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Edward Bond's *Saved* as a Representative of a Dehumanized Society

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Abstract

British playwright Edward Bond (1934-2024) often employed minimalist settings, non-naturalistic elements, and Brechtian alienation tactics to emphasize the emotional desensitization and cruelty of the world he portrays. In his play *Saved* (1965), a drama that is both unsettling and challenging, Bond presents a dystopian portrayal of postwar Britain, where institutional negligence and societal disintegration lead to excessive violence and moral indifference, characterizing the individuals as both products and victims of a dehumanized society. The drama portrays a society lacking empathy, morality, and meaningful human connections due to structural failures, including poverty, fractured families, governmental indifference, and urban isolation. The notorious baby-stoning scene epitomizes this dehumanization. *Saved* depicts a grim representation of a dehumanized society, characterized by systemic alienation, ideological domination, and the disintegration of social institutions that deprive individuals of empathy and autonomy

This qualitative analytical study shows that *Saved* portrays a dehumanized post-war British society influenced by social, economic, and ideological factors. Through a Marxist lens, particularly through Louis Althusser's concept of the Ideological State Apparatuses, the study explores how structures such as the family and the economy drive characters' aggression, alienation, and moral desensitization. It reveals that the violence and emotional numbness depicted are outcomes of systemic flaws and ideological dominance in capitalism, rather than mere individual actions, highlighting the need for enhanced social responsibility and moral awareness. The study comprises an introduction and a section wherein the researcher analyzes the play from a Marxist perspective. The paper concludes by summarizing the study's findings.

Keywords: dehumanization, desensitization and cruelty, Edward Bond, Ideological State Apparatus, Repressive State Apparatus, *Saved*.

مسرحية إدوارد بوند "منقَذ" كنموذج لمجتمع غير إنساني

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المستخلص:

غالبًا ما استخدم الكاتب المسرحي البريطاني إدوارد بوند (١٩٣٤-٢٠٢٤) إعدادات بسيطة، وعناصر غير طبيعية، وتقنيات اغتراب بريختية لتسليط الضوء على التبلد العاطفي والقسوة في العالم الذي يصوره. في مسرحيته ""منقذ" (١٩٦٥)، وهي دراما مزعجة وصعبة في الوقت نفسه، يقدم بوند تصويرًا ديستوبيًا لبريطانيا ما بعد الحرب، حيث يؤدي الإهمال المؤسسي والتفكك الاجتماعي إلى عنف مفرط ولامبالاة أخلاقية، مما يميز الأفراد كمنتجين وضحايا لمجتمع غير إنساني. تُصوّر الدراما مجتمعًا يفتقر إلى التعاطف والأخلاق والروابط الإنسانية المعنوية بسبب الفشل الهيكلي، بما في ذلك الفقر، الأسر الممزقة، اللامبالاة الحكومية، والعزلة الحضرية. ويجسد مشهد رجم الطفل الشهير هذا التجريد من الإنسانية. تُصوّر المسرحية تمثيلًا قاتمًا لمجتمع مُنَزَّع الإنسانية، يتميز بالاغتراب المنهجي، والسيطرة الأيديولوجية، وتفكك المؤسسات الاجتماعية التي تحرم الأفراد من التعاطف والاستقلالية.

تُظهر هذه الدراسة التحليلية النوعية أن مسرحية ""منقذ" تُصوّر مجتمعًا بريطانيًا في فترة ما بعد الحرب مُنزعًا من إنسانيته، متأثرًا بعوامل اجتماعية واقتصادية وأيديولوجية. من خلال عدسة ماركسية، وخاصة من خلال مفهوم لويس ألتوسير للأجهزة الأيديولوجية للدولة، تستكشف الدراسة كيف أن الهياكل مثل الأسرة والاقتصاد تدفع الشخصيات إلى العدوانية، والاغتراب، والتخدير الأخلاقي. يكشف أن العنف واللامبالاة العاطفية الموصوفة هي نتائج للعيوب النظامية والسيطرة الإيديولوجية في الرأسمالية، بدلاً من كونها مجرد أفعال فردية، مما يبرز الحاجة إلى تعزيز المسؤولية الاجتماعية والوعي الأخلاقي.

تتضمن الدراسة مقدمة وقسمًا يقوم فيه الباحث بتحليل المسرحية من منظور ماركسي. تختتم الورقة بتلخيص نتائج الدراسة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إلغاء الإنسانية، التبلد والقسوة، إدوارد بوند، جهاز الدولة الإيديولوجي، جهاز الدولة القمعي، "منقذ"

1. Introduction

From *Saved* (1965) to *The Worlds* (1979), Bond exposed the insanity and corruption that come with living in a capitalist society. As he developed his theatrical skills and political philosophy, he went beyond just stating the problem to showing how to solve it. Given how the past, present, and future are intertwined, his Marxism is more essential. To examine the social, moral, and political underpinnings of current crises and to affect future change, he often examined significant historical junctures in his plays (Hirst, 1985, p.4).

In his works from *Saved* (1965) to *The Worlds* (1979), Bond revealed the corruption and madness inherent in a capitalism-based society. As he refined his theatrical abilities and political ideology, he transitioned from merely presenting the issue to illustrating methods for its transformation. His Marxism is more fundamental, as it pertains to the interrelation of past, present, and future. In his drama, he consistently explores pivotal historical periods to analyze the social, ethical, and political foundations of contemporary issues, aiming to influence future change (ibid).

Bond attempted to portray society after the Second World War, as the theatre had become the domain of the middle class at that time. In his article, "The Royal Court in Its Social Context," George Goetschius debates the reasons why the theatre became a focal point for plays on societal and political themes. He contends that due to social transformations after WWII, characterized by heightened geographical, societal, professional, and didactic movement, it became essential to accommodate a significant population within the class hierarchy of the British people. By the time *Saved* premiered, the Court had become recognized as a venue for middle-class transition (ibid., p. 25). Like John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, produced ten years earlier, Bond's play was performed in conjunction with other works anticipated to satisfy the emerging middle-class spectators and to bolster the precarious endeavor of presenting a completely distinct work by an unfamiliar playwright. *Saved* represents the unyielding depiction of the action through a vividly genuine style that more starkly reveals the paradox at the core of the play. The audience is compelled to confront the stark realities of the world as perceived by both the protagonist, Len, and Bond. They are provided with a precise, intricately detailed depiction of life that simultaneously serves as a scathing critique of the social and political structures of modern Britain (ibid., p. 27).

The portrayal of trauma and violence in contemporary play has also been the subject of recent research published in the *Journal of the College of Education for Women*. In Philip Ridley's *Mercury Fur*, for example, Rahim

and Muhi (2024) examine how violence and post-apocalyptic pain are portrayed, highlighting how extreme cruelty mirrors the social and psychological breakdown of modern civilization. These kinds of studies show how academics are becoming more interested in studying violence as a dramatic device that reveals more profound sociopolitical concerns. In a similar spirit, the current study examines Edward Bond's *Saved*, emphasizing how the play depicts violence and moral desensitization as outcomes of socioeconomic and ideological systems inside a dehumanizing society (Rahim & Muhi, 2024).

Bond's works address societal issues through rational action, arguing that human nature is not destructive. Theatre reflects human relationships and themes of warfare and aggression, highlighting their essence.

2. Bond's *Saved* as a Representative of a Dehumanized Society

Edward Bond's *Saved* is a provocative drama that examines the consequences of social deprivation and emotional estrangement on working-class kids in post-war London. The plot focuses on Len, a young man who becomes embroiled in the troubled existence of his fiancée Pam, her abusive family, and her violent, disenchanted pals. The protagonists grapple with poverty, apathy, and alienation, culminating in a horrifying act of violence, the stoning of an infant, underscoring the repercussions of societal negligence and moral deterioration. Bond uses stark reality and graphic imagery to critique a society that neglects its disadvantaged constituents. *Saved* is significant because it diagnoses a potential future, of which the violence is only a symptom. The play's violence is not arbitrary; rather, it is the outcome of a system that fails its citizens. Not only are individuals responsible for the baby's infanticide, but a society that has failed to assist its young people, normalized violence, and abandoned them is also to blame. Bond demonstrates how capitalist institutions encourage violence, with individuals at the bottom of the hierarchy acting as both perpetrators and victims. In the opening of the Methuen edition of *Early Morning*, Bond states: "I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austin wrote about manners. Violence shapes and obsesses our society.... It would be immoral not to write about violence" (Bond, *Preface to Lear*, 1972, p. Ivii).

A group of young people in *Saved* has multiple conversations that hint at the eventual escalation of hostility and violence. They ruthlessly debate the unintentional death of an infant by a gang member in their first exchange. Their account of the incident conjures and strengthens an atmosphere in which the grotesque can materialize, even though it is not explicitly expressed in overt physical form. Critic Dan Rebellato calls the play's portrayal of infanticide "one of perhaps the three or four most iconic scenes

in post-war British drama" (qtd. in Haddow, 2019, p. 25). The brutalizing manufacturing setting, the moral void of South London's working-class society, and the resulting beastliness and cruelty are all explored in *Saved*. The most shocking scene for the audience is when a bunch of young working-class louts, including the baby's father, kill the infant in its stroller.

The drama compels the readers/ audiences to witness working-class people in their most dire and hopeless moments, as Len does. Still, it denies them any simple or practical moral outrage to express pity and rage. It is a lengthy piece that depicts the grim outlook of modern life through thirteen separate but related episodes. The narrative, set in South London, shifts between a working-class house, a jail, a café, and a park. It depicts brutality, ferocity, and killing, which are more convincing because they are closely tied to their familiar, everyday surroundings. It starts with a humorous scene of a stopped lovemaking session and ends with a somber scene of societal deadlock in the same room. Bond used a realistic, dramatic style reminiscent of earlier Royal Court writers' work, but he refined it to make his social and political satire more powerful. The initial scene, where Pam has taken Len home, makes this clear. There is no subtext at all, but their exchange has the sharpness of Pinter's language. In fact, the lack of depth in their interactions reflects the emptiness of their culture, which in turn reflects the deprivation that characterizes their social situation (Hirst, 1985, p. 48). This is clear in the following exchange between Pam and Len:

LEN. This ain the bedroom .

PAM. Bed ain' made .

LEN. Oo's bothered ?

PAM. It's awful. 'Ere's nice .

LEN. Suit yourself. Yer don't mind if I take me

shoes off? (He kicks them off). No one 'orne ?

PAM. No .

LEN. Live on yer tod ?

PAM. No .

LEN. O (Bond, 1977, p. 11).

This scene is both a precise, accurate depiction of this condition and a very comical introduction to the drama.

Bond attempts to illustrate how the constrictive socioeconomic structure of capitalism undermines interpersonal bonds, rendering a person estranged

from both their surroundings and others. In addition to violence, Bond addresses societal inequality, communication breakdown, and the breakdown of the family system in *Saved*. He is interested in people's suffering under capitalism. He claims that due to the unfair class distinctions and unequal wealth distribution, the capitalist system disregards human dignity. According to Bond, social institutions serve as society's superstructure and are intended to strengthen the system's foundation. To create law-abiding, obedient citizenry, these social structures corrupt the person. In this play, the social rules are more economic than ethical and compassionate. Thus, rather than being aspirational, they are really restricting. The play is a rational and impassioned portrayal of people's lives, designed to meet the demands of a technologically advanced civilization (Scharine, 1976, p. 125).

Family ties become crucial to Bond as he follows the life of a group of working-class people in South London. The bond between Pam and her family exemplifies household dynamics. This family lacks emotional closeness and empathy in their relationships. Their lifestyle has relegated them to the status of animals. Pam is unemployed and lives a life devoid of purpose. In such a depressing and repetitive existence, family members seem completely unrelated to one another. Pam does not tell Len about her father because she does not care about him or what he is doing. From the beginning, the father and daughter's emotional distance is apparent. Even her parents' presence at home is intolerable to Pam. "I hope I never see em again," she tells Len (p. 35). After he moved in as a lodger, Len discovers that Pam's parents, Harry and Mary, had not spoken to one another in a long time. "They ought to be shot...Ow did it start," (p.37) Len asks Pam, wondering why. Pam is unable to recall the exact moment and reason for their communication breakdown. She distances herself from the issues they face. She is completely estranged from her parents and doesn't feel like she fits in with the family. An extreme illustration of the family's separation is the distance between Harry and Mary. Instead of being husband and wife, Mary and Harry are just two strangers connected by money and sharing a home. Pam's own family is unable to teach her family values. As a result, she lacks maternal affection for her child.

Marxist philosophy also critiques ideology, which is the manner in which prevailing viewpoints normalize and perpetuate inequality. Authorities, such as the police, are either nonexistent or incompetent in *Saved*. Harry exalts wartime experiences, Fred takes joy in his criminal persona, and the baby's death is handled indifferently. These are indications that the moral response has been dulled by bourgeois ideology, leading people to accept inhumanity as the norm. Using Louis Althusser's theory, *Saved* becomes a

play in which the subjects are ideological products rather than free agents. Family dysfunction, poverty, and patriarchal abuse are ISAs (Ideological State Apparatuses) that perpetuate cruelty. Althusser's assertion that ideology "acts" on people, influencing their violence and emotional numbness, is embodied by characters such as Pam, Len, and Fred. Althusser highlights the tangible manifestation of ideology. He says, "Ideology has a material existence… always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices" (Althusser, 1971, p. 33).

Even if *Saved* takes place in both public and private settings (the home and the streets), these are "machines" through which ideology functions: homes normalize emotional neglect, and institutional failures have already shattered social ties. Althusser believes that ideology doesn't only reflect the world, it "hails" individuals into being subjects produced through ideology. He states, "all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject" (ibid, p. 40). Characters like Pam, Len, and Harry are not just people in the play; they are ideologically "hailings," economic hardship, social neglect, and social roles that cause them to become violent or damaged people. Their brutality is therefore ideologically predetermined rather than merely psychological.

To "hail" themselves into being "real men," young males in the park conduct verbal violence as a means of enacting masculinity. Pete to Colin: "You're gutless. You'd run from a fight with a girl" (p. 63). Fred adds: "He ain't even got the balls of a mouse" (p. 63). While the others establish their masculinity through denigration, Colin is interpellated into the subject-position of "coward" through mocking. Here, male bonding rituals of humiliation serve as a reproduction of ideology.

As a woman to be coveted, humiliated, or cast aside, Pam is frequently "hailed" into her gendered subjectivity. Fred tells Pam, "Shut your mouth, slag" (p. 13). Pam is reduced to a sexualized insult, demonstrating how her status is shaped by patriarchal thinking. According to Althusser, ideology functions materially; in this case, Pam's subordination is enforced by language itself.

Althusser defines ISAs (Ideological State Apparatuses) as "institutions that shape belief and subjectivity (e.g., schools, family, media)" and he differentiates them from RSAs (Repressive State Apparatuses), which represent "institutions exercising control through force (e.g., police, courts)" (Althusser, 1971, p.45). The family unit in *Saved* serves as an ISA, creating subjects through verbal abuse and emotional neglect as opposed to official pressure. It is not nurturing. Because external RSAs are conspicuously lacking or ineffectual, the idea that cruelty is self-generated and spreads via

ideological networks is strengthened (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002, p.120). Bond depicts the breakdown and corruption of ISAs in *Saved*, especially the family, which is the most personal and influential ideological system. Harry, Mary, and Pam's family serves as a place of emotional aloofness, strife, and dysfunction rather than as a place of moral growth or support. No structure teaches the characters how to be human in a world that has dehumanized them; religion is unimportant, and education is lacking. Bond challenges the intellectual underpinnings of capitalist survival by revealing how these ISAs fall short of a moral or affective foundation.

Althusser assures the fact that "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1971, p. 30). Thus, characters in the play live in a difficult socioeconomic environment that includes violence, family dissolution, and poverty. They consider others as enemies, dehumanize rather than sympathize, and continue a vicious circle of violence through their everyday language and conduct, which reflects an ideology that warps their reality. The characters are mostly desensitized by their surroundings, and their capacity for autonomous action is severely constrained by their tacit acceptance of what appear to be the unchangeable circumstances of their lives. A manifestation of the characters' inhumanity is their continual verbal assaults on one another, employing derogatory epithets and disregarding each other's emotions with vehement disdain. One such instance occurs during the dialogue between Pam and Len early in the play: Pam: "You're thick. You've got no brains. Nobody wants you. You're nothing" (p.7). Fred insults Pam by saying: "Shut your mouth, slag" (p. 13). Pam's mother, Mary, insults her daughter: "Dirty bitch. You're just like your father. Filthy" (p. 42). In numerous observed verbal conflicts, latent physical aggression appears poised to erupt. Indeed, this occurs when Mary douses Harry's head with tea water near the conclusion of the play. The play is notorious for presenting one of the most startling instances of violence in theatrical history.

Many members of society, particularly the working class, are unfairly denied the social and economic conditions that support a thriving culture. Therefore, society bears equal responsibility for the resulting violence, which is a product of ignorance and frustration, as does the individual. As his other works demonstrate, Bond's conception of culture is the cornerstone upon which society is constructed, rather than a privileged possession, the cherry on top, or the icing on the cake. A culture-deficient society is a reason-deficient society. Bond's own persistent and increasing optimism stems from his strong belief in the potential to establish a new and rational culture, one founded on Marxist standards rather than outmoded notions of

privilege (Hirst, 1985, p. 51). The dehumanizing impacts of capitalism, the estrangement of the working class, and the dissolution of social and familial relationships under oppressive economic systems are all explored in *Saved*, making it a potent Marxist text.

The play places a lot of emphasis on the domestic violence scenario that follows Mary and Len's sexual experience. Mary's advances to Len provoke Harry, who hasn't spoken to his wife in as long as Pam can recall, to react, and she physically assaults him in return. One of the play's most realistic and poignant elements is Bond's observation of this quiet conflict between husband and wife. It accurately depicts an all-too-common working-class scenario in which a communication breakdown turns a disagreement into hostility. The ultimate manifestation of this culture's barrenness is the refusal to communicate: a more articulate couple would argue and verbally attack one another; Harry and Mary lack the means to support one another; the blame is attributed to both them and society (ibid, p. 53). Pam's parents don't get along, and the length of time since they last spoke suggests the cause of Pam's erratic, insecure demeanor. They have failed to raise her positively. Poor communication and total carelessness have been the foundation of their marriage. The play opens with a clear indication of the absence of emotion and familial ties among family members. Because she was not raised in an emotionally charged environment, Pam is now an adult who lacks passion.

When Mary does act violently, it is perceived as pitiful and childlike when she throws the bread on the ground and strikes Harry over the head with the teapot. According to Bond, social injustice breeds violence, and the only way to put an end to violent acts is to create a just society. Their way of life has reduced them to animals: Harry's exhausting night work and Mary's monotonous household routine are unavoidable aspects of their financial circumstances, further highlighted by Pam's attitude towards Len, which appears to repeat the same behavior set by her parents. Bond views this as the result of a capitalist culture that is largely indifferent to a policy of broader cultural advancement and has a conferred curiosity in abusing labor power. Even in this play, he establishes the foundation for a constructive future, but he has come to realize that the solution necessitates a more drastic restructuring of society (ibid, p. 54).

The most evident aspect of beastliness in *Saved* is the continually alienating influence of animal imagery. Harry is a "nosey ol' gander" (18) who resides in a "sty" (21). Females are called "birds" (34), "pigs" (117), or, most commonly, "cows" (23, 43, 83). Barry vividly remembers the murder of "Yeller-niggers" who were dismembered with a "pig-sticker" (29). The mutual wooing of Pam by Len and Fred is examined on a fishing boat,

interspersed with detailed instructions on how to bait a hook correctly. The final victim of the worker's repressed aggression, Pam's infant, is never assigned a human individuality. His screams are intertwined with those of a cat ensnared in a funnel, Pam denotes to him distantly as "that" (58), and Barry performs a haunting rendition of a cradlesong in which the infant's brain serves as bait. The youngster is perceived as an entity devoid of vulnerability due to its youth; Colin remarks that he "looks like a yeller-nigger" (68), and when they commence stoning the child, Mike sarcastically proposes contacting the "R.S.P.C.A" (71) (Castillo, 1986, p. 84).

The gang reacts when someone cautions them not to harm the baby, "Yer can't. . .. Not at that age. . .. Course yer can't, no feelin's. Like animals" (p. 67). They consider the child to be monstrous, label it unattractive, and find its actions both repulsive and entertaining. However, the gang's acts are the only thing that can shock the spectator; the members of the gang turn into monstrous beings that have no human consideration for a defenseless young life. However, Bond intends to criticize the spectators as a whole, to confront the complacency that shields them from understanding the social ideals that either cause or support inhumane action. When watching *Saved*, Bond argues, viewers should understand "the nature of its society, what the nature of its problems are, and therefore what sort of solutions are needed" (Bond, "Drama and the Dialectics of Violence," 1972, p. 7).

Instead of providing nurturing, the family in *Saved* perpetuates abuse and disregard, turning Pam and Len into antagonistic, estranged individuals. Mary calls her daughter "Dirty bitch" and "Filthy" (p. 42). Pam is interpellated into the subject-positions of "failure" and "filth" in this instance by Mary. The family serves as an ISA that maintains animosity rather than providing care. Pam then transfers this abuse to Len and her child, so materializing ideology through neglect and verbal abuse.

People become estranged from society as a result of the capitalist-dominated, industrialized urban fabric. Their characters' feelings of estrangement set the stage for uncertainty, hostility, and frustration. The author's concept of social class distinctions is also expressed through these urban structures. The violence we see in the modern world is actually a "release of aggression created by the dehumanizing restrictions of an industrialized society," according to Bond (qtd. in Scharine, 1976, p. 67). The characters' frequent allusions to money, or the absence of it, illustrate how capitalism ensnares them as deprived economic beings. Len tells Pam, "I still ain't paid me rent this week" (p. 20). Len's inability to fulfill financial commitments defines him more than his uniqueness. Poverty turns into an ideological state that breeds animosity, mistrust, and tension.

The workers' occupations in *Saved* are an unpleasant, unavoidable aspect of their existence, and they would rather disregard their work upon departure. "Don't talk about it," (p. 41) Fred replies to Len when he inquires about his occupation. "It's a job," (p. 78) Harry responds when Len asks about his work situation. This suggests that they prefer to avoid discussing it. The reader has less knowledge of the specific nature of the labor these guys undertake; however, the assembly line serves as a significant underlying motif in the play. Moral institutions exhibit the same corruption as factories, resulting in the church in *Saved* becoming as impersonal as an assembly line, where individuals no longer seek the purpose of life but engage in calculating, impersonal pursuits of sexual fulfillment. The dehumanized object-man expresses his hostility towards others as if they were afflicted entities (Castillo, 1986, p. 82).

Those workers experience extreme loneliness as a result of feeling isolated from their occupations, from society at large, from one another, and from the natural world. Since no one even acknowledges the baby's humanity, the stoning of the infant is merely a severe manifestation of the estrangement from everything humane and natural, the continuation of the species. Len is the only character who still tries to help others and appears to be compassionate. Len's question to Fred about what it is in him that makes Pam fall so deeply in love with him best captures his loneliness. A glimmer of hope exists when Harry, in his clumsy manner, reaches out and requests that Len stay in their home. As the only person they know, Len is essential to the others' survival.

Bond's dedication lies in reflecting on the state of humanity in the capitalist world of the 20th century, investigating the role of artificial social structures and the covert ideological motivations behind their functioning in starting the downward spiral of the population's dehumanization. People's disappointment and rising indifference could be articulated and located through political theater. It had developed as a result of the modern world's lack of absolutes and certainties. It expresses disapproval, participation, protest, and a resolve to expose everything society takes for granted. These plays reveal the dialectical relationship between a literary work and the historical circumstances that surround it, serving as interpreters of modern culture (Mander, 2018, p. 1206).

Karoline Gritzner believes that Bond's drama addresses socially repressed yet unsettling aspects of sociopolitical reality, such as ferocious social conduct, which is acknowledged as a sign of the insanity of contemporary culture. *Saved* can be interpreted as a portrayal of modern society's suffering due to the communist revolution's failure, which promised to abolish the class system and instead perpetuates prejudice and viciousness

as supposedly "normal" morals of the underprivileged publics. Bond depicts a community at war with its own values, aspirations, and exasperating flaws. In addition to placing the theatrical action in a distinct and identifiable socio-economic setting, the London working class in the 1960s, the play's strong mimetic quality, and its perhaps reliable portrayal of working-class individuals, their language, and their lifestyle, also point beyond the play's immediate social issues. The problems that affect a certain class of society are magnified and given a relevance that seems genuine to modern society as a whole, but this does not imply that the unsettling realism of ferocity among that class is lessened or downplayed. In a sense, Bond's "realist," instantaneous, mimetic portrayal of society in this play is inaccurate and untrue since it only shows half the truth, the less invasive part, that is, that fierceness has become a normal occurrence "only" for some individuals in society. The complete "truth" would be that society today is characterized by violence and lives in the shadow of the horrors of the twentieth and the wars of the present century (Gritzner, 2015, p. 51).

The baby's stoning is the clearest indication that ideology has failed because neither the state (RSA) nor the family (ISA) steps in to save lives. The infant is destroyed, signifying the breakdown of social reproduction, rather than being successfully interpellated into subjecthood. In the play's "Author's Note," Bond remarks on the stoning of the baby by saying:

Clearly, stoning to death of a baby in a London Park is a typical English understatement. Compared to "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 (Bond, 1977, p. xii).

This demonstrates that Bond views social and emotional deprivation as systemic rather than personal, a fundamental tenet of Marxist philosophy. The vicious cycle of violence and hostility, which results from the unsuitability of the biological and technological men, brutally traps both the victim and the perpetrator. They are both "culturally and emotionally dead long before Scene Six" (Mander, 2018, p. 1204). The scene represents the psychological and physiological abuse of everyone by society's repressive structures. The deceased infant is profoundly drugged, lacks a name, has no sex, and no sense of self. It can be slaughtered without regret because it is not even close to being a person. This also holds for the German soldier whom Harry killed. It makes it very evident that society is prepared to use violence to further its own goals.

Edward Bond personifies Theodor Adorno's idea of art as a means of resistance in *Saved*. Rather than providing us with comforting stories or emotional release, the play exposes us to harsh social truths, ethical

dilemmas, and everyday brutality. According to Adorno's criticism of the "culture industry," mainstream entertainment shapes passive recipients by using formulae to hide misery. Bond, on the other hand, rejects this gloss. For example, the baby's stoning is a moment that reveals the hidden cruelty of social neglect rather than being dramatic. Through such sequences, *Saved* embodies Adorno's "negative dialectics", the tension between what society promises care, respect, decent society, and what many people really experience: estrangement, familial breakdown, hidden ferocity, and the truth not in reconciliation but in rupture. In keeping with Adorno's view that true art should dispel illusion rather than soothe it, Bond's play does more than just portray social evils; it calls on the audience to recognize the structural forces at play (Adorno, 2005, p. 247).

Bond elucidates the reality of individual existence, shaped by social and political influences that diminish human and familial connections from being meaningful and constructive to becoming insignificant, reduced to mere satisfaction of sexual wants. The characters in the play experience a sense of alienation from their society. Numerous acts of violence stem from this sentiment, most notably the horrible death of the child. It illustrates deteriorating relationships and societal frameworks, indifference towards humanity, erosion of parental roles, discontent stemming from a politicized existence, and neglect of individual accountability (Kaur, 2009, p. 25). Pam, the infant's mother, administers medication to the infant and leaves it outside to avoid disturbance. Len disregards the sobbing baby.

The abandonment of Pam's unwanted baby is considered one of the most terrible scenes in contemporary drama, among many others. The drama depicted an infant being completely neglected. On multiple occasions, the baby is heard sobbing offstage while his mother looks on in utter ignorance. The young mother is unable to sense her obligation to her child. The baby is handled as an "object" during the play. Every night, while the mother is occupied with watching television, it cries for sleep. "*The baby screams with rage . . . she turns up the volume*" (p. 36). This relates to Evangelia Papadaki's theory of objectification, which states that objectification is "defined as the seeing and/or treating a person, … as an object" (Papadaki, 2024). When someone is dehumanized, treated like a commodity, and denied even the most basic rights, this is known as objectification. This may result in the victim's personal space being restricted and their value being diminished.

The baby makes its stage directing debut in the play with a wail: "*Slowly a baby starts to cry. It goes on crying without a break until the end of the scene. Nothing happens until it has cried a long while*" (p.36). Pam doesn't listen to the baby's cries. "Why don't you shut that kid up?" (p. 37) Mary

cautions her. The simplest excuse Pam uses to avoid accountability is "Juss cries louder when I go near it" (p. 37). Pam did not attempt to soothe the infant. She denies developing any kind of closeness with her child. She invites Len to take the baby with him, which prompts Mary to inquire, "Wouldn't yer miss it?" (p.40) Pam responds that "that Racket" is a dehumanized person (p. 40). Pam passionately interrupts her infant. As a result, the infant becomes a "racket" for her rather than a living individual.

Unlike Pam, Len is the only individual who views the infant as a "human being". The infant is referred to as "It" by everyone and has no human name. Despite being the infant's dad, Fred has no decent obligation to take responsibility for it. To stop the baby from crying around Fred, Pam gives it "aspirin" (p. 119) to dull it. "Won't wake up till t'morra. It won't disturb yer" (p. 58). The baby is merely a way for Pam to keep Fred. For Fred's friends, the infant is not a human person either. Fred and his buddies torment the infant by spitting on it, pinching it, pulling its hair, and using other methods after Pam has left it at the park. The infant's human identity is unknown to them. Pete opposes the baby's right to life by comparing it to an emotionless animal. Without any regret or sympathy, he and his cronies ultimately kill the infant by stoning it. The baby's death serves as a metaphor for society's sterility, a sentiment Len articulated long before the incident of "No life growin' up 'ere" (p. 52).

The audience, who would not anticipate any physical aggression towards the infant, is shocked when the baby is left with a gang of bullying grown-ups, including Fred, the baby's likely dad. The infant does not appear to be seen as a human person by Mike, Fred, Colin, Pete, or Barry. Barry grabs the infant's stroller, pushes it, and then scares the child by popping the stroller's balloon. Following the infant's demise, Barry's song reverberates with the horror of this tragic event:

BARRY.

Rock a bye baby on a tree top

When the wind blows the cradle will rock

When the bough breaks the cradle will fall

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.

They laugh (p.63).

The child's death conveys social, realistic, and political messages to the audience. Socially, it signifies the disintegration of familial bonds, the erosion of maternal instinct, the decline of accountability, the surrender to materialistic gratification, and the erosion of human worth within society. This gesture possesses symbolic significance on a political level, commemorating the children who perished during the Second World War in a park intended as a sanctuary of peace. Bond subsequently critiques both the family and the authority for perpetuating the discrimination experienced by the youngsters. Both forfeit their sense of responsibility towards the children. In this context, Innes asserts that "baby battering … symbolizes the decadence of the social establishment or the human cost of an oppressive political system" (Innes, 2002, p.58).

Arthur Arnold states that the aim of the play "is to lay the corpse of the baby upon the doorsteps of society, to impress upon the audiences that the youths who stone the baby to death are no less victims of the society than the child" (Arnold, 1972, pp. 15-19). David Ian Rabey asserts that the primary focus of the argument revolves around the act of infanticide, deliberately and critically highlighting the ramifications of societal decay: the youth dehumanize an invisible infant, referring to it as a despicable "yeller-nigger" or "yid" with "no feelin's" (p. 68) to justify their brutality. This sequence is, however, significantly contextualized by further instances of reduction: Pam consistently administers medications to the infant, rendering them insensible, while Bond introduces a grim irony following the lethal stoning by depicting her pushing the baby carriage away without seeing inside; Len's refusal to intervene in the lethal mockery renders him complicit. His inclination to find the ideal in simplicity, exemplified by his observation of Fred fishing, may be another aspect of a reckless propensity for escapism and self-effacement, which seamlessly integrates him into his deteriorating environment (Rabey, 2003, pp. 79-80).

The baby's murder symbolizes the "Biblical Slaughter of the Innocents". However, determining who is to blame for that act is not an easy task. Because he accuses Pam of producing the child in the first place and leaving it in the park, Fred accepts the penalty guilt-free. He also blames "roving gangs" (p. 75) and the police for not carrying out their responsibilities. Fred receives the penalty because he thinks it will elevate him to the status of a star of the lawbreakers, which he sees operating in all facets of his life. The others praise Pete for getting away with killing the youngster in his van, and he feels no remorse for doing so. Harry considers himself one of "the lucky ones" (p.118) to have had the experience and has no remorse for killing the soldier during the battle. A bomb killed Harry and Mary's son in the park at the time of the war, but no one is held accountable. Because society as a

whole created the inhumane circumstances in which his characters live, Bond holds society directly responsible for their deeds (Browne, 2005, p. 155).

The protagonists' isolation from every aspect of their lives leads to anger and hatred. The drama depicts these emotions in several ways, including Pete's murder of the boy, Mary and Harry's protracted silence and the fierceness that results when it is broken, Pam's tirade about her missing magazine, and the baby's stoning. The boiling rage the family constantly suppresses, particularly in the last, silent scene, is perhaps even more terrifying than the outbursts. Pam expresses her fury towards Len, Fred directs his frustration at Pam, Mary unleashes her fury on Harry, and the group of lads targets the defenseless infant. Indeed, the family members in Scene Four torment the baby similarly to the boys in Scene Six, albeit through different methods. The infant persistently cries and chokes during Scene Four, while Harry, Mary, Len, and Pam, the baby's mother, are dining. None of them hastens to assist the infant or ascertain his needs. The violence depicted in Scene Six is abhorrent, particularly Pete's method of killing the baby with his van. Violence is an inherent consequence of the depersonalizing characteristics of society, the physical and psychological distortion of individuals to conform to the industrialized work paradigm, the absence of autonomy over their lives, and the confinement within a sterile environment devoid of cultural roots (LeBlond, 1982, p. 83).

Initially, *Saved* appears to be a realistic portrayal of life in the congested, working-class neighborhood of South London. His depiction of the world is thick and devoid of moral principles. But only in the theatre, where his skillfully crafted visuals and sounds evoke a visceral reaction in the audience and allow them to experience the play, can the full impact of his vision be felt. Each viewer will later reflect on that experience and form their own judgments about the meaning of the life depicted.

The play also denounces war and its devastating impact on the protagonists' lives. Harry's depiction of his wartime experience in Scene Twelve is profoundly distressing. He informs Len that he "must 've" (p.118) killed someone and was powerless to prevent it. This is warfare: fatalities, bloodshed, explosions, captives, etc. His son was a casualty of battle. However, when the audience learns of this incident, they do not express outrage at its violence; rather, the depiction of the group stoning the youngster in the London Park incites their fury. In his "Author's Note" to *Saved*, Bond acknowledges the egregious inhumanity of the stoning of the baby, although he deems it an insignificant tragedy when juxtaposed with "the strategic bombing of cities, it is a negligible atrocity. Compared to the

cultural and emotional deprivation of most children, its consequences are insignificant" (ibid, p. 8).

The essence of the message is that to embody humanity, one must act with compassion towards all living beings, not just towards fellow humans. This may be contrasted with Fred's inability to comprehend why he is confined in jail for "it was only a kid" (p. 75).

In response to a question concerning Pam's relationship to society, Bond said:

You can see that she handles her baby much as she herself was handled as a child. Humans are made human by making a culture. We live in a culture that exploits us, that dehumanizes us- replacing humanness with sentimentality ,revenge, fashion, cash, and debt… The unnamed baby in the pram is in the same structural position as Pam. When the young men murder the baby, they act out the confusions of Pam's life; they are the offspring of exploitation and an ideology that now has no historical excuses and is simply perverted… I have shown how the young men's motive for murdering the baby is the nostalgia to be human. It is the motive that makes Pam an emotional self-harmer. When the young men stone the baby, they are stoning themselves. Babies are not stoned to death in parks, but drama has to take the extreme to the logic of the audience's lives. A lot of what we do is terrifyingly paradoxical. But history is always terrifyingly logical ("Interview with Bond by Román", 2019, p. 14).

Bond's experiments with episodic storytelling critique the dehumanization, alienation, and fragmentation of mass society. His dramaturgy reflects our society and era. It is not merely a flurry of facts and information; rather, it is a careful consideration of the core of culture and, whether conscious or unconscious, of the current state of society. Truth, beliefs, morals, knowledge, and a sense of the real were all lost in the post-war era. This intense sense of alienation highlighted the philosophical cynicism and metaphysical ambiguity that permeate society on stage (Mander, 2018, p. 1203).

Pete, the young person involved in the mishap, explains what transpired:

What a carry-on! 'E come runnin1 round be'ind the bus. Only a nipper. Like a flash I thought right, yer nasty bastard. Only ten or twelve. I jumps right down on me rewer an' bang I got 'im on me off-side an' 'e shoots right out under this lorry cornin' straight on (p. 38).

The others add their own details while reveling in the graphic details: "Crunch," "Blood all over the shop" (p. 38), they snicker, but another challenges Pete's account: "Garn! Yer never seen 'im. . . . 'It 'im before yer

knew 'e was comin" (p. 38). However, Pete responds, "Think I can't drive?" (p. 38). In this exchange, Bond portrays a sector of society in which ethical principles are inverted and the brutal excitement of the hunt takes precedence over human life.

The final scene in which Len attempts to repair the chair symbolizes the restoration of humanity, familial relationships, and bonds. The family seems to be having their inaugural dinner together. Despite the persistent disputes among them throughout the play, Scene Thirteen, the final scene, features no verbal contention. William Babula argues that the final scene is crucial. It offers both the characters and the viewer the prospect that optimism will endure despite the play's somber tone, and humanity can be regained (Babula, 1972, p. 147).

Len is the only character exempt from the abyss, as he retains his human attributes. Bert Cardullo asserts that he serves as a savior to Pam's family (Cardullo, 1986). He is perpetually "tryin'a 'elp" (pp. 74). He continues to exhibit kindness towards Pam despite her severe abuse of him. He assists Harry and Mary whenever feasible. He presents the infant to the irked Pam and attempts to place it in her arms, asserting that "yer'd feel better" (p. 44). The song he performs for Pam in Scene Two is essential to the play's theme:

Be kind to'yer four-footed friends

That duck may be somebody's brother.

Yer may think that this is the end

Well it is (23).

Len has a very different perspective from Pam, the other lads, and even Harry, who, while developing a deeper understanding with Len, is unable to let go of his animosity for Mary. The first of Bond's heroes is Len, who gains tenacity from all he learns throughout the play and won't give up. He persistently keeps mending the chair Harry destroyed during the dispute with Mary, which is at the heart of the last scene of social impasse (Hirst, 1985, p.54).

Gritzner believes that although *Saved* is considered a pessimistic play, it offers a glimpse of an unrealized life, symbolized by Len's repair of a broken chair. That is why Bond's plays are strongly utopian in nature. At the very conclusion of the play, this humanistic and humanizing gesture sheds an optimistic light on the play's previously unsettling plot. The gesture suggests a future, outside or beyond the play, that may be less gloomy or hopeless than the one that is depicted on stage, but it does not lessen the characters' sufferings (Gritzner, 2015, p. 51). Len appears to be the only one

repairing the brittle human ties while everyone else remains mute. This play is hopeful for Bond. This optimism is reflected in Len's actions. He strives to stay in touch with the others, wants to aid Pam, and doesn't take part in stoning the baby. He also looks capable of giving Pam a fresh lease on life.

Bond gave us a taste of Len's life, and since Harry tells Len that there are no answers to that kind of situation, there aren't many choices. If he leaves this house and opens the front door, he won't end up in the street; instead, he'll enter a house just like this, according to Bond's explanation. Therefore, Len has no way out, and his only option is to uphold his moral character and humanity (Hay & Roberts, 1978, p. 56).

3. Conclusion

A potent critique of the moral and social decay that defines post-war capitalist society may be found in Edward Bond's *Saved*. The play illustrates how violence arises from deeper structural conditions like poverty, alienation, and the disintegration of societal institutions rather than only from individual cruelty through the unsettling act of infanticide and the prevailing climate of emotional apathy. This study illustrates how institutions, including the family, societal norms, and economic structures, are important in shaping people who internalize violence, indifference, and moral numbness, using Louis Althusser's notion of Ideological State Apparatuses. As a result, the characters in the play seem less like independent agents and more like the results of socioeconomic and ideological factors that restrict their capacity for moral responsibility and empathy.

In the end, *Saved* reveals the dehumanizing effects of a society that provides its citizens with no real social or moral foundations. Bond's theatrical approach forces viewers to confront difficult truths about the relationship between society's systems and human conduct. By doing so, the play not only criticizes the circumstances in post-war Britain but also poses broader questions about society's duty to uphold morality and restore human dignity.

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