



National Library  
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service

Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada  
K1A 0N4

## NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

## AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

✓                    THAT WHICH CAN BE SAVED:  
A CONTEXTUALIST READING OF EDWARD BOND'S SAVED

by

Robert E. Insley

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1980

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS  
in the Department  
of  
English

© Robert E. Insley 1988

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

• July 1988

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be  
reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy  
or other means, without permission of the author.

8


Permission has been granted to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author (copyright owner) has reserved other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her written permission.

L'autorisation a été accordée à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur (titulaire du droit d'auteur) se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation écrite.

ISBN 0-315-48757-7



A P P R O V A L

Name: Robert E. Insley  
Degree: Master of Arts  
Title of Thesis: That Which Can Be Saved: a contextualist reading of  
edward bond's Saved  
Examining Committee: Chin Banerjee, Associate Professor

Professor Jerald Zaslove  
Senior Supervisor  
Associate Professor of English

Professor Joseph Gallagher  
Associate Professor of English

Professor Marc Diamond  
Associate Professor  
Centre for the Arts  
Simon Fraser University  
External Examiner

Date Approved: July 29, 1988

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant to Simon Fraser University the right to lend my thesis, project or extended essay (the title of which is shown below) to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay

THAT WHICH CAN BE SAVED: A CONTEXTUALIST READING OF

EDWARD BOND'S SAVED.

Author:

(signature)

Robert Earl Insley

(name)

15 Aug. / 88.

(date)

## ABSTRACT

This thesis critically addresses Edward Bond's second and most controversial play, Saved, from a perspective removed by time and space from that controversy. The reading examines the emotional context of the play's subject matter, which is demanded by its intensity and inner form.

Chapter One is a critical account of the evolution of my thinking about Saved in terms of the critical and interpretive principles that have guided my approach to literature. Looking, then, at criticism contemporary to The Royal Court's original production of the play, this chapter argues that what most disturbed those first reviewers is still important to a full understanding of the play. I examine the sexual tensions and violence that define, at almost every point, the lives of the characters. The problem suggested by the play's title, salvation for the world of its characters, is discussed in the belief that if it can be spoken of at all it must be in the context of the constant violence of their lived experience.

Chapter Two addresses those sexual tensions as they evolve in the play, arguing that while most critics have rightly recognized archetypal elements in these relationships, they have generally laid the stress too strongly on the Oedipal aspects, to the loss of the specific context. Whatever observations of psycho-social situations

there are in the play must be constrained by, first, other elemental forces alive in that world, and, second, by the social forces that cause their rebirth in this modern context.

Chapter Three explores the tensions in the lives of the characters that lead to violence, concentrating in particular on the baby-stoning scene which marked the play for controversy. I argue here that although I have separated sex from violence in discussion, at this point they emerge almost undifferentiated: that, in fact, the *fusion* of these themes is exactly what makes the play both a devastating moral statement and a full aesthetic experience, as defined by the philosopher Stephen C. Pepper.

Chapter Four argues that the title of the play is not ironical, and that an ironical viewpoint would detract from the context of the play and would be morally evading the potential to salvation in its world, expressed aesthetically through the development of Len. I conclude that the intensity of Len's experience offers its own sort of salvation that can be understood.

For My Parents



## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Jerry Zaslove, for giving me both the freedom to explore the play as I felt necessary and the guidance that helped shape and sharpen that exploration. I thank Malcolm Page for so generously giving his time to share with me his knowledge of modern British drama; and Dan Callahan, who first saw the value of *how* I read, and who showed me how reading could lead to understanding and away from despair. And, as always, I want to thank Suzie Young, who has not only helped me with the typing of this thesis, but who has stood by me in every way throughout this process.

## Table of Contents

Approval . . . . .	ii
Abstract . . . . .	iii
Dedication . . . . .	v
Acknowledgements . . . . .	vi
Table of Contents . . . . .	vii
Chapter One: INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Chapter Two: CHARACTER: - THE POSITIVE FUNCTION OF SEX. . . . .	33
Chapter Three: READING VIOLENCE . . . . .	58
Chapter Four: THAT WHICH CAN BE SAVED . . . . .	84
AFTERWORD . . . . .	105
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	108

## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

#### I.

The thing that I am always afraid I will forget, that I lost sight of many times in the planning and research of this thesis, is the anger that made it possible and, to some degree, necessary. When I am talking to my students about writing I tell them that there is always a danger that they will abstract themselves out of their place in what they write, that the act of writing will become for them an act of denial, denial of their own literacy. Style implies attitude and, with that, degrees of despair, desperation and a willingness to struggle towards liberation, or its dream: or else it can imply a denial of all of these. So aimed at or not, the context of what is written is always part of its main force and importance. Everything ever read has been made by human beings in terms defined by their particular histories and limitations, and by the dissatisfactions, dreams and desires that go beyond history.

This is a study of Edward Bond's 1965 play, Saved, in the context of my lived experience, and the context of contemporary dramatic and cultural criticism. Not the least limiting factor in this study (maybe the most limiting besides my lack of experience) is the fear that I feel in approaching the subject matter and the actual aesthetic experience of Saved. This is an embarrassing admission: I am aware of the importance of appearing both strong and

authoritative in literary criticism, especially in a thesis, which is much more of a test than it is writing for oneself. So much literary criticism is written with the pomposity of the righteously true, from confidence given by institutions and by being "part of a tradition," and I really wonder what most of it means or matters, especially for people like me (and there are more of us than the others) who are not part of institutions and traditions, who feel permanently outside of them. Like Nietzsche's tight-rope walker, my position is so tenuous and so much depends upon keeping my balance that doubt and fear are cast over my slightest movements--or at least that's how it feels. So I admit this--why not?--and carry on. By admitting to a certain weakness I am also acknowledging feelings that connect the rest of my life--the son of a barrister who never got "beyond" unskilled labouring jobs--with the failed lives of Bond's plays. I don't want to romanticize myself: I always felt there was something phoney about characters like the gamekeeper in Lady Chatterley's Lover. But I do want to stress that I am writing this study because I need to, not because I hope to get "something" out of it, like a job or career. I don't think I will ever be able to go back to the lumberyard after writing it, but I have felt that way before and I have always gone back. I am writing this to try to figure out why this play bothers me so much, why I feel in my guts that it is right, a true play: I hope to find words to match those

"visceral" feelings, but I think I will be just a little suspicious of too much success....

When I first read Bond's plays ten or twelve years ago I knew I "had to do something with it," but I didn't know quite what. I was a student actor in those days--kind of accidentally--and I always felt that I had to "do something with it" whenever I read something that was really vivid, whether it was written by Aeschylus or Heathcote Williams. I never, or at least rarely, actually "did" something, but I always felt better when I determined that I would. Bond's plays struck me as especially important. Peter Feldman, who was my teacher and director for two-and-a-half years, introduced me to these plays. He was civilized and very kind to me and, like me, I think, a little too self-concerned. He was kind of a hero to me--which I feel silly admitting--because of his civility and accomplishments. At a party that I remember only bits of, he told me to read Bond, that his plays were just what I needed. I cannot say I liked Bond--does anyone like a kick in the stomach?--but it did affect me: he seemed to feel with the same indignation that I did, he "wrote" my hatred and my hopes. The only other experience I have had like it was when I read Sons and Lovers, the feeling of literature doing violence to me. Bond frightened but fascinated me and, in spite of their non-reactions, I never stopped trying to convince the other students that we should "do" Bond. They treated me as an

oddity and sometimes as a nuisance, and I realize now that they either *could* not have a response to Bond, or that they simply hated and therefore denied the value of his plays. Almost everyone either hates his work, or else simply will not take it personally, and I suppose it is rather puritanical of me to do so.

After more than a decade, however, I still take it personally: I think that that earlier experience with the Lawrence novel must be to blame, must have taught me a way of reading that I cannot unlearn. I say this because when I re-read books--even classical literature--after I had read the Lawrence, I didn't feel the same about them. I had changed--I was "in pain." This is something I can't seem to change. Even six years in a lumberyard without reading a single novel couldn't change it. Bond chose to stare, and not without both fear and a certain erotic interest, at the face of humanity, at human society, and to really stare without first abstracting what was there. He didn't, at least with Saved, choose to be safe, entrenched in theory and abstraction that anyone could accept as true. And although I've looked extensively through theories and criticism for this study, I have accepted nothing without first testing it in my guts: I therefore must reject the Platonic position that my response is a stage below Bond's, as I have really rewritten and recreated the play through my reading it. Which is not to say that I have "improved" the play: I don't expect that

anyone except my supervisors will ever read this study, which is obviously not true of the play. Saved is a kind of finished thing that anyone can conceivably go to and begin the process for which this thesis is, for me, only the product. But as a response this thesis is a product still in process, that is, it still is a process.<sup>1</sup> This is the only way left that I can now "do" Saved.

Back for a moment to fear and doubts. I have never had any real ambition since I gave up on acting. After I made that choice I never again acted, or stage-managed--I never even went to a play again for close to six years. For the first time in my life I didn't read. I laboured in a lumberyard, cutting and moving lumber, by hand and by forklift. I drove trucks. I held hard to the belief that what I was doing was valuable. I tried to forget how the world felt, and I made myself numb to the cold, the dust, the pulled muscles, to whatever pain there was. Perhaps hardest of all I saw younger people with less skill, intelligence and endurance promoted over me, because they were better "connected." I got one rise in those six years. This is not a complaint, for this is not bad treatment at all, if you're working class. It is simply the way working-class life is in

---

<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin put this more succinctly and clearly in One-Way Street when he said, "The work is the death mask of its conception." Walter Benjamin, Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), p.81.

this country, which is really one of the best in the world for the working-class. Just the same it is such a shitty deal: if you got something out of your work besides wages, it would still be all right, but this is very rare. This is why there are still so many Marxists about, in spite of the contradictions that have arisen quite naturally in the last century or so between actual life and Marx's theories about it. For, in what he said about the relation between the worker and the product of his labour, and what this relation reduces the worker to in a world that increasingly cares only about the product and the consumption of it, Marx was more right than even he could know. All working-class people are expert liars without ever knowing it: but they do feel something wrong, something missing, and even if they don't have the culture to tell them what it is, they do feel the "lack." The world was made bad for them, and what culture they do have only makes them tolerate it. It does not make it easy to understand it, and it certainly does not make it easy to change it. Work gives them nothing but wages, but does not stop there: it takes away their integrity by taking away their understanding of the work, their dignity by reducing work to toil for wages, and their happiness by making their dreams incompatible with reality. Essentially all relationships are reduced to falsehoods, and what else makes us human, if not our relatedness?

I don't have the answers and I don't want to appear to



have them. It is just that these are people I care about.

It is true that the world must change, so that lives start to feel true. But how is it to change if people don't first understand the lies and the forces that make them necessary? As they come to understand, however, they will also know a deeper pain--the anaesthetic of popular culture and exchange relations will wear off--and they will probably hide from that pain, even if it means re-building those walls. How did Plato get those people out of the cave anyhow?

Revolution is not a real possibility today. I'm glad of it, because a revolution that starts only from class-resentment is not enough. A lot of people would die, a lot would be crippled, and even more would be forever crippled in their hearts and minds, which destruction would make possible only more imperialism, more state control, and freedom would still be absent. And if revolutions aren't about freedom, about making life feel truthful and good, deeply good and not just "materially abundant," then they are really only about changing masters. "Caliban, Caliban, / get a new master, be a new man." And masters is masters. To suggest that the dictatorship of the proletariat would be better than the dictatorship of our present society is like suggesting that the end of the nuclear arms race would mean the end of oppression. It would be a conditional retreat from insanity, not the end of a society gone insane.

The revolution that matters will be one that makes us

live, not one that lets us "act out" anger and resentment, which is not a sane end, even though anger and resentment are both positive signs of life. This revolution will have to somehow start with the anger, the feeling that things are not right, and that they need not be so. This is what I feel so positively in Bond's Saved. My earliest reflexions on my own life made me realize that there was too much lacking in the world, that it had no room for the dreams I felt most intensely, more *truth-fully* than the possibilities the "real" world gave. As despair pushed me to educate myself or die, at least in the emotional sense, disillusionment followed: answers were known, other possibilities did exist, but were not chosen--why? It was not, and is not, what I then thought, that too few felt the need. The simple truth is that the way things are *privileges* certain members of society; oppression of the many equals freedom for the few, even if it is a wasted freedom. So, in my case at least, despair led to both anger and understanding, and I've never allowed myself to "rise above" these roots, and to thereby lose them: and this kind of innocence and experience is what shapes my literacy and my reading of Saved. In the character of Len I found the truth of a lesson a former teacher tried to impress upon me: that innocence is the one thing we have worth fighting for, and we must not allow even the fighting for it to destroy it. And, to this degree, I think Saved is Bond's best work.

## II.

The mythical mind sees the world's basic disharmony reflected in the multiplicity of the gods. No man can do justice to them all.... Greek tragedy takes its raw material from this world of myth and epic. But there is a difference. Men no longer bear their tragic knowledge calmly, but pursue their questions ceaselessly. Men ask questions and find answers when they transform the myths themselves. Only now the myths attain their full maturity and depth, but no version of them can henceforth be stable.<sup>2</sup>

What Jaspers describes in the transformation of the ancient consciousness from the epic to the tragic -- the revolution in culture that is found in the shift of consciousness from Hesiod and Homer to Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides--nearly describes what happens with Bond's Saved. In his penetration into the official ideology which regards the working-class-poor, in his understanding of the sado-masochistic processes of that sub-society, and by creating a play with an inner form which does not allow pre-conceived explanations except at the cost of the play's integrity, Bond has also taken what was seen as doomed, fated and unchangeable, and asked questions so as to transform the myths of his society. Even if he is least among them, this

---

<sup>2</sup> Karl Jaspers, Tragedy is Not Enough, trans. Harold A. T. Reiche, Harry T. Moore, and Karl W. Deutsch (New York: Archon Books, 1969), pp.33-5.

puts him in the company of playwrights like Ibsen, Strindberg, and Hauptman, who went from a new reality, a new real society, and interpreted its myths according to their own visions so that those myths took on a new, critical relation to the society. As society changes and the individual's grasp of it and himself changes, cultural forms inevitably change out of the intensity of feeling and questioning. The lived experiences of later nineteenth and early twentieth century dramatists led them to question the bases of social organization--from the family up--and the worth, and even the reality, of the individual. Robert Brustein argues that drama's modern movement is romantic in essence, the individual is set time and again against an emotionally dead and alien society,<sup>3</sup> while Raymond Williams points to the new "structures of feeling" that arise out of the personal approaches of these playwrights who struggled directly with a reality that contradicted idealistic truth.<sup>4</sup> I think both critics see the same phenomena, with different stress: it is a movement only so far as the authors that make it up all question the individual struggles against a monolithically static society, a stasis that does not and could never satisfy. Rarely didactic, always angry, and often in despair, they expressed dissatisfaction without exception.

---

<sup>3</sup> Robert Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt (Toronto; Little, Brown and Co., 1962).

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Williams, Theatre from Ibsen to Brecht (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1968).

And almost without exception, too, were the middle-class status and the middle-class worlds of their characters, a situation that had changed by the time Edward Bond came to the Royal Court Theatre in the late 1950's. I don't wish to expound on this era of British theatre: it's too well-known and there are many who could do this much better than I, people who were there. It would also be incompatible with the direction I want to take: my task is to explore Saved in relation to the society that made the play possible, to test the truth of it against the truth of my own lived experience, and to thereby come to a better understanding of both kinds of truth. I want to illuminate the particular aspects of the play that I respond most strongly to, and by this examining process illuminate my own limitations and, perhaps even change them. I intend to respond to this play personally, which is not necessarily the level the author intended or the critics decided that it should be responded to: in a word, I want to risk myself.

When I was first told to look at Bond I was not one to particularly care about what critics thought: it was enough for me that Feldman had said that he was considered the most important British playwright of that time, eclipsing Pinter in those years. Suitably impressed, I went to the library and read his plays. I knew immediately that he was writing the stuff I wanted to play--it never occurred to me that others would not respond in a similar way. When I showed the

plays to my fellow student-actors, however, they only responded with distaste or disinterest, certainly with nothing like what I felt. Nobody except me wanted anything to do with Bond's plays, and this is what started the cycle of self-questioning and re-reading the plays, together with reading criticism of the plays, that has since framed my reflections on them and their subjects. Because of these experiences with theatre--the knowledge gained by reading about the work of groups like the Berliner Ensemble counterpointing the experience of work that added almost nothing to the text because it stubbornly resisted serving the text--my disillusionment deepened; but lately I have realized again that it need not be so. If it were within the parameters of this thesis to do so I would argue for a contextualist theatre--one that *builds* plays from prolonged collectively funded experiences of the text: but as I no longer "do" theatre (that is, since I am neither prepared nor empowered to implement such a program), I would consider this direction presumptuous of me. It is too easy to prescribe for others.

The near volumes of criticism that attended each new Bond play always looked for controversy, but it was Saved that brought the most antagonistic rejection. It outraged and really hurt reviewers: they were affronted in some essentially personal ways that forced them to condemn the play and its author. The receptions given plays like Ibsen's

Ghosts and Dumas' Hernani are legendary, and because they are legendary they seem now a bit unbelievable; such things could never happen today, when people just don't feel as deeply and as *moralistically* about things. And yet there it was, just over twenty years ago, a play that explosively polarized critical and popular opinion. Penelope Gilliat even received hate-mail for her favourable review in the Observer,<sup>5</sup> which began, significantly, "I spent the first act shaking with claustrophobia and thinking I was going to be sick. The scene where a baby in a pram is pelted to death by a gang is nauseating. The swagger of sex jokes is almost worse."<sup>6</sup> By starting from an immediate emotional reaction to the performance and by keeping this personal response always in view in her analysis of the play, Gilliat showed not only an emotional literacy that is rare but also a much rarer integrity to those emotions. She was alone among the major reviewers to see how the play made the pain inherent in every aspect of the characters' lives, even in their clichéd language of put-down and response, vivid. But what mainly interests me in her review is in that first paragraph just quoted: I know exactly what she means by "nausea," "claustrophobia," the "sickness" and the "shaking," because

---

<sup>5</sup> Philip Roberts, ed., Bond on File (London: Methuen London Ltd., 1985), p.16.

<sup>6</sup> John Elsom, Post-War British Theatre Criticism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1981), p.177.

these are some of the feelings I still get when I read this play. Saved is not a calculated pleasure to read. Whenever I read it I feel there is a part of me beyond control, beyond the grasp of sure understanding. I don't quite understand what happens to me when I read it, I only know that these feelings are there, that something becomes vividly "there" when I read the play. And I don't like it. Each reading is a kind of trial, necessary in order to come close to the truth of the play, but giving of real pain, which traps and encloses me emotionally. Claustrophobia is the exact sensation I would expect from a good performance. I often don't finish my re-readings of Saved, and I still begin these readings with a sort of dread, and with wonder that I should be afraid: why not the anticipation I feel before giving myself to countless other plays? But if a play is really alive, perhaps it should do no less than this. As I mentioned, however, Gilliat was nearly the odd woman out, one of the rare reviewers to recognize the value of the play during these first performances of Saved in 1965 at the Royal Court. Other favourable, if less compelling, reviews included Ronald Bryden's in the New Statesman, which praised Saved as an indictment of a society that "allowed" the poverty and social deprivation that formed the background of the play,<sup>7</sup> while Theatre World's reviewer recognized the power of the play's "realism," which "in spite of, or because

---

<sup>7</sup> Roberts, Bond on File, pp.14-15.



of, its squalor...held audiences riveted...."<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Olivier offered a chastening defense of the play during the media controversy that followed between the Lord Chamberlain's Office and the Royal Court (which William Gaskill had turned into a private club in order to get Saved on), saying that "the grown-ups of this country should have the courage to look at it...."<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless there was a sense of detachment in all these reviews, excepting Gilliat's, an abstraction from the real stuff of the play, from the effect it has on emotionally alive and sensate human beings: I don't dislike abstraction on principle, but I hate the way it allows us to avoid what is really happening in the most unique and revolutionary part of ourselves, our emotional centres. Doubtless Olivier did a good thing to point out that, like MacBeth, Saved "places" its act of violence at the centre of the drama, but in doing so he neither said what makes Bond's play so different an experience from Shakespeare's play, nor illuminated the reasons for the outrage caused by Bond's play. He'd have been doing a better thing if he had mentioned why MacBeth and Shakespeare's other plays have in certain eras been treated with suspicion and pronounced unperformable.

It is a marked tendency on the part of the play's defenders to discuss it--and especially to discuss the baby-

---

<sup>8</sup> Theatre World, Vol.61, (December 1965), p.4.

<sup>9</sup> Roberts, Bond on File, pp.16-7.

stoning scene--in terms of its "message." They are all very much concerned that the play is seen in its proper light, that is, as an indictment of a society that creates the pre-conditions of violence, and which is structured so as to deprive the poor culturally as well as economically.' I don't dispute this point-of-view entirely, but I do find that it entirely misses the emotional level on which the play works on us, and the kind of knowledge that can be gained by looking at what Gilliat talked about in her review.

Consider, too, Bond's own defense of the scene, from which his sympathizers take their lead: "Clearly the stoning to death of a baby in a London park is typical English understatement. Compared to the "strategic" bombing of German towns it is a negligible atrocity, compared to the cultural and emotional deprivation of most of our children its consequences are insignificant."<sup>10</sup> Bond is being perfectly reasonable here and therefore only opinion can dispute him, at least at this level on which he speaks: the fact remains, however, that this level is totally detached from any operating in the play. My point is that this clever political abstraction of a scene which was written in order to evoke a necessary and true response is patently dishonest. The whole purpose of the oxymoronic phrase "negligible atrocity" is to deflect attention from a scene that if we are

---

<sup>10</sup> Edward Bond, Saved (London; Eyre Methuen, 1966), p.7. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the essay.

at all alive cannot but force a response on various complex and deeply personal levels. What is a "negligible atrocity" ? If one Jew is systematically de-humanized and murdered, beaten slowly to death or machine-gunned, would that be "negligible"? Perhaps "six million" is a phrase too general to understand emotionally. One person, another human being, so like me and yet so absolutely an-other, different, I do understand, and my outrage is immediate and personal, and I am ready to risk myself to stop his pain and the impossible *affrontery* of his murder. No live person seeing a live performance, or experiencing a live reading, could take in Bond's "negligible atrocity" and so lightly set it off against atrocities involving greater numbers of people. Bond may be quite right, quite abstractly, morally right: perhaps we are all guilty. But that kind of admission is only glossing more far-reaching processes inherent in Saved, and for me it is an almost meaningless "guilt."

More interesting and, in the final analysis, more honest are those pained and outraged first reviews. In the Sunday Times, for example, J.W. Lambert concluded:

Cruelty and viciousness, on stage, are no strangers to the theatre. But was there ever a *psychopathic exercise so lovingly dwelt on as this, spun out with such apparent relish and refinement of detail?*

Here is the crux for modern drama. It is becoming more sharply and urgently associated with contemporary life than it has been for centuries, if ever. Things as horrible as this baby-killing, and worse, happen every day; but it is not

enough merely to enact them. *Without the shaping hand of art*, the result is only reporting. And when to reporting is added the intensification of stagecraft and powerful acting, and the *prolongation of sadistic antics* far beyond the time needed to make a valid point, in circumstances carelessly rigged, the conclusion is inescapable, that we are being offered *not a keenly understanding, and therefore implicitly compassionate,* study of deprived and unfortunate people, but a concocted opportunity for vicarious beastliness--still, I naively suppose, a minority taste.<sup>11</sup> (my italics)

I do not want to belittle Lambert, or even really to attack him here: I wish to understand him. Like Gilliat's, his is a shockingly full response, far beyond the usual weekly review: his emotions were obviously engaged (even if he is self-contradictory in his violent attempts to disgorge the experience, "a concocted excuse for vicarious beastliness"). That Lambert earlier confused Len for Fred in his description of the scene, and later says that the scene is "spun out with...refinement of detail," while at the same time lacking "the shaping hand of art," attests not to ineptitude but rather to the impact, the *assault*, that Saved made on his feelings. There is no profession more prone to cliché and mechanical, conventional response than that of the theatre critic, and Lambert is so bewildered that he calls the play both "carelessly rigged," *inartistic*, (i.e., lacking "the shaping hand of art"), while at the same proclaiming it

---

<sup>11</sup> J.W. Lambert, Sunday Times, 11 Nov. 1965, quoted in John Elsom, Post-War British Theatre Criticism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.175-7.

"spun out with...refinement of detail." It is "only reporting" in an artistic setting, presented through "powerful" acting, a "psychopathic exercise." It does have a "valid point," but it makes it invalid by making it affront the audience: are valid points only valid within abstract parameters?

Just what are Lambert's standards? Obviously it has something to do with previous conventions for depicting violence on stage. When he says "Cruelty and viciousness, on stage, are no strangers to the theatre," does he refer to contemporary theatre, the ancient stage, the Elizabethans...all of them?

As a way to illuminate his critical and moral dilemma, compare the violence of the ancient Athenians' plays with Saved. One of the most marked features of the Greeks' plays is that their violence took place off-stage, and was either reported as in Oedipus Rex, or shown in tableau as in The Libation-Bearers. But this did not distance or mediate this violence as it would today, as critics often imply: that is, it did not "take away" from the action, and buffer the emotional experience. The way in which the violent act is premeditated in the play, by the traditional quality of the story, and by the immediate power of the play's language (as in Oedipus Rex, when the messenger describes how the king has blinded himself), the gap between spectacle and diction is closed, if not surpassed. Does not Sophocles dwell on the

details of the blinding (like its literary predecessor, Homer's Odyssey) every bit as much as Bond does on the violent act in Saved? Furthermore, to an audience as in tune with the spoken word as we are with the visual image, such descriptions doubtless made *more* impact than visual images could, given their relative technical accomplishments. To an audience that was both involved with the day-to-day of violence and death and with its ritualistic/religious recognition to a degree almost beyond our grasp today, the impact of the disaster, spoken in heightened meter, would probably be far more resonant and immediate than it would be for us. It is true that tragedy is more deeply felt when the distance given by the universality of the story is present, but not out of all context. We might recognize Clytemnestra's dilemma and pained response in ourselves, and in turn, Electra's and Orestes', but the Greeks knew the origin of the violence of those lives lay in the family's history of sin against hospitality, and in the horrors of murder and cannibalism.

I don't want to explicate all the differences between Athenian theatre and ours, even if it were within my capabilities to do so, for that would still only just begin to cover the range and rationales behind the conventions of violence on the stage in the last two-and-a-half millenia. Suffice it to say that for Lambert and many like him these conventions exist in order to shield the audience from the

impact of drama in its entirety: and this is getting it backwards. Conventions exist in order that we can get a fuller impact, that we can experience deeply so that art can affect us in our human centres. Now the anxieties of the long-ago Greeks are not our anxieties, not to the same degree, and in wholly similar ways neither can their ways of addressing their fears and structuring their responses be ours. Just as Shakespeare found his way through horrors similar to those in the Orestia in Hamlet, MacBeth and Titus Andronicus, we have to look at these things anew: the world has changed so that they must be written and spoken of with renewed stress.

I like Lambert's response because it is a shout of pain, a desperate attempt to answer a new question in an old language, to lessen the horror of the repressed, reborn, with a shield of old phrases and ready-at-hand aesthetics and morality. He was forced into a new relationship to art, to drama, and his outrage and indignation fills his review. He is prepared to, and he wants to, acknowledge a "valid point" if and only if it is "implicitly compassionate," but because of what Saved is, he cannot find sympathy with the situation and is forced to see the violence itself. Even as he denies Saved the status of "art," insisting that it is "contrived"<sup>12</sup> and "only reporting" he at once is compelled to describe the scene at length so that his readers can share his horror,

---

<sup>12</sup> Elsom, p.176.

that they will perforce agree that such horror is impermissible. The fact is that this decent citizen had had to *actually look at* what he knew "happen(s) everyday": and this is precisely what only art can do, make us see vividly what we've trained ourselves to mechanically ignore (repress).

So the scene offended Lambert not so much in what it did, as in *how* it did it, that is, in its context, structure, and implications. It would be petty and negatively conventional if I therefore labelled his response "bourgeois," and it would be pointless inasmuch as I am no less, if differently, limited, and inasmuch as I know he is only struggling very hard to be responsible. In a subsequent article in Drama he called Saved the "modern equivalent of bear-baiting or cockfighting" and he despairs that "worthy persons who loathe and despise bull-fighting praise precisely this kind of theatre--which lacks even the justification of reality."<sup>13</sup> Earlier in the same article he provides another clue to his sense of outrage:

In the opening scene Pam brings Len into her parents' house for the sole purpose of *quick copulation*. Mr. Bond's purpose in this scene is surely to demonstrate the *hopeless inadequacy of this kind of sex*. A more skillful dramatist, and a different producer, would have done that without bothering with the degree of writhing, groping and fumbling which left the audience with *nothing to do but join*

---

<sup>13</sup> J.W. Lambert, "Plays in Performance," Drama, No.80 (Spring, 1966), p.17.



*in mentally*, or sit wondering what interruption would be devised before the *final stages of the operation*. In other words, a *valid dramatic situation was turned into a passage of mere titillation*. Again, in the last act, Len, left alone with his plump mother-in-law, is made the subject of her teasing advances, yes, well, another *perfectly valid situation*. But when her teasing is brought to the point where he, as she stands with her leg raised, fumbles round her groin for several seconds--in fact in slow motion--to get his hand inside her stocking and mend a hole, we are *clearly being invited to share the proceedings*.<sup>14</sup> (my italics)

Again, Lambert starts in a moral tone: quick sex-for-a-thrill is "hopelessly inadequate," "groping and fumbling" turns "perfectly valid dramatic situations" into "mere titillation." For shame, they are trying to make him "join in *mentally*"--why "*mentally*"?--and he won't do it! Before giving way entirely to flippancy I must stop and reassert that what matters here is not the bad criticism, but rather it is the fact that Lambert is so angered, that he caught himself "joining in" and is utterly unforgiving. And he wasn't alone. The Lord Chamberlain's Office demanded cuts that included precisely those scenes that offended Lambert, along with the words and actions that suggested sexuality.<sup>15</sup> Saved insisted upon a new relationship between stage and audience by its subject matter and the organic connexions of

---

<sup>14</sup> Lambert, Drama, p.17.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Roberts, The Royal Court Theatre, 1965-1972 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), pp.30-1.

its themes, that is, the flow of the sex into the violence, and vice-versa: really neither is totally disconnected, separable, from the other. A large part of Lambert's confusion arises from this marriage of themes, the erotic connexion between sex and violence in the play. Or at the very least he knew he need resist Bond's attempt to extract an erotically-charged response to both sex and violence, and his reviews are the record of his rejection. However confused his attempt to do so, Lambert did see, on some level at least, what exactly was in the play: it is something that must be resisted in consciousness. Hence the insistence on *validity*, or in other words, on the endless repetition of pre-formed, pre-digested ideas that lack the qualities that force us to see what is really there, that make us see with something like full consciousness, that involves our senses while challenging our conventions of thought. But this is precisely, again, the function of art, to make us over, to make life vivid again. In this thesis I will argue for those qualities that Lambert is so stubbornly *against*, that what he hates in Saved is exactly what makes it good, Bond's best play.

### III.

There is an obvious adaptive value for an intelligent organism who must learn to adjust to variable situations, if he can discriminate vividly the particular characteristics of that situation which require responses to it. Habits and general responses are adaptive to so far as the environment remains constant and

repetitive, but they are not suited for a variable environment with novel situations. An intelligent organism, particularly man, has survived primarily through his versatility in learning and his capacity to adapt to extremely varied situations--not only in his physical environment, but also and more and more so in his social environment. Hence, *the more vividly and accurately a man can perceive the unique quality of a situation to which he must respond, the greater his adaptive capacity...* Thus men come to appreciate those among them who have a talent for awakening them to the vivid perception of things they have been overlooking. These are the artists who bring them back to actuality, and in so doing perform an important adaptive service. *Not only do artists point out what the ordinary man may be missing in his physical environment but they vividly reveal the actual conditions of his social environment.*<sup>16</sup> (my italics)

I have to admit to many dissatisfactions with critical and artistic schools that want to say that there is such a thing as a correct view. My stance is that depth and breadth of experience of art (and life) is the only justifiable aim of literary criticism, and that a predisposition to certain methods or to ultimate social aims will, more often than not, cripple potentially good criticism. There is always more to good art than can be singularly expressed, and even the best dialectical approach is still just an approach to what can only be done by art itself. Hence my elation with the writings of Stephen C. Pepper and with contextualist

---

<sup>16</sup> Stephen C. Pepper, Concept and Quality; a World Hypothesis (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co., 1966), p.595.

aesthetics. To my mind, it is only through "the vivid perception of things they have been overlooking" that more people will proceed to *emotional* literacy and to fuller responsibility, from which I believe a better world will follow.

It will do well here to explain more fully a major concept of this paper, namely the contextualist key category of *fusion*. Pepper says in The Basis of Criticism in the Arts that "...in any emotional reaction there is no clear separation of visual, auditory, or tactile sensations from the internal and dynamic ones,"<sup>17</sup> and I will argue, by extension, that in a fully-funded reading of Saved its thematic considerations, while separable, nevertheless make their assault because of the manner in which they are *fused*: "It is an experience in which a total situation is absorbed in a vivid fused satisfying quality."<sup>18</sup> It is fusion that is paramount to my reading: my argument is based on my perception that Saved is aesthetically valuable (or, at least, it is more valuable), because of the way no theme stands quite apart from others, so that Bond ends up representing the world in its naturalized fused state. Therefore, while I want to draw out these themes and discuss

---

<sup>17</sup> Stephen C. Pepper, The Basis of Criticism in the Arts, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), p.64.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen C. Pepper, The Basis of Criticism in the Arts, p.65.

sex and violence in separate chapters, I do not want to set them off as wholly separable entities: the merging of sex and violence is the most important level on which the play works.

In my conclusion I will argue that this fusion of sex and violence is natural in the individual, and that it is through and by culture and society that a tension arises to separate the two. I believe that this is true because they both act upon our erotic centres: the fascination with and repression of this is documented at all stages of cultural development. I believe this is a new perspective on Saved, as it necessarily de-emphasizes the view of the play as social commentary, replacing it with a viewpoint that looks to the individual (Len) as the only potential source of insight.

I don't imagine Bond would share this point of view, as after Saved he seemed progressively determined to argue against the individual's potential to subvert the dominant order. In fact, in his next play, Early Morning, he inserts Len into the trial scene, as if to show the untruth of the apparent potential Len represents in Saved. Bond's play polarized critical opinion to the degree that only since the mid-eighties has the play been put into a context that is both judicious and appreciatively analytical, not either necessarily hostile or else protective of the play and its

author.<sup>19</sup> This debate has shown, however, that ultimately a play can neither be guaranteed good by its defenders nor bad by its detractors. And more importantly it cannot be made into something it is not, even by an author's defense of its themes and his means of presenting them.<sup>20</sup> My criticism begins at a point twenty-three years and half a world away from that of Lambert and Gilliat, as well as being separated from my own first perceptions of Saved by a dozen years, many readings, and huge changes of self-perception: it seems impossible to me that the person I then was could respond to this play in ways I can still understand, and yet I still can and do. This is the connexion that makes this thesis worthwhile to me, the way in which the play still affects me now, as it did then, as it did for Lambert and Gilliat. For this reason I have chosen to begin with Lambert and Gilliat's response to Saved and to concentrate on those aspects of it that most disturbed them, caused them the most pain: that which so challenged them that it forced them to confront their social selves, forced them to recognize that to defend or attack the play was to make a personal and moral choice that started from a questioning of their usual ways of thinking. As Pepper suggests, art is powerful medicine. It makes us see what we have forgotten or missed, and it forces

---

<sup>19</sup> Benedict Nightingale, 50 Modern British Plays (London: Heinemann Educational Books, Ltd., 1982).

<sup>20</sup> Edward Bond, "On Violence," Plays: One (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978).

us by its structuring functions to view (both emotionally and critically) what is pleasurable and what is painful; and at its best, art forces us to recognize our connexions to the feelings and relationships of life that we have ignored by omission and commission. Such recognition, directly acknowledged, constitutes the basis of the most valuable criticism, just as recognition of the seeds of irresponsibility in oneself constitutes the only wholly responsible approach towards society.<sup>21</sup> That is to say that just as the starting point for responsible social action must be in the individual recognition of the capacity and desire to give over that responsibility to an abstract group (society), a critic must begin by recognizing that that which most disturbs him in a work of art, that which he must work to accept or reject, is that which he is responding to most fully. This is the starting point for my criticism, for much as I am disturbed by various aspects of Saved and by the work as a whole, at the same time I am fascinated by it and it gives me a kind of pleasure that I am not yet prepared to fully acknowledge. None of Bond's other plays affects me to quite this degree, and on this basis alone I'd be prepared to defend it as his best play. But inasmuch as the majority of critics have disagreed with this judgement, an analysis of the major themes and structure of the play, and of my

---

<sup>21</sup> Alex Comfort, Art and Social Responsibility (Vancouver: Pendejo Press, 1971), p.32.

feelings, seems necessary. For the most part the critics who liked the play twenty years ago, like it for the same reasons today, but given the polemics that defined the debate in 1965 this strikes me now as simply not going far enough.

Something like a critical perspective, a literacy largely formed by an emotional closeness, derived from lived experience, to issues of the individual and society, to violence, to sexual mythology, and combined with knowledge of the plays that often and fully explore these issues, seems necessary to me for in depth exploration of the play: I can offer this even though I lack in other key areas of knowledge.

These are also some of the great themes of critical theorists of this and the last century and I would be at least remiss to fail to explore what historical, sociological, psychological and aesthetic thinkers have understood about them. I will use these writers' insights wherever it is appropriate to do so, but I must acknowledge at the outset that they have had more influence in how I think than in what, and for this reason I will acknowledge my debt to them more through my bibliography than through direct citation. The works of Marcuse, Freud, Elias, Marx and Benjamin that explore the ways that individuals make through society, along with the utopic visions of Lawrence, Comfort, Bookchin, Shelley and Goodman are what have taken me beyond myself in this essay, but of course they do not share the



blame for that which is uninspired here. These ideas have acted powerfully on me, giving form to my near-ideas and reassurance to those feelings in me that were too unformed still to be part of conscious thought. They have helped make understandable, if not comfortable, what always seemed to me an impenetrable monolith--what they call civilization, culture, society.

\* \* \*

Saved is a strange play, structured not by accident, but in a way that has not been repeated in Bond's subsequent works, inasmuch as it expresses in both content and form an essential (poetic) vision of a culture that fails, a culture that irresistibly gives its subjects over to a turned-inside-out civilization. Never again did Bond find form that so much was content. As a critique of society it is as powerful as its defenders say, but the play is much more than that alone. It is more importantly a play that hurts, that gives pain to those who do care about the world and the people in it, by re-presenting in many of its complexities a forgotten underworld of those beyond the reach of hope and healing. Good theatre does not happen on a merely ideological level, even though it does, like everything human, incorporate ideology. It happens on a level where the audience is first made to feel the aloneness of the human individual, and then grasps or loses his redemption, is saved or damned. This is what we still respond to in the Greeks,

✓

in plays from the Renaissance, in plays since Ibsen, and I do not feel much from plays that do not strive to make their way through to this basic relatedness, whatever I may intellectually *know* from them. At the point that theatre only functions critically it seems to me to have only gone half-way there: negative function is necessary but not sufficient. Art cannot *name* that which redeems, but it must give the feeling that it is there.

## Chapter Two

CHARACTER: THE POSITIVE FUNCTION OF SEX

## I.

Human incest taboos are not instinctual or biological. They are, rather, the initial (and universal) cultural artifact, deriving immediately from the universal fact of familial social organization in humans. For secondary incest taboos vary widely in their range, and hence can scarcely be instinctual if they can be modified by mere culture change, even so minimal a change as state legislation. However, one incest taboo can be categorically asserted to be found everywhere in all human societies. Nowhere, and under no circumstances, may a son have sexual intercourse with, much less marry, his biological mother. Nowhere may the individual have the object of both oral and genital love in the same person. For this would be disruptive of the family; and in this sense the Oedipal Complex is universal.<sup>22</sup>

I did not write the play only as an Oedipal comedy. Other things in it--such as the social comment--are more important, but I have not described them in detail here because they are more obvious.

Saved, p.7

It takes Bond about two pages in his preface to Saved to explain the "Oedipal" forms in the play. The majority of commentators accept the author's reading out of hand, and question neither Bond's interpretation nor the actual sexuality--its full potential--in the play itself. Hay and Roberts point to how the reversal of the Oedipal myth

---

<sup>22</sup> Weston La Barre, The Human Animal, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954), p.122.

reinforces Bond's rejection of Sophocles' conclusion,<sup>23</sup> while at the same time they recognize the degree to which "myth" and ritual inform the paramount scene in the play.<sup>24</sup> In a more recent book Nightingale rejects Bond's invocation of Oedipus in his explanation of the forces that lead to the stoning to death of the baby. He states that Bond's assessment of the play's most controversial scene as "the Oedipus, atavistic fury unleashed" (Saved, p.6) is simply wrong, and that the incident has more to do with scape-goating than Oedipal fury.<sup>25</sup> He does not, however, succeed in dispelling the impression that the murder, whether scape-goating or otherwise, does seem to arise out of the community of sexual tensions that inspire and contain every character in the play. While I agree with Nightingale in the most part, I cannot agree it is *only* scape-goating, at least in its arbitrary sense, removed from these sexual ambiguities. On the other hand, Hay and Roberts' approach seems motivated by their sympathy with the author--perhaps specifically with his politics--rather than by careful, critical investigation of the play's murder. They do not say *why* these "atavistic" forces should be found in such pure form in 1960's London, how they came to be there. In a word, neither Hay and

---

23 Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts, Bond: A Study of His Plays, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980), p.54.

24 Hay & Roberts, Bond: A Study of His Plays, pp.49-50.

25 Nightingale, p.397.

Roberts, nor Nightingale, satisfactorily answer all the questions raised by the aesthetic context.

Perhaps the problem has its origin in Bond's preface; that is, the problem of making clear what actually is happening on the social-sexual levels of Saved. It has been noted that Bond writes the most extra-dramatical commentary for his plays' publications of any playwright since Shaw: he writes poems, stories, songs, forewords and afterwords to support the issues he feels really count in the plays.<sup>26</sup> There is a problem suggested by this relationship. Like most people I came to Bond well after being thoroughly grounded in Shaw's plays by teachers who seemed to think that Shaw was modern British drama. Now Shaw wrote a lot of really good plays, and his prefaces, afterwords and so forth are always provocative, if often confused and usually right off the plays they adorn. Shaw *had* been misunderstood often enough that he was at least justified in writing and publishing these along with his plays. But having recognized this fact it does not follow that he necessarily knew best about his own plays, or anyone else's for that matter: he may have made Ibsen produceable in British theatres by his efforts, but I would hardly know Ibsen's more poetic plays from Shaw's analyses of them. Hence my suspicions about extra-

---

<sup>26</sup> Catherine Itzlin, Stages in the Revolution (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980). In her chapter on Bond she quotes only from his prefaces, notes and afterwords, never from the plays themselves.

dramatical writings. It is the same with Bond as with Shaw: if these elements are in the play, and are worthwhile, if they deepen and vivify our experience, they will be revealed. Bond's argument that the Oedipal elements are less obvious, and therefore are in need of elucidation, simply doesn't hold. In coming to terms with Saved, in an actual struggle with one's own perception of the aesthetics therein, terms of reference from classical drama, anthropology and psychology do not apply with anything like the same force as the work itself, whether or not they can truthfully be pointed to in the work. Saved is a play deeply concerned with sex in its social, interpersonal and cultural manifestations. It is sex that motivates the main characters' actions, it is through sexual relations that all the characters seek to define themselves, and it is largely because of their sexual anxiety that these characters are still alive, feeling the tensions and contradictions that work so hard to numb them to the reality of one another. I can think of dozens of English plays that make fun of sex and the sexual elements of human relationships, but of hardly any others that allow such full rein to the sexuality of everyday life.

If it seems that I have "sex on the brain," well, that's probably a fair accusation. But I am not, for the sake of an obsession, setting out to force it onto the structure of this or any other play. It is there--that's all. And it must be at least allowed that I am by no means the first to

see it. When the Lord Chamberlain's Office demanded cuts in the plays it was as much because of the overt sexuality, especially in scenes one and nine, as because of the violence in the play.<sup>27</sup> Nor is there any doubt that Lambert was as revolted by that same sexual activity, ("which left the audience with nothing to do but to join in mentally..."<sup>28</sup>), as he was by the extremely violent sixth scene, ("a psychopathic exercise so lovingly dwelt on."<sup>29</sup>) Both elements contributed to his feelings of indignation at what he thought of as an assault on an audience that was sympathetic and therefore deserving of more delicate treatment. Gillat sees the "swagger of sex-jokes"<sup>30</sup> as worse than the violence. And in something unintentionally revealing Bond suggests a connexion between violence and sex that runs through the play: "This sort of fury is what is kept under painful control by other people in the play, and that partly accounts for the corruption of their lives." (Saved, p.6). Thus the repression of violent tendencies is equal to sexual repression inasmuch as it must be controlled in a way that causes pain, and in that it also erupts only in spite of that repression. If there is an outright validity to the comments of the preface it is in that Bond equally

---

27 Hay & Roberts, Bond: A Study of His Plays, p.41.

28 see above, p.22.

29 see above, p.17.

30 see above, p.12.

confuses sex and violence there and that they are as erotically charged as in the play. This is the great validity of the play: there the two forces are as mixed and confused as they are when they arise in their naturalized forms in our culture. This is too the real but ignored force of Saved as a social document.

So the subject matter of Saved is sex and violence, the aesthetic of the play the specific way in which these constantly connect and mesh. For a contextualist there is hardly a better starting point. As Pepper says, "Conflicts of *instinctual impulse* and *social interest* stir our awareness of experience to the deepest, and the further they can be carried in a work of art towards their full tragic import the more vivid our realization."<sup>31</sup> (my italics) That is, it is the function of art, by its inner form, to *make vivid* our experiences by the explication of the conflict inherent in the human condition. Aesthetic experience largely *is* the inner, intuitional/emotional recognition of the vulnerability of the human individual in his given social context. By writing about the sexuality of these characters, Bond takes that inner human life that is closest to the surface and most vulnerable, and he opposes this to the limitations put on them by a society that cannot begin to care about these their real desires. It is a context in which it can be seen how

---

<sup>31</sup> Stephen C. Pepper, Basis of Criticism in the Arts, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), p.67.



society becomes more and more *total*, by its very character destroys the individual and therefore the dream of redemption. There can be no place in such a society for the intuitional, emotionally responsive and adventurous self, as these qualities are not only inconsistent with the maintenance of the social contradictions that ensure the human status quo, but also threaten to divert energy from the mechanical functions that keep institutions stable, hence threatening disruptions of the instruments of oppression themselves. In a word, it is in the interest of all who benefit from the present alienated states to limit the capacity for *feeling* itself. It follows that the sources of modern anxiety (society, in its institutional and abstract forms, in conflict with the individual, who feels, *remembers*, lives sensuously, and dares dream of earthly salvation), is also the potentiality for real change.

So the questions that need answering here are to what degree this potential is discovered in Saved, and to what degree the play is a failure if this potential is left undiscovered. If sex has this power to partly redeem, to empower, to vivify, to de-alienate, then why does it not do so in the post-war capitalist society re-presented in Saved? By looking carefully at individual situations in which sex determines desire and possibility and by seeing the degree to which stasis is maintained and contained, the provocativeness of sexuality in the play will be more exactly illuminated.

The forces at work in Saved are Oedipal in the sense that Labarre uses it, at least insofar as Len is the play's main protagonist and whatever promise it makes lies mainly in his human potential. Parentless and apparently wandering, Len seeks living contact with Pam at an adult level, and he only succumbs to his masturbating relationship with her and her mother after repeated humiliation and the final failure at remaking her family, represented by the child-murder. These anxieties are essentially analogous to those that have attended the acculturation of humanity: the individual feels both the need to explore and express the chaotic, backhand forces within, while recognizing and fearing for the easily toppled, tenuous nature of civilization. In Saved, sexual recognition threatens society in the same way that the bacchants threatened Pentheus, and that Moira toppled Sophocles' heroes: that it is not fully known as such by the play's author is immaterial. In the character of Len this shattering potential has its last stronghold, and that in the play that wears on and digs at him are those societal forces essentially that want to dislodge this potentially chaotic reserve. Len doesn't stay at the end out of altruistic motives, or out of moral "superiority," but rather out of a still living desire to establish living relationships in spite of his deadening, destructive surroundings.

## II.

Saved opens at Pam's place, in the living room where she has brought Len for what was meant to be a simple, straightforward fuck on the couch. Even though Len brags that he has had over sixty girls, this is obviously his first, or close to his first, heterosexual intimacy. But however many he really has had is really not as important as the innocent curiosity that pulls him along through these moments in spite of his nervousness. Pam shows the ease that comes with experience not only by using the front room and her explanation of why she prefers it to the bedroom, "It's awful. 'Ere's nice", but also in her utter indifference both to Len's nervousness and to whatever objections her father, who is preparing to go to work, might have (Saved, p.11). In fact, having sex in the living room shows more than mere indifference to her parents: it shows too that for Pam there is more intimacy in the privacy of her room than of her body, and that it may well be that she gets her primary enjoyment not from the act itself but rather from the directly confronting elements of it. Sex with Len and his like is a challenge to her parents, perhaps with intent to shock, but it is more pointedly an ultimately masochistic confirmation of their immovable indifference to her. There is no real intimacy here as she is *risking* nothing of herself. She feels none of Len's anxiousness. At first he is just another boy, necessary but not particularly differentiated for her:

she only needs him on top of her for a few minutes to prove to herself that she is valuable, desirable, wanted. That sex is an act of protest, a bitter denial of her unimportance in her own home, a shout in a vacuum, shows succinctly the depth of her alienation, the utter lack of relatedness that has gone to make her. Pam no longer retains any capacity to learn from the act itself, from the joy she might feel from this closest of intimacies: if she gets real physical pleasure from coitus it is not the sort of joy that she leads her to imagine the possibility of a better world, one not filled with disappointment. She cannot feel that there is a contradiction between the sensations of sexual intimacy and the non-intimacy, the deadness of her world. Sex cannot teach her anything.

Her father is not, however, *absolutely* indifferent to Pam. True, a display of moral outrage about her activities is quite beyond him: he doesn't himself have much sense of his place in the world, certainly not enough confidence or personal power to have moral superiority over and patronage of Pam. But Harry is curious--the sex-act draws him. Having walked in on the preliminary stages he exits quickly into the scullery to make his dinner for work on the night-shift. Len then taunts and teases him with innuendo, created around Pam's bag of sweets, until Harry must look in again:

Pam: You're terrible! (he has taken some sweets from her bag) They're my sweets.

Len: Less 'ave a choose. (Loudly) 'Ow's that for size?

Pam: What yer shoutin'?

Len: (he puts a sweet in her mouth) Go easy! Yer wanna make it last! (She laughs. He bites a sweet in half and looks at it.) Oo, yer got a lovely little soft centre. (Aside to Pam) First time I seen choclit round it. (He jumps on the couch)

Pam: (shrill) Yer awful!

Len: That still 'ard?

Pam: (laughs) Leave off!

Len: Come on, there's plenty more where that come from. (He puts a sweet in her mouth)

Pam: (splutters) Can't take no more!

Len: Yeh - open it. Yer can do a bit more!

Pam: Ow!

Len: Oorr lovely! (He tickles her. She chokes) This'll put 'airs on your chest!  
(They try to laugh quietly. The door opens. Harry puts his head in. He goes out. He shuts the door. Len calls:)  
'Ave a toffee!

Saved, pp.17-8.

Besides being one of only two scenes in Saved, a comedy, that is in fact funny, this lampoon of love-making shows a spontaneity and lively energy that is unmatched by everything consequent. From this high point of self-confident playing and tense sexual curiosity, the play descends through violence, disaffection and confinement to absolute silence. Hence, it is retrospectively that their relationship seems significant and rare, which adds to the play's overall irony and hopelessness.

Implicit in their fun with Harry is Len's challenge to him, which turns into easy victory, as Harry has no power over Pam: the patriarchal orthodoxy that permeates most working-class families is very strangely absent. Len has walked into a tribal vacuum where the conventional roles have been left empty, where everyone scraps on pretty much the

same ground. So it is that Pam is casually indifferent in her sexual adventures and is willing to treat even her sex as a means to an end. It is no more than a tool to her, something she "possesses" that can help her towards something that she desires, if only to strike back at the indifference of her family. She can bring young men home and have them on the couch, and so become the centre of attention in the central room of a house where she normally gets only the kind of habitual and automatic attention that a cat that isn't allowed on the furniture gets.

But for Len the situation is electrifying. For a young man with little or no history of sexual prowess, no accumulation of conquests, for whom sex is an end in itself, to wield power over a father, even a father who is empty of the usual paternal potencies, is aphrodisiacal. There is a tense, jolting aliveness in Len's questions about Pam, about the bedroom, and about Harry: what Pam terms "noseyness" is tension, seeking release from the strictness of real or imagined inadequacy, and from the pose of indifference regarding a situation that he cannot help but be totally interested in. For Len the stakes are high and Harry provides him with the means to overcome his own inner tensions and to thereby gain the appearance of non-involvement in the act itself, to become, in a word, Pam's equal in sex. By baiting Harry, Len passes a test that is at once symbolic and practical, for he not only "conquers" the

older male, thus stealing his potency, but through this confrontation he calms his own nerves by acting out his anxieties. By the end of the scene he feels potency, which is the only assurance the male has that he will be acknowledged by the female, his only source of confirmation. It only remains to be said that this situation is indeed Oedipal and that Len now possesses what Harry by right of fatherhood has previously possessed, that is, Pam.

This power of Len's to usurp Harry's rightful place is not unnoticed or unvalued by Pam. She knows at once Len's strangeness, his will to fill the empty space that her father would ordinarily occupy, and his power to therefore disturb her stifling environment while staying somehow independent of it; but her need for stability, even the stability of perpetual disaster, is stronger than her enjoyment of Len's probing presence. In fact, by the end of the second scene she is ready and able to begin to replace Len. By this time he is no longer an unknown quantity to her: he has been probing her too much, disturbing what she had long firmly forced herself to turn away from, to not see or think about. Len's become a lodger in her home, and as such is no longer the outsider who took her outside herself and her malignant homelife, who could defeat the world's indifference to her.

For his part, the more he knew about Pam and her family the more he had to know, and the more he learned the deeper he became entrenched in her family. Len was obsessed

with knowing her, all that she was, her history. But because he had to know he had to question, and to Pam each question was blame too, an accusation of complicity, of responsibility for what she and her family had become. It doesn't take much thinking to discover the rationality behind her defensiveness: what child does not blame herself, take it as proof of personal inadequacy, when parents endlessly fight each other. So like his archetypal ancestor, Len questions too much and ends up harming himself by this need to know. It is a challenge that Pam cannot answer, any more than Harry could take the role of authority in the first scene. The perceived stability of her environment as well as her ability to take a few moments of happiness once in a while is wholly dependent upon her ability to deny involvement, to deny responsibility. This is the only shelter that she had had against the storms of her home life and she clings to it like life itself. She did not ask to be born, she did not ask for her world, and neither could she change it in her continual state of fear and denial. Her sexual forays gave her distance from the painful reality of her home, a way to be "nice" in an environment that categorically forbade happiness. Thus, in the second scene the boat that she and Len float in metaphorically underlines her inner-life: it is her liferaft upon which he, once a guest, was becoming an intruder, a violator. Len has penetrated far enough--too far:



Pam: She never mentions 'im an' 'e never mentions 'er.  
 I don' wanna talk about it.  
 Len: They never mention each other?  
 Pam: I never 'eard 'em.  
 Len: Not once?  
 Pam: No!  
 Len: It's wet down 'ere. (Pause) I ain' livin' with me  
 in-laws, thass a fact.  
 Fred: (off) Four!  
 Len: I never got yer placed till I saw yer ol' people.  
 Pam: I never chose 'em!  
 Len: I never meant that!  
 Pam: Don't know why yer wanna keep on about 'em!  
 Len: I never try an' get at yer!

Saved, pp.25-6.

Every question he asks, every suggestion he makes, cuts deeper, is a further condemnation of what she is, and she'll fight to the death to save herself and the stability she's fought all her life to attain. He does not see or feel the storm about her anymore: she has become a part of it through being constantly naked to it. The vulnerability that follows from sexual intimacy with Len is denied the moment it presses on her, the moment it demands instead of giving quietude, demanding greater intimacy and interdependence. Whatever has given her relief in the past has come out of her lifelong denial of her living context, and by using the access to her inner life that their sexual pleasure allowed him, Len \* questions that context and forces her self-defense.

By the end of the scene she has already moved far from Len, closed the doors of intimacy, and has found in Fred a new interest. Using the same sort of banter to express his interest in Pam as Len had earlier used to taunt Harry, Fred sets himself up for her appreciation. His play for her is as

straight-forwardly lewd as Len's was initially awkward, and Pam's necessarily tenuous integrity is enough to ensure that Fred will get what he wants. Pam knows without thinking that if she was going to retain the only security that she'd ever known, the security that comes from pre-limiting one's responses to the world to a crippling extent, then the choice to make was away from Len's emotional striving towards a pre-limited and complicitly oppressive connexion with Fred.

Just as the end of the second scene hints at Pam's future and disastrous liaison with Fred, the next scene's end gives the first suggestion of Len's future sexual encounters with her mother. As the gang (Pete, Colin, Barry and Mike) stand around joking about how Pete had gotten away with running down and killing a child on his bike ("accidents is legal"), the youngest of them, Colin, recognizes Len and calls him over. Mary enters to meet Len who is to help her take home the shopping, which serves as an occasion for the gang to tease them. In spite of the good humour of the sexual innuendo this scene is more menacing than the previous similar banter, given the immediately previous context of their celebration of Pete's unpunished murder of the child. Their suggestions that Len and Mary are sexually involved prove unintentionally accurate, foreshadowing what will eventually fall out as a result of their close proximity and mutual forced celibacies. In spite of her unattractiveness and age, she does indeed have "the regulation 'oles" (Saved,

p.32), as well as other characteristics that draw Len to her. But more interestingly, it is at this point that sexuality--the Oedipal attraction and conflict as Labarre speaks of it<sup>32</sup>--starts to function in the play to create for Len and Pam's family a new, if strained, set of relatedness. This is the point, too, at which Len becomes more the character of main concern, the measure of the functioning of social mechanisms and their effects upon living human beings. From scene four onward Len must choose, and, actively, stubbornly choose, to remain with Pam's family and to create new relationships out of habits so deadened by mutual despair that they seem monolithic, unbreakable. What Len learns and, more significantly, what he consistently *refuses* to learn, the way he chooses his innocence again and again over and in spite of his experience of the real world, is the very core of the play's redeeming potential. That he chooses to understand the world through some inner judgement and faith that refuses to break wins the world too some degree of salvation.

Remarkable for its documentation of what can today be easily (perhaps too easily) recognized as child abuse, as Pam's baby (at least seven months have passed since scene two if the baby is Len's, nine if it's Fred's) bawls offstage for close to ten minutes, no one even seriously considering helping it, scene four details the animosity that's grown up

---

<sup>32</sup> Labarre, p.122.

between her and Len. By entering in only her slip as Len sits eating his supper at the table, Pam visually foreshadows the action of scene nine, in which Mary enters again in only a slip to finish dressing in front of Len. There is no doubt that Pam does it in order to tease him into staring at her, so that she in turn has an excuse to abuse him, even though she complains that she can do what she likes in her own home when her mother as much as calls her a whore for not dressing in the scullery like a decent girl (Saved, p.38). Pam digs at him any way she can in the hope of getting him out of the way. His presence reminds her of their former intimacy, and his excuse of sticking around for the baby's sake--he does as little to help the screaming child as the rest--stands in the way of her plans to bring Fred into the house.

The contradiction between Len's stated purpose of staying for the baby's sake and at once doing nothing to help it is by the end of the scene put in perspective when he reveals his real motive for hanging in so long past the end of his affair with Pam. When Harry tells Len to keep his door shut when Fred stops over to sleep with Pam that night, he replies that he keeps it open so that he can listen for the kid (Saved, p.42). But when in scene six he and Fred share an intimate discussion in the park it becomes clear that he listened for more than just the baby:

Len: I used to 'ear, know that?  
 Fred: 'Ear what?--E's like a flippin' riddle!  
 Len: You an' 'er.  
 Fred: Me an' 'oo?

Len: On the bash.  
 Fred: Do what?  
 Len: Straight up.  
 Fred: Chriss.  
 Len: Yeh.  
 Fred: Yer kiddin'.  
 Len: On my life. Kep me up 'alf the night. Yer must  
 a bin trying for the cup.  
 Fred: (draws his cigarette) Why didn't yer let on?  
 Len: No, it's all a giggle, ain't it?  
 Fred: (shrugs) Yeh? Makes yer feel a right Charlie.

Saved, p.53

In their study of Bond's plays, Hay and Roberts reveal that in the first two drafts of the play Len admitted to masturbating while listening to Pam and Fred make love in her bedroom, and in a note beside that section of the manuscript Bond had written: "I might be ashamed of the blatant sexuality of this but in genuinely pleading for themselves (not grovelling) everyone gains dignity. This is true of L."<sup>33</sup> Whether or not Bond had anything to be ashamed of is a question I will hold in abeyance, as it doesn't really matter that he chose to discard the explicit confession, since it is implicit. Even when he was explaining to Harry in scene four why he was keeping his door ajar, there is a sense that he is lying, hiding guilt (Saved, p.42). Harry has noticed that he keeps it open only when Fred's staying over, and Len senses that he's "been caught." In Harry's lack of condemnation, in his neutrality, there is a kind of sympathy for Len: incapable as Harry is of expressing feeling--perhaps even of feeling--there is at least a possibility of recognition on

---

<sup>33</sup> Hay & Roberts, Bond: A Study of His Plays, p.48.

Harry's part, of the insight of a fellow-creature, similarly hurt, similarly reduced and broken. His "Yer'll catch cold with it open" (Saved, p.42) is not compassionate in the ordinary sense, but in the context of his absolute silence towards everyone and everything throughout the play's previous action it is at least an attempt to communicate, a desire to speak out. When in the penultimate scene Harry walks in on Len, who is lying on his bedroom floor with a knife in his hand trying to clear the cracks in the floorboards so that he can better hear what's going on in Pam's room, it tells in an exact stage image the extent of Len's desperation, of his intense involvement.

It is obvious that Len sticks around not because of the baby but rather because of its mother. His motivation is simply that he wants sex with Pam: the memories of sex with her are paramount in his mind, constantly troubling and inflaming him. This motive is neither acknowledged by Bond nor explicated in positive terms by his critics. In his preface Bond says: "Curiously, most theatre critics would say that for the play to be optimistic Len should have run away. Fifty years ago when (the same critics would probably say) moral standards were higher, they would have praised him for the loyalty and devotion with which he stuck to his post." (Saved, p.5). Which is a very good but very conventional point, hardly meaningful at all given the way that it ignores what is really happening. It is true that

Len does show "loyalty and devotion" on occasion, as in scene five when he stays home from his job to nurse Pam, who's gone sick because Fred has rejected her.<sup>34</sup> But loyalty and devotion describes the quality of his behaviour, not his motivation: he does not stay in order to be loyal and devoted. In terms set out by the play, Len is rejected, abused, reduced from a sexually free and active agent to a state of masturbatory adolescence; and to say that he allows this process because he is morally upright is to deny those dynamics that underlie it. But unsatisfactory as this moralistic justification is, it at least is far enough removed from the play itself, as Bond is probably only concerned with defending the play against his critics, not really with explicating it, so that it does little to cloud the complex reality therein. This motivation of Len's does not play itself out simply at all in either his own psychology or in the play's structure, and in order to attain to close to a total view of it, it is essential to recognize and examine the full extent of Len's desires for Mary, Pam's mother.

In scene nine Mary enters to Len in the living room, wearing only her slip and saying that she hopes Len doesn't mind (Saved, pp. 86-7). They talk about Pam in passing,

---

<sup>34</sup> Hay & Roberts, Bond: A Study of His Plays, p. 47. "Scene five is one which Bond had not originally envisaged as part of the play: 'the scene where the baby is on the bed was added after the play was written, and is really unnecessary--...'"

discuss all the sex in the cinema (which Mary doesn't like), and she gets Len to polish her shoes. Their discussion contains considerable sexual innuendo, but is kept on a harmless, friendly level, until she tears one of her stockings on a chair. Unable to find nail polish, Len offers her the use of his needle and thread:

Len: Well, 'ave a bash.  
 Mary: It'll make it worse.  
 Len: Noit won't.  
 Mary: (puts her foot on the chair seat): You do it.  
 Len: Me?  
 Mary: I could never use a needle. I should a bin there by now.  
 Len: I don't know if I --  
 Mary: Get on. It's only doin' me a good turn.  
 Len: It ain' that. I --  
 Mary: Mrs. Lee's waitin'. I can't take 'em off. I'm in ever such a 'urry. They'll run.  
 Len: Yeh. It's dodgy. I don't wan' a prick --  
 Mary: Yer got steady 'ands your age.  
 Len: (kneels in front of her and starts darning): Yeh. (He drops the needle): O....  
 ...Mary: (puts her foot back on the chair): I ain' got all night.  
 Len: I'll 'ave t' get me 'and inside.  
 Mary: You watch where yer go. Yer ain't on yer 'oneymoon yet. Yer 'and's cold!  
 Len: Keep still, or it'll jab yer.  
 Mary: You watchyerself.  
 Len: I'll just give it a little stretch.  
 Mary: All right?  
 Len: Yer got lovely legs.  
 Mary: You get on with it.  
 Len: Lovely an' smooth.

Saved, pp.91-2

After a few more lines Harry comes in on them. They're both aware of his presence, but they carry on as before, Len admiring her legs. When Len can't find the scissors to cut the thread, Mary tells him to bite it, which he does with



some trepidation, after which she complains that he took his time, and Harry retreats hurriedly to the kitchen (Saved, p.93). This is a particularly striking image, Len kneeling before his former lover's mother, her plump leg posed high on the chair, his lips touch the stockinged thigh, while Harry silently stares and then scampers off. It is one of the best stage-pictures in the play, haunting the mind long after that moment, and finally motivating the cataclysm of scene eleven, in which after untold years of not even talking to each other, Harry and Mary scrap verbally until she smashes him with the full teapot.

There is no doubting Mary's intention to tease Len and, at least by the end of the scene, there is no doubting that Len wishes to comply in this seduction, as he suggests that she might as well stay in as she'll miss the start of the movie. Whether because she'd already got what she wanted, getting some of her own back on Harry, or because she was suddenly conscience-struck, overcome by the guilt of being seductively coy with Len or at being caught by Harry, she walks away at that point while Len goes to the couch where he'd made love to Pam in scene one, to masturbate. It wouldn't be amiss to philosophize on how far Len has "come down" since the play's opening, but it would be more to the point to simply note that Mary, at least at this moment, has taken the place of her daughter, while Len's position has become far more ambiguous.

A strange sort of family or tribal unit has been created by Len's working his way through this network of sexual conquests and frustrations: when Pam was his love-object he stood as an intimate adult male, enfranchised to live with at least a potential to take responsibility for sexual and family-making activities. At the last stages of the play, however, he has abandoned his previously active role, in spite of his protests to the contrary to Pam, and has himself become incorporated by the all-encompassing stasis of this family, replacing Pam with Mary as a masturbatory and symbolic object. At the same time his relationship to Harry has shifted, from that of a co-rebel with Pam against his symbolic but factually empty authority, to that of rival for Mary; but in respect to Harry and Mary's physical marriage, there is also a parallel to Len and Pam's inasmuch as the mutuality of the sexual ends of both relationships are both over. So Len is not quite Oedipus at South London, as the emotionally positive pole of sex has been simply overpowered by the pervasive negativity of their situation, their social context; and when Harry confronts his legal wife of twenty-odd years he has a great deal less to defend than had Laertes at the cross-roads. A smashed pot and a gash full of tea-leaves is less than tragic, though still not quite comedy, but it does retain some poignancy, some anguish, and a more thoroughly alienated view of life than the ancient Athenians could ever have had.

So in what does the salvation promised by the play's title lie? Where is redemption for the real people and real situations that inspired the play? The answer, or at least the only answer that stands up against the realism of the play, lies in the development of the co-theme of violence, and the way in which these two themes intersect, are erotically intertwined. The questions are perhaps better put: Why does Len allow this process of his own degeneration? Why does he choose to entangle himself in a hopeless situation? And why does it seem like the right thing to do, the only real answer to the real world of the play? This is not to suggest that there is another answer for Len: that is on a level with the suggestion that Hamlet wouldn't be tragic if only the prince would make up his mind and act. The way Hamlet chooses is *the nature* of the play, just as the choices that Len makes or fails to make are very much the essence of Saved. In order to understand the necessary quality of these choices and these characters it is necessary to now investigate the thematic development of violence in the play, to see how it permeates all aspects of social knowledge and activity, and how it therefore destructively penetrates all aspects of the private lives of these South Londoners.

## Chapter Three

### READING VIOLENCE

#### I.

Each one is the centre of the world, and everyone else is "outside." All communication is an exchange, as transition between solipsistically constructed realms. The conscious beings of these men can be reduced to a small number of relations between fixed quantities. The language of logistics is its appropriate expression. Coldness and alien-ness are divisible, without further ado, from this basic culture of the epoch: *nothing* in the essence of the bourgeois individual opposes the repression and annihilation of one's fellow man. The circumstances, rather, that in this world each one becomes the other's competitor and that even with increasing social wealth there are increasingly too many people, gives the *typical individual of the epoch that character of coldness and indifference which is satisfied with the most pitiful rationalizations about the most monstrous deeds as long as they correspond to his interest.*<sup>35</sup> (my italics)

The polemics of Horkheimer's statement stand out best in the context in which he wrote, that is, 1930's Germany where the rise of National Socialism still only suggested the length and breadth of the atrocities of the war years. To me the most important aspect of his view lies in his recognition of the connexions between society and culture, responsibility and the individual. When he speaks of bourgeois life being reduced to transactions, exchange, to the coldness inherent

---

35

M. Horkheimer, "Egoism & the Freedom Movement," Telos, #54, (Winter 1982-83), p.49.

in the absolute isolation, of the individual made entity apart from community, he was speaking in a way more prophetic than descriptive. The full ramifications found most abhorrently in the death-camps of the Nazis remain culturally apparent: as though to remind us that all life can be smashed to atoms in mere minutes, this has been dubbed the atomic age, and the atom bomb has become the instrument of awakening from innocence for three successive generations, the nightmare that has made childhood fear, daytime reality. If as Horkheimer says there is nothing essential to the culturally inbred individual of this epoch that opposes the annihilation of the other, provided his own interests are served, then there is an obvious level upon which his perspective can be used to discuss the truth-value of Saved, namely, the level of actualized violence.

That the infamous baby-killing scene is immediately justifiable and understandable in terms of cultural deprivation and the violence derived from the oppression inherent in material (class) subjugation is well documented by defenders of the play. But this interpretation falls well short of the kind of understanding Horkheimer shows, and of the complexities of the play itself. Saved is not a social document, or even a polemic against the ruling, controlling classes of England. It is, as I have been arguing, a play, a piece of art with its own particular forms of expression, its own means of re-presenting life in a context more imaginative

and emotional than didactic. So to see the play as only a social document would be to fall prey to the easy answers derivable from ethnological and sociological study, and therefore to bypass the most evocative elements in it. The aesthetic realm has value beyond commodity and exchange in the precise way in which its truth can only be experienced as a discovery of relatedness, of one's inner state and its vital interconnectedness with others, with nature, with the universe.

Inasmuch as Bond first chose to write about violence and those at the low end of the social scale, he was interpreted as being mainly interested in the didactic representation of social reality, and his numerous interviews and polemical writings in the twenty years since Saved confirm this view. But the play is not reduceable to this, even if its author would have it so. The baby-killing is itself derivable from social reality, but its ramifications are diverse and perhaps finally unanswerable. Bond has been compared with Brecht, both as dramatist and polemicist, and for good reasons. He was early on in his work influenced by the 1956 visit of Berliner Ensemble to England, and by his work with the Brecht-influenced Royal Court Writers' Workshop under George Divine.<sup>36</sup> And there is a parallel critical obfuscation of Brecht's work that can shed light on Saved.

---

<sup>36</sup> Peter Holland, "Brecht, Bond, Gaskill, and the Practice of Political Theatre," Theatre Quarterly, VIII, 30 (Summer 1978), pp.24-9.

Following the popular success of Three-Penny Opera, Brecht was expected to steer wide of "bourgeois" topics, to represent the emergent class' perspective as exclusively correct. And yet in many of his plays, in particular Galileo, Mother Courage and Her Children, The Good Woman of Szechuan, and The Caucasian Chalk Circle, he did not restrict himself from concerns that were part of the bourgeois tradition. The last of these, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, will serve particularly well to show this parallel, for either by intent or accident Bond hit upon the same symbol as Brecht to measure the level of social insanity. When Grusha gives up her home, goes hungry, loses the security of her position as servant in the governor's house, undergoes humiliation by her sister-in-law, and must even submit to becoming the sexual and labour property of the farmer, it is because she can see that even her oppressor's child is human. This is hardly because she is of the proletariat: in spite of Brecht's defenses of the soldiers and other servants, in the final analysis, the child's humanity is not significant enough for them to risk everything as does Grusha. Whatever she shows of compassion and determination is not the exclusive property of her class: rather, Brecht's criticism is that the ideology that destroys mutual aid--and sacrifice--comes from above, from the bourgeoisie who dominate social relations through the control of the economic hierarchy.

In a way that is both courageous and equally evocative,

Bond uses the same symbol, that of the child abandoned and entirely dependent and vulnerable, to express a new sense of relatedness: that is, to realize not a nightmare born of revolution, an extraordinary circumstance, but one of absolute ordinariness, of the everyday. Where Grusha succeeds in spite of her limitations, the gang in Saved fail because their capacity to care has been somehow destroyed. They do not see, like Grusha, that the baby's face is human: they seem to lack the ability to make this simplest of recognitions. This is the greatest source of horror and disgust in Saved, that nothing in the forces of dominant culture gave these men the resources to resist this "atavistic fury," while at the same time it seemingly robbed them of a humanity that should be intrinsic to everyone.

Yet in its representation of the child's murder Saved is true to life: in fact, in this age of death-camps, organized mass torture and murder, "strategic" nuclear weaponry, Bond's statement that the stoning of a child in its pram is a case of "typical English statement" does seem, at a glance, true (Saved, p.6). But, of course, the scene is in no sense an "understatement." What Bond does by discussing this act removed from its dramatic presentation is a little dishonest, a diversion from its full truth value. It is essential to a true understanding of the play to see its violence in the context that makes it meaningful and not to dissipate that meaning. In this way alone can our feelings about that



violence lead to an understanding integral to our culture.

Horkheimer recognized both the social and the erotic relevancy of violence, and how it shapes or warps our perceptions. Whereas mystery, vagueness, and fear underlie much investigation of violence, in fact it is one of our dearest cultural values: is there anyone whose life has not been at least restricted by his fear of the passion for violence in others? At the same time and in apparent contradiction, the popular cultural media exploits this passion--counts on it, really-- to sell their products. And yet this relationship to violence is denied, consistently represented as the property of subcultures or individuals outside the dominant order. As a result people no longer possess the emotional wherewithal to accept and understand violence as it shapes their own lives, and so violence is intensified by ignorance and denial, until it exponentially overreaches its former capacity to make society corrupt and insane. As Horkheimer says, the struggle for each individual to dominate all others, the conditions of living that allow recognition of the other only as a threat to self, and the competition for limited power and material wealth, all lead directly away from mutual dependency and aid to a real lack of feeling, to utter coldness: within the parameters he defines violence can be intensely satisfying, the release of pent-up frustrations can become almost an act of creation. The young men in Saved literally explode through the

limitations that have always bound their desires when they pick up stones and throw them: it is perhaps the greatest pleasure they have ever felt, as for once their desires can play themselves right out. The act of violence is thus an act of communal release.

This is the starting point for my investigation of violence, for it alone implies the complicity of *all* individuals in the culturally transmitted violence that makes the specific act of violence inevitable, that violence which denies inner truth as it simultaneously shapes abstracted, alienating society. The cycle seems beyond changing, beyond re-call, as the denial of inner truth contains its own despair. So it is necessary now and always to stare hard in the faces of that group of young men who act so violently, so against human reason: it is because I saw that violence in myself and did not know where it came from that I write this essay.

## II.

I began Chapter Two by maintaining the humour of the play's first scene and how it contained a power that enabled a special sexual intimacy between two isolated individuals. I then proceeded to show how that first intimacy led to a series of conflicts centering on sexual conquest and leading to an intricacy of relations, all mutually attracting and repelling. Starting from this same point I want to explore the erotically-charged core of violence within these very

relations, the way that violence is a part of each character's experience, a part of even their language and perception. From the very first inquiry, when Len asks Pam's name and she answers "Yer ain' arf nose" (Saved, p.11) conflict is never far from the surface. From her very lack of concern for him and her casual flippancy it seems that they are not prostitute and customer, and yet at the same time her reluctance to share even her name is jarring in the circumstances. This odd combination of strangeness and intimacy indicates more than just a desire to shock (as Lambert suggests), as it puts our expectations on edge, disturbing our patterns of recognition and making the ingrained look suddenly unfamiliar: it indicates a need to question the structure of drama itself, to enter with the audience into a new relationship, and an attendant new way of *feeling* about the world.

Bond shows a world that lacks hope, because it has been robbed of meaning. In a reversal of the Promethean myth, fire that is the inspiration of creativity and the light of knowledge has been taken away to become the private property of the few, though many must tend it. Work has thus become only the exchange of time for money: it contains no deeper meaning and it feels like punishment. If you hate what you do you always end up hating yourself too, and you learn to disdain yourself, to be deeply uncaring when the major activity in your life is only toil. The bosses and those who

serve them always blame the workers when productivity lags or sales drop off, but *they* don't have to feel that their lives are shit because *their* lives aren't bound by the meaningless, lifeless products of their working hours. So in an unbound moment Pam can even take gratification because she's Len's "first tart in weeks": sex is only good insofar as it is something she's free to do (but not something that liberates), something she doesn't have to mind, to think about (Saved, pp.12-3). More than just romantically deflating, this indicates a new way of relating to the world, a way in which not even one's own self is one's own, where everything is somehow unreal. Life is good when it can be forgotten about, when it is no longer thought of as the way it is. At other times it is bad, something to be muddled through or, if possible, cheated. Experience only shows that things are bad and that it's stupid to hope for it to be different. Thus, it is an environment that is understandable only as myth, that is, where all causes lie beyond what is knowable: and myth has its own logic independent of those who create it, a logic most often malignant.

For in the distance that separates Len and Pam there is implied a distrust of all things, the self included. To have agreed to sex with him and to yet not trust him with her name shows an assumption about their world that the critics have never quite gotten the feel of, an attitude about herself that is formed around the poles of intense self-hatred and

the desperate need to escape this hated self. So she at one moment feels the void and the next flies to possess something not-her; the need is to desperately assert, again and again, that this is *mine*, to attach all feelings about the self to objects so that the self is no more. She clings to whatever is not her--her sweets, her smokes, her Radio Times--so that she need not accept her negated, unreal self.

And it naturally follows that with all really close relationships her primary aim will be again to negate, to deny connectedness:

Len (lifts his head): 'Ere!  
 Pam: What?  
 Len: Oo's that?  
 Pam: Ol' man.  
 Len (sits): Whass 'e want?  
 Pam: That cushion's stickin' in me back.  
 Len: I thought yer reckon yer was on yer tod?  
 Pam: 'E's late for work.  
 Len: O. Why?  
 Pam: Why?  
 Len: Yeh.  
 Pam: I don't know.  
 Len: Reckon e' saw?  
 Pam: Shouldn't be surprised.  
 Len: Will 'e be long?  
 Pam: Don't arst me.

Saved, pp.13-4

When Len mocks Harry in the first scene, he stands outside of her by this act of vanquishing the familiar. In fact, the significance of their making love is structurally dependent upon this violent oppression of someone already totally oppressed, as it is Len's destructive, negating action that makes him powerfully attractive to Pam, makes him more than just a pick-up.

But Harry's oppression can stand in for the oppression of all the others in the play: Len's act of making a fool of Harry in this scene shows exactly the processes that follow from the extreme need of all these characters to feel in some way better than the others. Just as Harry is assaulted in his own home, so are Len, Pam and all the rest under seige in every aspect of their lives. Pam thrills to see Harry put down and made ridiculous only because there is nothing else in her life to satisfy her: if one only knows oppression then one can only dream of revenge. Human beings deal with consistent environmental conditions by forming patterns of behaviour that are likewise, that is, they form habits, and so in a world that constantly attacks and threatens the individual organism it is hardly surprising to find that the organism reflexively thrusts away from it. Adaptation to particular circumstances no matter how potentially healing becomes practically impossible; the cliched, ingrained reactions take on a life of their own. To this extent the world is predictable, and in predictability there is a kind of safety, even though it is also progressively poor, alienating and claustrophobically static. As these people are stripped of hope, of each other, of the true basis of culture itself, their poverty confines them with a totality that has only become possible since this age of mass culture

began.<sup>37</sup>

The characters in Saved have been too long and too thoroughly acted upon by this mass culture. They no longer possess themselves, and the potential to build their own culture, a weapon to hold off that which robs them, is still a long way off for them. Scene two shows the depth of Pam's incapacity to understand herself, her own history, as she shows Len, who wants at least to know, only ignorance and frustration.

Len: Some mothers! (pause) Livin' like that must'a got yer down.

Pam: Used to it.

Len: They ought to be shot.

Pam: Why?

Len: Don't it ever worry yer?

Pam: Ow?

Len: Supposed you turned out like that?

Pam: No.

Len: 'Ow'd it start?

Pam: Never arst.

Len: No one said?

Pam: Never listen. It's their life.

Len: But --

Pam: Yer can't do nothin', yer know. No one'll thank yer.

Len: 'Ow long's it bin goin' on?

Pam: Longer'n I know.

Saved, p. 24

Len's subject is Pam's parents, and what she says she doesn't know is the length of and reason for their feud, for she can remember no time when they were not feuding. But what does

---

37 Culture necessarily implies promise, but inasmuch as mass culture survives only because of the consumerism it serves and feeds off of, it only promises that we shall lack more and more. That is, it is a false promise: it gives a promise of fulfillment but in fact takes the possibility of fulfillment away.

her apparent lack of curiosity regarding even her own life come out of, why does she so thoroughly deny herself a personal history? This all-pervasive distrust of self-knowledge is obviously tied to her parents' feud, so why resist Len and his questions? That she is afraid of that knowledge is the obvious answer, and that her denial of the importance of his questions somehow emanates from this same fear is likewise obvious, but this takes us no closer to understanding why she should be so afraid. And Pam must be understood, not just shrugged off as a stupid slut, as both her community and some of the play's critics have done. Whatever it is in her world that she so absolutely avoids knowledge of, it is something essential to understanding her. This is also one of the most important concerns of the play, for Pam is more the rule than the exception in our world. Her fear and denial is not hers alone: it is at the core of her parents' behaviour, the gang's viciousness, and even Len works in counter-position to it, and sometimes succumbs to the fatalism inherent in it. When she answers him, "Never arst" and "Never listen," she is as much as saying that she fears her world too much to ever try to penetrate to its meaning. For a child the world is its surroundings, the people around it and its environment. Psychologists say that very young children do not distinguish between themselves and the world: everything is themselves and they are in everything. But what if from the very start of life and at



every moment access to all things and people is conditional or denied: what if everything and everyone is withheld from that child, in whole or in part, always? Well, if the growing up process of distinguishing between self and other is thus biased by the child's inability to get of the other, then it follows that there will be a complimentary bias against giving of the self. And what are human beings if they are not the constantly changing and reordering sum total of goings-out to others and returnings to the self? We are by nature social animals fated, for better or worse, to make ourselves through contact with others. So it is hardly surprising that Pam is blocked and stunted in all her feelings: that her child is to her resoundingly and always an "it," that she sells the pram for fifty quid to some ghoul, her mother telling her to hold out for two hundred: these things are only the logical results of how she's learned to live. She can only live the way she knows how, and this means that she must hide or run from those ultimate contacts that cannot either be readily jettisoned or easily oppressed: she lives a life-raft existence and she cannot afford to be pulled under those who want to go beyond life on the raft, into the water. I do not mean to imply that she is "conscious" of all this. I mean, rather, that she learned these tactics at a very early stage of life, and that as part of those tactics she also internalized the habits of thought that define an antipathy to thinking, especially self-

analysis. Ethics and morality require a degree of security that can allow the possibility of the equality of importance of another's life and livelihood, and this sort of admission is antithetical to Pam's view of reality. Just as soldiers are taught (or untaught), to never admit to "the enemy's" human-ness, Pam can see no ends that are not her own. And she is not a mere solipsist, and so easily discounted. She is the human end-product of a cultural "intention," an ordering of thought itself antithetical to mutual well-being. In a word, she is only a typical human being of the modern capitalist era: she is the commoditized and self-commoditizing, alienated and self-alienating product of cultural purpose turned inside-out.

I do not intend here a polemic against capitalism--I've had enough of that noise, even if there weren't many better qualified than me to deliver one. But it remains that Pam's culture only recognizes exchange value--expresses itself in economic terms. It stole from her what every animal has<sup>38</sup>, its oneness of activity and self, and gave her in return the Radio Times. She tries to own Fred by an effort of will, by

---

38 Karl Marx, "Property and Alienation," Marxism and Art, ed. Berel Lang and Forrest Williams (New York: Longman Inc., 1972), pp.21-3. In fact, all human societies take "nature" (i.e., oneness of activity and life) away from their young but, as Marx argues, this should evolve towards a compensatory fulfillment. See also Marx, "Alienated Labor," Man Alone, ed. Eric and Mary Josephson (New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1962), pp.93-104.

having the baby and naming him as the father, and her ongoing efforts to force him to "live up to his responsibilities" end up creating the situation of the baby's murder. At the end of this she has nothing of what she wanted and is still tortured by what she had before: same old house, same old father and mother, same old Len, and she has even fewer chances of forgetting it all in a night's carefree sex, having ruined her reputation by shrewishly pursuing Fred. Even in economic terms she stands to gain diminishing returns on her only asset--her sex. Capitalists--or at least those who want to benefit from a capitalist perspective in society--are proud of the way that people take to commodity market, body and soul. But for Pam and those like her, who have lost and will always lose because they firstly have nothing of their society's resources and wealth, and secondly because whatever other potential they have is taken away by a lying culture to be re-presented to them in a commoditized form, so that they themselves become commodities, where is there redemption? In her despairing, "All my friends gone. Baby's gone. Nothin' left but rows." (Saved, p.112), she can only hope to blame someone else for her unhappiness, which can only leave her with less and less self-knowledge and insight. And an unredeemable life is no life ~~at all~~.

## III.

Which leads back to Len, the source of Bond's often quoted "almost irresponsible optimism." (Saved, p.8) What happens to him as a result of the baby's murder is indeed the best indication of the potential for optimism in the play, so it is of primary importance to look at this scene. It begins with Len and Fred fishing, an almost pastoral beginning reminiscent of scene two where Len and Pam paddled about in a rowboat. Fred shows Len how to bait a hook with a worm, he tries to cadge smokes off Len, ends up giving him one as he hasn't had a job since he was fired for staying home to nurse Pam and, as mentioned in the Chapter Two, they end up comparing their experiences with Pam, concluding that she must prefer Fred because he has a bigger penis. She enters with the baby in a pram to nag at Fred for not coming around, and only by calling her the worst of sluts can he get her to leave: "(to Mike): Yours must be the only stiff outside the churchyard she ain' knocked off." (Saved, p.60). She leaves the baby, telling him he can take it to his tart to look after.

Mike's "Lovely start t' the evenin's entertainment" (Saved, p.60) sums up their annoyance with being saddled with the baby, as they'd planned to go to the local church where they hoped to pick up a couple of "nice pieces." Fred sits downstage while Len leaves to try to find Pam and bring her back to collect the baby. When the rest of the group enters

(Pete, Colin and Barry), Fred feels some obligation to stay which keeps the others there too. Their rough joking leads inevitably to the pram, as the only new and different source of amusement. There is nothing overtly malevolent at first with the baby. They only intend to have fun, not to murder. It isn't really the baby at all but, rather, the pram and its potential as a prop to their music-hall antics, that draws them. But also like music-hall comedy, the jokes are all at someone's expense, a bit nasty: Barry's face will make the baby crap itself to death; they'll put it to sleep if it wakes--with a brick; and Barry is like "a bloody uncle" to the kids on his street (Saved, p.62). His nursery rhyme, "And down will come baby and cradle and tree/an' bash its little brains out an' dad'll scoop/'em up and use 'em for bait," causes general laughter, which escalates when he discovers and poses with the balloon:

Colin: Thought they was pink now.  
 Barry: (pokes at Colin's head) Come t' the pictures t'night darlin'? (he bends it) It's got a bend in it.  
 Mike: Don't take after its dad.  
 Barry: (blows it up) 'Ow's that then?  
 Colin: Go easy.  
 Barry: (blows again) Thass more like it. (blows again)  
 Colin: Do leave off.  
 Mike: That reminds me I said I'd meet the girl t'night.

(Saved, p.63)

The jokes about penis size and the girls who won't be able to resist their manly members is really only true to life-- I've seen it dozens of times, in locker-rooms and factories,

when the supervisors weren't around to push us on to our next chores. When the balloon bursts and Colin falls dead, the action starts to become more violent, as Barry then pushes the pram over him. Colin dodges the pram when Barry pushes it violently at him, but it hits Pete, who in turn propels it back at Barry. After several repetitions they become concerned for the baby inside and, when they actually look inside at it, there is even a moment of recognition-- they know it as another human being by its tiny hands. But this recognition is only brief, and when Barry asks how to get babies to sleep, Pete answers that you pull their hair, and of course they laugh when he shows them how. Mike comes to see so Pete does it again. But when hair-pulling doesn't make the drugged child sleep, they try pinching it. Then they pull its napkin off, and seeing its legs flail, they progress to see it in less human terms:

Colin: Ain' they ugly!  
 Barry: Ugh!  
 Mike: Can't keep 'em still!  
 Pete: 'Avin' a fit.  
 Barry: It's dirty. (they groan)

They spit at its crotch, cheer two direct hits, which leads to punching it:

Pete: Give it a punch.  
 Mike: Yeh less!  
 Colin: There's no one about! (Pete punches it) Ugh!  
 Mind yer don't 'urt it.  
 Mike: Yer can't.  
 Barry: Not at that age.  
 Mike: Course yer can't; no feelin's.  
 Pete: Like animals.

They strike it again and again, they laugh when Barry wants to piss on it, when Mike wants to burn it, and when Pete considers aloud how easily its fingers would break, "Snap!" (Saved, p.68) The baby looks like a "yellow-nigger," has a nose like a "yid," will grow up "stupid," "deformed," "an idiot" (Saved, p.68). In its terror it defecates, so Pete rubs its face in it, and he is copied by Barry, who "always wan'ed a do that" (Saved, p.68). They pause at the thought that there will be a row over this, which leads them to challenge Fred, who has stayed out of it to this point. They toss him a stone, which he eventually throws at the baby. They continue stoning it, like kids throwing at a tin can, until the park bell rings and they have to scamper through a hole in the fence. But their pleasure is so intense and the experience so exhilarating that Barry cannot leave even then. He has to get one more shot in, throw just one more stone into the bloodied, shit-smearred little body, which he does, finally allowing Pete to drag him off (Saved, p.71).

I know that I risk being accused of dwelling on cruelty by detailing the events in this scene, but I know, too, that the only way of looking at a thing is to look at it, however much people may wish it unnecessary to look: wishing doesn't change anything. My immediate response is that it feels so real, so true, that it must be a very good scene. I can't say exactly why I feel it to be true, only that I do: it isn't that it's perfectly naturalistic, or natural; it

isn't even totally logical, or necessary, it doesn't even offer a fine pleasure-giving truth, the sort of image-emotional connexion, of a metaphor, or the truth of a "universal" archetype that suddenly makes us feel in contact with all of the spiritual and natural world. And since these do not seem the predominant feeling of the scene, it would not lead to any truth to try to evoke them here. What bothers me is that I can never quite abstract myself here, never quite treat this as a piece of literature that expresses ideas. I can think of no other play that I so fear reading--which sounds ridiculous even to me--that I do not feel capable of somehow rising above or being uplifted by. This pain, anger, and helplessness that I feel, now and whenever I read it, is, of necessity therefore, the key to my reading of the play.

My inability to incorporate Saved or to accept the efforts at incorporation by its admiring critics, that is, to find answers that satisfy my reaction to it, is tied more to this scene than to any other. My aim was to answer these same questions in Chapter Two as well, as I believe that the source of both my discomfort and that of previous critics lies in the interconnexions between what sex and violence both show of the human beings in this play. The conventionally separable qualities of pleasure and pain, love and hate, freedom and suppression/repression, closeness and separateness, and so forth, are so mixed and organically



fused in this play that to at all separate them gives the play a flavour that isn't quite right. The fusion of these normally opposed elements, which Bond never achieves in any subsequent play, provides a new vision in the play, as opposed to a point-of-view or a theory of life as economic or political: Saved is not amenable to orthodox analysis and may ultimately be beyond any but a personal recognition. As Pepper says, "It [the aesthetic experience] is an experience in which a total situation is absorbed in a *vivid fused satisfying quality*."<sup>39</sup> (my italics) This is to assert that there may be something achieved in this play as an historical/aesthetic work that is beyond whatever can be said about it as a literary event, and to admit that it is *more* than what can be said about all of its parts. Which is why my *experience* of this fusion may be the only valid addition I can make to everything that has been already said about it.

So my reading suggests that I must return to the context of the pain, again and always, and figure out where its sources lie, how I might be looking at things differently enough to affect my reading or, as I prefer to say, my imagining, of the play. I know first of all that by imagining each character I am in a "part" of me playing each role. I want to see what they see, go through, discover, understand the source of each emotion as it comes up. In a

---

<sup>39</sup> Stephen C. Pepper, The Basis of Criticism in the Arts, p.65.

word, I *identify* with them, with varying degrees of success. If I saw this on stage it could be more vivid, if the actors were good. In a theatre, events on stage can be as real as in life, even more "real." The truth is that there has never been a performance of Saved with a baby actually in the pram, but this doesn't mean that it isn't *really* there for both actors and audience. I know that the baby is there, disbelief is suspended, or more exactly, belief makes real. Shit and blood are everywhere. My disgust makes me want to disbelieve, but I've seen children who were crippled by their parents, to make them more pitiable and therefore better beggars, so I know I must believe. I've seen photographs of children during various wars, so I know that it's somehow true. I want to see that baby as the murderers would have to, I want to think of them as human beings like myself, and I know that by imagining it I can come close to feeling what they feel as they do what they do. But at this point I fail--I can never quite throw a stone. It's not that I'm particularly fond of children--I'm really indifferent to them, although there's a few I quite like. And it isn't that I abhor violence in some general, principled way, although I do hate mass brutality. But I like the exhilaration of danger, and I can understand how violent behaviour might prove addictive for some people. At the same time I cannot yet imagine being exhilarated in that situation, stoning a baby in a park. The gang seems to me monstrous, which is a

kind of clue. For monsters are only those repressed anxieties that return externalized, outside us but ultimately discoverable as arising from an inner state. That I cannot imagine is true, but that I must recognize that I, too, have the capacity to stone a baby to death is an absolutely necessary admission. I think what happens is that because a baby is weak, vulnerable, totally dependent, my ethical sensibilities "kick in" automatically, not allowing my imagination to take this final step. That this happens bothers me, because I don't like having my imagination incapacitated in this way: it makes me feel controlled. I am reminded again of Lambert's protest about having to join in mentally: to some degree, I also feel the same kind of outrage at the point of the stoning. Up until that point I am able to identify with what happens in the play, and because this is how I am used to seeing drama I cannot help but feel an implication in this act, which seems totally against all the values of civilization. Thus, Bond makes inevitable the questioning of those values, and the play's inner form makes it (at least from a contextualist point-of-view) necessary that this questioning takes place for each and every spectator.

So this is what I conclude: even though I do not feel that I've had a lot of privileges in my life, I obviously have had. Seeing oppression is still not living it, sympathy is still not empathy, empathy still not the "slings

and arrows" themselves. I've always had access to art and other civilizing influences, in spite of the fact that I've never owned much or had the means to make the money to own much. If my only opportunity to escape solitary confinement, if my only means of feeling alive and out of misery was to live through my cruelest, sharpest impulses whenever, I could do so without being caught, why not stone a baby? Perhaps sociopathology is only the logical outcome of an inner life bereft of all but violent fantasy and resentment.

Saved shows something I've never found to the same degree, with the same starkness, in another play, and that is the degree to which our particular kind of society, this industrial-capitalist one, makes violence the particular inheritance of everyone formed by it: this eruption, this stoning of a child, is only a relatively dramatic instance in a process that is constant and unending, but a potential part of all of us, given this theft of culture by society and its resulting dehumanization. This child is only one particularly apparent object, an erotically-charged target, for the gang: something that focusses the process outside of themselves. What is most significant in this scene is that it speaks volumes on our incessant anxieties; here is Auschwitz still happening, it is still with us, in us, the nightmare still lives. Is it possible that death-camps are not isolated phenomena, but really the logical working-out of forces alive in each and all of us? The answer is, whenever

I ask and wherever I look, yes: civilization is under assault; it is just as tenuous as the Greeks thought--only, now, the enemy is society itself.

Given this admission, where do I go to recover my stated goal--my only concern, really--of redemption in and for *this* world, which is, after all, the only world I know? The answer is not easy, especially since it is far removed from praxis--necessarily far removed. But it is, however limited and inadequate, the best answer I've so far found out of a lifetime of anger, dissatisfaction and frustration, spoken and unspoken desperation, and sometimes happiness.

## Chapter Four

THAT WHICH CAN BE SAVED

Mimesis is representation through estrangement, subversion of consciousness. Experience is intensified to the breaking point, the world appears as it does for Lear and Antony, Berenice, Michael Kohlhaas, Woyzeck, as it does for the lovers of all times. *They experience the world demystified.* The intensification of perception can go as far as to distort things so that the unspeakable is spoken, the otherwise invisible becomes visible, the unbearable explodes. *Thus the aesthetic transformation turns into indictment--but also into a celebration of that which resists injustice and terror, and of that which can still be saved.*<sup>40</sup> (my italics)

\* \* \*

Anxiety stands at the source of all idealistic doctrines that look for the highest felicity in ideational practice: anxiety about the uncertainty of all the conditions of life, about the contingency of loss, of dependence, and of poverty, but anxiety also about satiation, ennui, and envy of men and the gods. Nonetheless, anxiety about happiness, which drove philosophy to separate beauty and necessity, preserves the demand for happiness even within the separated sphere. *Happiness becomes a preserve, in order for it to be able to be present at all.* What man is to find in the philosophical knowledge of the true, the good, and the beautiful is ultimate pleasure, which has all the opposite characteristics of material facticity: *permanence in change, purity amidst*

---

<sup>40</sup> Herbert Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1977), p.45.

*impurity, freedom amidst unfreedom.*<sup>41</sup> (my italics)

As seen in Saved, intense dissatisfaction with the world is a given, and even though my commitment to the world is tenuous at times, I remain committed in spite of my experiences, so it is of paramount importance to me to keep faith with at least the possibility of its redemption. For those of us with no faith in gods or heavens this world is the only hope, and because of Saved's subject matter of alienation, self-destruction and the poverty of body and soul, this question of redemption seems well posed: for if the world is to be "saved" then we must allow the possibility of redemption to all, and not only to the "chosen" ones. There can no longer be redemption for some but not all--or at least the *choice* must be there for all.<sup>42</sup> This is what the world's learned in this last epoch, if it has learned at all.

I want to move towards a conclusion here by evoking Marcuse's idea that it is in aesthetic experience itself, as opposed to what art specifically depicts, that there is offered a promise of redemption. If the world is to change

---

<sup>41</sup> Herbert Marcuse, "Affirmative Culture," Negations, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p.96.

<sup>42</sup> T. Adorno, "Commitment," The Essential Frankfurt School Reader, ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1985), p.304: "Within a predetermined reality, freedom becomes a vacant claim: Herbert Marcuse has exposed the absurdity of the philosophical theorem that it is always possible inwardly either to accept or reject martyrdom."

then I believe we must keep ourselves full of real innocent passion, and we can only do this by being as sensitive as possible to as much as possible. And I realize that it must not be as immediately obvious how this personal belief is related to and derivable from such diverse works as Saved and The Aesthetic Dimension, especially given the way I have elucidated Bond's play in the last two chapters, so I want to put aside my freer methodology now in favour of a more disciplined and structured approach. I hope this will make more clear the thinking and the feelings that have motivated my writing, and to underline what has gone before.

By defining the apparent contradiction inherent in bourgeois art as counterpointing the society in which the art lives, Marcuse's statements work well to parenthesize my discussion.<sup>43</sup> The double-thrust of his argument is to point out that authentic art is that which both indicts existing social conditions and the human relatedness (or lack thereof) that they spawn, while at the same time showing that this is not purely negative in function, that such negative capability presupposes or intuits a utopic vision, a dream of fulfillment which the artist holds to in spite of his dissatisfactions. The aesthetic realm alone offers

---

<sup>43</sup> Herbert Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension, pp.72-3. "The autonomy of art reflects the unfreedom of individuals in the unfree society. If people were free, then art would be the form and expression of their freedom. Art remains marked by unfreedom; in contradicting it art achieves its autonomy."



redemption from the prevailing material conditions of life while staying within this world; that is, it opposes itself to religion in its grasp and acceptance of this world while promising a return of abundance in it. The promise of Eden on earth, the absolute and self-guided happiness of the individual, is what art returns to the mind and soul, (the soul as the life-giving core of hope and vision in each of us). It is in the nature of art that it is "powerless against this reconciliation with the irreconcilable; it is inherent in the aesthetic form itself,"<sup>44</sup> and this can be seen functioning in Saved in a way that makes it necessary to again address the way in which perceptions of the play are linked and focussed by living contexts.

I realize that Saved is a play and is therefore primarily a stage-thing, and not a thing for reading: I know fully the degree to which a play depends upon actors, directors, set designers and carpenters, et al, and I know that therefore an essay of this kind can neither be fully realized on stage nor fully realize the processes of a stage performance. My interest here has been to draw out the play's inner form and to explicate it in terms of real-life experience, and although this does not translate directly into theatrical usage it is still an expansion of those borders that always strive to limit any play's relevance. Thus, insofar as Marcuse's writings aimed at a significantly

---

<sup>44</sup> Herbert Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension, p.66.

different view of the arts that rescued them from various critical orthodoxies, his view has an especially rich (if at times, ironical) application to Bond's least morally-predisposed work. The theatre can make the problems raised by the play apparent, but it's the job of literary study to push at the limits of interpretation.<sup>45</sup>

The most profound problem raised by the play is the one suggested by the title: who or what, or how exactly is anything "saved" in the play or the world it re-presents? Hay and Roberts are not convinced by the author's suggestion that the play is "irresponsibly optimistic," (Saved, p.5) simply because in the end Len fixes the chair. They conclude that the title is best seen as ironical, and at first glance this qualified rejection of Bond's stance seems right.<sup>46</sup> This short, almost wordless scene offers no epiphany or reconciliation, while at the same time it restates old antagonisms, repeats old resignations, and reasserts old boundaries: how can it possibly contain the promised redemption of the title? This is my paramount concern here and the reason I have taken this approach to the sex and violence in the play: for the single act of mending a chair

---

45 I do not mean that this is exclusively the task of the student of literature, as any intelligent director will, at least at some stage of preparation, do much the same work, as will some actors, set designers, and so forth.

46 Hay and Roberts, Bond: A Study of His Plays, p.44 & 62.

cannot, without the support of the intensity of the forces that shaped the whole work's inner form, speak forth poetically enough to override the prevailing, impenetrable social conditions of these characters.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, since Bond has stated that he never intended the play's title to be taken as ironical it seemed like a worthwhile task to look carefully at what he said, as opposed to intended. And I think that he is right:

something is most certainly discovered in this play, and from the total context there is at least potential that can go beyond simpler situations.

I point to Len as the receptacle of redemption in the play. It is in what he sees and what he learns from it--or more exactly what he *chooses* to learn in spite of what he *should* learn--that there is some individual salvation which in essence is more revolutionary than all-comprehending political strategies could ever be.

This does not at first glance seem opposed in any way to what Bond himself said about Len: but in plays following his first cycle of six (of which Saved is the second) his main protagonists do not turn back to the human relationships that shaped their lives. They turn instead to larger, abstract political thinking, to revolutions in which they determine--

---

<sup>47</sup> The author says that we don't understand because we have not learned to "grasp at straws." There is, nevertheless, more to a fully-funded experience of the play than is suggested by this fragmented approach.

very much as did the powers they seek to replace--that life is not so precious as justice and freedom. And in systems that set themselves up to administer these things as abstract concepts there is an absolute and universal tendency to push aside human considerations for the sake of idealism, and to then set ideals aside for the habits of power. Hence, my argument is not against Bond's assessment, but rather it is against his reasons for it.

Let there be no doubt about it: Len's society is one of resigned individuals--each one is alone, alienated, despaired--it is not, therefore, a community. The dominant emotion at the end of the play is despair, for what hope could there be for such people and such circumstances. And when I say that they have despaired, it is not the same sort as say a Hamlet or Lear could know--it does not even approach that sort of consciousness and self-awareness. There is no hope in the world as such, for when community in its full sense is non-existent as in Saved the kind of culture that fills its place destroys relatedness and minimizes individual potential.

Now Bond sees a vision of revolution in his post 1972 plays that is *opposed* to the individual: that sort of revolutionary potential is seen as a lie, a survival from the bourgeois era. And because Len does not represent potential real revolution, that is, politics in praxis, Bond could justifiably say that he has been consistent. I acknowledge

the decisive nature of such an argument: as Bond constructs it, it is unanswerable. Thus, I have chosen to argue away from political considerations, as discussions of relationships and violence have always led directly to political interpretation so as to justify the play, choosing instead to look at the sex and violence in and of themselves. For it is in the *positive* nature of the indictment of existing social conditions that the play's full redemptive potential lies, and it is most directly understandable through the effects of the sex and violence on Len. As Marcuse says,

While art bears witness to the necessity of liberation, it also testifies to its limits. What has been done cannot be undone; what has passed cannot be recaptured. History is guilt but not redemption.<sup>48</sup>

Thus art forces, by its power to reconcile, a radical break with conditions that make redemption unattemptable: it brings into focus the individual's will to be reconciled to history, and to therefore act on history.

To see this viewpoint it may be necessary to take a step back or, more exactly, a step forward. The clue to Len's full symbolic function in the play came to me from Bond's later plays, most particularly, The Sea, which is a fairly subdued naturalistic comedy, and the last play of what he called his first cycle. It is an old alcoholic beach-

---

<sup>48</sup> Herbert Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension, pp.68-9.

comber who offers comfort to a disaffected and confused young man:

I believe in the rat. What's the worst thing you can imagine? The universe is lived in by things that kill and this has gone on for all time. Sometimes the universe is crowded with killing things. Or at any rate there are great pools of them in space. Perhaps that's so now. At other times it falls out that they've killed everything off, including each other of course, and the universe is almost deserted. But not quite. Somewhere on a star a rat will hide under a stone. It will look out to feed on debris...And in time it will change into things that fly and swim and crawl and run. And one day it will change into the rat catcher. I believe in the rat because he has the seeds of the rat catcher in him. I believe in the rat catcher. I believe in sand and stone and water because the wind stirs them into a dirty sea and it gives birth to living things. The universe lives. It teems with life. Men take themselves to be very strong and cunning. But who can kill space or time or dust? They destroy everything but they only make the materials of life. All destruction is finally petty and in the end life laughs at death.<sup>49</sup>

Just how successfully Bond uses extended metaphor is a matter of real contention, but it does at least convey his view that *humanity* will survive, in spite of humankind's mass insanity, even if it is only as a reserve, like a prisoner who steals moments away from his gaolers, risking even greater punishment but preserving vestiges of selfhood. Just so each of us is potentially a rat that will hide or

---

<sup>49</sup> Edward Bond, Plays: Two, (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1978), pp.167-8.

deceive, in order to live on in defiance of the overwhelming psychopathy of modern society. And this is the predominant image of Len that emerges from Saved, that of the rat: it will do well here to show how the images, verbal and visual, of Len in the play clusters to give this impression.

He did not participate in the baby-killing. In the scene immediately following the one in the dark with Fred in his gaol cell, Len reveals that he was nevertheless present, watching from a hiding place in the bushes:

Len: I saw.  
 Fred: What?  
 Len: I come back when I couldn't find 'er.  
 Fred: Yer ain't grassed?  
 Len: No.  
 Fred: O.  
 Len: I was in the trees. I saw the pram.  
 Fred: Yeh.  
 Len: I didn't know what t'do. Well, I should a stopped yer.  
 Fred: Too late now.  
 Len: I juss saw.  
 Fred: Yer saw! Yer saw! Wass the good a that? That don't help me. I'll be out in that bloody dock in a minute!  
 Len: Nothin'. They got the pram in court.

Saved, p.76

In his preface, Bond uses this confession as a point of departure to discuss his sense of "moral relativism." In his view Len is "naturally good," but "he is not wholly good or easily good because then his goodness would be meaningless." (Saved, p.5) But this does not explain his willingness to allow the child to be killed, a child that he may have been the father of, and one which he had cared for more than its mother had. The very way in which this

confession is made, his insisting on the bare fact that he saw it, underlines this willingness on his part. "Moral relativism" simply does not satisfy here: Bond has couched Len's *complicity* in terms that do not expand to meet this situation. His caring for the child, for Pam and her family, for Fred, are all easily done: the difficult *goodness*, the only goodness that would not be easy to that point in the play, would be the act of stopping the gang and saving the child--and even this may not have been that hard, had he *wanted* to do it. It is one of those situations where just one person saying "no" could stop the inconceivable from happening.

So the questions are, why does Len allow the murder, and what does he get from it? As suggested by the image of the confession, he does feel guilty for it, and as in every situation that I can think of that is motivated by guilt, it exists because *pleasure* went before it. Pleasure always attends guilt: guilt is the learnt and socially-necessary response to those pleasures denoted dangerous, a repressive response that keeps from self-knowledge certain inadmissible evidence.

Freud will always be applauded for one recognition above all others, and that is his insistence that the erotic centre of each individual human is both sexual and aggressive by nature, and that it is only a kind of tension--one learned very young but often slackened to the point of losing all



distinction in individuals--that keeps one kind of pleasure from running into the next. Thus the orgy of violence in the park, this almost orgasmic release, the violence directed at the baby's genitals, the combination of interest and disgust at its bowel movement. And Len's fascination with the violence. But the distinction remains, and it is a most important one, that Len only watches. There is distance, a need to understand and a reluctance to participate that holds out a promise for this act: Len recalls the scene as the audience would--he refuses to let it retreat into the background--and, insofar as the memory of it stays alive, he will struggle to understand and change the world. It is mainly by watching that he experiences all his pleasure: he actually only has sex with Pam in the time between the end of the first and the opening of the second scene, but he watches numerous times and is therefore involved in repeated primal sexual scenes. First he spies on Fred and Pam making love in her room, jerking off by himself. Next, after admitting this to Fred in the park scene, he watches the gang stone the baby, later admitting to this, again to Fred. He masturbates again after he mends Mary's stocking, and in an image at least as powerful as that of mending the chair, the all but final scene, he lies on his stomach trying to clear the floorboard cracks with a knife, so that he can better hear what's going on in Pam's room, where he thinks she has a new boyfriend. It becomes clear that Len is a kind of

Oedipal character. Even when he asks how it came to be that Pam transferred her affections for Len to Fred, it is necessary to Len's view that it must be because Fred has a bigger penis (Saved, p.52). This is the primal triangle shown through variations of the primal scene over and again, and it shows the central erotic concern that makes this play at once so repugnant and so fascinating. For we see largely as Len sees, and it must therefore be admitted that when the tension between these two sides of our own erotic cores are similarly confused the distinction cannot stand. The violence of its paramount scene, the excitement in the explosion of hate, does not disintegrate. However much Saved is hated (and it is a rare play that is so hated), in its structure it contains a single devastating insight: civilization is built upon a separation of the destructive and creative forces in each and every individual, Eros and Thanatos, but because of the way our society either commoditizes or excludes, alienates or disenfranchises, this tension breaks down. In this age, where Ford's assembly-line has given rise to a mind-set that has envisioned the chorus-line at one end of the cultural spectrum and the concentration-camp at the other, life has been reduced to exchange-value for nearly all, and atrocity is moving to replace morality as the basis of tragic action, with tragic awareness dislocated, so that this debased tragedy is reborn with each successive human birth. Bond intuited this

situation in its totality, and he saw, or felt, clearly the ends of this total frustration of what makes us human. Although the intellectual understanding is not as evident, his grasp of the facts of dehumanization are more vivid in Saved than in any subsequent work; and they are more powerful than in later works because they are not abstracted, whatever they may represent abstractly. The play's overall mood clearly indicts a world that only serves insane ends.

So how is redemption derivable from such a vision of the world: how is anyone in the play "saved" and, by extension, how is it that anyone can be saved in a world where the conditions of the play are intensified and underlying every aspect of the human condition? The author answers: they are saved because Len fixes the chair and stays by his post, because he chooses goodness in a bad world. Not a bad answer, but it follows from this that Bond can only see his play as a kind of patchwork, and not as the whole integrated thing that it is, for this one good act cannot "cancel out" all the evil that has gone before and which still remains. I knew a priest once who liked to say, "be in the world, but not of it." This means keep yourself apart from the world in your ideals, and you can therefore keep a part of yourself "pure" for god and heaven--I understood this more on an intuitive level than an analytical one. I intuited something else too: this view originates and returns to a despair of the only world I felt existed--

this one of nature and society, all life. Fair enough, I guess even sympathetic in a way: it's hard not to despair. But I stopped despairing, at least obsessively, at about the same time I stopped believing in gods and hoping that they would allow for that which is in all of us, and therefore in our society, to re-enfranchise the world. In Saved's recognition of these forces, of how people become evil when they can no longer recognize themselves for what the world has done to them, there are borders set within which redemption is possible, for society itself is born out of these things in each person.

In Saved Bond frames a vision that allows redemption for this world in two main ways. The first is consistent with the way in which he elucidates the play. As my reasons for partially accepting this view are different, at least in stress, than his, I will conclude this by explicating these. I will try to make clear the point of view that has motivated this study and inspired my methodology, even shaped it.

This first way is the manner in which Bond re-presents the world. His method is naturalism: directors at different times have aimed closer to or further from "traditional" naturalism, particularly as Bond sees himself as an "epic" playwright, but the language is formed as naturalistically as possible. In the quote that heads this chapter, Marcuse points to those anxieties that shape our lives, and Bond's language expresses them in ways essentially similar to those

of Sophocles or Aeschylus: these anxieties and the forces that give rise to them are not safely stowed away in Saved, but, rather, they are the essence of the play. When it has become dead and calloused, merely a thing of habit, culture only acts as an ultimately ineffective ecto-skeleton, trying to contain these eruptive forces: but it has no elasticity, it is dead and static, and it cannot prevent these from bursting into the open air. Bond is obviously as different from, as he is similar to, the Greeks, and it is simply in the way that this deadness of culture (which is really only the sum total of human relatedness) contrasts with the fecundity of the Athenian one, that this difference emerges. Where is the other side of these anxieties, the faith in justice that turns back the furies in the last, the island of happiness that lies beyond the child-murderer's despair, and the return to wholeness for the community of the madness-murdered king? What is left to Len does not approach the level of Prometheus' just defiance, or of Oedipus' dignity, but there is nevertheless something promising in his final state. Len does not rise to their level of tragedy because ultimately tragedy is made in communities: in the absence of community, life itself is tragic and so art is false when it promises the sort of consciousness that saves Hamlet or Oedipus. For what happens to him Len cannot find reasons, for that kind of consciousness is the preserve of the privileged: his actions, however, seem to point to an

intuition of this consciousness. He keeps faith with the faithless Pam, which implies that his sexual experiences with her gave birth to emotions he could not really afford, and that he had the rare integrity to nevertheless hold hard to them. His choice to stay where he was not wanted, to keep speaking to that unhearing and viscious family, shows his need for relatedness--intuited and stuck to--in spite of his lack of power. There is, too, a saving power in his curiosity, his will to understand. It must be so for he sees the killing, he *thrills* to it, and he *knows* somewhere, that he thrills to it. However incapable of expression or insight his actions speak volumes regarding his choices and, from this, all else follows.

The present times may be the most advanced stage of society, but this advance is for many of us an advance of what is least desirable in a society. It has taken on a life of its own, in which we do not participate. It is total in its interest and power over the life of the individual, and it is total in its irresponsibility to those individuals, but this is not the most *desperate* period of this epoch. In 1942, Alex Comfort wrote against a maniacal, self-justifying and self-righteous barbarism that sprang up almost unopposed in every segment of his society. It thrived in all the different intellectual "schools," amongst all classes, and with no lines drawn on the bases of sex or religion. Against this he opposed a vision of humanity that redeems time and

space by hiding itself away from the madness: "The weak are inheriting the earth,...They inherit by default, like small animals inhabiting the floor of the forest, and dying off like flies,...Their clinging among the wreckage to mutual aid perpetuates civilization."<sup>50</sup> Society no longer has a recognizably human face, and humanity is found only in isolated acts, which are by definition subversive, performed by a few individuals who if cornered feign disinterestedness or deny their non-complicity. This description works well for Len: he is the image of an animal scurrying around just out of reach, beneath the mayhem of crashing forces above. His decision to stay in spite of the all-encompassing and incomprehensible evil that clings to his situation is a choice for the same stubborn humanity Comfort praised. Len is not quite a child in his innocence and he is not nearly a Prometheus in his inner conviction, but he never stops wanting to understand, and by this alone he does preserve his innocence or, if you like, his capacity to see beyond the darkness of his present situation. Len forgives the world, and his resilience, while not sufficient, is a necessary precondition of redemption for it.

I was going to leave off writing this on a personal note, the same way I began, but looking back I see that this entire thesis is personal, and that the anger I had wanted to

---

50

Alex Comfort, Art & Social Responsibility,  
(Vancouver: Pendejo Press, 1971), p.44

reaffirm is implied throughout. In his writings Pepper again and again points to the place of the reader in the creation of the poem, of the utter necessity of the many-funded perception to make meaning emergent. It is this "dialogue" between art and audience that makes the vivid "thereness" of the aesthetic seizure, and it is only within the framework of this context that the most radical element in art--its ability to call forth emotion--can remain paramount. It is with this awareness that I will therefore offer my final, and I think most expansive, reason for affirming the correctness of the title of this play, framed within some key concepts of the aesthetic theory that underpins most of this essay: contextualism.

In The Aesthetic Dimension, Marcuse attacks the misconceived aesthetic viewpoints that have pre-limited the reach of art, arguing instead that it is in the ways that artists re-present the relationships of humans to each other and to institutions that the goal of redeeming the world is pre-figured. The most ardent despair is only apparent, for the form carries content beyond even the author's ideological limits. For example, he calls up the example of Ibsen's The Lady From the Sea, a work whose conclusion offers apparent comfort to the conservative-minded, and he points to the patent wrongness of this view: all that precedes Mrs. Wangel's final decision to stay with her husband is so much more evocative, a drawing out of her emotions that



approaches the poetic, that it simply overpowers her final decision. The work as a whole defies its conclusion.<sup>51</sup> This is what critics have long felt about Saved, the reason that Len's carpentry at the end does not fill us with optimism. And in this is a clue to the play's most far-reaching redemptive quality: it is that Saved shows its subject as it is. The play offers no excuses while showing some of the reasons for, and the logical conclusions of, cultural deprivation. In that Bond looks at the devastation, the ruin that is the lives of these people, and stares long and hard without attempting to either conceal or interpret within the play, he is devastating in his vision. It is this sense that here is a truth that must be tested by each member of the audience or reader within the parameters of his own lived experience, that there is something truly redemptive offered. For the truth does redeem, if that truth relates you back to a living situation and therefore revivifies, dislodging habits of thought that have deadened perception of what should be most immediate to us as human beings. It seems contrary to logic to suggest all this of Saved, there being nothing "positive," conventionally pleasing or uplifting about this play. It is a brutal play about pain, misery, and monstrous forces in each of us, and there is no escape from them. But it can make us more human in its acknowledgement of hopelessness and of pain; and it is not in what is seen

---

<sup>51</sup> Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension, p.48.

that redemption lies but, rather, in the act of looking. A truthful vision of the world contains its own redemption.

**AFTERWORD**

This essay has not worked out at all like I imagined it would, previous to the start of writing it. I have been pulled in different directions by many considerations and longings, not the least of which being my desire to do justice to Bond. His concern for the world is beyond question: he's even said that he'd consider it morally appropriate to kill oneself rather than preach despair. It's judgements like this--his didactical writings are full of them--that largely attracted me to Bond in the first place. Unfortunately, it is also this tone that has driven me away from him. Much as I love ideals like justice, truth, and the moral imperatives for economic changes, and have made many major life-choices in ways consistent with the high tone this love demands, I have also come to recognize how ridiculously monkish it all has been. Morality is needed (now more than ever), but it can no longer be prescribed by preachers, even if they are wonderfully honest and scrupulous artists. There is something finally mean about all that moralizing.

Ultimately the truth-value of a work of art must be anticipated in each and every spectator of it. I wrote this thesis knowing that the quality of it would depend entirely on the depth, extensiveness, and richness of my reading of the play, and I worked not so much to be accepted (although I'd be lying if I said this was not the case at all), as to

be truthful to my sharply vivid yet resonant experience of the play. To this point I also wrote for the adventure of it and for the chance to "work through," as my anger at being blocked off from experiencing some sort of dynamic relationship to others was leading me to despair of the situation ever changing. I'll be returning to my old situation as a lumberyard labourer, with a demotion and pay-cut, in two days from the point of writing this, so it is important to me, leaving this adventure behind, to somehow affirm its intrinsic value.

Change is constant in terms of the varying life-situations: what does not change is our incapacity to vividly experience them. I have tried to avoid the sort of analysis that ultimately trivializes any work of art: Saved's power rests in the manner in which its thematic and structural elements merge, fuse, to present a wholeness, that is essentially a vivid emotional experience. Habit, conventions, and the dominant ideologies of those who affirm the status quo, are the main forces that rob life of its vividness, and art is, in its presentation of circumstances and conflicts, one of the few ways that we can still discard habits and rediscover ourselves. This is what I mainly mean by redemption.

D.H. Lawrence wrote of the "thought-adventure" as the last possible discovery for mankind, meaning that discovery of our own humanness is to be valued to a degree so far

beyond whatever new technologies are awaiting us that it is immediately apparent that *only* human-ness ultimately matters. The understanding and relatedness of you to me, and the new culture and society that could spring from it, all follows from a willingness to adventure in thought, that is, to really *risk* yourself in ~~pursuit of~~ that understanding. This essay on Saved has succeeded on this account. I'm not likely to be "paid off" by the world for having thus adventured, but I didn't expect to be either. Part of what makes them (thought-adventures) really valuable is that they *don't* have that kind of pay-off. Like truth, it is its own reward.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorno, Theodor W. "Commitment." The Essential Frankfurt School Reader. Ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: The Continuum Publishing Co., 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Prisms. Trans. Samuel and Shierrey Weber. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1967.
- Arendt, Hannah. On Violence. London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Publishers, 1968.
- Bond, Edward. Saved. London: Eyre Methuen, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Bingo. London: Eyre Methuen, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A-A-America and Stone. London: Eyre Methuen, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Fool and We Come to the River. London: Eyre Methuen, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Plays: One. London: Eyre Methuen, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Plays: Two. London: Eyre Methuen, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Bundle. London: Eyre Methuen, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Worlds. London: Eyre Methuen, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Restoration and The Cat. London: Eyre Methuen, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Summer and Fables. London: Eyre Methuen, 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The War Play: A Trilogy. London: A Methuen New Theatrescript, 1985.
- Benjamin, Walter. "One-Way Street." Reflections. Ed. Peter Demetz. New York: Schocken Books, 1986.
- Bookchin, Murray. Post-Scarcity Anarchism. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986.
- Brustein, Robert. The Theatre of Revolt. Toronto: Little, Brown, and Co., 1962.

- Burns, Wayne. The Panzaic Principle. Vancouver: Pendejo Press, Ltd., (no date).
- Comfort, Alex. Art and Social Responsibility. Vancouver: Pendejo Press, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Novel and Our Time. Vancouver: Pendejo Press, (no date).
- Coult, Tony. The Plays of Edward Bond. London: Eyre Methuen, 1977.
- Elias, Norbert. Power and Civility. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Pantheon Books, 1982.
- Elsom, John. Post-War British Theatre Criticism. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Post-War British Theatre. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1976.
- Freud, Sigmund. Civilization and Its Discontents. Trans. James Strachey. London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1961.
- Goodman, Paul. Growing Up Absurd. New York: Random House Inc., 1956.
- Hay, Malcolm and Philip Roberts. Edward Bond: A Companion to the Plays. London: T.Q. Publications, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Bond: A Study of His Plays. London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1980.
- Hayman, Ronald. The Set-Up. London: Eyre Methuen, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. British Theatre Since 1955. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Hinchliffe, Arnold P. British Theatre, 1950-70. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974.
- Holland, Peter. "Brecht, Bond, Gaskill, and the Practice of Political Theatre." Theatre Quarterly, VIII-30 (Summer, 1978), pp.24-9.
- Horkheimer, Max. "Egoism and the Freedom Movement: On the Anthropology of the Bourgeois Era." Telos, #54 (Winter 1982-3), pp.5-60.
- Itzen, Catherine. Stages in the Revolution. London: Eyre Methuen, 1980.

- Jaspers, Karl. Tragedy Is Not Enough. Trans. Harold A.T. Reiche, Harry T. Moore, and Karl W. Deutsch. New York: Archon Books, 1969.
- Kerensky, Oleg. The New British Drama. London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1977.
- La Barre, Weston. The Human Animal. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954.
- Lambert, J.W. "Plays in Performance." Drama, #80 (Spring, 1966), p.17.
- Lang, Berel and Forrest Williams, Eds. Marxism and Art. New York: Longman Inc., 1972.
- Marcuse, Herbert. "Affirmative Culture." Negations. Boston: Beacon Press, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Aesthetic Dimension. Boston: Beacon Press, 1977.
- Marx, Karl. "Alienated Labor." Man Alone. Ed. Eric and Mary Josephson. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1962.
- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. On Literature and Art. Ed. Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski. New York: International General, 1973.
- Nightingale, Benedict. Fifty Modern British Plays. London: Heinemann Educational Books, Ltd., 1982.
- Pepper, Stephen C. The Basis of Criticism in the Arts. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Concept and Quality: A World Hypothesis. La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co., 1966.
- Roberts, Philip. Bond on File. London: Methuen London Ltd., 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Royal Court Theatre, 1965-1972. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1986.
- Scharine, Richard. The Plays of Edward Bond. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1976.
- Taylor, John Russell. The Second Wave. London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1971.
- Theatre World. Vol.61 (December, 1965), p.4.



Trussler, Simon. Edward Bond. Portsmouth, England: Longman Group Ltd., 1976.

Williams, Raymond. Drama From Ibsen to Brecht. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1968.

Worth, Katherine J. Revolutions in Modern English Drama. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1972.