of them, gave them an allowance - " (41). Xenia still clings to her belief that these acts of kindness excuse the fact that her family

and their class facilitated the concentration camps. She takes no responsibility for past crimes, insisting that "there's nothing I need blame myself for" (41). Instead, Xenia accuses Marthe of being the guilty one: "I saved your life. Yet you gave evidence against us. Not out of fear. You weren't forced. My father might have been shot. How wrong. Such guilt is almost unforgiveable" (42). Whereas Xenia tends to see history only as it relates to herself, Marthe, like Rose, Anna, and Terry, sees the past in terms of class struggle and social injustice:

What guilt?...People in my generation had to depend on your family in order to live. But why should that have been? Your kindness made us beggars. It made some of us grateful, which is worse. (42)

Marthe reiterates the argument forwarded in The Bundle, The Worlds and Restoration, that individual acts of kindness do not change the world:

"If you spent your life being kind people would still die of ignorance and neglect. Much more is needed" (42). Xenia's world, according to Marthe, is corrupt because the "foundations of your world were crooked...[a]ll the good you did was meaningless" (43). The war was caused by the "panic and madness" which grew out of the "confusion and competition" of a capitalist society run by factories and banks. Marthe tries to force Xenia to see the forces which constitute reality and history, an awareness that must precede social change:

What we do, what we are, depends on the relationship between us [and "the factories, banks, governments that control our lives"]. Faced with that kindness is like blowing on a storm to make it go away. But when those relations are just we will live justly. Kindness will have meaning. Justice and mercy will be one. (43)

Xenia's inability to transcend her self-centered view of history, even after Marthe's speech, is seen in her persistent claim that her "father was a liberal man" (43). Because she does not understand Marthe's ideas, Xenia reduces the conflict between them to a personal one: "Now you admit you despise me" (43). Frustrated with Xenia's refusal to admit her relationship to history as a social being, Marthe can only restate their differences, showing what she has learned from her past: "I saw a photograph of my death. I lived my second life a new way. I listen to them [the voices of her dead comrades] not you" (44). The essence of the conflict between the two women is summed up at the end of Scene Five, when Marthe describes herself as a collective being -- "it's as if a crowd had to die" (44) -- and Xenia wallows in self-pity: "The world was taken from me...I can't begin again" (45).

Bond melds Marthe's individuality with the dead victims of the past by having her spit in Xenia's face, a gesture that fulfills the thwarted cultural struggles of all the women who were shot the day Marthe was saved. Marthe's action is not intended to be seen merely as an act of personal revenge; she is an individual who defines herself in terms of her understanding of class and history. Because Xenia is unable to accept her own past in a complete way, she can only see Marthe's gesture as a personal affront: "How dare you! Because you're dying you think you can be a monster!" (45). Offended, Xenia prepared to leave the house, hesitating to offer Marthe help in returning to her room. Bond allows Xenia to be kind in this instance in order to show that she does possess some good qualities. The playwright has shown, however, that individual acts of kindness are irrelevant in the face

of all Marthe has said in Scene Five. -- Marthe's vehemently negative response to Xenia's offer, which quickly becomes less gracious -- "I don't want to be accused of letting you die of exposure" (45) -- illustrates the dying woman's disgust with isolated acts of kindness which conceal greater injustices. Xenia perpetuates the old world which Marthe has spent her "second life" opposing; and she has learned nothing.

Scene Six, after the interval, opens with Marthe carefully setting a table, going through the rituals of daily life in the face of death. She tells Ann of her dream, which conjures up an image of renewal after a battle: "The town looks as battered and new as a child that's cried itself to sleep" (47). Marthe still does not view the conflict with Xenia as a personal quarrel, as evidenced by her lack of rancour towards Ann's mother: "I'll set a place for your mother. I don't think she'll come, but she might and it would be better if she found a place set for her" (47). Although the signs of Marthe's approaching death are becoming obvious -- David mentioned earlier the danger of deep vein thrombosis, and her ankle is swollen -- Marthe is filled with a sense of peace: "Everything's open and new" (47). Having confronted history and spoken the truth in Scene Five, Marthe can now teach Ann how to live; Xenia, on the other hand, no longer belongs in the house. The pretty table and the sunlit room are appropriate backdrops to the rational and clear view of life and death that Marthe imparts to the young people:

If we didn't die we'd live like the dead. Without death there's no life. No beauty, love or happiness. You can't laugh for more than a few hours or weep more than a few days. No one could bear more than one life. Only hell could be eternal (49).

Unlike Xenia, who sees the world self-reflexively, Marthe stresses the need for each person to struggle for social justice during his/her life: "Don't give yourself to your enemies or neglect anyone in need. Fight" (49). Marthe's statements are reminiscent of Rose's and Terry's in the earlier plays. Seeing death as part of the inevitable process of life, Marthe realizes that her death is part of the movement of history: "I die so that you might live" (49).

Juxtaposed with Marthe's rational acceptance of history, life and death is the German's letter, read by David and Ann. The letter confirms Xenia's role in an irrational world. In a card accompanying a bouquet of flowers, the German pays tribute to her as an icon of the old world:

Believe an old but still active man when he speaks
from the heart of the great debt he owes you...When
I deliver these flowers I shall press your hand in
silence and let them speak for me...To the beautiful
girl in white on the balcony of long ago with the
humble respects of her dutiful Heinrich Hemmel.
P.S. I am innocent. (51)

David and Ann's rejection of what Xenia represents is indicated by their exclusion of her when, after reading the letter, they discover that Marthe has quietly died in the chair. For the first time Ann directly opposes her mother, sending her back to the hotel. David has articulated earlier his judgment of Xenia as a destructive element: "All things under the sun throw a shadow. Your mother throw hers towards the light" (50). The extent to which Xenia clings to her self-centred blindness is symbolically revealed in her refusal to accept the flowers which we know are from the German, and that locate her in history. Her original

motivation for returning to the house further signifies her lack of understanding of what Marthe tried to teach her: "I came to tell her I wasn't angry. My presence filled her with a great rage. It was bad for someone in her condition" (53).

At the end of Scene Six, Bond leaves David alone on the brightly lit stage with the dead body, indicating in his stage notes the character's physical movements: "David lifts Marthe from the chair. Her feet are off the ground" (53). Pressing Marthe's hands to his head, David cries, "Bless me. Bless me. Still warm . . ." (53, Bond's ellipsis). The significance of this action lies in that it is the last of a series of images introduced at the end of Scene Three, when Marthe tells Ann about the custom of bringing newborn babies to the sea: "When we were young parents took their new babies down to the rocks on a sunny day, held them over their heads and shouted their names to the sea" (28). As Marthe describes this tradition, physically illustrating the gesture of lifting a baby (28), it is seen to be a celebration of life, a joyous, harmonious confrontation of man and nature. This same image reappears in a different form, however, when the German describes the exhumed bodies of the prisoners, who were thrown into the sea:

. . . out boats towed the bodies behind us in our wakes as if they were swimming after us and pointing at us with their outstretched hands - that's how they died. A dead woman clutched a child in the crook of her arm and floated on top of the sea as if she held the child up out of the water to see us (33).

In the German's account, the image of the mother and child no longer implies birth and celebration, rather it evokes a picture of a hideous mockery of life. The irrationalism of Nazism inverts the gestures of living into a frieze of death and accusation. The transformation of the image functions as a telling commentary on the political ideologies of the speakers, each of whom embodies and exists within specific socio-historical relations. At the end of the play, Marthe has arrived at a complete acceptance of her relation to the world and nature; this is why she can teach Ann and David how to live, and she dies without bitterness. When David lifts Marthe and asks for her blessing, his gestures recall the original image of parents participating with the sea in a ritual of benediction; his action re-establishes a rational relationship between man and nature, life and death. David has incorporated Marthe's knowledge, and therefore his future represents the new life that will pursue the cultural struggles of Marthe's "second life".

Scene Seven, subtitled "The Agreement" strengthens the optimism implicit at the end of Scene Six. Ann plans to break off some of her previous ties with her mother, an indication that she has chosen to align herself with Marthe's and David's understanding of history. David expresses hope that Ann is carrying their baby, the child they may have conceived on the island. As they prepare to scatter Marthe's ashes in the garden, another example of how Marthe's death contributes to life, the play ends with the sense that David, Ann and perhaps their offspring will be able to build a future founded on a rational knowledge of who they are in relation to history and society.

Conclusion

This thesis has traced two lines of development in the major plays of Edward Bond. Through an examination of recurring themes, one discerns the evolution of Bond's political ideas and concerns. The necessity for class-based individuals to become critically aware of the social forces which constitute reality, and to discover responsible means of political action are major themes in most of Bond's plays. The nature and morality of political violence is a subject that often accompanies Bond's examination of political awareness and action, especially in the later plays such as The Bundle and The Worlds. The social role of the artist and the relationship of the individual to society are also issues that preoccupy the playwright. Bond's interest in the function of art and the determinants of aesthetic value grows out of his examination of the role every individual is required to play in society.

In order to convey his political ideas in his plays, Bond develops dramatic techniques appropriate to their expression. The evolution of the playwright's dramatic methodology constitutes a second major line of development that has been discussed in this thesis. Although Bond's methodological refinements do not correspond in a direct one-to-one relationship with his thematic concerns, certain changes in the playwright's dramatic techniques signal his realization that he must adapt his form to suit his content.

Bond's plays until The Woman are realist works that attempt to present and interpret specific social structures and problems. The use of short episodes and deliberate juxtapositions both within and between scenes is typical of Bond's realist plays. Characters are consistently located in particular socio-historical contexts in order to emphasize the social significance of the action; in his earliest plays, Bond's use of dialect stresses the social positions of the characters. Conflicts arise primarily as a result of the characters' class interests; emotional and personal relationships are seen to be determined by these interests.

In the plays starting with The Woman, Bond's realist theatre evolves into what the playwright considers to be epic theatre. Encompassing the principles of Bond's realism, epic theatre is distinguishable by the way the playwright foregrounds his social message. Characters not only exist in particular social contexts, they embody and demonstrate historical processes. The general is seen in the particular. Conflicts take place in a public sphere and transcend but do not obliterate the subjectivity of the characters. Bond's epic technique of public soliloquy, a device that grows out of the parable-telling of The Bundle, reflects his desire to find a dramatic method that enables his characters to articulate an analysis of their situations. As in the realist plays the structures are composed in such a way that cause and effect are demonstrated. In the epic plays, this is done not only through the choice and ordering of scenes, but also through the characters' verbal explications in their soliloquies.

All of Bond's plays present political problems with which the characters must grapple. The audience is invited to join in the analysis of the particular issues addressed in the plays. The playwright always passes the final responsibility for what the plays demonstrate to the spectators in the hope that people will relate his art to their lives, and in the process contribute to the political struggles analyzed imaginatively in his work. Bond has recently completed two new hour-long plays: Red Black and Ignorant and The Tin Can People.¹ The general subject of these plays is nuclear war, an indication that Bond's commitment to socially-relevant theatre remains strong. Those who have become acquainted with Bond's challenging and thought-provoking work await with eagerness the most recent developments in the work of one of England's leading playwrights.

¹Letter to the author, 15 June 1984.

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