

Political Violence and Aggression in the Plays of Edward Bond: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

Political aggression explains that an inflexible class system and a destructive political structure are responsible in generating an out of shape aggressiveness and violence. When the intended effect is not attainable by appeased ways, human beings are forced to adopt themselves in political aggression in order to form a more sane and normal society. Bond makes an earnest appeal for an action on the basis of demand. He also suggests bringing about a structural change in the society. In the light of Bond's political theories, gender or sexual politics is considered as part of the overall political structure of a play. In his "theatre of violence" gender politics is concerned with the functions characters perform and with the distribution of the roles of aggressor and victim between the sexes. In his plays, the dichotomy of the sexes prevails in the sense that domination is the ultimate aim of either sex. Women act as violently as men, but the deeds of extreme cruelty committed against them are even more degrading. While in some plays a fully developed female character becomes a summation of actions, in others the fragmentation of character corresponds to the discontinuity of dramatic structure. Female sexuality is exploited and dominated by male fantasies, thus adding to the ambivalence of Bond's gender politics.

Key words: aggression, political aggression, structural change, social theory and gender politics, women and violence

The rich have become richer, and the poor
Have become poorer; and the vessel of the
State is driven between the Scylla and

Charybdis of anarchy and despotism.

P. B. Shelly

Introduction

Political violence is a broad term used to describe violence perpetrated by either persons or governments to achieve political goals. Many groups and individuals believe that their political systems will never respond to their demands. As a result, they believe that violence is not only justified but also necessary in order to achieve their political objectives. Similarly, many governments around the world believe they need to use violence in order to intimidate their populace into acquiescence. At other times, governments use force in order to defend their country from outside invasion or other threats of force and to coerce other governments or conquer territory.

Political violence can take a number of forms including but not limited to those listed below. Non-action on the part of the government can also be characterized as a form of political violence.

There are five forms of political violence. They are: 1. Violence between non-state actors for example Ethnic conflict. 2. One-sided violence by non-state-actors-Gender-based violence and Terrorism. 3. One-sided violence by the state-Genocide, Torture, Capital punishment, Police brutality, Famine. 4. Violence between a state and non-state actor – Rebellion, Rioting, Revolution, Civil War and Counter-insurgency. 5. War between states.

Irrational political economy is one of the factors contributing to the conditions that breed human aggression. Modern American interpreters, who relate economic factors to crime, state that the economic condition has an indirect impact in weakening social control and thereby affecting crime.¹ A vicious political structure would certainly cause social discontent and shake the very foundation of culture. Conflict is the outcome of such discontent about a particular social, political or economic arrangement, administrative order or a political ideology. Activated forms of such conflicts lead to political aggression.

Types of political aggression

There are two main sorts of political aggression, as explained by Bond in his introduction to the play “Bingo”. The first is the aggression of the weak against the strong. When the strong are unjust, the weak are compelled to act aggressively to survive. The second aggression is of the strong against the weak. The strong are taught by the ruling morality that the weak are violent and destructive. So the only decent course open to civilized man is to act as his own galore. These are myths that have been used to justify force to

preserve social relationships. An irrational organization heeds myths to maintain it. This myth operates in different levels.

Illogical myth

In the affluent liberal democracies of the West, there a mythology that class conflict could be muted by reform to a point where it becomes only a spice to the spirit of healthy competition. Bond intends to educate the Londoners of the illogicality of the myth. The diabolic enemy of a unified and healthy culture is class. Class oppression has become an unpleasant fact. Many of the characters of Bond wage a bitter conflict with society based on the classes. The reality of the myth is revealed in his first play “The Pope’s Wedding’ Mr.Bullright who does not appear on the stage and whose name is only mentioned by the youngsters in the play, is the local employer holding almost feudal authority. He has his final year of captaincy in the ensuing cricket match and is quite keen on winning it. He wants to stop Bill from playing in the match and sends him to the farm to attend to a sick animal. Ron, another youngster in the group, guesses that it is a tactical move of Mr.Bullright to ensure victory to his team. Bill cannot decline to work but can vent his anger shouting. “The sod (Twists his scythe) I’d like t’ ‘ave’ is owd ‘ead stuck on this”² Even this verbal violence is transposed into a sexual key when he threatens that he would seduce his wife. Other workers are agitated, restless and furious as they find themselves helpless against the political power of Mr.Bullright, conferred on him by his status in the society. They are not sure how to use their energy that finds some outlet in their bickering with each other for money and cigarette. Scene two offers them an occasion to look forward to a class confrontation but it is only symbolic rather than real. The cricket match is an effective image used by Bond to convey his point. But their agitation does not terminate with their victory in the cricket match. Having defeated Mr.Bullright and tasted the energy of rebellion, a few of them shift their attention to helpless Alen, the recluse. They fail to discriminate their target and attack his cottage; the only way to assert that they have some effect on the world.

Portrayal of class society

Bond’s portrayal of a class society in ‘The Sea’ is wider in scope. In this play he delineates a society with a rigid system of class structure to show a more characteristically English form of repression. The main conflict here is between Mrs.Rafi and Hatch, and the pernicious effect of commerce on human relation buttressed by a myth of morality that brings it to a disaster. The dramatist effectively demonstrates how the values of such characters like Mrs.Rafi with her haughty grande-dame manner could provoke a warped aggressiveness in characters like Hatch and his mates. Mrs.Rafi with an air of self-assurance, bestowed on her

by her superior status unleashes a form of mental and emotional violence on all those below her. She appears to have crippled her social inferiors by her casual and vicious treatment. The irony is that the conflict between Mrs.Rafi and Hatch is won by neither. Hatch becomes mad, entrapped by the contradictions in his professional life where as Mrs.Rafi starts feeling that she would soon be sensible and therefore be hated and treated as if she were made. Bond believes that a community is responsible in turning an individual to a saint or a criminal. This community is characterized by a set of ideas and values laid down by the owners and rulers of the society. It is the response of the individual that determines the character of a society.

Political system

Bond presents and political system whose deepest values are non-human and whose modes of working are therefore unjust. This system has a corrosive influence on the happiness of the people. The pre-capitalist and post-revolutionary societies can destroy happiness effectively if they do not sever themselves fully with the inhuman values of the past. Before a change is proposed, one should know the need for change. To recognize the need for change, one should know the condition – personal and social, the society has been framed into. Bond endeavours to present in his later plays the condition that call for a change and engages the audience in the politics of learning and education. The analysis of the biology and sociology of violence leads to a discussion of the acceptance of the dangerous implications of violence in revolutionary politics.

Pattern of violence

Bond in the Guardian (29 September 1971) states that “the simple fact is that if you behave violently, you create an atmosphere of violence, which generates more violence. If you create a violent revolution, you always create a reaction...”.Violence has its own logistics, and terror and fear will follow its use. If the use is larger, the terror and fear will be larger. This will follow its use of more violence. This cyclic pattern will be seen repeating itself.

Politicaloppression

In his play “Lear” is concerned with different kinds of political oppression and the violence he shows is exclusively political in nature. The play deals with revolution as well as violence. The two may not be synonymous, but they are complimentary. The play brings home the theory of cyclical pattern of violence begetting violence. Regime succeeds regime but the pattern of life remains without change; aggression, fear, mistrust and pervasive

brutality being its hallmarks. Each society attempts to outdo the oppressiveness of the previous one.

Lear is held responsible not only for the political situation but also for the behaviour of his daughter and the action of the rebels. He builds a wall to protect his state from the enemies. He has enslaved his own people making them a part of the mission. The wall becomes a prison. Lear proclaims in the first scene, “I killed the fathers; therefore the sons must hate me. And when I killed the fathers I stood on the fields among our dead and swore to kill the sons!”³. The structure of the cause and effect operates throughout the play. Bond employs what he calls “agro-effects” liberally in the play through visual and physical imagery. In this way he emotionally commits the audience to the structure and spirit of the drama.

The scene of savagery

The audience is plunged into a scene of savagery in the opening scene of “Lear”. It smacks of an unjust and dangerous kind of society. Three workers are seen carrying a body in a hurry near the defensive wall that Lear has ordered to build. The foreman shouts, “Go back, go back! Work!”⁴ as it is obvious that someone is arriving, that the soldiers and workers cover the dead body with a tarpaulin. A clear atmosphere of panic and fear dawns on the scene. The king enters the scene and orders that the work be done at a faster pace by recruiting more labourers. He discovers the dead body and one of the workers is accused of dropping a pickaxe on his head. He institutes a drumhead trial for sabotage. After some talk about the wall and the Duke of Cornwall and North, he orders the firing squad to shoot the worker. When his daughters object, he goes hysterical, grabs the pistol from the officer and shoots him. The extraordinary speed of events signifies the absolute power of Lear and the whole air of repression and violence Lear trails on his wake. Bond enacts this scene to show us a glimpse of a society where values are fluid and expedient. It is a vile and sinister society where the relationship between the father and daughters is mangled, where a dead body is shown no respect, where a man can be executed summarily on barest evidence. Lear uses terror to protect his people from foreign injustice and aggression, thereby encouraging the growth of the same at home.

Horrific events

The horrific events in “Lear” speak for the theory that men are not innately violent but are forced to react violently goaded by an irrational and inhuman political system. When they are too timid to accept change and strive to protect the status quo, they become aggressive. In the first scene, Cordelia and Goneril, the two daughters of Lear do not want to involve

themselves in the killing of the worker, Lear remarks that they are too good for this world. But when they start conspiring against Lear, they prove themselves more than a match to their father in callousness and inhumanity. The grim flippancy of the sisters indicates their nature and Lear's treatment of them as well. Their revolt is a result of their upbringing. They have grown of fear, not love their father. Their world was one of violence and brutal selfishness. At the end of the scene One Fontanelle shouts, "Happiness at last! I was always terrified of him."⁵ Bond gradually establishes the necessary features of the sisters to prepare the audience for the torture scene of Warrington.

The mutilation of Warrington in Scene Four is a consequence of the developing situation. The sisters capture Warrington. Both of them allures him to betray Lear, assassinate the dukes and seize power. They also suggest that he could be a consort to the victories Princess. When he refuses to do as they wish, they had his tongue cut out; kicked and punched by the soldier in his professional style. Fontenelle is swept by what happens and acts like a girl in her teenage excitement. Bodice, who all the while engages herself in knitting, pokes the needles into the ears of Warrington and renders him deaf. Fontenelle appears to imbibe satisfaction over the torture of Warrington and her language falls back into that of a child with an opportunity for revenge on a parent. She jumps on his hands and screams, "Kill his hands! Kill his feet! Jump on it – all of it! He can't hit us now. Look at his hands like boiling crabs! Kill it! Kill all of it! Kill him inside! Make him dead! Father! Father! I want to sit on his lungs!"⁶ Both the sisters are mad and their deportment is grimly comic.

Emotional reaction

Reading the scene may leave us with a taste of nausea and disgust as the actual acts of violence provoke a strong emotional reaction. In performance the opposite effect is achieved. The technique of emotional counterpoint, handled deftly by Bond creates a reverting tension in which comedy frames and controls the violence. The emotional effect of the scene is perturbing but our empathy is arrested by Bodice who acts like a commentator. Her comments on the hysterical outburst of her sister are made to provoke laughter. She remarks, "Plain, pearl, plain. She was the same at school.⁷ it is akin to a more aggressive scene in Shakespeare's "King Lear" where an intuitive sympathy for Lear in the novel is modified by the ironic comments of the Fool and Edger. Tony Could points out that Bond uses a remarkable technique in this scene by juxtaposition of the two events in ironic contrast.

Opposing attitudes

David L Hurst cites two similar parallel scenes where such juxtaposition of opposing attitudes to violence generates a complex reaction from the audience. In the "buffeting play"

of the Wakefield medieval miracle cycle, the conduct of Ananias and Caiaphas is contrasted. Ananias insists that they proceed by law and Caiaphas indulges himself in a sadistic frenzy of hatred. In "Dutches of Malfi" by Webster, Cardinal and Ferdinand consider on how to deal with their sister who has secretly married against their wishes. The dramatist presents in the scene the shrewd pragmatism of the Cardinal against the passionate intensity of his brother, Ferdinand. In "Lear" we are not allowed "the relatively comfortable experience of emotional Catharsis nor allowed to reject the cruelty."⁸ Bodice succeeds in us accomplices and yet involving a more measured response. With the violence under control, judgement of the audience is solicited. We are compelled to evaluate the nature of the violence and understand the horror more deeply. Though the emotional outbreak is held in check by the comicality of the scene, not a single moment lost in keeping up the heinous mood of the situation. The result is a heightened sense of outrage accentuated with understanding. It is indeed "a very complex and rewarding effect for a playwright to achieve."⁹

Stalin-Figure

Cordelia, who is treated as an apotheosis of love by the Shakespearian scholars, is in "Lear" a victim of self-oppression. Cordelia, the wife of the Gravedigger's boy, under goes the pain of looking at her husband being killed and herself being raped resulting in miscarriage, becomes the leader of the rebels. She wages a guerrilla war against the regime of Lear's daughters whose power starts collapsing. During the fight, she orders to execute a captured soldier, while one of her own men lies dying from a stomach wound. She declares, "When we have power, these things won't be necessary."¹⁰ but when assumes power, she uses terror to intimidate and silence her enemies. Bodice and Fontenelle are executed, and Lear is blinded so that he would not be rendered impotent politically. She even resumes the construction of the wall. Her attempts to change the political system of Lear prove futile. Different leaders may be ushered into power but power corrupts their humanity and compassion and it imprisons freedom in the name of law and order. Lear tells her, "Your law does more harm than crime, and your morality is a form of violence."¹¹ Cordelia defends her action with the reason of creating a just and free society. Lear pleads, "You have two enemies, lies and the truth, You sacrifice truth to destroy lies, and you sacrifice to destroy death. It isn't sane."¹² The revolution of Cordelia demonstrates how violence may be used to rein force the very things, it initially revolt against. Bond is justified in stating that Cordelia turns into a Stalin-Figure as the analysis progresses in the play.

Overt violence

Bond wishes us to identify the overt violence of Lear with the covert violence of Cordelia that it is to be institutionalized in the society. His daughter in their indiscriminate savagery continues the arbitrary cruelty of Lear when they seize power. But the new order of Cordelia evolves a more efficient system of terror to suppress all opposition. Both Bodice and Cordelia realize where their actions would lead to. They have had only an illusion of freedom. Both share the tyrannies of power. Bodice inherits it from her father whereas Cordelia achieves it rather by violent means; but the outcome is much the same. Bodice at one point contemplates, "I was almost free! I made so many plans, one day I'd be my own master! Now I have all the power . . . and I'm a slave."¹³ Cordelia too is driven to be ruthless once she assumes power. It becomes an inevitable imperative for her to act strongly. When advised by Lear, she replies, "Yes, you sound like the voice of my conscience. But if you listened to everything your conscience told you you'd go mad. You'd never get anything done – and there's a lot to do, some of it very hard."¹⁴

Violence begets violence

The ever-present risk of violence begetting violence is created by the elevated position of Carpenter. He is now an important member of the cabinet. He is sent to witness the execution of the Royal Family. He sees himself as morally correct and orders the death of Fontanelle. Just as the Carpenter is concerned with efficient action, so the Fourth prisoner, a doctor is keen to prove his efficiency and usefulness to the regime by performing the autopsy on the body of the Fontanelle. The same Fourth prisoner later blinds Lear with a touch clinical expertise, which is very much akin to the scientific atrocities of the concentration camps. There is no trace of maliciousness or emotional involvement on his part. It is done out of expediency to bring himself to the notice of the authorities, and not for the sake of hurting Lear himself.

Bond's attitude

Edward Bond explains, in his letter fourth March 1982, his attitude towards persons like the Fourth soldier or soldier A of the torture scene of Warrington that "in a sense all acts of cruelty are signs of madness and so presumably their perpetrators shouldn't be punished for them. I am afraid that if morality isn't a religious matter concerning God, it must be a political matter. And so justice also becomes a political matter."¹⁵ He adds at the end of the letter that the concept of guilt is primitive and has never helped the victim. Therefore, to Bond the real problem is emancipation of society. Lear is indeed a study of violence of the different forms it takes in military and civilian life. Bond infuses greater degree of realistic

violence in the play than in any of his previous dramas. The mounting violence on the stage makes a tough demand on the audience.

Political aggression and social inequality

According to David L Hirst, even the stoning of the child in the play “The Saved” has political bearings. This sort of public violence is a direct result of political aggression and social inequality. He says if people recognize this fact, they will cease to make glib moralistic pronouncement on such products. For, Bond intends to confound conventional morality by exposing its hypocrisy. Like G. B. Shaw, he harnesses the basic technique of using paradoxes. He plays down his condemnation of conventionally and commonly considered bad behaviour to focus on conducts he holds to be worse. In “Saved” he takes his cudgel not against the gang of youngsters with their obscenities and violence but against the unjust social and economic situations that beget such sorts. Perhaps the stoning scene is “still the most emotionally upsetting scene Bond has ever created.”¹⁶ Nevertheless, it represents the consequence of a deeply engrained violence in society and its institutions. The play is an expose to the audience to consider the far greater obscenity perpetrated by political establishment.

Emancipation of society

Revolution alone cannot bring about the emancipation of society. It is possible only with the growth of political and social maturity. The plays of Bond dramatise the problems to be confronted with and demonstrate a rational solution to them. As reply to the problems he has raised in the earlier plays, Bond starts writing a series of plays that he calls “answer plays.” “The Bundle” is the first in that series. Here he presents a system that thrives on avarice, competitiveness and waste. Law and order, educational system and morality are forms of coercion of the ruling class of this system. It brutalizes the people making them apathetic or cynical, self-hating and violent. The play has invited comments on the nature of its message namely, “that it might be necessary to use political violence or revolution in order to create a free and just society.”¹⁷ Bond himself admits that in “The Bundle” he has attempted to demystify the use of moral argument in order to stop being morally blackmailed. In an interview with Tony Coult, he states, “in order to change the society structurally, you may find yourself doing what is, in quotes, “Wrong” as long as there is class oppression, aggression of feudal and political authority and degeneration of cultural and social values, violence will continue to exist and action against may tragically have to be violent.

Aggro-effects

Unlike in *Saved*, there is almost non-stop physical violence in *Lear*. Every rest, such as that at the Boy's farm, leads to more violent action. The debatable dramatic effectiveness of aggro-effects in *Saved* is less debatable in Bond's play of modern, total war. As Taylor mentions in *The Angry Theatre*, the baby stoning in *Saved* seems both realistically and theatrically questionable. The scene is "difficult to believe, and the way he [Bond] writes . . . does not make the belief any easier. . . . [S]uch things happen from time to time, but in quite this way? [Though] "good taste" can hardly be invoked any more as a criterion, relevance I suppose can"¹⁸. The more plausible, more "relevant" violence in *Lear* takes Bond somewhat off the hook. Some of the modern audience, familiar with 20th and 21st century war atrocities, are not surprised by the terrifying actions onstage.

In the atmosphere of "come-down" from 60's euphoria, with the harsh pressing reality of political crises at home and abroad, questions of political power and revolutionary challenge to the state and status quo were intensely relevant, and a student and youth generation were keenly aware of their importance¹⁹.

During the Vietnam War and thereafter, modern audiences could not fail to find theatre that reflected current events seen via television, photojournalism, and other mass media sources. The initial scene in *Lear*, for example, of the rigid, tyrant king shooting the prisoner recalls Eddie Adam's photograph of a Viet Cong officer being shot by General Nguyen Ngoc Loan²⁰. *Lear's* shooting of the worker is mental torture for the man as he awaits his fate while *Lear* and *Bodice* argue over the need for killing him. Adam's photograph of the Viet Cong officer shows a slight bodily wincing by the officer, expressed more so in his face, as the bullet moves through his head. The audience senses the same painful tension as *Lear* holds the gun at the worker's head. Another example of similarity to current events is the soldiers' destruction of the Boy's farm, in all its wanton violence, recalling the atrocity of the My Lai massacre. The revolutionary violence of *Cordelia's* guerilla movement projects the breakdown of Cambodian society when the Khmer Rouge's takeover of the government in 1975 lead to the mass murder of millions under the name of a better, Marxist state²¹.

In his *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*, Jan Kott remarks that Shakespeare's history plays strike resonance with modern audiences. Using *Richard III* as an example, Kott notes that "the violent deaths of the principal characters are now regarded as an historical necessity . . . something altogether natural"²². The modern audience, after witnessing the horrors of the wars, failed revolutions and ethnic cleansings of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is not put off guard by scenes showing obscene violence. In Shakespeare's history plays, Kott

notes, “history turns full circle”²³ and displays a repetitive pattern. First, the current ruler is seen dragging “behind him a long chain of crimes”²⁴. To achieve the throne, he murders his foes, then his friends, and then his possible successors. “[A] young prince returns. . . . [He] personifies the hope of a new order and justice”²⁵. Sadly, history then repeats, the young man kills off his enemies, then his allies, then his successors. In operation is what Kott calls “the Grand Mechanism,” the seemingly endless repetition of power politics occurring in the reign of kings²⁶.

Members of modern audience witness in *Lear* an update to the Renaissance Grand Mechanism. This time at work is the mechanism of modern revolution, a mechanism that has occurred in countries around the globe in the 20th and 21st century. A child born while Stalin ruled the Soviet Union, Bond most frequently equates Cordelia to that dictator, whose mass murders and purges were part of the betrayal of the initial revolution of the country. Bond may not define the Boy’s standing in contemporary history as he does Cordelia, yet the Boy can be equated, certainly in stereotype, as a counter culture, organic farmer who fights the man and practices random acts of kindness. “The come down from the 60’s” that Coult mentions happening in the world during the Vietnam War period is portrayed in the death of the Boy: paradise is lost. The rising of Cordelia is the sobering truth of the grand mechanism of contemporary political events. “[W]e’ll make the society you only dream of”²⁷, she tells Lear. Bond and the audience know better.

Lear as political hero

Much as in *Saved*, no change to the general good results from the abuses, deaths, and despair that the characters endure in *Lear*. The possible, truly socialist state the Cordelia might forge is not forthcoming. Her response to the political crisis is as mismanaged and horrendous as the government created by Bodice and Fontanelle. Bond, as in his earlier play, offers a straw to clutch at the end of the play. In *Saved*, the image of Len fixing a chair, what Bond saw as a signal for optimism, is dramatized more unequivocally in *Lear*. Rather than recede into silent anonymity as Cordelia requests, Lear makes a symbolic stand. Blind, he is taken to the wall where he begins to tear it down with a shovel, until he is shot by a soldier. Bond has noted in an interview that while a line can be drawn in his early plays’ protagonists from Scopey, Len and Arthur to Lear, “Lear is not Len”²⁸. The political education Lear undergoes is far from Len’s very slight progress in *Saved*. Unlike Pam’s family who ignore Len as he mends the chair, Lear’s act is acknowledged by another character onstage. As the play ends, one of the workers moving past the corpse of Lear looks back at his remains and the shovel sticking up from the ground. The torch, Bond indicates, has been passed.

Lear's gesture, though more clearly defined, does not however give the audience much more to analyze than Len's gesture does in *Saved*. It may conclude the play with a better hint at positive progression and indicate personal redemption for Lear, but it is not sufficient for inspiring social action or insights for the audience. The Boy, after all, mentioned his gesture of wall-wrecking earlier in the play. Additionally, the audience has heard during the play that others have also worked subversively against the wall's being built. Lear's action is nothing historically new. It is just new for him. Lear's gesture is a hardly a straw to clutch - if the audience wishes to find ways out of the grand mechanism of modern revolution. For B. A. Young, Lear at the time of its first production was Bond's "most dramatically mature play, [but] Bond has still nothing more concrete to say than that power, rather than the misuse of power, is wrong"²⁹. Trussler ends a 1976 critique on Edward Bond's work by tying together *Saved* and *Lear* in order to make a rhetorical conclusion about the playwright's effect:

If men do recognize their dangers in time, it will not be directly due to Bond or, for that matter, to any artist: but it will partly be due to the climate of opinion his work has helped to create. So far, the hopeful signs may be of little more account than Len's mending a chair, or Lear's few spadeful of earth. But they are there, the straws at which humanity must clutch. Bond's is the solid dramatic brickwork miraculously built of straws³⁰.

Political violence

Right wing political violence cannot be justified, as Tony Coult explains, because it always serves irrationally which is a destructive force. Left wing political violence is justified when it helps to create a more pacific form. Bond wants this action to be the result both of necessity and of calculation. Bond declares in "Love and Pity", one of the poems in the play "The Bundle".

"What is pity?

To break the yoke on the ox's neck?

To yoke-maker has a hundred yokes in his stores

Break the yoke maker!"³¹

An Unconventional Form

In "The Bundle", the success of revolution of Wang is not shown through scenes of violence. They are kept to the minimal. Only a few scenes are meant to send shock waves in the theatre. In scene four of the play, Bond documents the moral dilemma of Wang and dramatizes its solution in an unconventional form. The audiences are stupefied to see Wang

throw the abandoned child into the river though they are emotionally prepared by the theatrical techniques of Bond. One of the poems entitled “Virtue” in the play “The Bundle” states,

It is not time to sit and talk
We have not earned the right to be kind
We have not won the power to do well
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?”³²

He seems to follow this dictum when he attempts to justify the act of throwing the child into the river by Wang. The motive of Wang is not personal but political.

The Interest of Bond

The interest of Bond in this play is to project actions that reflect the hardship of Wang to awaken the people to the need for change and the positive response to it. In scene Seven Wang and Tiger are seen sitting passively in the disguise of priests while a woman is being punished for stealing a cabbage leaves. She has a heavy stone tied to her neck. Wang waits for the right moment to plunge into action. He suppresses his passion and the result is that there is a blob of blood from his mouth. This is one of the shock effects of Bond to show the adverse physical responses caused by the inaction of Wang himself. The visual image on stage brings out the complexity of the emotional and moral issues with clarity. Wang expounds to Tiger that “the government makes not only laws, but a morality, a way of life, what people are in their very nature. We have not yet earned the right to be kind. I say it with blood in my mouth.”³³ In this play, Bond is not obsessed with violence but is preoccupied with the ways to end it. Wang becomes the agent of change transcending the vicious working of an unjust society.

Conclusion

In his introduction to “The Bundle” Bond explains how changes in the human consciousness must inevitably precede changes in social institution and social structures. Social institutions control law, education, civic force and such machinery and knowledge needed for a common and united life. They result in a tacitly accepted view of life. This view of life, essentially belonging to the ruling class with its institutional values, encounters a

collision with the moral values of the working class who are exposed to the change of human consciousness and who creates new developments in human consciousness and new ways of understanding and interpreting the world. It is the working class that has the first taste of new technology, and social institutions usually resist changes.

Unless the experience of the workers and consumers are transposed into concepts, the tacitly accepted view supported by the social institutions would remain powerful. When a new human self-consciousness is not being formed and given shape, human self-consciousness of the working class becomes reactionary. It is seen that conflict arises with the absence of equilibrium, order, harmony or consensus. Discontent and disagreement contribute to the process of tension. There is clash over either values and meanings or resources like property, income or power. Human beings become increasingly barbaric and aggressive.

In “Lear” Cordelia and her followers represent human consciousness and Lear and his daughters stand for political institution. But Cordelia fails to develop a proper attitude and becomes apathetic to the inhumanity of her own reactionary regime and even becomes its brutal accomplice by resuming the construction of the wall. In “The Bundle” Wang is the human consciousness and Basho Represents the institution. Wang arrives at a sound and reliable interpretation of the world not merely in terms of concept but also in justified expectation. Bond offers “a paradigm of the first prerequisite for changing society: the education of its members in a critical awareness of the nature of their oppression”³⁴. Bond believes that our species is under threat not from social criminals but from the political ones. Bond says in a note that we expect to find violence on the streets with the class of leaders we have. He adds that this is not because people are barbarous but because of our society is³⁵. One has to accept this fact.

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