



A Study of Edward Bond's Concept of Rational Theatre and its Role in Contemporary Political Drama

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Edward Bond's concept of Rational Theatre. It focuses on how his plays give a critical response to violence, injustice, and social systems. The purpose is to analyze Bond's theory and see how it shapes both his plays and his wider ideas about theatre as a tool for social change. Edward Bond became an important playwright in post-war Britain. He challenged traditional theatre by bringing political ideas onto the stage. Bond worked during a time of state violence, capitalism, and moral decline. In response, he created the idea of Rational Theatre. This is theatre that uses reason and critical thought to reveal social problems and encourage audiences to reflect. His plays, such as *Saved* (1965) and *Lear* (1971), sparked debates about censorship, stage violence, and the political role of theatre. This research uses a qualitative method, studying Bond's plays closely. It also reviews his essays and interviews. The study uses performance theory and political criticism to see how Bond creates Rational Theatre. It looks at his use of staging, language, character, and themes. The analysis shows that Rational Theatre uses strong images of violence, isolation, and social collapse. These force the audience to think deeply and respond morally. Bond's plays do not allow passive viewing. Instead, they make people face the real causes of cruelty and injustice. Bond's work shows that theatre can be a rational, public space for ethical thinking. His plays link personal suffering with larger social and political problems. He uses theatre to build critical awareness. In this way, Rational Theatre is not propaganda. It is a shared process of reasoning and reflection. Edward Bond's Rational Theatre changes how we see drama today. It says theatre must help society question itself and imagine solutions. The study ends by saying Bond's work is still important today. His ideas guide theatre makers who want to combine artistic form with political purpose, especially in times of social crisis

INTRODUCTION

Edward Bond is one of Britain's most provocative and politically committed playwrights. He has transformed modern theatre with radical ideas and powerful dramatic works. At the center of Bond's work is his idea of Rational Theatre. This is a form of theatre that uses reason and critical thought to reveal injustice and raise political awareness. Bond believes theatre should not only entertain but also help people understand the causes of social problems and inspire them to change society. His plays, such as *Saved* (1965), *Lear* (1971), and *The War Plays* (1985), directly address the crises of his time.

Research Problem

Although Bond's influence on political drama is widely recognized, there is still much to learn about how his concept of Rational Theatre works in theory and practice. Important questions remain about the methods Bond uses to promote rational thinking through his plays. How does Bond use drama to encourage critical thought? How does his use of violence help analyze society? What relevance do his ideas have in today's political theatre? This study aims to explore these questions and understand how Rational Theatre builds social responsibility and critical awareness.

Objectives or Purpose

This study focuses on Edward Bond's concept of Rational Theatre. It investigates how this idea shapes his plays and contributes to the tradition of political theatre. The study has four main aims: To examine the ideas behind Rational Theatre. To analyze key plays that shows Rational Theatre in action. To assess the value of Bond's methods in today's world. To consider how Bond's work responds to modern social problems.

LITERATURE RIVIEW

Thesis Statement or Hypothesis

This study argues that Edward Bond's Rational Theatre combines reason with drama to encourage audiences to think and act. Bond uses violence, alienation, and historical awareness to involve spectators in deep moral reflection. His theatre rejects passive viewing. Instead, it creates a shared space where people can examine the roots of violence and work towards social change.

Significance of the Study

Today, people around the world face violence, inequality, and political unrest. Bond's Rational Theatre offers important lessons about how theatre can help communities think together and act for justice. This study expands knowledge of Bond's work and supports wider discussions about theatre's political and moral purpose. By studying Rational Theatre, this research offers useful ideas for modern theatre makers and scholars.

Scope and Limitations

This study examines selected plays by Edward Bond, focusing on *Saved*, *Lear*, and *The War Plays*. It also analyzes Bond's essays and interviews. Although Bond's full body of work is large, this research focuses on plays that clearly express Rational Theatre. The study is based on textual and theoretical analysis.

It does not include audience studies or performance reviews beyond available sources.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Approach

- a. **Qualitative Research:** Since your study involves analyzing dramatic texts, political themes, and theoretical perspectives, a qualitative approach will provide a deep understanding of Bond's Rational Theatre.
- b. **Thematic Analysis:** Identifying key themes in Bond's plays that illustrate his concept of rational theatre, such as violence, social injustice, and political structures.
- c. **Comparative Analysis:** Examining Bond's approach alongside contemporary political dramatists to assess his influence and relevance.

2. Primary Sources

- a. **Edward Bond's Plays:** Close reading of key works such as *Saved*, *Lear*, *The War Plays*, and *The Crime of the Twenty-First Century*, focusing on their structure, dialogue, and political themes.
- b. **Bond's Theoretical Writings:** Engaging with Bond's essays, prefaces, and interviews where he articulates his concept of Rational Theatre.

3. Secondary Sources

- a. **Critical Literature on Bond:** Reviewing scholarly analyses of Bond's theatre, particularly those discussing his use of reason, alienation, and didacticism.

4. Theoretical Frameworks

- a. **Brechtian Epic Theatre:** Since Bond draws on Brecht's theories, this will help contextualize his dramaturgical methods.
- b. **Marxist Literary Criticism:** Examining how Bond's plays challenge capitalist and authoritarian structures.
- c. **Post-War British Political Theatre:** Situating Bond within the evolution of political drama in Britain, comparing his work with contemporaries like John Arden, Caryl Churchill, and Mark Ravenhill.

5. Method of Analysis

- a. **Textual Analysis:** Examining Bond's plays for their narrative strategies, character development, and use of language in constructing a rational argument.
- b. **Dramaturgical Analysis:** Assessing how Bond employs stage directions, setting, and dramatic techniques to engage audiences intellectually and emotionally.
- c. **Contextual Analysis:** Investigating historical and political contexts that shaped Bond's theatre and its contemporary significance.
- d. **Audience Reception Studies:** Exploring how different audiences have responded to Bond's plays, particularly in contemporary stagings.

6. Structure of the Paper

- a. **The Paper is Divided Into Five Sections:** Introduction – Presents the research background, aims, and methods. Section Two Theoretical Framework – Explains Rational Theatre through Bond's writings and related theories. Section Three includes Textual Analysis – Examines *Saved*, *Lear*, and *The War Plays* as examples of Rational Theatre. Section 4 includes

Conclusion – Summarizes the findings, highlights the study's importance, and suggests future research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

One of the key factors which made Bond appealing to modern audiences is his concept of rational theatre, a theatrical approach rooted in logic, critical thinking, and social responsibility. This framework not only defines his work but also provides insight into his creative evolution and continued relevance. Bond in his *Selections from the Notebooks* says that, "The RT is founded on the proposition that human beings can understand themselves and their society rationally – and that the solutions to these problems can be understood. That in fact, their problems have solutions and that it would be possible for them to solve theirs." (2014:47)

His creation of Rational Theatre represents a significant innovation in modern drama, evident in his pushing the boundaries of the medium to engage audiences in critical reflection on the pressing issues. Rational Theatre aims to analyse the current global and historical crises, while also exploring the possibilities for establishing a more rational and harmonious society. Patterson believes that the aim of:

Rational Theatre' – is to create a new existence for ourselves by breaking out of our cage. How this is to be achieved is never exactly clarified by Bond. It appears that he generally subscribes to a benevolent version of Marxism, one that decries violence as a means of pursuing a social ideal." (Patterson, 2003: 139)

Bond tries to analyse the present-day crisis in world affairs and human history and to show the potential for achieving a sane society. In this theatre, individual must take full responsibility for himself and others, which manifests humanity's radical innocence and the fundamental drive to seek justice. His plays prompt the audience to understand that acknowledging or brooding over the past mistakes alone is inadequate and insufficient; it is essential to act and drive change in the society.

Edward Bond conceptualizes Rational Theatre in his play *Lear* which is antedated by two essays: "Introduction: The Rational Theatre" and the "Author's Preface." In these essays, Bond used his protagonist, *Lear* as a foremost example to validate his rational theatre. Bond argues that a writer's self-expression is meaningless without a language to give it form. He asserts that true literary expression occurs when writers engage with experiences outside themselves, particularly within society. He asserts in his *Plays One* that "the subject of literature is society" (Bond, 1971: 3). Bond makes a compelling argument about the nature of literature and its role in society. Bond advocates "Literature is a social act; it is the social expression of thought and utilizes the social medium of language. However, the creative act is the work of an individual. It is through these creative acts that the individual's connection with society is both expressed and shaped" ((Bond, 1971: 3).

Bond views literature as inherently social because it is an expression of collective human thought and experience. It communicates ideas, values, and emotions that resonate with others, thereby creating a shared understanding or reflection on societal issues. For Bond, literature is a social phenomenon; the act of

creating literature is individual. Each writer brings their unique perspective, experiences, and creativity to their work. Through their creative acts, writers both express their connection to society and influence it. Their work reflects personal insights and critiques, contributing to societal discourse and potentially shaping public perception and thought. Bond in his *Plays Two* says

A writer writes what he has experienced and learned (what else could he write about) but he does not write about) but he does not write about himself". Further he adds, "To say that a writer writes about 'himself' is as meaningless as to say theatre could be an expression without its language. Really the subject of all literature is society" (1977: 11).

According to Bond writers use literature to articulate their views on social issues, reflecting their individual connection to the broader community. Conversely, literature has the power to shape society by challenging existing paradigms, inspiring change. The individual's creative output can thus have a profound impact on the social fabric. "They (audiences) saw a problem. The problem made more complex until a climax was reached – and then they were shown how the problem could be solved. . . And that seems to me to be what the theatre should not do. It should not reassure people about the conditions of society. It can reassure them about their strength to alter society (Stoll, 1976: 428).

Bond positions himself as an ordinary individual within his society. His problems are a microcosm of the larger problems faced by society as a whole. Edward Bond in his "Author's Note" in *Saved*, comments that "I am a typical member of my society, and so my problems are the problems that everybody else must solve if they're not going to die, or be killed, or be very happy". (1962:10) By stating that his problems are reflective of society's problems, Bond emphasizes the interconnectedness of individual experiences and societal structures. The personal is political; the struggles of individuals reflect the broader systemic issues. Bond underscores the notion that literature, even when it explores themes related to nature or the natural world, is inevitably shaped by the social and cultural context of the author. Bond asserts that despite the focus on nature, the author remains a "social man," embedded within a social framework that influences their perspectives. "Literature may also sometimes be about 'nature' the 'natural scene', the 'world of plants and animals'. But these things are still written by social man, who looks at 'nature' as, himself, part of society... men cannot escape this social self". (1977, 11). This implies that writers are influenced by their social, cultural, and historical circumstances.

Art, for Bond, must engage with political realities to avoid being trivial. By addressing political issues, art gains depth and relevance, reflecting the complexities of human society and interactions. For Bond, according to Patricia Hern:

Men without politics would be animals, and art without politics would be trivial. [...] Art is the most public of activities. [...] Art is the expression of the conviction that we can have a rational relationship with the world and each other. It isn't the faith or hope that we can, it is the demonstration that we can." ((Patricia Hern: 2013: 12)

For Bond the choice of subject in art is important. He stresses that the integrity of the work's objectivity is paramount. An objective portrayal, free from sentimentality and bias, allows art to serve its true purpose: to provide a clear and rational understanding of human relationships and societal structures. This means that art should be honest, clear-eyed, and truthful in its depiction of reality.

An objective portrayal, free from sentimentality and bias, allows art to serve its true purpose: to provide a clear and rational understanding of human relationships and societal structures. "Bond's subsequent career as a dramatist can be seen as stemming from that first realisation of the power of the theatre and its potential for enlarging our sensibilities." (Smith, 1979: 66) For Bond, art: Makes the present relationship between people easier to understand, by destroying cloaks of sentimentality, hypocrisy and myth, and it makes the potential rationality of these relationships more certain. It does this partly through its choice of subject – but the important thing is the integrity of its objectivity." (Patracia: 2013, 12)

By making relationships and societal dynamics easier to understand, art fosters greater clarity and insight into human interactions. This understanding is crucial for fostering rational relationships. Art not only exposes the irrationality and flaws in current relationships but also highlights the potential for rational and just relationships. It offers a vision of what could be, grounded in the integrity and objectivity of its portrayal.

Bonds Critique of Shakespeare's Historical Plays

Edward Bond's approach to the role of drama in society and his critique of Shakespeare's historical plays is rooted in his broader vision for Rational Theatre. Bond, a playwright known for his radical and often controversial perspectives, challenges the way Shakespeare's historical dramas are traditionally perceived and utilized. Bond argues that Shakespeare's historical plays often romanticize the past, portraying historical figures and events in a way that glosses over the harsh realities of power, violence, and social inequality. Bond referring to his characters "And not of these individuals could have fitted into the society of the good government he had spent so long in describing and praising in the history plays" (Bond 1977: 9). Bond suggests that the characters in his plays are incompatible with the idealized society depicted in historical plays. This romanticization can obscure the true nature of historical events and figures, making them seem more noble or justified than they were. "Bond argues that Shakespeare gave an answer to the problems of his particular society, which is not valid for our society." (Klein, 1989: 71) According to Bond, Shakespeare's historical plays tend to glorify rulers and the exercise of power. According to Bond, Shakespeare's historical plays tend to glorify rulers and the exercise of power. They often focus on the personal dramas of kings and nobles, which can reinforce the idea that history is shaped by great individuals rather than by broader social forces and struggles. Bond argues, "Lear dies old, Hamlet dies young, Othello is deceived, Macbeth runs amok goodness struggles, and there is no good government to protect ordinary men. Shakespeare cannot answer his questions, but he cannot stop asking them." (Bond, 1977: 2)

Bond argues that Shakespeare's historical dramas, such as Richard II (1597), Henry IV (1597) and Henry V (1699). Bond believes that Shakespeare's historical

plays do not offer a sufficient critique of the social and political systems they depict.

The 'good' government of the history plays is not good. Historically it could not be good, and the question of its strength, and its internal freedom from corruption, is almost irrelevant to the sort of government it was. It was a class government administering class justice; and Shakespeare, like all other men was too much a part of his own time to fully understand it" (Bond,1977: 9).

Instead of questioning the legitimacy of monarchy and the class structures of the time, these plays often reinforce them by portraying the restoration of order and the rightful ascent to power as the ultimate resolution. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare approaches the complexities of societal issues, but according to Bond, there remains a significant problem of unanswered questions. Bond observes that "The play is closed by the rumbling of an idiotic old Lear, babbling for buffoons and giants who will one day bring the good government... that will make men happy" (Plays One 2).

In contrast to Shakespeare's approach, Bond advocates for a type of historical drama that is more critical and reflective of social realities. Bond's plays often aim to expose the underlying social and political structures that shape historical events. He seeks to reveal the exploitation, oppression, and violence that are frequently glossed over in more traditional historical narratives. Rather than centering on kings and nobles, Bond's dramas often highlight the experiences and struggles of ordinary people. In an interview with Colin Chambers:

Bond calls his theatre Rational Theatre in the sense that there is a meaning to history, there is an explanation for human miseries and that we can discern a pattern in history and ameliorate the human condition. "I call my plays rational but they are often very passionate and very emotional plays, because passion and emotion are part of a rational life" (Chambers, 1980: 24).

This shift in focus aims to provide a more democratic and inclusive perspective on history. Bond's plays interrogate the nature of power and authority, questioning the legitimacy of those who hold power and the systems that support them.

Bonds Critique of Shakespeare's Comedies

Edward Bond's quarrel with Shakespeare's comedies is rooted in his critical perspective on how these plays address social issues, human nature, and the human condition. Many of Shakespeare's comedies, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*, take place in fantastical settings that allow characters to escape from the real world's hardships. The cross-dressing and mistaken identities in plays like *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice* may temporarily disrupt societal norms, but ultimately, the social order is restored without significant change. Bond emphasizes that real-world issues cannot be solved through magical or supernatural means. He suggests a pragmatic view, where practical solutions are needed for real problems. Bond's assertion that "There are no supernatural answers to natural problems" underscores his belief in the importance of addressing social and political issues through realistic, tangible means rather than relying on fantastical or escapist narratives (Bond, 1977:10). He emphasizes that the peace and reconciliation depicted on stage in Shakespeare's

plays are illusory and temporary, suggesting that they “would not last an hour on the street,” meaning they are not sustainable or applicable in the real world (Bond,1977: 10).

Bond’s Rational Theatre is a response to what he sees as the shortcomings of Shakespeare’s comedies. He advocates for a theatre that confronts social injustices directly.

Theme of Action

Bond’s Rational Theatre reject acceptance of the mistakes and insist upon action for redeeming the irrationality in the society. His rejection of acceptance and insistence upon action stems from his belief in the necessity of confronting and challenging societal issues rather than passively accepting them. Bond’s plays often critique societal structures and norms. He believes that acceptance of these structures without question leads to perpetuation of injustice and violence. Daniel R. Jones raises a question, “Why does Bond reject acceptance and insist upon action?” (1980: 505) He believes that for Bond modern society is irrational and unjust. The society does not allow “people to live in the way for which they evolved” -is increasingly denied by a society controlled by violence and repression, threatened by science and technology, and exploited by capitalists and capitalism” (Jones 1980: 505). By rejecting acceptance, Bond encourages audiences to recognize and challenge the status quo. He advocates for active engagement with societal issues. Bond’s works emphasize human agency and the power of individuals to effect change. In an interview with Jim Mulligan, he says, “My play is written to take young people back to important basic situations and enable them to question what it means to be a human being.” (Mulligan, 1993: 2) He rejects fatalism and the idea that people are helpless in the face of larger societal forces. By rejecting acceptance and insisting on action, he seeks to engage his audience in a deeper reflection on the issues presented in his plays, encouraging them to think critically about their own roles in society. “You must not write in way; you must not write clever speeches. Words must only be the gestures. Words must be a form of action.” (Stoll, 1980: 413)

This theme of action is one of the major quarrels with Shakespeare. Bond admires Shakespeare for his powerful criticism of the human condition. In Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, the narrative centers on Lear’s personal journey through suffering, madness, and eventual realization of his own human frailties. The tragedy is deeply introspective, focusing on Lear’s internal struggles and his ultimate resignation to fate. This approach, while profound, leads to a portrayal of resignation and acceptance of one’s fate as an inevitable conclusion. John Hall in the *Guardian* says:

Shakespeare does arrive at an answer to the problems of his particular society, and that was the idea of total resignation, accepting what comes, and discovering that a human being can accept an enormous lot and survive it. He can come through the storm. What I want to say is that this model is inadequate now; that it just does not work. Acceptance is not enough. Anybody can accept. You can go quietly into your gas chamber at Auschwitz, you can sit quietly at home and have an H-bomb dropped on you. Shakespeare had time. He must have thought

that in time certain changes would be made. But time has speeded up enormously, and for us, time is running out." (Qtd by Hall, 1971: 10)

In *King Lear*, the consequences of Lear's tyranny and the suffering of those he subjugated are secondary to his personal narrative. For Bond, this approach neglects the broader implications of power dynamics, societal structures, and the collective impact of individual actions on the community.

In contrast, Edward Bond's theatre is deeply rooted in Marxist ideology, emphasizing the critical importance of understanding and challenging societal structures and injustices. For Sakellaridou Bond shows allegiance to Marxist ideology and "constantly lives the dichotomy of the gifted but strictly committed artist, who finds it difficult to sever art from politics ..." More than his contemporaries, Bond is famous for "tiresome Marxist social analyses rather than aesthetic dilemmas and new proposals" (1992: 65-66) Unlike traditional narratives that often focus on personal tragedies and internal conflicts, Bond's work insists on examining the broader societal context that shapes individual experiences. He contends that merely accepting and resigning to the consequences of past mistakes is insufficient. In his view, acceptance is a passive response that fails to address the root causes of societal issues.

Bond's approach to theatre involves confronting uncomfortable truths about society, such as the exploitation and oppression inherent in many social structures. He aims to expose and debunk the myths that support these structures, such as the belief in the naturalness of human violence or the infallibility of technological progress. "Theatre, when it's doing what it was created to do, demonstrates order in the chaos, the ideal in the ordinary, history in the present, the rational in the seemingly irrational." (Stoll: 506) By dismantling these myths, Bond seeks to eliminate the complacency that permits societal injustices to persist. Bond's theatre invites viewers to move beyond passive acceptance and towards active engagement in creating a more just and equitable world. Bond's theatre is a call to action. It is a form of art that seeks to educate, provoke, and inspire.

Criticism of Absurdist

One of the outstanding contributions of this Rational Theatre is Bond's repugnance for absurdist theatre. Bond has expressed a strong aversion for absurdist theatre, criticizing it for failing to address real socio-political issues. Christopher Innes claims bond's approach is characterized by discussions among characters about ideas. "I don't like the theatre of discussion where people sit down and talk intellectually about an idea, because I don't think that is what theatre is about. Theatre involves the whole person on the stage." (Innes, 1979: 112) It often involves characters sitting down and engaging in conversations that are primarily analytical. Innes advocates for a more holistic approach to theatre, where the physical presence and actions of actors on stage are just as important as their words. Bond comments in *Modern and Postmodern Theatres*:

Absurd theatre is utterly pessimistic and does not help to explain things. A writer has the task of explaining things. Human affairs are decided by the mediation of various factors: one is technology, the other is society, and the third is human beings themselves - what we are biologically and psychologically. History represents the relationship between those three factors. (Bond, 1997: 99)

Bond criticizes absurdist theatre for its often ambiguous and nihilistic themes, contending that it fails to fulfil this responsibility. He prefers clear and purposeful storytelling, criticizing absurdist works for their obscure and fragmented narratives, which he feels can alienate audiences and obscure the playwright's intentions. For Bond, art conveys the idea that "human beings envisage perfection, that their condition makes the search and creation of that perfection morally necessary, and that the often seemingly arbitrary and absurd events of history have meaning as part of this creation" (Plays Two 14). This suggests that the pursuit and creation of perfection is not just a personal or aesthetic endeavour but a moral imperative. Bond in his Notebook II says that he is determined to write plays which "praise life" an argument against Theatre of Absurd (2014: 185) Art becomes a vehicle for addressing and embodying these moral concerns, providing a means for people to imagine and strive toward an ideal state. Hay and Roberts labels his characters as having intuitive drive for a "point of view which is the most morally and emotionally . . . developed" (Qtd. Hay and Roberts: 1980 43).

Despite Bond's explicit criticism of absurdist theatre, critics have frequently noted the presence of absurdist elements in his plays. Carter and Mcrae believe that: it is interesting that Edward Bond and Samuel Beckett should examine the geography of the human soul in divergent ways, concentrating on cruelty and on despair respectively – but with reference, direct or indirect, to the Shakespearean tragedy which critics have always seen as the most pessimistic" (2001: 377).

Their objection is that both, in some way, connect their work to Shakespearean tragedy, which is often seen as very pessimistic. They argue that Bond's characters often resemble those found in the works of absurdist playwrights like Samuel Beckett, who are perceived as dramatic irritants rather than catalysts for change, thriving on stasis instead of driving the narrative forward. This characteristic is epitomized in Beckett's works and can also be observed in characters like Pam and Len in Bond's Saved. However, Bond has clarified in his interviews that his purpose for creating such characters diverges significantly from that of the Absurdist.

In contrast, Bond aims to incite anger and a desire for change in his audience. His characters' suffering is portrayed not as an inescapable condition but as a consequence of specific social and political failings that can and should be addressed. Bond's plays are rooted in a rationalist perspective, emphasizing the need for critical thought and social action. His characters, despite their stasis, are meant to be viewed within the context of the broader social and political systems that shape their lives. This rationalist approach contrasts sharply with the existential focus of absurdist theatre, where the emphasis is on the individual's internal struggles and the inherent absurdity of existence. Bond's use of stasis and seemingly absurd characters is a deliberate strategy to highlight social injustices and provoke critical reflection and action. According to W.B Worthen:

How can we read the openness of the scene in Bond's theatre not as the vaguely hostile and indifferent emptiness of the absurd, but as an attempt to disentangle realistic presentation from the oppressive social practices that form the physical, institutional, legal, domestic environment – in a word the social environment . . .?" (Worthen, 1992: 91)

In absurdist theatre, the emptiness and openness often symbolize a lack of meaning or inherent hostility in the world. Bond, however, uses openness intentionally to highlight and critique the structures and practices that define social environments.

Bond criticizes Beckett's characters for being isolated and dealing with internal struggles disconnected from the larger societal context, resulting in art that evokes pity rather than inspiring change. Bond reiterates in his interview with Chambers "I call my theatre the Rational Theatre for this reason: it is in opposition to the absurd theatre" (26).

For Bond, Beckett's work, therefore, is seen as "useless" because it does not address the real-world issues that Bond believes theatre should confront. In contrast, Bond envisions his theatre as a tool for encouraging rational thought and promoting social change. He says in Notes II, "we cannot respond to Beckett as Marx and Engels responded to Balzac, because Balzac articulated the forces of change but Beckett sets out to restrain them." (282) Edward Bond argues that writers should steer clear of anything that denies or undermines humanity's ability to confront and overcome the harsh realities of society. Referring to absurdist's in his "Preface to Lear" he comments that those, "who in our time write only from weakness because they are trapped in the decadence of our time and have no rational view of the future or of anything else" (Plays Two 2). His plays are designed to make audiences think critically about societal issues. For example, in *Saved*, Bond presents a stark portrayal of urban decay and social disintegration. The characters' lives are marked by violence, alienation, and a lack of opportunity, highlighting the failures of society and the need for systemic change. The play challenges the audience to reflect on the root causes of these issues and consider their role in addressing them.

Bond contends that if art lacks a social or ethical purpose, it becomes a form of 'artistic prostitution'. This phrase implies that art without a moral or social purpose is compromised, serving merely as a commodity rather than contributing to meaningful discourse or societal improvement. Bond criticizes the philosophy of the Absurd for claiming to make moral statements about the foundations of human existence while actually separating political violence from moral judgment. Bond in his *Letters*: I says, "It took political violence and separated it from any judgement [sic]... If you live in a society where a banknote has meaning... then everything else has meaning... derived from money" (1994: 131). Absurdist theatre often explores themes of existential meaninglessness and the absurdity of human life, but Bond argues that this exploration fails to address or critique the ethical implications of societal violence and injustice. Bond suggests that in a capitalist society, everything—including art—is assigned value based on its economic worth. Bond's condescension for absurdist theatre, particularly the works of Samuel Beckett, is deeply rooted in his commitment to creating socially and politically engaged drama. As Jenny Spencer aptly remarks, "what would have become of Bond as an artist, had he not had such a frozen contempt for Beckett?" (Patterson: 2003: 9). Bond believes that theatre should serve as a tool for social change, promoting a vision of a socialist utopia.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Edward Bond's concept of Rational Theatre shows how drama can be used to question society. His plays expose violence, injustice, and the failures of social systems. Bond does not present violence for shock. Instead, he uses it to reveal deeper social problems. His theatre asks audiences to think clearly and take responsibility for change. This study has shown how Bond's Rational Theatre combines reason with strong emotions. His works, like *Saved* and *Lear*, connect personal pain to larger political issues. They do not allow passive watching.

Instead, they demand active reflection and moral response. In today's world of crisis and conflict, Bond's ideas remain important. His theatre proves that drama can be more than entertainment. It can be a tool for truth, awareness, and action. Rational Theatre helps people understand the causes of violence and imagine better solutions. This study concludes that Edward Bond's work is vital for political theatre today. It offers a model for artists who want to mix artistic power with social purpose. In times of injustice, Bond reminds us that theatre has the duty to help people think, question, and change the world.

FURTHER STUDY

This research is still delayed, so further research is needed related to the topic of A Study of Edward Bond's Concept of Rational Theatre and its Role in Contemporary Political Drama in order to improve this research and add insight for readers

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