

DRAMA

C R I T I C I S M

V O L U M E

45



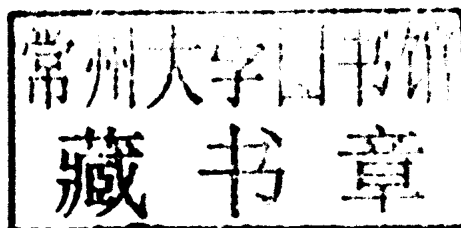
DRAMA

C R I T I C I S M

Criticism of the Most Significant and Widely Studied
Dramatic Works from All the World's Literatures

VOLUME 45

Marie Toft
Project Editor



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Preface

Drama Criticism (*DC*) is principally intended for beginning students of literature and theater as well as the average playgoer. The series is therefore designed to introduce readers to the most frequently studied playwrights of all time periods and nationalities and to present discerning commentary on dramatic works of enduring interest. Furthermore, *DC* seeks to acquaint the reader with the uses and functions of criticism itself. Selected from a diverse body of commentary, the essays in *DC* offer insights into the authors and their works but do not require that the reader possess a wide background in literary studies. Where appropriate, reviews of important productions of the plays discussed are also included to give students a heightened awareness of drama as a dynamic art form, one that many claim is fully realized only in performance.

DC was created in response to suggestions by the staffs of high school, college, and public libraries. These librarians observed a need for a series that assembles critical commentary on the world's most renowned dramatists in the same manner as Gale's *Short Story Criticism* (*SSC*) and *Poetry Criticism* (*PC*), which present material on writers of short fiction and poetry. Although playwrights are covered in such Gale literary criticism series as *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (*CLC*), *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (*TCLC*), *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (*NCLC*), *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (*LC*), and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* (*CMLC*), *DC* directs more concentrated attention on individual dramatists than is possible in the broader, survey-oriented entries in these Gale series. Commentary on the works of William Shakespeare may be found in *Shakespearean Criticism* (*SC*).

Scope of the Series

By collecting and organizing commentary on dramatists, *DC* assists students in their efforts to gain insight into literature, achieve better understanding of the texts, and formulate ideas for papers and assignments. A variety of interpretations and assessments is offered, allowing students to pursue their own interests and promoting awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Approximately three to five authors are included in each volume, and each entry presents a historical survey of the critical response to that playwright's work. The length of an entry is intended to reflect the amount of critical attention the author has received from critics writing in English and from foreign critics in translation. Every attempt has been made to identify and include the most significant essays on each author's work. In order to provide these important critical pieces, the editors sometimes reprint essays that have appeared elsewhere in Gale's literary criticism series. Such duplication, however, never exceeds twenty percent of a *DC* volume.

Organization of the Book

A *DC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** consists of the playwright's most commonly used name, followed by birth and death dates. If an author consistently wrote under a pseudonym, the pseudonym is listed in the author heading and the real name given in parentheses on the first line of the introduction. Also located at the beginning of the introduction are any name variations under which the dramatist wrote, including transliterated forms of the names of authors whose languages use nonroman alphabets.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.

- The list of **Principal Works** is divided into two sections. The first section contains the author's dramatic pieces and is organized chronologically by date of first performance. If this has not been conclusively determined, the composition or publication date is used. The second section provides information on the author's major works in other genres.
- Essays offering **overviews of the dramatist's entire literary career** give the student broad perspectives on the writer's artistic development, themes, and concerns that recur in several of his or her works, the author's place in literary history, and other wide-ranging topics.
- **Criticism** of individual plays offers the reader in-depth discussions of a select number of the author's most important works. In some cases, the criticism is divided into two sections, each arranged chronologically. When a significant performance of a play can be identified (typically, the premier of a twentieth-century work), the first section of criticism will feature **production reviews** of this staging. Most entries include sections devoted to **critical commentary** that assesses the literary merit of the selected plays. When necessary, essays are carefully excerpted to focus on the work under consideration; often, however, essays and reviews are reprinted in their entirety. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- A complete **Bibliographic Citation**, designed to help the interested reader locate the original essay or book, precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Cumulative Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *DC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in *DC* as well as other Literature Criticism series.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *DC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *DC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Title Index** lists in alphabetical order the individual plays discussed in the criticism contained in *DC*. Each title is followed by the author's last name and corresponding volume and page numbers where commentary on the work is located. English-language translations of original foreign-language titles are cross-referenced to the foreign titles so that all references to discussion of a work are combined in one listing.

Citing Drama Criticism

When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language As-

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Rocha, Mark William. "Black Madness in August Wilson's 'Down the Line' Cycle." In *Madness in Drama*, edited by James Redmond, 191-201. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Reprinted in *Drama Criticism*. Vol. 31, edited by Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau, 229-35. Detroit: Gale, 2008.

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Edward Bond

1934-

English playwright, poet, screenwriter, theorist, and translator.

INTRODUCTION

An intensely controversial and political dramatist best known for his use of graphic violence, Edward Bond has made an indelible mark on twentieth century drama. Bond's plays, especially the early works, challenged audience expectations as well as the censors of the English theater world. His provocative dramas, and the legal difficulties that followed, were instrumental in overturning the Theatre Regulation Act in 1968. Through his work, Bond has consistently approached societal problems through the lens of art and history. Whether it is in the form of social control, poverty, unemployment, or the threat of nuclear war, Bond has focused on issues related to power and justice.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Bond was born on July 18, 1934, to a working-class family in Holloway, North London. His parents, Gaston and Florence Bond, were farm laborers who had moved to London from East Anglia in an effort to find work during the Depression. When World War II began, Bond and his sisters, like many children in London at the time, were sent to the countryside for their safety. Unfortunately, they returned to London prior to the sustained German bombing campaign known as the London Blitz. During the Blitz, Bond was then evacuated to his grandparents' home in East Anglia. He returned to London in 1944, entering Crouch End Secondary Modern School. Not considered an exemplary student, he was nonetheless strongly influenced at fourteen by a performance of *Macbeth*. Bond left school at fifteen and worked in warehouses and factories until age nineteen, when he was called up to perform his compulsory military service—a formative experience that would shape his future views of power and privilege. Bond was stationed in Vienna as an infantryman for two years and found the military culture brutal and humiliating. After his service ended Bond began to write plays, and in 1958 he was invited to join a writers' group at the Royal Court Theatre by William Gaskill. Gaskill would later go on to direct some of Bond's best-known works. In 1962 the Royal Court

staged Bond's first play *The Pope's Wedding* in a one-night performance without scenery. The pared-down production was part of the theater's special series showcasing the works of new writers without investing in a full production. In 1965 Bond was selected as a finalist to receive a Most Promising Playwright award, but the same year his play *Saved* became the subject of controversy before it was even staged. At the time, play scripts had to be officially approved for public performance by the Office of Lord Chamberlain. Lord Chamberlain denied a license to produce *Saved* unless major cuts and revisions were made, but Bond refused to make any changes. Attempting to take advantage of a loophole which allowed private clubs to stage without a license, the Royal Court went ahead with a private staging before members of the English Stage Society. But in December 1965 police surreptitiously attended a performance of the play, on orders from Lord Chamberlain's Office. In January the Royal Court Theatre was charged with producing an unlicensed play and debates on theater censorship began in the House of Lords in February. Ultimately, the Royal Court was found guilty of violating censorship laws but was not given a formal punishment. *Saved* was the last play to be officially prosecuted under the censorship laws, but Bond's next play, *Early Morning* (1968), which portrayed Queen Victoria as a lesbian in love with Florence Nightingale, earned equal scrutiny by censors and was banned. Again, the Royal Court held a private staging in March 1968, which was raided by police. No charges were filed, but further performances were prevented. Months later, a performance of Bond's *Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1968) was mounted in Coventry in defiance of the censors' demands for revisions, but no action was taken. In September 1968 the English Parliament voted to pass legislation that would end government censorship once and for all by abolishing the Theatre Regulation Act. Bond was vindicated, but public and critical response to the level of violence in his plays would continue to frustrate him. In the 1970s Bond began directing some of his own plays and demanded increased control over productions of his works. In 1985 the Royal Shakespeare Company agreed to have him codirect his seven-hour trilogy *The War Plays* (1985), but Bond found the working conditions untenable and left the production; he would later denounce the staging without him as disastrous. This caused a rift between him and members of the English theater. Although his plays continue to be produced

throughout England and Europe, Bond removed to France, where he currently develops and premieres many of his plays at Le Théâtre National de Colline in Paris. Meanwhile, Bond also continues to be involved in a youth theater founded in Birmingham in 1982, Big Brum Theatre in Education Company, through which he produces plays aimed at getting children and youth involved in theater and helping them to explore the social issues specific to young people. Since the 1990s Bond has remained disillusioned with English theater and refuses to allow any of his works to be performed by the country's large national companies, but he has been involved in many other projects, including a 2003 film based on his play *In the Company of Men* (1992). In 2000 he published a major study of his dramatic theory, *The Hidden Plot*.

MAJOR DRAMATIC WORKS

Bond's most consistent themes revolve around the often subliminal rage of the working classes and the state's role in simultaneously repressing and provoking it. In the "Author's Note" to his first volume of published plays, *Plays: One* (1977), Bond explained: "Human beings are violent animals only in the way that dogs are swimming animals. We need to eat; but only when we're starving does there have to be the possibility that we will use our capacity for violence to satisfy our need for food. Violence is a means not an end." Bond's plays obliquely explore the moment when human needs have been denied and ignored by existing power structures, giving way to a violent response. His first produced play, *The Pope's Wedding*, takes place in a rural farming community in East Anglia that has been isolated and marginalized by poverty and low social status. Scopey, a farmhand, is resentful and angry about his wife Pat's commitment to care for a local elderly eccentric named Alen. He eventually murders Alen and assumes his identity. In *Saved* the violence is ostensibly brought on by stagnancy, boredom, and alienation in the lower classes and culminates in the onstage torture and murder of a baby. *Lear* (1971), considered one of Bond's greatest theatrical achievements, reimagines Shakespeare's great tragic hero as a myth and metaphor for the birth of leadership and nationhood in modern England. While Shakespeare's *Lear* must learn to accept suffering as a fact of human life, Bond's learns to accept responsibility for his role in creating suffering. Shakespeare figures again in Bond's play *Bingo* (1973). In the play, a retired Shakespeare becomes involved in debates over England's early enclosure laws, which removed land from public use and caused great hardship for the country's peasant class. As a land owner, Shakespeare sides with the interests of emerging capitalism and eventually commits suicide out of guilt over his decision. Bond again uses a figure from English literary history to illustrate the effects of a harsh society

on the individual in *The Fool* (1975). This time Bond rewrote the life of early-nineteenth-century poet John Clare, who rises from rural peasantry to literary fame in London, only to end up broken and mad in an asylum for lunatics. In *Restoration* (1981), Bond examines the English election of 1979 and its consequences through the lens of the Restoration era, with which he saw many parallels—specifically the lower classes' commitment to Tory ideals despite the fact that those very ideals consistently worked against their interests. With *The War Plays*, Bond returned to the present, this time with a trilogy of plays that address the threat of nuclear war at the height of the Cold War arms race. In the trilogy's first installment, *Red Black and Ignorant* (1984), the central figure, known as the Monster, is the ghost of a baby killed during a nuclear war. The play shows what kind of life the baby might have had, taking the audience forty years into a future in which he is eventually killed by his own son in another war. The second play in the series, *The Tin Can People* (1984), depicts the immediate aftermath of nuclear war, when a lone wanderer happens upon a group of survivors, with a massive supply of canned goods, who have created a military culture fueled by fear and paranoia. In *Great Peace* (1985), the trilogy's final installment, Bond focuses on a mother's experience during nuclear attack and its aftermath. Her son, a young soldier, returns home with government orders to kill a child to conserve food supplies. The soldier kills his sibling, causing his mother to go mad with grief.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Bond's plays sparked outrage among audiences and theater critics because of their concentrated use of graphic violence, particularly Bond's depictions of violence against children. Yet, as Bond has argued in his "Author's Note" and elsewhere, his primary goal in showing violence is to make audiences understand that "Violence is not a function of human nature but of human societies." Literary critic Tony Howard noted, "The murder of children is Edward Bond's recurrent image of the social destruction of the innocent." Bond himself has said that he intends his theater to be "rational," as opposed to his contemporaries in the Theater of the Absurd movement, who portray life as essentially absurd and meaningless. Bond's humanism asserts that it is only unjust institutions that drive people to immoral behavior. According to Christopher Innes, "[A]ll social activity is presented [by Bond] as moralized violence. The sack of Troy that the authorities condone, or the anarchic murder and rape of civil war in *Lear*, the politically justified killing of the children in *Narrow Road*, or the socially condemned stoning of a baby in *Saved*—all are treated as actions of exactly the same kind and status. For Bond, violence is not an aberration but a general symptom." But while literary critics have

found much to analyze in Bond's plays, theater critics have at times struggled to find value in them. In his review of a 1965 production of *Saved*, Irving Wardle wrote, "In a recent interview Mr. Bond said that his aim was to 'illuminate' violence. One would hardly have guessed this from the play itself which does nothing to lay bare the motives for violence and appeals to no emotions beyond those aroused by the act itself. According to one's proclivities these may be horror, sadistic relish, or amusement; a fair proportion of last night's audience fell into the third category." Despite Bond's statements, critics still question his motivation and beliefs regarding violence. Benedict Nightingale, for example, writes, "the emphasis on economic and social conditions seems to suggest that they alone are responsible for human suffering, and leaves us unclear whether or not Bond still thinks that mankind is also afflicted with an innate and immutable sadism."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Plays

The Pope's Wedding 1962
Saved 1965
A Chaste Maid in Cheapside [adaptor; from the play by Thomas Middleton] 1966
The Three Sisters [with Richard Cottrell; translator; from *Tri sestry* by Anton Chekhov] 1967
Early Morning 1968
Narrow Road to the Deep North 1968
Black Mass 1970
Lear 1971
Passion 1971
Bingo: Scenes of Money and Death 1973
The Sea: A Comedy 1973
Spring Awakening [translator; from *Frühlings Erwachen* by Frank Wedekind] 1974
The Fool: Scenes of Bread and Love 1975
Grandma Faust: A Burlesque (Part One of A-A-America!) 1976
Stone 1976
The Swing: A Documentary (Part Two of A-A-America!) 1976
We Come to the River (libretto) 1976
The White Devil [adaptor; from the play by John Webster] 1976
Plays: One (*Saved*, *Early Morning*, *The Pope's Wedding*) 1977
The Bundle, or, New Narrow Road to the Deep North 1978
Plays: Two (*Lear*, *The Sea*, *Narrow Road to the Deep North*, *Black Mass*, *Passion*) 1978
The Woman: Scenes of War and Freedom 1978

The Worlds 1979
Restoration: A Pastorale 1981
Derek 1982
Summer: A European Play 1982
After the Assassinations 1983
 * *The Cat* [adaptor; from the novel *Les peines de coeur d'une chatte anglaise* by Honoré de Balzac] (libretto) 1983
 † *Red Black and Ignorant* 1984
 † *The Tin Can People* 1984
 † *Great Peace* 1985
Human Cannon 1986
Plays: Three (*Bingo*, *The Fool*, *The Woman*, *Stone*) 1987
Jackets 1989
September 1989
Jackets II 1990
 * *In the Company of Men* 1992
Plays: Four (*The Worlds*, *The Activist's Papers*, *Restoration*, *Summer*) 1992
Olly's Prison (teleplay) 1993
Tuesday (teleplay) 1993
At the Inland Sea: A Play for Young People 1995
Coffee: A Tragedy 1996
Plays: Five (*Human Cannon*, *The Bundle*, *In the Company of Men*) 1996
Eleven Vests 1997
Plays: Six (*The War Plays*, *Choruses from After the Assassins*) 1998
 * *The Crime of the Twenty-First Century* 1999
Chair (radio play) 2000
The Children 2000
Have I None 2000
Existence 2002
The Balancing Act 2003
Plays: Seven (*Olly's Prison*, *Coffee*, *The Crime of the Twenty-First Century*, *The Swing*, *Derek*, *Fables*, *Stories*) 2003
The Short Electra 2004
The Under Room 2005
Arcade 2006
 * *Born* 2006
Plays: Eight (*Born*, *People*, *Chair*, *Existence*, *The Under Room*) 2006
Tune 2007
A Window 2009
There Will Be More 2010

Other Major Works

Blow-Up [with Michelangelo Antonioni and Tonino Guerra; adaptor; from the short story "Las babas del diablo" by Julio Cortázar] (screenplay) 1966
Laughter in the Dark [adaptor; from the novel by Vladimir Nabokov] (screenplay) 1969
Michael Kohlhaas [with Clement Biddle Wood and Volker Schlöndorff; adaptor; from the novella by Heinrich von Kleist] (screenplay) 1969

Nicholas and Alexandra [with James Goldman; adaptor; from the biography by Robert K. Massie] (screenplay) 1971

Walkabout [adaptor; from the novel by James Vance Marshall] (screenplay) 1971

The Swing Poems (poetry) 1976

Theatre Poems and Songs (poetry) 1978

Poems, 1978-1985 (poetry) 1987

The Hidden Plot: Notes on Theatre and the State (nonfiction) 2000

Selections from the Notebooks of Edward Bond. 2 vols. (notebooks) 2000

Edward Bond Letters. 5 vols. (letters) 1994-2001

*These works, written in English, were first performed in translation. *The Cat* was performed as *Die Englische Katze*, *In the Company of Men* as *La Compagnie des hommes*, *The Crime of the Twenty-First Century* as *Das Verbrechen des 21. Jahrhunderts* and *Born* as *Naitre*.

†These plays were performed together as *The War Plays* in 1985. *Red Black and Ignorant* has also been performed under the title *The Unknown Citizen*.

AUTHOR COMMENTARY

Edward Bond and Peter Billingham (interview date November 2006)

SOURCE: Bond, Edward, and Peter Billingham. "Drama and the Human: Reflections at the Start of a Millennium." *Performing Arts Journal* 87 (2007): 1-14.

[In the following interview conducted November 2006, Bond discusses existential and ontological issues of the twentieth century as he has examined them through his plays.]

[Billingham]: I wonder, Edward, whether first of all you could reflect upon where your writing is now and your thoughts on drama, this November 2006? We might begin by considering your play *Born* that is about to be produced in Paris.

[Bond]: *Born* is the third play in what I call the Colline Tetralogy. Colline is the name of the theatre, it's one of the French national theatres based in Paris specializing in contemporary theatre. I wanted for a long time to write this play called *Coffee* and this was to do with an incident that happened in the Second World War. It's a true story. Almost always, my starting of a play is initiated by some true incident. *Coffee* was about the massacre at Babyar and one of the people who survived, a woman. It was very extraordinary because one of the reasons that she survived was that she and some others had got left in the back of a lorry in a situation where the Germans were killing thousands of people. When

these people were found, it was ordered that they must be taken back to the ravine where the others had been killed. The Germans fired across from the far edge so that the victims would fall directly into that ravine. The German soldiers who were doing the shooting were making coffee when this small number of prisoners was finally delivered for execution. They were so cross because they thought they'd done their job for the day and now it looked as if they couldn't have their coffee. One of them threw away their coffee in disgust and I thought: that's the twentieth century. It tells you everything because, for me, drama has two sides although they are the "one side": one is the kitchen table and one is the horizon of the universe. That combines the existential with the ontological and that really is what the neonate and human being is about. I thought that the coffee incident was absolutely extraordinary and I worked on that and wanted to explain: What was this? Why did the soldier do that? It was about 15 years before I wrote the play and I could understand why I had kept it in the back of my mind. I couldn't write it until I felt that I could technically handle the stage in order to write that play about that event. This led to a series of plays and whereas *Coffee* is set in the past, the following play *The Crime of the Twenty-First Century*, is set in the future.

How do that coffee incident and my reaction to it extend into the future? I discovered whilst I was doing this that what I was really dealing with is a problem that the Greeks could not deal with. This was even though they represented the origins of Western culture and of this ability to reflect upon what one is thinking and what one is doing rather than simply translating it onto the "Gods." I don't believe that this is some form of Western-centrist thinking, but I really do think that they were confronting the fundamental problems and questions that all human beings have to deal with. They therefore created this extraordinary institution of democracy. It's not what we would recognize as democracy. Nevertheless, in the end people were actually paid for their attendance in this democratic process because the farmer-participants who lived in the outlying areas couldn't afford to come into the capital city all that often. The people were required to be spectators at the theatre, which was the other main public institution alongside of the parliament and the courts of law. I think that they tried to deal with very, very profound problems.

How do you view those problems impacting our contemporary world and indeed its possible future?

They are essentially the problems of Oedipus and Orestes. Oedipus is the problem of the self and Orestes (and Antigone) is the problem of the relationship to authority and the community. Of course, both of these problems overlap but that is the basic conflict. However,

they couldn't put the two together. The reason that they couldn't put the two together is that then they would have to start to ask the very fundamental questions about their own democracy. As they couldn't deal with these problems, I think they stood in the way of the development of theatre. They couldn't bring these two questions or issues together so that eventually they stopped writing plays. Greek theatre ends its radical phase with the death of Euripides and it was Euripides who had pushed these two questions very, very far. What I realized, going back to my tetralogy, was that I would have to try and put the problems of Orestes and Oedipus together. That is absolutely the expression of the problems we face.

We have technological problems—the machines we make are too powerful for us. Instead of, as they did in the past, enabling us to improve our relationship with nature, they now damage our relationship to nature. And so whereas tools were the makers of humanness now tools are becoming anti-human. We have to work out what the relationship of the individual to the community is. What is our relationship as individuals to State authority? How do human beings create themselves? I don't think that we are the products of genetic determinism. I think if that were so, we would no longer be in history but in nature. We'd be in evolution. The only way that we can create humanness is not by saying I've got a machine that enables me to till the earth: a plough. I've got a machine that enables me to go the Moon. In itself these things do not create humanness, they create new problems for humanness. The only way that you can create humanness is by dramatizing the self. We should be dramatizing the conflicts within the self and what art and drama should be doing is increasing human self-consciousness. That's not an abstract matter. Once you engage in that process you have to start asking, why am I committed to humanness? I can't say, oh, I can't decide whether or not to be human, I'll sort that out tomorrow, in the sense that one might say: I don't know whether I like classical music or not, I'll try listening to some tomorrow. If you are a human being, you are committed to it; there is an imperative to being human.

Could you develop this concept of the "human imperative" further?

You cannot simply ignore that imperative. It's not of course human solely in terms of: I've got to have clothes to wear, I've got to have sex. Because some people are prepared to give those things up for causes that they believe deeply in. In the human, therefore, there is an intellectual dimension. It's not just about the emotional or the physical; the mind has an intellectual imperative to be human. It does this because of what is already in the neonate, the newborn child. It isn't a matter of some human essence but rather of the situa-

tion—its site, and I think in modern drama site plays the role of what character did in, for example, Ibsen. The neonate seeks to be at one with the world, at home in the world, which is its site. The cause of this is biological, but the effect is what I call an "intellection," an imaginative-rational process. The ultimate effect of this is that later the post-neonatal, the child and eventually the adult in society seek justice. This is the origin of all drama. But justice is highly paradoxical. We live in unjust societies and so ultimately laws are historically "justified" but morally unjust. 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.

I call this the "Hamlet question": that all creativity is poised on what I call the "Hamlet-colon." This problem is furthermore very clearly posed by Nietzsche when he kills God and this gave him a problem: I've no longer got God to tell me what to do and make me do it. I no longer believe that God creates me but that I create myself, and this leads to modernist aesthetics and modern thought. What Nietzsche says in the conclusion to his *Ecce Homo* (his autobiography) is: "Have I been understood? I am Dionysus against the Crucified One." What he is saying of course is not only about himself but also poses the question: what are human beings? Having arrived at the crisis of the nineteenth century and the crisis of the Enlightenment, he then says: is it this or is it that? Am I Christ or am I Dionysus? What are human beings? That of course is really the "Hamlet-problem." Hamlet asks "To be or not to be?" Then you say, to be what? Just to say will I face the problem or will I not face the problem or can I erase the problem by killing myself? Hamlet goes around looking for accidents to save him from having to make decisions because the decisions are so momentous. What he's saying is that on one side of the colon I am the regicide who kills the King and I know who I am and I know what I do, I act. Or on the other, I do not know who I am; I think and contemplate between Dionysus and Christ.

This is something I think that Nietzsche probably gets from Hegel because Hegel has this idea of the "unhappy consciousnesses." Consequently, for example, I am a member of the universe. I can understand the universe. I am ontological in that way, but I am also this miserable worm that is absolutely nothing. Which is your identity? Nietzsche says I am Dionysus, the Beast, and the Superman. Why did Nietzsche then go mad? Well, it was because he saw a horse being viciously mistreated in Milan and he couldn't bear that, he broke down. Now, the devotees of Dionysus were encouraged by him to pull living animals to bits. So Nietzsche is lying. Nietzsche does not know whether he wants to be Dionysus or Christ. The only thing that he can be certain of is that he doesn't want to be Parsifal. Parsifal is a

necrophile pretending to be interested in the light. It's a form of spiritualization of existence and that's a cop out. That was why Nietzsche quarreled so much with Wagner; initially he'd thought that Wagner was going to be the modern equivalent of Greek drama.

Is it possible to reiterate the nature of the central problem that faces us as human beings at the start of the twenty-first century?

The central problem remains: Do I understand what I am doing and if I can understand what I'm doing, how the hell can I do it? (Returning to the Hamlet-colon) I can see the consequences of what I will do, or do I act and don't take cognizance of the consequences of my action which I cannot control? You could toss a coin, except, as I said, there is intellectualization in the human mind which involves a value and the value is justice and that is ontological and that makes it much more difficult. As a human being what I have to do is to enact and enunciate justice, and that really is the colon, you see? Creativity is poised on that problem: how can I perform justice and that of course is what the theatre is about. That takes different historical forms. Different communities, societies, and cultures work out a *modus vivendi*: not just how to live, but how to live with themselves. Drama comes to a crisis it cannot solve without destabilizing society instead of freeing it from ideological rigidities. For instance, Greek drama couldn't deal with slavery as an institution, not the domestic slavery of women in *The Trojan Women*. Philosophy has to replace drama at these crises. Aristotle can say slaves should be grateful cattle; a dramatist can't say this, can't stage such slaves—their misery would have to be made comic. In fact, Greek philosophers couldn't resolve this problem either. Instead religion took it over. Religion banishes drama anyway because it wishes to reify it and monopolize it. Then religion breaks down in the Renaissance because the Reformation questions religious authority, and inevitably it seems that we need drama again to look at this problem because people no longer have an authoritative statement from philosophy. Descartes who is a contemporary of Shakespeare is saying exactly what Shakespeare is saying, but Shakespeare is much more radical. Drama has to be more radical because it is an act. Descartes can sit in front of the fire and say, "I think and therefore I am."

So you have to re-dramatize and recreate human consciousness, recreate humanness: this is what Shakespeare is about. Then he can hand over to the Enlightenment and philosophy can take over again and start speculating about this problem because drama can't take it any further at that time. Philosophy takes over and you can follow this pattern through to the end of the nineteenth century, with writers like Strindberg and Ibsen. They try to keep these two problems alive for us.

It's like Ibsen says, I want to think about this in a very rational way; I want to exclude the irrational—although he regrets this decision later on. It's very interesting: He begins by saying how do we bring water to the community but in the later plays water becomes very dangerous—it's what you're drowned in. Meanwhile Strindberg says, well this isn't really telling us what we need to know, its not dealing with the problem of Orestes and Oedipus. I call this the "Problem number 5"—it's perhaps a bit mischievous of me—yet scene five in *Born* is very critical in relation to this. Strindberg says I'm going to write the Dreamplays; he split the problem into two manageable sections but the colon is no longer there, it's no longer active. It becomes a barrier, no longer a confrontation. This will not work.

How does your understanding of Marx and his political philosophy, and its significance in terms of twentieth-century history, contribute to this critical dilemma?

The limitation of Marxism in the Victorian period was that it offered a mechanical interpretation of human nature. Marx turns Hegel upside down and says it's actually to do with material reality and not the spirit because what Hegel will finally do is to reconcile the dichotomy—the Hamlet-colon—by saying that the "World Spirit" will take care of this and resolve this for us. We are just these functions for the world spirit. Marx is absolutely true in saying that history is a product of our material relationship to the universe but I also think that imagination is material and I think it's false to make that distinction or division. It's just an ideological contrivance. Marx is right about this but he doesn't sufficiently explain how this happens, and that's why we get Stalin on one side of the colon and the Gulag on the other, because the problem has not been faced.

Human beings are not given the stages, the spaces, and the drama in which they can create a new form of humanness. One can talk about the culture of socialist man but I'm not talking about culture, I'm talking about humanness. Culture will sustain itself but humanness must be re-created. What became for me the problem of the tetralogy was exactly this: How did one resolve the challenge of the Hamlet-colon? If we can't do that, then we can't remain as human beings because this problem is not a genetic inheritance but is rather an effort of will and understanding and of submitting yourself to dramatic processes. That then takes you not necessarily to the problems of the contemporary world because people used to talk about geo-political problems but they're now chrono-political problems. This is because in the present it seems that the clock has not only two hands but six, seven, or eight—different parts of the world are living in different times. I said some years ago now that if a medieval Pope had the atom bomb, he would be obliged to use it. That would be his religious

duty. He would have to use it so that the Infidels could be killed and sent off to Hell. Our problem now is a political and administrative problem in that history has fallen out of sync with itself and this creates very, very dangerous practical problems.

Those are slightly different from the problems of reconciling Oedipus and Orestes. That's necessary because if you don't do that, you cannot have a being in a new and changing world. So one is faced with trying to write a play that is going to integrate all cultures into this problem set by the Greeks. It is not a practical possibility but it is absolutely necessary for human beings that they understand themselves. This is very dangerous and this is what I am always looking to point out in my writing, which is that there is no guarantee that we will remain in history. We may return to evolution and what evolution then becomes is the way that machines administer human beings. In conclusion, what I am trying to do through the tetralogy is actually to enact what it means to be a human being.

That sense of enactment is a stimulating concept. What is provoked for me is an image from The Pope's Wedding where Scopey sits in the clothes of Alen whom he has previously murdered. That sense of the enactment of paradox has been present in your work right back to those very early plays. What does that image speak to us? Has what it speaks to us changed in the intervening 40 years?

It is a very important thing about drama is that it is visual as well as verbal. Barthes says that you don't write anything—language writes you. I often talk about the paradox and the paradox is both sides of the colon. Hegel might have argued that, if one considered *Antigone* in the context of the colon, both Antigone and Creon had equal rights. I think this is not so because Antigone is right and Creon is not. Imagination in itself is not only a humanizing ability but also a humanizing imperative. I have to describe what happens to the pre-language being, the newborn child. This will require some imagination in itself but I do think that it is absolutely important. The newborn child does not know that it is born; it does not know that there is a universe or a world—all it knows is that there is *it*. It is—I am—that's almost a religious thing. It—the neonate—develops a relationship with that world. You cannot say if I want self-consciousness to examine myself, I cannot do it—I immediately disappear, because there isn't a self. I've got a hand, I've got clothes but what is my self? I know I do certain things, I may even do a coherent series of things but the self can never look at itself. This is the origin of drama and the origin of humanness and why the two are structurally related.

When one says the neonate "is"—what is it? Come on Hamlet, be *that!* I can use my imagination to understand the rational in that situation. It has pleasure and pain.

These are two polarities. Could you then say that the self is its relationship to pleasure and pain? What those things are for us are not necessarily what they are for *it*. The infant self is not going to say, I'm going to do the crossword now as an interlude between pleasure and pain. So, in an important sense it *is* pleasure and pain. Then something happens which evolution gives us: there is pleasure and pain but they also relate to something beyond the self. It is at that point that the self is created. I do not create what is out there but what is out there defines my self. You cannot split off the self from its site. I am my relationship to my site. Then it ceases to be simply a spectrum of pleasure and pain. You create the concepts to use to define an adult world: the tragic and the comic. The pleasure becomes the comic and the pain becomes the tragic. I am a relationship to my site because that relationship is mediated through the tragic and the comic. Therefore I am a dramatic structure and I cannot abstract myself from that situation, it's just not possible. The core of drama is that problematic question: How am I existing in enduring this relationship? That is the crux of humanness; I am the site but I am also somehow responsible for it. A fish is not responsible for its sea but I am responsible in some way for the site that I am in.

In that enactment of Scopey in the clothes of Alen—is that a human imperative or a neonatal imperative that is driving Scopey? In order to locate his sense of self in terms similar to those that you have been identifying and using, does that imperative necessitate the murder of Alen?

No. Scopey is creating himself. Scopey is a fiction of course he is a device of the imagination. Being is a critical relation of the site to itself, except that it needs consciousness for that to be human. The neonate is given the existential and the ontological together and that is a highly dramatic experience that one can recreate in drama. Drama is our reality and in that reality we face the critical problem that the neonate faces between the comic and the tragic. [Like Scopey] you *are* this problem. It ultimately implicates you in all of the problems of society, of politics and culture. I am the need for justice—it is an ontological and existential imperative—not purely a desire. If I cannot solve that then I go mad.

What then are the implications for politics and political theatre that seeks to serve and express a political function?

Well, what happens when an audience comes to a play is very different from watching a screen. I think that screens criminalize their audiences, but that's another subject. When you enter a theatre what is the audience doing? Well, there is a "social self" present and at work and the "social self" is a compromise because we all