

Justice and Social Disenfranchisement in Edward Bond's *Saved*

Rabar Ibrahim Mohammad
University of Raporin
Faculty of Basic Education
English Department

Abstract

This paper studies Edward Bond's play *Saved* in respect to the individual's response to injustice system. The play deals with inequality and discuss various subjects ranging from female subjugation to the ambitions of working-class people, the relationships of these females with their children, the rights of sexual preference for women in inter-racial relationships, and the perceptions of society in connection with these issues. The paper investigates representations of violence in the 1960s among working-class people in UK and illustrates contradictions and conflicts in the meanings afforded to unmarried motherhood and, in turn to highlight how the unmarried mother was used as a motif for exploring post-war normative boundaries around marriage, motherhood, and female sexuality. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the negative effects of injustice system and the lack of power reflects on the working-class young people in their environment in Edward Bond's play *Saved*. Bond addresses the problem of social injustice and violence in the modern world. The paper is also presents Bond's vision of the problem, elaborated in his play, as well as to highlight the emphasis he puts on the importance of personal struggle for humaneness in an inhuman and unjust world. Bond offers many valuable insights into how destructive ideologies can be transcended by imagination, which he believes still has the potential to revive humanity and restore the lost dignity of man. Then, the study defines social disenfranchisement and an ideal society within the concept of womanhood in order to understand the degree to which paternalistic ideas influence female interrelationships in society.

Keywords: Edward Bond, Injustice, Violence, working-class people, power, feminism.

1. Introduction

Edward Bond (born July 1934) is an English playwright, theatre director, theorist and screenwriter. He is the author of the play *Saved* (1965), the production of which was instrumental in the abolition of theatre censorship in the UK. His highly controversial work has met with extremes of reaction, from vilification to claims that he is the world's greatest living dramatist. The play itself is set in London during the 1960s. Its subject is the cultural poverty and frustration of a generation of young people on the dole and living on council estates. It is also a play about people living without meaning, every stage of development in the play explores this and explores 'the gap between the two realities, the subjective self and the objective world' (Bond 2008c). In response to the censorship of the play, Laurence Olivier wrote a letter to *The Observer*, saying that: "Saved is not a play for children but it is for grown-ups, and the grown-ups of this country should have the courage to look at it." (Davis 1)

The concept of justice is the first virtue of social organizations, as truth of systems of thought. Justice can be thought of as different from charity, kindness, wisdom, mercy, and generosity. Justice has traditionally been associated with concepts of destiny, rebirth or divine providence. The understanding of justice is different from one culture to another; as cultures usually depend upon a shared history and religion. Each culture's ethics create values which influence the notion of justice. Also, justice is a principle of specialization: a principle that requires that each person fulfill the societal role to which nature fitted him and not interfere in any other business. In this play justice is highly paradoxical. As David Davis quoted Bond's statement "It should be even more outrageous that it is the paradoxical truth of our society." (43) In the paradoxes of drama, the young men kill the baby as means of asserting their self-respect, if this seems an outrageous suggestion; Justice derives from and is directed toward the individuals with their environment. "An injustice is like a pebble dropped in the center of the ocean when the ripples reach the shores they have turned into tidal waves that drown cities". (Bond 2000, 2)

1.2 Injustice in the Modern World

An ideal society consists of main three classes of people: producers, auxiliaries, and rulers. Society is just when relations between these three classes are right. Each group must perform its appropriate function, and only that function, and each must be in the right position of power in relation to the others. Rulers must rule, auxiliaries must uphold rulers, and producers must limit themselves to exercising whatever skills nature granted them. After Second World War, British government ruled capitalist system, low economic growth and rising unemployment were accompanied by relatively high inflation. People suffered from depression due to the political system. It was the time when every citizen was working to cope with the worse economic condition, including women, "British economic performance in the 1950s was equally disappointing" (Eichengreen 122). It was the time when women had choice to participate in economic activity, and they considered it as an opportunity, to stand against male dominance. This provided a way for these women to escape realities and they wove their own world of fantasies in which everything was perfect.

The law has a judge but justice has no judge. Instead it has drama, because justice is created in the site where the self-touches society and drama has important role to find our humanity. Injustice system and the young people's lack of power make young people escape

from reality and revenge killing. It is surprising that a child should be their victim where the brutalized derive a certain sense of superiority from brutalizing those still more powerless than they are. Finally, the child and the gang in society seek justice. As David Davis says: “Edward Bond’s drama deals with the individual struggling for self-understanding in a society where people live in widely different circumstances. The play makes it clear that this struggle can succeed only by making society more just – the two things are indivisible. The formula might be: My humanness, your justice.”(79)

People have to search out their humanity by indicating reality of life and resolve their difficulties in life. Human-being has to struggle for survival and bear any difficulty in life. Pam blames all her troubles when she talks with Len, “I ‘ope I never see ‘em again. Thass all.” (Bond 25) It is the repeat of the pattern of gradual and continuing and estrangement suffered by Pam’s parents, Harry and Marry. In the real world, humanity needs justice; if justice is denied then humans must seek revenge, because of injustice system and lack of power of the working-class young people drive young people to attempt to achieve power over their own lives or over other people. For instance, a manager gets angry and leaves his post to his vice, his vice also gets angry and yells at his workers, and then workers get angry and get back home, while they are at home they yell at their wives, their wives get angry and impose their anger on their eldest child, the eldest child gets angry and yells the younger under themselves, finally the more younger and the less powerful becomes victim of the bad temper of the other all before them. Young people clutch at some meaning they think they have of how the system works.

The purpose of justice is to provide an objective set of rules for governing conduct and maintaining order in a society. Justice system and equality make people feel happy, healthy and successful in every society. In the case of losing hope in society, it is annihilated and frustrated. It is clear that stoning the baby to death by working-class young people in a London park is a good example of injustice system of British government. As Richard Scharine quotes John Russell Taylor statement “showing the brutal murder of the baby in the park as merely the release of similar tensions to those already on view in the flat requires a less naturalistic production, in which setting, costuming.” (67) Therefore, the killing can be seen as a revenge killing against the injustice system in British society, because most social and personal problems are solved by alienation or killing.

The role of Fred in this drama is creating an image of the reality of the whole society and he presents the play’s plea for law and order. Fred is urged into throwing the first stone by his friends.

Barry to Fred: Why don’t you clout it?

Fred: It ain’ mine.

Barry: ‘Ere, can I piss on it?

Collin: Gungy bastard.

Mike: Got any matches? They laugh (Bond 67)

People do not only condemn such society, they also condone it by living it from a distance Len sees the killing, but he does nothing. Len is closest to humanness because he keeps asking questions but he is not innocent, everyone is responsible for the society they live in.

Len: I saw.

Fred: What?

Len: I come back when I couldn't find 'er. (Bond 76) Fred is disconnected from the reality of what he is doing and the baby was never a human being to him. Fred thought that he is not guilty.

Fred: It was a kid. (Bond 75)

The working-class young people become the tools of society, destroying others; they murderers of innocents like the baby, the one who is incapable of feeling or responding. When society becomes chaotic and lawless which is caused by injustice system everything becomes boring and everyone feels disappointment, powerlessness, emptiness, dissatisfaction, indifference, and the sense of humanity bring down. As a result, human-being thinks violence and revenge killing. The murder of the baby is conferred as one of many seriously casual acts of violence in which the gangs seem habitually to indulge. Bond envisions democratic socialist society, more humane one by "rational means that means writing plays, that means teaching that means discussion, that means persuading, that means caring." (Bond14)

The working-class young people are struggling against authority in their limited way. Their aggression caused by injustice rule has become an extension of the violence inherent in the system which governs their lives and a baby in society becomes the victim of society. As Davis quoted Bond's statement:

"The neonate was responsible for 'justice' in its self-universe. But when it enters the outside world it finds, for reasons some of which are naturally determined and some of which we may call historically contingent, that society is unjust." (39) The neonate has by then neurologically structured in its brain, it's imperative to seek justice. In this way the structural need for justice may be corrupted into the desire for revenge.

Working-class young people have been brought up in an urban environment and who are attempting to cope with the effects of this environment. They attach themselves to aspects surroundings and try to make use of them to survive. They escape from reality and responsibility by drinking and joking about sex, but in fact, everyone is responsible for the society they live in. Society made people who are trained to obey and not question anything, do not think critically, when violence bursts out, it targets the weak and unprotected, the ruling class needs that:

"Some of their cries while they murder the baby are ruling-class slogans. This is the way in which ruling class anger and aggression can be used to strengthen the unjust social relations that cause its anger and aggression, and the ruling class can recreate in an increasingly inhumane forms the social conditions which it claims as the justification for its power." (Bond)

Technology – mechanical universe is substituted for a human reality in a circular process, no human values, jobs are for the men disagreeable, routine of assembly line – alienation from natural self leads to decay in all aspects of life, man is a machine that can exchanged with any other worker, loss of sacredness of individual life. Murder as an act of violence against is a soulless body. The structure of capitalism is built upon this cyclical violence: the violent behavior of the underclass provides justification for the ruling classes to

further deepen the social division. According to Bond, capitalism was the main factor of social injustice at that time:

Len: I'm 'andy with me 'ands. Yer know, fix up the ol' decoratin' lark and knock up a few things. Yeh. We'll 'ave afir little place. I ain' in no blinkin' sty (Bond 21). Capitalism can endure beyond its natural time because people's subjectivity can be captured and their consent obtained through mystification.

For the workers, the working-class can make revolution with a view to get better, because revolution brings off future. The jobs of workers are disagreeable, no human values, inevitable part of their lives, and they would prefer to forget about their work as soon as they leave the shop:

Fred: 'Lo Len, 'Ow's life:

Len: Usual. 'Ow's the job?

Fred: Don't talk about it. (Bond 40)

Industrialization is political as well as economic and social. Its society has enforced upon humans strictures that can only lead to violence. It then calls that violence and inherent part of human nature and uses it as an excuse to add still more strictures. As Scharine quoted Bond "A human being was not designed to work in a factory, I mean just as a tool. You are not made to stand at a bench day after day doing these mechanical jobs." (66) Human beings are used so inefficiently, they aren't made for that sort of things, so that nobody can be happy.

1.3 Social Disenfranchisement and ideal Society

In a society where the official discourse of politicians is full of lies, and where the authorities are able to cover their criminal activities by finding loopholes in the legal system, it is very hard to fight injustice and violence. Those who are mistreated by wrong policy often resort to violence themselves being unable to cope differently with the situation they are placed in. They are engulfed by a social climate in which: "the need for justice becomes the desire for revenge" and, the need to create becomes the necessity to destroy."(Bond 2003, 25) However, revenge can bring us neither justice nor a peaceful mind. Perpetuating violence cannot be good.

Social disenfranchisement is completely connected to justice, the working-class young people in this play belong to a social system that they feel no connection to; they are disenfranchised and vent their frustration through aggression and anger. As Bond says in an interview for the Telegraph Newspaper, "My play predicted the riots." London is still gathering itself after the onslaught of the August 2011 riots and there is a sense of bewilderment about the violence that sprang up, seemingly unprovoked. There's a point of connection between the action of the adults in the play and the August riots. Girls and guys were acting politically; they don't understand their political situation. They didn't find out where the bankers are living, they turned on their neighbors. They started destroying themselves and that's what happens in this play. The guys kill the baby in order to gain their self-respect. That seems like a total contradiction. That baby is dirty, inarticulate, and unable to control its situation. Durbach writes "We treat men as children. They have no real political or economic control of their lives and this makes them afraid of society and their own impotence in it. Marx has described adult alienation very well, but we can now understand more about it." (482) the relevance of *Saved* is highlighted by the riots, but its relevance has

always been there. The political system has to be revolutionized, everyone must change society. A revolutionary society needs to change not only social relations but also human consciousness.

Conclusion

To conclude, in the play *Saved*, Bond explores the subject of injustice and violence in detail. The focus is on war's aftermath, the memories of WWII and the mass destruction it had caused. The question is whether the human mind has evolved enough to learn anything from the terrible mistakes made in the past; throughout history human beings have confronted lots of problems in their societies. People use many ways to express their protestation. Its human need for justice, if justice is denied then humans must seek revenge, because most social and personal troubles are solved by alienation and killing. The baby is killed because it never received what Pam lacked from her own parents a human identity. Fred is sentenced to prison. Through its examples, society teaches its members to neglect the needs of others. For society to deny to humans their basic needs to love, protect, create, and enjoy is to murder the humanity in them as surly as if they had been stoned to death in their cribs. Finally, working-class people and a baby in society becomes victim of social due to injustice system. Bond is convinced that kindness and false sympathy is not enough to change the world. A more radical change in the structure of society and the minds of the ruling people is needed to restore human dignity. It is necessary to re-examine the fundamental nature of human relations. Only that would make the world a better place.

References

- Bond, E. *Saved*. Ed. David Davis Edward Bond *Saved*. London: Methuen Drama. 2009. Print.
- Bond, E and Peter Billingham. "Drama and the Human: Reflections at the Start of a Millennium." *A Journal of Performance and Art* 29. 3 (2007): 1-14.
- Bond, Edward. "My Play Predicted the Riots". *The Telegraph* 30 Aug. 2011: n. pag. Web. 20 May 2013.
- Bond, E. (2008c) unpublished letter to the author Davis, D. Commentary in E. Bond: *Saved Student Editions*, Methuen, 2008.
- Bond, E. 2003. *Notes on Imagination*. Methuen Contemporary Dramatists. London: Methuen London.
- Durbach, E. "Herod in the Welfare State: "Kindermord" in the Plays of Edward Bond." *Educational Theatre Journal* 27. 4 (1975): 480-87.
- Eichengreen, Barry. *The European economy since 1945: coordinated capitalism and beyond*. Princeton University Press, 2008. P.122
- W. B. Worthen. "Dramatic Strategies in the Plays of Edward Bond." *Contemporary Literature* 35. 1 (1994): 195-202.
- Scharine, R. *The Plays of Edward Bond*. New Jersey: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1976.

پوختەى باسەكە

ئەم توپزىنەوہیە ھەستاوہ بە شىكردەنەوہیەكى ئەدەبى بۇ شانۆگەرى ئىدوارد بۆرند (saved) دەربارەى ھەلوئىستى تاك لە كۆمەلگەدا بەرامبەر بە سىستەمى نادادپەرۆەرى، شانۆیەكە لە نایەكسانى و چەندىن بابەت ھەر لە چەوساندنەوہى رەگەزى مى تاوہكو چىنى دەسەلاتدارى دەكۆلئیتەوہ. وە ھەرۆہا پەيوەندى كۆمەلايەتى ئەم رەگەزە لە گەل منالەكانيان و پەسندكردن و مافى ئەم پەيوەندىە رەگەزىانەى نىوانيان و ھەلوئىستەى كۆمەلگا سەبارەت بەو دۆزە. ئەم توپزىنەوہ يە لەو ناكۆكى و مملانى و توندوتىژيانە دەكۆلئیتەوہكە دوچارى خەلك و دايكايەتى دەبنەوہ لە سالانى (1960) لە بەرىتانىا ئەمەش بە تىشك خستە سەر ئەوہى كە چۆن ئەم دايكانە وەك بىرۆكەيەك بەكار ھىنراون بۇ رەوايەتيدان بەنۆرمەكانى دواى شەر و ھاوسەرگىرى دايكايەتى و رەگەزايەتى مى، ئەم توپزىنەوہیە لەكارىگەرى نەرىنى سىستەمى نادادپەرۆەرى دەكۆلئیتەوہ لەلايەكى تىریشەوہ پەرچە كردارى گەنجان لەبەرامبەر ئەم نادادپەرۆەريانەدا، ئامانجىكى ترى ئەم توپزىنەوہ يە، بە كورتى بۆند تىشك دەخاتە سەر نادادپەرۆەرى كۆمەلايەتى و توند و تىژى لە جىھانى نویدا. وە ھەرۆہا توپزىنەوہكە باس لە دنيايىنى بۆند دەكات بەرامبەر ئەم كىشانە كە لەم شانۆیەدا درىژەى پىدراوہ . خالى بنچىنەى توپزىنەوہكە برىتییە لە بەھای مرۆف بوون و تىكۆشان لەم جىھانە نادادپەرۆەردەدا، بۆیە نوسەر پىشنىارى چەند بىرۆكە يەكى بە بەھا و بە نرخ دەكات بۇ ھۆشياركردنەوہى كۆمەلگە، كە چۆن ئايدۆلۆژىاي وىرانكەر زال دەبىت بەسەر ئەندىشەى مرۆفداو ھىشتاش پىى وايە ھىزىكى شاراوہ ھەيە بۇ مانەوہى لە ژيان و مرۆفایەتى و گەرانەوہى شكۆ بۇ مرۆف، لە كۆتايىشدا ئەم توپزىنەوہیە تىشك دەخاتە سەر بى بەرىكردنى كۆمەلگا لە بەھاكان و كۆمەلگەى نمونەى و لەگەل چەمكى دايكايەتى بۇ تىگەيشتن لەوہى تا چ رادەيەك بىرۆكەى باوك سالارىەت كارىگەرى لەسەر پەيوەندىەكانى رەگەزى مى ھەيە لە كۆمەلگەدا.

ملخص البحث

هذا البحث قام بتحليل ادب المسرح ل ادواردبونرد saved حول موقف الفرد في المجتمع تجاه عدم وجود في العداالة والمسرحية تبحث عن عدم المساواة والظلم الفاشي في المجتمع من قبل المسؤولين والسلطين وتبحث عن الاناث وحالهن في المجتمع وعلاقاتهن باولادهن وحقوقهن وتبحث هذه الدراسة عن الظلم الواقع عليهن وعن الامومة في السنوات (1960) في بريطانيا وتسليط الضوء علي الزواج والامومة والجنس المقابل ويبحث عن تأثير السلبي ورد الفعل الشباب تجاه عدم المساواة و النظام الاجتماعي ويتكلم عن موقف بوند تجاه هذه المشاكل والنقطة الاساسية في هذا البحث هي قيمة الانسان لهذا يقترح الكاتب مجموعة من الاقتراحات الثمينة لتوعية المجتمع وتحذيره من الايدولوجيا الخرافية وظلم الرجال تجاه المرأة وتأثيره على المجتمع.