Drama is a unique genre. It is at once a graphic text and a visual text. So a drama needs to be evaluated at two levels: at the verbal level and at the performance level. A dramatist can use two different types of narrative techniques, one for the verbal narrative and the other for the visual narrative. Dramatic art is the sum total of both these narratives. The political content of the play is usually objectified in its narrative. Content and art harness each other and together they construct a coherent text which is an ideological superstructure. A critical assessment of the techniques used in the visual presentation of the reconstructed history/past on the stage entails a scrutiny of the tools employed in theatre. The politics of a writer is evident not only in his themes but also in his techniques. Edward Bond has (re)constructed history out of the past in his plays. History is different from the past. But past is the essential raw material required to synchronize history. Bond’s plays constitute a theatricalization of history. In other words, his plays are visual paradigms of history.

Bond utilizes sophisticated means for the enactment of his theatre events. His stage techniques are often appropriations or modifications of Brechtian epic theatre. Epic style provides him a means to convey a message to the rationalized audience. There are significant changes in Bond’s theatre from
Brechtian theatre. The style of an epic theatre, as in a documentary theatre, finds its fulfilment through a sequence of theatre devices: use of a chorus, a narrator, slide projection, film, placards and alienation effect. Bond has remodelled Brecht’s “alienation effect,” and called it “aggro-effect,” in his plays which concentrate on violence and injustices of a society. Bond has later characterized his “aggro-effects,” as “Theatre Events.” Epic convention of documenting events with their accuracy has helped Bond to narrate the events of his plays as specific theatre events. In this way, Bond's search for new dramaturgical methods accommodates his expression of the “rational culture” in tune with the working class culture. The Epic platform provides him contexts to enact various reconstructive strategies needed in his stage performances. In a way, his dramatic devices are appropriated from traditional theatre devices.

The reconstruction of a traditional myth into a modernized story, (re)invented or (re)interpreted to suit the sophisticated environment is a recurrent dramatic strategy Bond has employed in most of his plays. The mythical appropriations very often invoke the memory of the audience toward certain recent political events of a country. So this strategy is a technique used to connect the past/memory to the present and (re)construct meanings of the present to (re)invent the significance of the past. Both narration and characterization are used as the means to sustain the element of memory in theatre. Whether implicit or explicit, there are clear indications of contemporary events or the political history of a nation in Bond’s plays.
The audience becomes convinced of the dangers of a corrupt society and responds to the nature of events so as to rectify them and build a better society based on rational culture for a better future.

Bond’s epic theatre appeals more to the rationality of human beings than to their emotions. It keeps a form of narrative similar to a chronicle play or a documentary theatre. Bond’s theatre aims at cultivating a sense of history in the audience. Jenny S. Spencer, in *Dramatic Strategies in the Plays of Edward Bond*, emphasizes the element of historical consciousness in his plays: “Bond’s plays immerse actors and audiences in questions involving history and politics that more popular playwrights may prefer not to face” (2006: xiv). History and politics are always interconnected. They raise serious questions of culture and identity formations. Historical events represented in his theatre have direct involvement with the political systems of the past and the present. Their visual representation is related to the concept of identity, of both the dramatist and the audience.

There are many ways in which history and myths have been reconstructed on the stage in Bond’s plays. He develops his plays through various strategies of adaptation, appropriation, imitation, redemption, travesty, allegory and political parables. The enactment of a reconstructed history involves many complexities in its stagecraft. This is because visualization of history cannot be separated from its reconstruction. The performance of the mythic dimensions of his plays cannot be individually separated from that of
their historical facts. In its enactment on the stage, history, memory, myth and the like are different forms of the past. Both history and myth merge with each other in the depiction of events. There are subtle differences in the verbal representations of these forms. But no difference is experienced in their visual (re)presentations.

The theatrical traditions that Bond appropriates for his contemporary political theatre include Elizabethan tragedy, Edwardian comedy, history plays, Brechtian epic theatre, political farce, war plays, naturalistic dramas, documentary theatre, and so on. Bond's *Early Morning* adapts a mixed variety of these theatre traditions. It celebrates the political history of British establishment through comic characterization, adapting the artistic techniques of epic theatre. The narrative structure of the play centres on the character, Arthur. There are twenty one scenes in it. The corridors of Windsor Castle linger in the minds of the audience as the background of the play.

The administrators of the Victorian establishment are reconstructed and staged by Bond in their proper costumes. When the gents wear their morning coats, Queen Victoria appears in her starched frock and lace collar. Florence’s narrative reveals that Queen Victoria keeps a lesbian relationship with Florence, though she is married to George, one of the Siamese twins of the heirs of the royal family of Queen Victoria. In Scene Nine, during the trial of Lord Chamberlain, Florence plays the role of John Brown to participate in the trial.
John Brown’s use of language provides a natural setting for the ongoing trial in the play:

Florence. Theer’s enough sheepies heer in yon baggie tay nat wavies far yeer ’hae armee, wuman. As ma faither sayed; eek muckle the wuman, an the nattin wull sluther. That’s wisdom. (1977: 175)

It is John Brown who speaks through Florence to Queen Victoria, who makes a demand for wool to knit her dress during the trial. The Queen addresses Florence as Lady Flora during the trial. When they are too intimate with each other, Florence assumes a male role with the name Freddie. At a few other times, Queen Victoria addresses her Florrie. Lord Chamberlain, the accused in the play, is indirectly reconstructed by Bond to show his protest against the censorship of his plays.

The division of the stage into upstage and downstage discriminates people on the basis of the classes in the society. In the play, Len and Joyce sing in the vernacular; they are linguistically concordant with their social background. Tony Coult, in The Plays of Edward Bond, comments on the satirical tone of the language used in the play:

When he (Bond) turns to a more open and expressionistic style of play with Early Morning, a new kind of dialogue appears, a very funny, formal parody of the speech of the middle and upper classes. It is a style that satirises the moral evasions made
possible by cultivated speech, and the inability to deal with real experiences. (1978: 77)

Class divisions are performed with the difference in the use of language the different classes use in their life. In Bond’s play, the formal use of language together with the inadequacies of coping with real life experiences satirizes the deterioration of values in Victorian culture.

The play with its surrealist techniques comically celebrates the dream-like atmosphere of the cannibals. The Scene Fourteen depicts George, but he is only a skull and a few bones, like a ragged epaulette on Arthur’s shoulder. The setting of Heaven from Scene Sixteen onwards as the location of the few events in the play creates a supernatural dimension to the play. Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts, in Bond: A Study of His Plays, observe: “Early Morning is written in the form of a dream sequence” (1980: 66). But, the play very realistically tries to evade itself from the dreamy characterization and refers to the destructive attack on historical figures.

Bond often uses linguistic anachronism as a subversive force to reconstruct history and satirize false morality. Since language is the index of the social class of the speaker, socially inappropriate use of language by the characters produces a ludicrous situation on the stage. According to B.A. Young, the play achieves its humour not only “by the ludicrous use to which august historical characters are put but by the ingenious use of anachronistic or socially inappropriate phrases in their dialogue” (Vinson, 1973: 107).
The play directly satirizes Victorian morality abundant with social evils which people still keep as their own. The scene of hiding Arthur’s head on the lap of Florence surrealistically creates a lot of humour in the play. The narration also reveals the possibility of unnatural happenings which add to the comedy of the play. Victoria’s passion for the head of Arthur makes her reply: “It’s the sort of perverse thing he would do. We’d end up with two Arthurs on our hands. I couldn’t cope” (1977: 214). Supernatural atmosphere of the play paradoxically enacts the stupidity of Victorian values still prevalent in the society. Arthur’s metaphorical coinages like “I’m like a fire in the sea or the sun underground. I’m alive” (1977: 215) contradict the nature of ordinary life. Arthur’s paradoxical comparison of the living with the dead, who are “always hungry,” amazes even his friend, Florence.

Jenny S. Spencer, in “Edward Bond’s Dramatic Strategies,” comments on the comic nightmare in Early Morning which disrupts the traditional notions of Victorian history:

The grotesquely caricatured figures of Queen Victoria, Gladstone and Disraeli are attempts to displace the history-book idealizations of such real personages, idealizations which live on to justify our present institutions and obscure the destructive contradictions on which they rest.(Spencer, 1981: 126)

The reconstructed figures like Queen Victoria, Gladstone and Disraeli from the British official history have close similarities with the historical real personages
in the empirical history of the nation. But the dissimilarities expressed in the play are to subvert and satirize the institutions the authorities have constituted in the society.

Bond’s Lear clearly depicts a world which is teemed with brutal forces working against the basic values of humanity. Bond reconstructs the King Lear myth of ancient times in this play. Besides adapting the legend of King Lear, Bond appropriates Shakespeare’s classic play King Lear. The story of King Lear has been suitably given apparent twists in Bond’s Lear. But the theatre audience has the reminiscence of the traditional myth in their minds, which helps the playwright to reduce his narrative realm to the minimum and to create explicit difference from the traditional point of view of the myth.

Shakespeare created King Lear to strengthen the myth in the minds of his contemporaries. In The Dubious Spectacle: Extremities of Theater, 1976 – 2000, Herbert Blau observes that Shakespeare’s King Lear has been recreated ever since Renaissance period. Such appropriations often,

. . . intersects with theory in relation to revisionism, with another brief look in passing at the Renaissance stage. I might add that the way I think about it has long been affected by the work that was done on Lear, receding now in memory over the space of many years, as a matter of history itself, …. (2002: 286 – 87)

Blau emphasizes how Lear functions as memory and history in the minds of theatre audiences. The play recreates the theatrical tradition of Elizabethan
tragedy in a modern way. This is the result of Bond’s dissatisfaction with the action of the play created by Shakespeare. While Shakespeare’s King Lear passively accepted his destiny, Bond’s Lear boldly acts despite his tragic situation. Bond has deliberately appropriated the classical Elizabethan tragedy into a modern tragedy.

For Bond, the modern tragedy encounters the dark realities of the daily life. Lear’s suffering is the result of the cruel oppression of his own daughters. The portrayal of the blinding of Lear is scientifically performed on the stage with the help of a prison doctor. Bond uses the theatrical device of making the torturer a representative of the audience. This connects the action to the spectator and makes the torturer feel the inescapable guilt of participating in the action. Lear sees himself as a caged animal, unjustly and cruelly condemned.

The play Lear precedes two essays titled, “Introduction: The Rational Theatre” and “Author’s Preface.” These essays make clear how Bond wants to communicate his idea of rational theatre through the enactment of Lear. He states in his “Introduction: The Rational Theatre”: “Literature is a social act; it is the social expression of thought and uses the social medium of language. Yet a creative act comes through an individual. It is these creative acts that seal the individual with his society” (1978: xi). The rhetorical style of speech used by Lear has been intentionally employed by Bond. According to him, rhetoric is one of Lear’s Three Great Crimes. The myth of the rhetoric communicates the
saying: Might is Right. Bond’s use of language in the play is purely poetic with its command for action.

Rhetoric or poetic language often leads the audience away from the flawed action of the character. It provides a cover for overlooking misdeeds or failures. Bond’s poem titled “Lear,” in Theatre Poems and Songs, restates how people had been surrounded by myths during the period of Lear. The poem begins as follows:

Lear was born in ancient shadow
When men stumbled in darkness
And bound their wounds with myths. (1978: 3)

The continuing stanzas are direct commentaries on what happens in the separate scenes of the play. Apart from the details available from the text of the play through narration, commentary and instruction, Bond’s use of songs provides informative background to the constitution of his plays. In his “Author’s Preface,” Bond structures his argument of the play: “Act One shows a world dominated by myth. Act Two shows the clash between myth and reality, between superstitious men and the autonomous world. Act Three shows a resolution of this, in the world we prove real by dying in it” (1978: 12). Similar to an epic play, Bond intervenes with the audience by means of songs with music, prefaces and commentaries to convey his messages, aspirations and challenges to the audience.
The depiction of the supernatural entity by means of a ghost has served several purposes in the play. Lear's self-pity and political consciousness develop into compassion when he befriends and harbours the Gravedigger's Boy's Ghost. One of the ways through which Lear achieves consciousness is his relationship with the Ghost. Ghost takes over the mission of teaching the old man Lear how to live. Part of Lear's learning process is conversations with the Ghost. He literally teaches Lear how to walk, beg, and be compassionate to strangers. In brief, the Ghost provides Lear the wisdom of practical life: life cannot be lived in terms of imagination, poetry or rhetoric.

In the third act of the play, Lear becomes an artist, a storyteller, who understands that parables are sufficient means of explanation in a violent age. When Lear first appears on stage, he is a cruel king bent on building a wall around his kingdom, supposedly to protect his people. His actions show his indifference to their lives; he kills a workman who has accidentally killed another and thus delayed the completion of the wall. In the poem “Lear,” Bond observes Lear’s new life in death:

He’s shot on the wall
At death he began to make a new life
Others still live the old life. (1978: 3)

Lear is shot dead, at the end of the play near the same wall he built to protect his people from enemies. His attempt to destroy the wall is part of his active role in action rather than remaining passive to the immoralities of the new government.
Lear’s action is a visualization of “the language of paradox” on the stage. Bond’s message to the audience is loud and clear: be ever active to protest the injustices done to them. The wall symbolizes social institutions that control society. It confines and restricts people from their natural urges to transcend their limitations. Bond’s Lear is a classic illustration of re-visionist mythmaking. The wall is an attempt to stagescape resistance.

In the poem “Lear,” in Theatre Poems and Songs, Bond shows how art subverts the past. Art has the ability to be rational. Bond portrays the misconceptions of the people, who consider that the world is absurd. According to him, the society is absurd with its own corrupted practices. Bond demands that the society needs a change to make a change in the world. Lear’s action to subvert the powers of the authorities, although causes his failure, results in the protest against the injustices of the society:

- Our world is not absurd – our society is
- Art is rational and subverts the past
- When the weak choose to fight they are already strong
- A man’s pessimism is measured by what he will lose
- His hope by what he will gain
- When the world is changed. (1978: 3)

Bond’s poems in Lear help the audience to take decisions befitting to the need of the hour. Very often, the songs directly make comments on the need for change. In the poem “To the Audience,” Bond pinpoints the nature of his
communicative approach to the audience. It becomes clear that he wants to highlight what everyone normally fails to observe:

I want to remind you

Of what you forgot to see

On the way here

To listen to what

You were too busy to hear

To ask you to believe

What you were too ashamed to admit. (1978: 4)

The poem exhorts the audience to realize and recognize the nature of reality in the day-to-day life. The society seems to have indulged in its normal practices. Other poems in the play Lear include “On Leaving the Theatre,” “Titles,” “Lear’s Song,” “Lear’s Father,” “Lear’s Prison,” “Lear at Forty,” “Song of the Grave Digger’s Boy,” “The Snake,” and “The Autopsist and the Fish.” These poems are sung at the respective action referred to by the characters in the play.

Bond’s Narrow Road to the Deep North is a satirical reconstruction of the British Empire. Bond reconstructs the play's launching point with a true incident in the life of the seventeenth century poet Matsuo Basho who abandons a starving infant by a river-bank in order to travel North in search of enlightenment. This is a memory play, highlighting the life of Basho who is responsible for his actions in life. As in an epic theatre, the poet Basho has
been estranged from the audience for abandoning a society in its poverty-stricken state.

On his return, Basho becomes an accomplice on the side of the imperialist Christian forces waging war against the peasant-tyrant Shogo. The play narrates how Shogo’s atrocities make him a tyrant in the city. He is the representative of the worst administration that a country can have. Bond depicts an immoral society through Shogo. His language manifests his impractical execution of his administration. Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts, in *Bond: A Study of His Plays*, remarks: “Shogo does not understand certain things and resorts to cryptic sayings as an alternative: “I can’t be on both sides of a door at once…” (1980: 94). It is by the end of the play, the audience realizes that Shogo is the abandoned child who grows to be a tyrant in the society. Kiro’s revelation of this fact becomes dramatic in the end of the play while it questions the responsibility of an artist, like Basho in the society. The play deals with important issues like artist and his commitment to society. Bond hints that in the conflict between social commitment and personal aspiration, the artist must commit himself to society.

Bond satirically reconstructs the Japanese haiku tradition of poetry in the play. Bond’s version of Basho’s poems subverts the conventions of haiku tradition. The play consists of many poems supposedly versified by Basho. Bond’s version of Basho’s poetry narrates the life of the people by the river Fuji. Further, the poems are the interpretations of the events in the play.
The play does not employ a chorus to interpret its events as in an epic play, but the characters individually make their evaluation of events in the play. The poem “The Old Horse” in *Narrow Road to the Deep North* portrays the difficulties people encounter in the society:

The old horse stops on the bridge

The carter unhitches and leads her from the shafts

Leg broken

Passers-by help to push her in the river

Wild struggle but she drowns quickly. (1978: 19)

The flood in the river makes their life difficult. The other poems in *Narrow Road to the Deep North* include “The Soldier,” “On Being Arrested,” and “Poems Kiro Reads.” The poems in the play narrate these difficulties.

The play *The Bundle* is again a reconstruction of Bond’s own earlier play, *Narrow Road to the Deep North*. Both these plays use the same legend of the life history of the Japanese poet, Basho. The river Fuji functions as the sustainer as well as the destroyer of the people who depend on it for their livelihood. The text of the play, *The Bundle*, precedes Bond’s introduction titled, “A Note on Dramatic Method,” wherein he states:

Plays should deal, either comically or seriously, with situations, accounts and characters, which concern the audience in their daily life. But a dramatist need not always deal with the present. The past is also an institution owned by society. Our understanding of the
past will change with our developing consciousness. This is not a partisan rewriting of history but a moral discovery of it. (1996: 130)

Through *The Bundle* Bond deliberately decides to relate the events of his drama with the daily life of the theatre-goers. As he states, Bond is concerned with the moral discovery of events he narrates. Bond rewrites his memory of the life journey of Basho, the Japanese poet. He thinks that a sense of the past or a consciousness of history helps one rediscover one’s past.

*The Bundle* depicts two artist figures: Basho and Wang. Wang becomes a son figure to Basho. He is educated and raised in Basho's house as a slave. These different class positions produce different results in the play. Basho's journey to the deep north is to contemplate enlightenment in order to make a better judge of him. This is a new dimension Bond adds to the artist Basho, to be one of the ruling classes. From the beginning of the play, Basho is shown as obsessed with self-dramatization, apparent in his diction and ceremonial utterance which he uses throughout his daily life.

Robyn Fivush and Catherine A. Haden, in *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self: Developmental and Cultural Perspectives*, elaborate on the power of narratives in constructing cultural frameworks and events:

If narratives are a critical link between memory and self, then it becomes apparent that the roles of language and social interaction are paramount. By their very nature, narratives are culturally prescribed forms for
organizing events through canonicalized linguistic frameworks. Although
events in the world may be organized in space and time, it is through
narrative that events take on human shape and human meaning. (2003: viii)

Narratives manifest the relation between history and identity. This relationship
is established through language. Language organizes and concretizes events on
the one hand and constructs their meanings on the other.

Basho’s encounter with the abandoned baby reveals the artist’s
responsibility to the society. This encounter becomes the yardstick with which
the audience measures Basho's artistry and his action throughout the play.
The link between art and reaction to human suffering is emphasized by the fact
that Basho's introduction of himself as a great poet coincides with his reaction
to the abandoned baby. His art mirrors the human condition and misery, and it
does not advocate enlightenment in order to change them.

Basho, after fourteen years of absence, comes back to the same spot, and,
still more melodramatically, encounters the same Ferryman and the baby whom
he abandoned. Bond exposes the falsity of Basho and his enlightenment in this
scene. The baby left by the river is, melodramatically, sold to the same artist
who abandoned him in the first scene. Although the baby grows up and is
educated in Basho's house, the whole experience creates a different character of
Wang because of his class position. Had not Basho abandoned the baby and
reared him instead, he would have the same class experience of Basho.
The boy’s fourteen years’ experience as an underling cultivated a different class
experience in him. As his childhood experience was well-entrenched, he could not erase them. He is taught to write and to study the classics and is accustomed to stand behind Basho's judicial chair and to listen to the poets' singing to the Koto. Wang even uses Basho's poetry to advocate knowledge of how the ruling class thinks and executes power and control. His class consciousness and sense of class conflict help him understand the working of power hierarchies in society.

The seventh scene of the play is structured as a play-within-a-play, as a dramatic rendering of the protagonist Wang's abstract analysis of his society. It functions as a manifestation of Wang's ideas and of how he relates them to society. Wang successfully manages to direct a piece of epic theatre. He has grasped the principles underlying epic conventions: participating in actual performance, bringing the participants to the point of recognition, arousing their capacity for action, and forcing them to take decisions and to encounter the responsibility for the actions. The scene is only a visual presentation of the protagonist’s class consciousness and his effort to interpret society on the basis of class.

The poem “Crimes” in *The Bundle* goes on to narrate the impact of a cruel society. It is an irony to notice how the unjust can temper injustice with pity and the merciless to give mercy. The poem symbolizes a world teemed with anarchy:

The unjust temper injustice with pity

The merciless give mercy
Just as tradesmen to make a profit
Mark some goods down. (1978: 136)


Freddie Rokem, in *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre*, claims that theatrical performance of a past event is only redoing of it on the stage:

Theatrical performances about historical events are aesthetic adaptations or revisions of events that we more or less intuitively (or on the basis of some form of general knowledge or accepted consensus) know have actually occurred. The theatre, by performing history, is thus redoing something which has already been done in the past, creating a secondary elaboration of this historical event. (2000: 6)

Staging a reconstructed history is an enactment of a past event in the context of the present. In this regard, it is only an aesthetic and visual attempt to construct a sense of the past.
Bond’s play *The Fool* displays the cultural circumstances which lead artists to face their reality in terms of a commodity culture. Bond's depiction of the relationship between art and reality is expressed through the technique of the play-within-the-play. As Shakespeare’s play-within-the-play, *The Mousetrap* in his *Hamlet*, the play reveals and re-enacts the real experiences of the society. As it is an almost autonomous performance, it spaces the production in relation to its audience and environment. But on a more fundamental level, it shows the extent of theatricality created by the inclusion of a subtext within a main text. The location for the play-within-the-play is significant in many respects. At the porch of Lord Milton's house on a winter evening, a group of peasants, dressed up in the fancy costume of mummers, appear. The events take place at one of the upper class characters’ house, which signifies a specific social dimension to the relationship between the classes.

The purpose of the mummers’ gathering at Milton's house at Christmas signifies an annual re-enactment of the traditional popular story of the victory of St George over the powers of death and darkness. They are assembled in the hope of winning the favour of Milton and his guests. Satisfying the gentry unmistakably motivates the players. This purpose is reflected in the inner play's opening lines of the Enterer In: “to have a ‘treat.’” With this purpose in mind, the performance proceeds. However, the mummers’ costume initiates an atmosphere of playfulness that is connected to the peasants’ idea of a theatre. For Milton, his family, and his guests, the event is simply an entertainment.
The performance shows the cultural lag between the feudal lords and the peasants which finds a parallel in the social and cultural disparity between the capitalists and working class. In all regimes, the lower classes are expected to humour the upper classes; for the lower class art and life cannot be separated, but for the upper class art is an entertainment to bring joy to life. Art necessitates all classes to come together, whether to entertain or sustain life.

The playlet brings two classes together in one place on an occasion of merriment in joyful atmosphere. The gentry even hiss, boo, laugh, and whistle in response to the mummers. But the very idea of performing for someone else shows the separation between the classes. The social context of the performance shows the essence of the class division and underlying class conflict. Within the social gathering of Christmas, there is a gulf between the two groups. The spectators do not participate or identify with the characters at any stage. This is the greatest shortcoming of the performance. The aesthetic and cathartic functions of the play fail to take place. The class conflict does not dissolve even in imagination.

The performance also provides the Parson with an opportunity to explain the relationship between the poor and the rich. He announces the transitional nature of the age when he, at the end of the performance, lectures to the participants on the changes that are taking place in England of 1815. The Parson's speech declares the end of what is left of the common ground between the classes which appeared in the gentry's response to the mummers.
The political rather than the religious motif of his speech as well as the speech being directed at the peasants rather than at the gentry, establishes the position of the Church as a forerunner in supporting the newborn middle class. The enactment constitutes, for the Parson, an occasion that gathers even the non-churchgoers such as Darkie. However, Darkie's response to the Parson expresses the peasants' dissatisfaction with the present dehumanizing feudal system as well as the emerging bourgeois one. The peasants are in a quandary: they have to choose between two equally undesirable dehumanizing forces as their regime power.

The theatricality of the inner play is underlined throughout the performance with the characters introducing themselves to their audience. St George resurrects from death as soon as the Doctor pours a bottle of medicine down his throat. The Parson, a character from the outer play, ends the atmosphere of playfulness and mirth and introduces a new reality to the peasants. They become spectators of his enactment, but the vitality of the mummers’ language is a foil of contrast to his formal speech. He uses conventional rhetoric to describe the momentous changes and economic deprivation which are about to overtake the labourers through the new industrial revolution. The language of art used by the rustic artists emphasizes their social/cultural difference from the nobles. The religious rhetoric of the Parson underlines the lack of human interest in religious discourses. The play-within-the-play is a means to visualize class conflict and its influence on
the actors and spectators of the play: the class conflict subverts the elements of epic theatre.

The poet-boxing scene in the play expresses the new artistic sensitivity of the industrial age. This new sensitivity is a paradigm shift which takes place from one specific set of social and artistic circumstances to another set. This drastic change is more evident in Clare's artistic experience which leads him to madness. Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe, in *The Professions in Contemporary Drama*, observes that artist figures are not presented in an ideal manner in most of the bio-plays. A presentation of their weaknesses adds to the reality of events:

In the majority of bio-plays about artists, the central artist characters are not portrayed in an idealizing, let alone idolizing way. Rather, they are shown uncompromisingly as human beings with their good share of weakness, problems and difficulties. (2003: 90)

By the end of the boxing match, Clare's similarity with the boxer, who is unable to give up and who succeeds only in getting himself hurt, is established. Clare's case parallels the boxer's. The boxing scene works as a metaphor of the life experiences of Clare. As revealed, he cannot stop writing poetry and simultaneously he gets hurt. The dramaturgical strategies Bond uses are theatrical both in the written text and on the stage in its encounter with the audience. This scene is a visual paradigm of the poetic career of Clare.
Poetry injures him as boxing injures the boxer. The boxing is the most telling visual signifier for poetry or art.

The Parson surrounded by his oppressors in Bond’s *The Fool*

In the play *The Fool*, Bond deliberately keeps up a number of poems resembling the life of John Clare. They are in a way Bond’s version of Clare’s poetry. Many titles of Bond’s poems in the play have striking thematic relations with the original works of John Clare. The poem “Clare: Autobiography of a Dead Man” in *The Fool* resembles the well-known, original autobiographical poem of John Clare:

Who am I?

I am the play of light
That looks in shadows

Some are as black as crimes

In others I see. (1978: 63)

The title of the poem has been changed into an interrogation from its original version. The poem reflects the mistakes of the friends of John Clare committed to him. It is an ironic representation of the crimes/injustices done to the poet, rather than an autobiographical reflection of the life of the poet. The shadows symbolize how tragic his life was. John Clare's original autobiographical poem "I Am" begins as follows:

I am: yet what I am none cares or knows,

My friends forsake me like a memory lost;

I am the self-consumer of my woes,

They rise and vanish in oblivious host,

Like shades in love and death's oblivion lost;

And yet I am, and live - like vapors tossed. (Martin, 1865: 293)

The poem is a realistic portrayal of the life of the poet. Having been mentally retarded in an asylum, John Clare was forsaken by his friends. Other poems in The Fool include “Culture,” “On Entering Paradise,” “Hanged at Ely,” “Clare’s Wife,” “Mary,” and “Clare’s Little Songs.” These theatre poems comment on the life of the poet together with his friends in an age of industrialization. It depicts the tragic moments of an artist in a world of commercialization which lacks human values.
Performing history is problematic: it creates the context to orient history between the wide range of fact and fiction and erases the difference between the two. Freddie Rokem, in *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* claims:

Since performing history is obviously a hybrid notion—creating a bridge between performance and history—at times it moves closer to the fictional and even allegorical pole (like *The Mousetrap* and Levin’s *The Boy Dreams*) and at others closer to the pole of historical accuracy and documentation (like Sobol’s *Ghetto*). (2000: 7)

Performance creates an illusion of difference between history (fact) and fiction which the verbal text attempts to level. Performance often makes an allegory out of reconstructed history, myth or memory.

Bond thinks that words and actions are inseparable in theatre; they are complementary and even synonymous. The idiom of theatre has a physical form often called gesture. Words induce action and audience judge a play by its action and not by its dialogue. In this context, Karl-Heinz Stoll, in “Interviews with Edward Bond and Arnold Wesker” reports:

Actually it's not a literary art at all, and it's related more to sculpture than to painting. You have to get a basic grounding in the theater. It has to become second nature to you to think in terms of things acted out on the stage. You must not write in a literary way, you must not write clever speeches. Words must
only be the means to gestures. Words must be a form of action. Language on the stage has to be physical. Anything you say must induce action or repose or whatever. Nothing can be judged simply by what is said but only by what is done, by what happens. (1976: 413)

Bond’s contention is unambiguously self-explanatory. Bond’s plays have evolved out of his direct experiences at the theatre. He thinks that theatre is more an actor’s art than a writer’s art. So theatre requires an act of improvisation. He finds that the best scenes are those that yield most to improvisation. Thus a dramatic text is elastic to the actor’s talent. In this regard, Stoll reports:

But having done that I think all writing for the theater has to be an act of improvisation. It has to be related to the actor's technique and not to the writer's technique. This is something that I learned at the Royal Court, in the writer's group, where we never discussed or worked on dramatists' questions and problems. We learned how to improvise. Therefore, although I have carefully laid down a structure for the scene, the actual writing of the scene has to be an act of improvisation. If in the act of writing it does not work in the same way that an improvisation works, then I know the scene will be no good. (1976: 413)

These words reveal Bond’s insights into theatre arts. Bond feels that the language of theatre is intended to be heard and not to be read. So grammar
seldom finds a place in theatre. The idiom of theatre conveys the experience within the economy of words. So its does not matter whether the words belong to poetry or prose. The writing for the theatre is a genre in itself. In this context, Bond replies to Stoll:

I don't make a distinction between poetry and writing for the theater because, as I said earlier, I don't think that the language of the theater is a literary, grammatical thing. It's a physical thing. The words have to be physical on the stage. Shakespeare, of course, is the supreme example of this, because you actually feel his words when you say a sentence. It's a curious experience, and one knows that they are written absolutely for the stage and not to be read. (1976: 414)

The best dramatists write for the stage. Their dialogues become poetry by accident.

Michael Patterson also expresses a similar view in *Strategies of Political Theatre: Post-War British Playwrights*:

Bond’s technique, therefore, is to write dialogue that is explicit, devoid of subtext. His sentences are short, and abstract nouns are seldom used. Subordinate clauses are a rarity, most of these being simple temporal clauses introduced by ‘when’, ‘before’ or ‘after.’ This is not to exclude poetry, however. Some of the
mineral sentences have all the force and richness of poetic expression. (2003: 145)

Patterson thinks that short sentences form powerful dialogue. They have the force, richness and economy of poetry. They are like triggers ready to shoot and to leave an impact on the audience.

Writers use various approaches and techniques for making Shakespeare their contemporary. Bond has attempted to contemporarize Shakespeare in his plays. Bond has reimaged Shakespeare and presented him on the stage as a character. In this regard, Martin Esslin observes:

. . . there is the question of the re-writing of Shakespearian themes by modern authors. *Endgame*, as Jan Kott has pointed out, is a paraphrastic treatment of *The Tempest*, as is Edward Bond’s *The Sea*. Indeed Bond has used this technique very often, in his *Lear*, his *The Sea*; and in *Bingo*, he presents Shakespeare himself on stage as a character. (Elsom, 1989: 26)

Bond has re-written not only Shakespeare’s plays but also his biography based on traditions. It is interesting to see how Bond has transformed Shakespeare into a character along with his superman and his self-willed king. But Bond has the innate urge to portray his character with sympathy. Bond’s Lear is
culturally redeemed, though he has inherent human weaknesses. In this regard, Ruby Cohn remarks:

Lear … though old and blind at the end of the play, he climbs up to the wall that he himself originally constructed to defend his kingdom; and starts to de-construct it, if you will forgive the pun. He gets shot for doing so. But he has learnt. He is a more explicitly socially redeemed Lear than Shakespeare with all his ambiguities, chose to portray. (Elsom, 1989: 162)

Bond has made his Lear endeared to the audience. He has no ambivalence or ambiguity of vision. He presents his characters with all their weaknesses; but they are all eligible for redemption and social acceptance.

Bond’s theatre has internalized violence which is all pervasive in the world. He has innovated different techniques to visualize violence in society which range from madness to deformity from mutation to suicide. Bond wants to convey the abiding and disturbing presence of violence in all levels of social life. Bond deliberately negates the alienation effect of epic theatre to forcefully convey the idea of violence. In this context, Jenny S. Spencer remarks in “Edward Bond’s Dramatic Strategies”:

As opposed to Brecht’s alienation-effect, Bond once referred to them as “aggro-effects.” Hallmarks of his distinctive style, these protracted moments of threatened or disturbingly explicit
violence are remembered by the audience long after the performance. (Spencer, 1981: 132)

Threatened or explicit violence is pervasive in all social hierarchies. Bond wants his audience to leave the theatre with the lingering memories of violence visualized, though symbolically, on the stage. He expects his audience to respond to the violence in society, both natural and man-made.

In Bond’s epic play *Human Cannon*, Agustina of Estarobon becomes a historical spokeswoman of the Spanish Civil War. In the play, Agustina enacts the strategy of agitation through her defence against the authorities. The play brings into the minds of the people the memory of two revolutionary wars in Spain during late twenties and late forties. The location of the play is the small village, Estarobon. Bond locates the play in Spain in the description of the setting of the play in the text:

Spain

The first scene in the late twenties

The other scenes from 1936 to 1940. (1996: 35)

These indications tacitly remind the poor condition of the state of Spain during the Spanish Revolution. Nando’s parable of the stone on the ground underlines the emergence of an aggressive society in its developmental stage. Bond’s indication in the argument of the story questions the existence of a peaceful world teemed with machines as weapons. Nando’s daughter, Tina enquires and
wonders on the truthfulness of the story. Its affirmation is followed by the shifting governments who make restrictions in the state.

Besides the small houses of the poor villagers, there is the background of a city factory workshop. The setting of a road in the mountains adds to the scenic beauty of the landscape. Darwin Reid Payne, in *Scenographic Imagination*, observes: “Scenographers do make visual images: sketches, set renderings, working plans, and numbers of other kinds of drawings. Contributing to the creation of active images on the stage is a better description of the scenographer's function (1993: 87). Scenography stagescapes and visualizes narratives. The beginning of the play has a staging description: “A house with a field sloping behind it” (1996: 37). In Part Two, Scenes Seven, Eight, Ten and Twelve Bond employs mountains as the background of the actions.

Bond often uses incoherence and incongruency in the orientation of real objects to challenge the audience’s sense of reality or sense of space. Shomit Mitter elaborates this in *Fifty Key Theatre Directors*. For instance, Mitter, who directed and staged Bond’s most controversial play *Saved*, tried to use reality “precisely because it destroys illusion on stage” (2005: 151). The combination of real objects in imaginative contexts is challenging to the audience. He explains:

Edward Bond’s *Saved* (1967), in which Stein put a real boat on stage but deliberately failed to paint in the trees and the water that
the boating scene required. The act of insinuating an incongruously real object into the fictitious context of a piece of theatre had the effect of challenging the audience’s sense of the real – which was Stein’s precise intention. (2005: 151 – 52)

This incongruent stagescape underlines the difference between reality and illusion, fact and fiction. In the visualization of reconstructed history, this attempt is an exercise to the audience.

Bond employs role-playing as an important feature for the enhancement of the trial scene in *Human Cannon*. This enables him to use the strategy of separating the actor from the character between the scenes. In the trial, characters play other characters for different reasons. Role-playing is also constituted by complementary theatrical devices, such as the location of the trial, the relationship between the actor and the character outside the dramatic events of the trial, and the use of verses. The re-orientation of the location for the trial is followed by assigning different roles for the participants to play. As victims of the pre-revolutionary regime, the peasants act as the powerful. This change of personality and status inevitably underlines role-playing. The role-playing is a visualization of power relations. It visualizes interpersonal relations in terms of power politics.

Ignacio's narration as an actor establishes the proceedings of the trial in which he plays the character of the revolutionary organizer and later the prosecutor. He states: “On the fifteenth of February nineteen thirty-six the
Spanish Popular Front defeated reaction at the poles” (1996: 40). The role of
the prosecutor complements the revolutionary viewpoint Ignacio practises.
He narrates as an actor and his narrative leads to the interpretation of the
dramatic events. This technique of playing different character within the
trial facilitates him the possibility of being in and out of his character. He
also plays a completely different character when he remains for the illiterate
dead victim, Manuel. Within the overtly theatrical structure of Human
Cannon, Bond reverses the proceedings of the trial and allows the lower-
class to judge the defeated ruling-class. The trial scene is a visualization of
human predicament: man has to act out different roles in life. But the
technique of a single actor playing different roles visually and imaginatively
helps the audience.

In the play, there are different narratives loosely connected through the
characters. The narratives are imaginatively integrated through their visual
presentation. Tina’s narration predicts the fall of the Republic in Spain. This
narration confirms the role-playing in relation to the actors. Here, the narrative
has also the effect of a prophesy.

Tina.

For three years the people's militia slowly retreated before
Hitler Mussolini and Franco
In December nineteen thirty-eight Barcelona fell
Soon Madrid would fall
And on the first of April nineteen thirty-nine the republic would fall. (1996: 56)

These narrative demonstrations emphasize Bond’s preoccupation with the history of the Spanish Revolution. Rico’s narration also facilitates the atmosphere of war:

Rico. In a year or two the whole of Europe will be at war. We can hold out until then. When the allies fight the Nazis they’ll have to fight our Fascists. (1996: 59)

The presence of sentries with their 75 mm gun in Fascist fatigue uniform in the city factory yard adds to the terrible existence of the people in the nation. The aftereffects of the atrocities of the war are communicated, as in the Brechtian epic theatre, through the song of the chorus in the play. Scenes seven, nine and eleven end with the songs of the chorus. These songs touch the emotional chords of the audience and produce a strong impact on their mind.

Year after year the workers toiled
And plowmen bowed their heads to the ground
Till they were driven to die in war. (1996: 117)

Bond regards the songs in his theatre as a detached entity which contributes significantly to the play's meaning by carrying their own explanation, comments, and clarifications. “The Curse” is a song sung by Agustina, who is turned out of her house; she curses those who set Jose and Maria against her. The song expresses political consciousness and fierce reactions to the ruling
classes who exploit the working class to manufacture their guns. Class division is visually represented as a curse which is the inevitable tragedy of any society.

The song titled “Song of Agustina Ruiz Known as The Human Cannon” praises the fighting and struggling human being, supports the laws of change and the impossibility of defeating the fighter. The song has a mythical element in it: it shows a miraculous figure who will “ride the world with my two talking horses / Till the generations of the earth are free (1996: 107). This mythical figure has also the power of the seed that when falls on a stony ground shall turn the stone to fruitful earth, making it a garden in the “wastes of tyranny.” The unconquerable figure even equates her womb to mother earth's power of giving birth to liberty. These features, powers and attributes make the figure a legend. Here Bond attempts to construct a personal myth and connects it to the elements of nature to enrich its meaning and to elevate it to a transcendental level.

Bond, in his essay “Two Cups,” speaks in terms of a short parable to show the nature of drama which has mysterious powers to change reality. This change shows the reality of the ideological standpoints people ordinarily take. Bond’s drama depicts this change which people realize in the staging of events. He remarks:

What is drama? There are two cups, one white and one blue.

The white cup has a handle. The blue cup has none. We break
the two cups and trample and scatter the pieces. We carefully reassemble them. No fragment is left over. There is no crack on the cups, not one sign of breakage, each cup is perfect. But the blue cup has the handle and the white cup has none. Drama changes reality. (2006; viii)

The staged events of Bond’s dramas reveal how the people in each society make a world of their own not away from reality, but with a frequent interrogation of its existence. Scenography helps the audience to challenge reality. But it is imagination that connects reality and (re)presentation. Dramatic techniques often create on the stage a distinction between anticipated reality and performed reality. The incongruence in scenography magnifies this difference.

But Bond’s concept of reality is related to imagination. He explains the relation between the two in his essay “The Reason for Theatre.” He illustrates this relation by introducing the concept of the “Dramatic Site.” In his collection of essays *The Hidden Plot: Notes on Theatre and the State* (2000), Bond explains:

Imagine we travel on a road and the road exists but we do not. We lie in pieces along the road as if dismembered, but as yet the pieces were never whole. The gaps between some of the pieces are long. As we go along the road we find pieces of ourselves and assemble them. This image is imaginable but irrational. It is also rational but then unimaginable. That is the human paradox.
There is a gap between the two understandings. The gap is the site of drama. (2000: 143)

Bond means that reason and imagination are polar opposites in practical life. But reality in theatre is an imagined reality and pure reason spoils the aesthetic enjoyment of this reality. Bond’s “Notes on Imagination: An Introduction of Coffee” not only serves as the preface to the play but also explores a child’s mind to get a complete explanation of the world. Bond describes the concept of mapping the world as a means to know the world. The fourth note explains mapping:

A child’s world is a map. It learns to live in the world by mapping it. Its map of the world is its means of being. A child could not think or move without its map of the world. The map must contain and describe both the known and the unknown places. Nothing may be unmapped. Anything unmapped would be like a hole in nothingness. A child’s mind resembles a ruler, if part of the ruler moves the whole moves. (2003: 95)

The function of imagination is like mapping: imagination maps both the real and the unreal. But they cannot be separated. Bond also connects imagination with value. Everything imaginable has a value. He explains in the eighth note as:

Science is value-free. It studies the world in itself, not as a source of value. Science usefully mines diamonds in order to study
rocks. But everything in the imagination has value, nothing is imaginable without value. To imagination, value is what resistance is to touch. (2003: 96)

The significance of value in imagination leads to the importance of hermeneutics as a mode of analysis.

The stage setting of the third scene of the play *Born* is on a green hillside. With sophisticated techniques of the stage crafting, the stage is divided into an upstage and a downstage. This division depicts the society divided into the oppressed and the oppressors. The character named Woman is a victim of the armed criminals. There are five WAPOs dressed in their black working uniform, boots, and leg and body armour. Each of them uses his riot stick and visor helmet with a riot shield of transparent synthetic glass. The costumes visualize the oppression enforced through disciplinary power.
The play has been given a natural setting. WAPOs represent oppressors in uniform. The colloquial language of the characters points to their social class. For instance, the WAPOs use a local cockney accent, which Bond has accurately recorded. The WAPOs form themselves into a class with their cockney dialect and into a power group with their uniform. The rustic language also stands for the primitivism of the WAPOs. Bond points out that English society has not changed much since Bernard Shaw. Its social class of people can still be identified on the basis of their accent:

**WAPO 4.** It was ‘is idea. ’Arf set it up ’isself! Should appeal t’ ’im.

*(To WAPO 2.)* Yer start it - ’e wont agree else. (2006: 43)

The accent is unique and it constitutes the cultural identity of the WAPOs.

There are different types of narratives for the stage. Presenting past on the stage is visualization of the narrative. Reminiscences form one such type of stage narrative. As memory they form part of the history/past. In this kind of narrative, the reliability of the narrator is important. Lapse of time after the event may lead to unrealistic memory; the narrator may feign senility or even he/she may be senile. This situation leads to a discontinuity in narrative. It is often called a “betrayal of memory.” This is often used as a dramatic technique to fabricate narrative. In this context, Brian Richardson observes in “Voice and Narration in Postmodern Drama”:

. . . the most familiar presentation of narration on stage, the type of drama often referred to as the memory play. It is a partially
enacted homodiegetic narrative in which the narrator is also a participant in the events he or she recounts and enacts. (2001: 682)

The action progresses through the memory of the narrator, who is often a passive participant in the action. The impact of other characters on the flow of his/her memory is minimal. The narrator makes the audience to imagine what he has forgotten in the course of narration. In this regard, Richardson refers to the unreliable memory of Henry Carr in Stoppard’s *Travesties*:

Tom Stoppard’s *Travesties* takes place within the memory of Henry Carr, a historical figure who worked in the British Consulate in Zürich where, in 1918, he met James Joyce. The play is set several decades later; Carr is an old man thinking about writing a record of his encounters with the great figures he ran into during World War I. (2001: 683)

Carr’s old age and unreliable memory restricts the course of action of the play. The audience wonders whether he has actually lost his memory or he feign forgetfulness or brain fog. As they are unsure of his state of memory, they imagine the missing links in this narration. Thus, the audience unconsciously and indirectly participates in the narration.

The memory of a narrator often deceives the audience with its exact stage. No one, not even the person, has any hold on his memory: some events never fade out of our memories even if we want to and some others fade out of
our memory against our will. In this context, Rhonda Blair observes in *The Actor, Image, and Action: Acting and Cognitive Neuroscience*:

> Memories are fleeting and vivid, nebulous and absolutely real. Sometimes we can’t forget even though we want to, and sometimes memories fade, though we want to hold onto them with all our might. Memories are front and center in our consciousness and buried deep below it. … a memory is a neurochemical event—the activation of a neural pattern. (2008: 70)

Memory is a part of the unconscious and is a neurochemical process. It can never be controlled from inside or outside.

Bond considers each play an event or a sequence of events. What makes the play remarkable is the historicity and theatricality of events. In his correspondences published in, *Edward Bond Letters I*, Bond remarks that he considers his constructions in the theatre as specific “theatre events” (1994: 41). This particular coinage is in tune with the socialism he supports and encourages along with his political activism. Both class struggle and economic hardship suffuse Bond’s works. He constructs his plays both politically and poetically around images. Bond presents each play as a cluster of images: there is a dominant image supported by several complementary images in each play. Each image is reinforced by crisp dialogue which is the verbal form of action.

For Bond, the ability to construct fiction/ history is a cultural device. His theatre is an attempt to visualize history that is fiction. In an interview with
Peter Billingham, in “Drama and the Human: Reflections at the Start of a Millennium,” Bond specifically highlights his dramatic space and emphasizes that “fictions are the way we relate to reality” (2007: 8). His orientation is to depict the injustices of the present society by connecting it to the past and to urge the humanity to find a way out through social transformation based on reason. Rationalism and humanism form subtexts in his treatment of appropriated, adapted and fictionalized history. Bond’s perspective of imagination is value based. In this regard, Bill Roper remarks in his essay, “Imagination and Self in Edward Bond’s Works”: “Importantly, human value, not fiction, is at the heart of the human mind’s use of imagination to understand the world and society” (Davis, 2005: 126). The objective of imagination is to understand the world/society on the basis of human values. Bond develops a politics of humanness and its aesthetic of theatre to represent the relation between the Self and the Other in a problematized contemporary world.

Theatrical construction of history, especially synchronic history, has assumed great significance recently. D. Keith Peacock, in Radical Stages: Alternative History in Modern British Drama, observes that historical drama enjoys great popularity in contemporary times: “Its characterization and broad acting style were likewise in keeping with the theatrical conventions of the day, and its period settings allowed ample opportunity for the satisfaction of the contemporary taste for picturesque staging” (1991: 19). There are several techniques employed for the depiction of period settings in a historical drama.
The sense of a historical period is communicated by means of references to historical figures, places, their costumes, settings and their dialogues peculiar to the period. In these plays, the scenography is often anachronistic to contemporary audience. The stage is often decorated with many objects which characterize peculiarities of the period enacted on the stage. Characters, settings, costumes and language are the major elements which (re)construct history / past on the stage. Very often dramatists employ anachronism as a means to link the historical events presented on the stage with the present concerns of the age.

Hippolyte Taine, the exponent of Positivism, regards a literary text as the expression of the milieu and the period in which the individual lived and the race to which he belonged. All human achievement, including drama, can be explained with reference to these causes summed up by Taine as “la race, la milieu, et la moment.” Literary scholarship takes as its object the casual explanation of the text in relation to these three factors and this makes it a form of scientific history. This prevalent notion of the positivist view of history has a great impact on the writers of the post World War period. It advocates a philosophy which claims the representation of events in terms of race, milieu and period. Katherine Worth, in *Revolutions in Modern English Drama*, notices that the dramatists of the war period are interested in portraying events in their dramas as the positivists intend them to be. She observes that the dramatists remain “to the pretence that the play has no audience, is not a play at all but history as it happened, the real thing” (1973: 5). This is true to their presentation and the audience believes that the events shown are
true to fact similar to the experiences of many victims of the First and the Second World Wars. To phrase it differently, the plays present the events in such a way as to highlight the fidelity to experiences, though they are sordid and repulsive.

Bond’s Bingo is a manifestation of Shakespeare’s life together with his moral response to the social relations with people. The life of the artist figure Shakespeare has become a myth in the minds of his admirers. The play celebrates his role in the society. But the great poet is presented as manipulating the lives of many people who surround him and depend on him for survival. His family disgracefully neglected by him represents the first category of people to whom Shakespeare behaves irresponsibly. His wife, his daughter Judith, Ben Jonson, the Son, and the Old Man confront Shakespeare as victims in the difficult hours of their life. But Shakespeare’s responses to them are morally shocking.

Shakespeare's dialogue with Judith underlines his strained relationship with his daughter. Shakespeare, well known for keeping manners in language, shows his frustration in the moral development of his daughter’s behaviour. Judith’s acceptance of her deteriorated language further emphasizes her protest for the neglect shown to her:


Judith. I can only use the words I know. (1974: 18)

The confrontation of Shakespeare with Judith is only an instance of protest where the use of language has been thoroughly deteriorated. Ben Jonson’s

Mr. Combe’s meeting with Shakespeare in the garden of the poet is related to the issues of enclosure movement. Combe’s men were to start digging the land for enclosure. In the witness of Combe, Shakespeare signed a document. Meanwhile, the Young woman made her way quickly out of Shakespeare’s garden. When Shakespeare admitted that the Young woman came here in search of a job, Combe took a determined step not to make herself a nuisance anymore. Later, the Young woman had been gibbeted on a hill. Two labourers Joan and Jerome, both middle aged, watched the hanging body for a moment. On their way to work in the field at Welcombe, they met the Son and Wally and enquired about the death of the Young woman. They together prayed to the Lord God for the establishment of justice. As cultural materialists register their commitment to the transformation of a social order, the gibbeted woman becomes a means of exploitation on the grounds of gender and class. Here, the Young woman’s wish to transgress, to go beyond the limit of what is morally or legally acceptable, meets with fatality. The strong material forces working in the society never permit anyone to go beyond its control.
In an attempt to set away the marginalized groups from the society by the dominant group, power structures exercise hegemonic and oppressive measures. This emphasizes that there is no equality for the down-trodden with the capitalists.

Bond uses powerful visuals to present violence on the stage. All the lower class characters are disturbing presence on the stage. The scenography in Bingo includes the hanging corpse of the Young woman, the fencing and the bridge. They represent violence against the poor and women, enclosure of the common land and the economic interests bridged by the poet and Mr. Combe. The Oldman and the Son present madness on the stage. The former’s mental deficiency caused by an attack with a blunt knife is a form of madness. The visual presentation of the play forces the audience to internalize violence and react against it. Bond uses sociolects to present social division of classes in his plays.

Bond’s use of sociolects, music and flashback is particularly useful for historicizing the past in his dramas. The poem “Scenes of Death and Money,” in Bingo, is the reversal of the sub-title of the play: Scenes of Money and Death. Bond’s observation on the relation of money and death is significant in an age of capitalism:

A man holds money
As a man under water holds breath. (1978: 49)

Bond’s plan is to depict a society in terms of money. He also shows the anxiety of every human being on the problems of its transaction and exchange. Other
poems in *Bingo* include “Shakespeare and the Beggar,” “Shakespeare’s Last Poem,” “Shakespeare and the Mulberry Tree,” “Three Poems on Shakespeare,” and “A Further Poem on Shakespeare.” These poems reconstruct Shakespeare’s relation to his society both as an artist and as a human being.

Hilde Klein, in “Edward Bond’s Use of Sociolects in His Dramatic Work,” claims that Bond uses different sociolects to reflect the social stratification of society. Bond employs them to “describe a concrete social class …to reflect the character’s social roles or to establish a social difference with the upper classes…” (1991: 96). Dialectical differences in the use of language create the impression of a character’s locality and the community to which characters belong. In the second act of *Lear*, Bond uses dialectical expressions like “T’ent time t’ natter,” which in plain English means that there is no time now for idle talk. All classes - aristocratic upper classes, middle classes and lower classes - of a society find a place in his theatre. Bond’s earlier play *The Pope’s Wedding* is set with characters belonging to the middle classes and they speak the idiom of a local community of East Anglia.

Bond’s *Coffee* is an imaginative reconstruction of the Nazi execution site Babi Yar. The five scenes in *Coffee: A Tragedy* are arranged in a specific manner, one after the other. Each one of them is respectively titled as The First House, The Second House, The Big Ditch, The Third House and The Fourth House. The stage of The First House is set on an upstairs room in a block of flats. The suspicious movements of the characters Nold and Gregory are
presented in an exaggerated manner with the voice of a woman outside the stage. But Nold on the stage does not show any sign of hearing the voice. He continues with his daily duties. The natural setting of the play has an abrupt shift to a dream-like landscape in the scene of The Second House.

The scene titled The Second House has a dark opening in a forest. At the back of the forest, there is a hole which leads to an underground hovel, a small dwelling unfit to live. The narrative of Simon reveals the nature of landscape in the scene:

Simon: They found a ravine – a ditch - a cliff on both sides. We set our guns up on one cliff – the other cliffs four ‘undred metres away on the far side a’ the ditch. Thass the point a’ it: ’arf way up that cliff there’s a ledge – runs right along it. Wide enough for one t’ walk on. There it was, ready waitin – a natural piece a’ architecture. They push ’em out on the ledge in groups. Thirty – forty – at a time. (2003: 163)

The setting of the natural landscape has its significance as Bond wants to perform a real incident he experienced in his life.

The scene at The Big Ditch is performed on a cliff top. The stage has been set up with three parts: a downstage, an upstage and a centre stage. A ravine in a full afternoon sunlight is imaginatively constructed with the power of narrative. A set of objects create the atmosphere of a military camp: a portable field canteen is arranged with Primus, coffee-pot and billy-can.
Ammo boxes, food scraps, cigarette packs, three empty schnapps bottles and other litter are scattered over the cliff top. The soldiers wear the Field Glasses and keep Machine Guns. The action of the play is revealed through the narratives of the soldiers.

The scene of The Third House is set on the floor of the big ditch, covered with the dead and dying. The use of the shortened language in Coffee signifies the threatening atmosphere of the play. A few characters are not named, they are introduced as Woman, Girl, etc. The Girl, who is always hungry, dances with the Woman when they get the sight of food which is hardly available to the victims. The scarcity of water makes the characters in the play meet each other. The Woman, though very late to realize, recognizes that the Girl is her daughter. The scene is made more theatrical with the death mask of the Woman worn by the dead in the ditch. They are imaginatively identified as dolls, the playthings of the living individuals. Fed up with the meaninglessness of life, Nold, Gregory and Simon attempt to play with their rifles to make an end to everything. Their reminiscences of the family make them to move with the present life. Gregory shows his companions a family photo from his wallet, which depicts Gregory in his civvies holding the shears with his wife.

The scene in The Fourth House is set in the daylight of a corner of a room with a table and three chairs. Terrible events are reported by the Young Woman and Nold, such as the bombing, and consequent death of the mother of the Young Woman trapped under the ceilings of their house. The girl, who
accompanies Nold, is brutally shot dead by the soldiers. The cry of a child off the stage points to the poverty of the people under strained conditions of the wars. There is only soup for them to drink, and that too is cooked once a day in a cauldron in the street. The scene ends with the emotional and expressive statement of wonder that Nold communicates to the Young Woman:

Nold. (eyes clenched, fists clenched on the table, through his teeth) I survived, I survived. (2003: 216)

The play is a visual presentation of the destructive potential of contemporary wars. In this context, A. M. Keith remarks in Engendering Rome: Women in Latin Epic:

The destructive potential of war in the twentieth century, encompassing as it does global annihilation, has endowed critical inquiry into the Western way of war with a new urgency and stimulated analysis of the role of war narratives in shaping cultural conceptions of power and conflict. (2004: 65)

The global destruction inherent in the recent war has necessitated a new critical enquiry into its nature. The play Coffee is a war narrative which can be viewed as a discourse of power and conflict.

Bond’s The Crime of the Twenty-First Century reconstructs the horror of war crimes. The play has been noticed for its futuristic stage-setting with the depiction of the ruins and remains of wars. The characters Hoxton, Grig, Sweden and Grace experience a pathetic living in the dilapidated wasteland as a
result of the atrocities of wars. Bond has created a terrible atmosphere where human beings suffer from lack of food, shelter and clothing. It is a world wherein people have been in mad search of their lost relatives. Bond imaginatively resurrects the dead to give meaning to the living.

The Tenth Scene of *The Crime of the Twenty-First Century* has been tactfully named the scene of the seven howls within its direction. Other than the comments of direction, the scene consists of no conversation, except the seven howls. The setting of the scene is a grey coloured room with a pale luminosity. Grig, the remaining character in the play, stands beside a stone block, which is like an empty pedestal. Grig’s institutional smock resembles the colour of the stone. Grig’s slow movements and staring across the stone at nothing point to the emptiness of his mind. As a frustrated and lonely man, his seven howls are preceded by utter silence in the play.

The landscape of the Tenth Scene of the play has accurate descriptions of an abandoned site. The resolution of the play is theatrically handled with silences and continuously enacted with seven howls. The scene ends with the beginning of the song, “The Site,” which elaborately comments on the significance of the site. As described in the song, people misunderstand that the age of peace stands with eradication of starvation. But it is an age where people starve for justice. The hunger of the age is for the establishment of justice. Justice has been replaced by machines in the twenty-first century.
Innumerable minute descriptions of the characteristics of the age are poetically presented in a song titled “The Site”:

The rivers dried – the seas became sewers where rats swam and ate fish – storms blew away mountains – uprooted the forests – the trees clutched the earth with their claws – cities were crushed into trenches of rubble where cannibals bred their children to eat – and the storm swept the human dust into columns and howled with the hunger that was in them. (2003: 270)

The cities, crushed into trenches of rubble, and teemed with cannibals give an image of the twenty-first century. It is an age when humans cease to depend on nature and begin to be fed by machines. But, it is the time when the machines begin to consume their own product. The hungry are shut in a vast prison city called Priscit. But the rich shut themselves in a ghetto. Both God and the Devil are icons of the insane. The meaning of the scene of the seven howls becomes clear in the verses of the song: “The dead were shut in a vast megasuburb that had no centre – /they howled as their way of talking to themselves” (2003: 271). The howls are the language of the dead. Grig’s seven howls communicate to the dead his anxiety of loneliness and the death-like life he leads now.

As a response to the fighting events of the Falklands war in the South Atlantic in 1981, Bond wrote his Restoration: A Pastoral. Falklands islands were under the rule of Great Britain until Argentina invaded it in 1982.
An attempt to restore the territory from Argentines led to the Falklands war.
The Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had a great role in executing the
recovery of the islands. Bond imaginatively reconstructs the events of the
Falklands war on the stage. His adaptation of Falkland war is an indirect one,
implying political protest through allegorical representation. The setting of the
play points to a park in London, where Lord Are makes an agreement to marry
Miss Ann Hardache, the daughter of a wealthy coal merchant.

Jenny Spencer, in her *Dramatic Strategies in the plays of Edward Bond*,
observes that the play is balanced in two acts between the binary opposites of
the comedy of manners and the comedy of tears: "As a comedy of manners in
Part One gives way to the comedy of tears in Part Two, the audience's
complicit, self-conscious laughter makes way for equally complicit, self-
conscious suspense" (1992: 178). Bond reconstructs an atmosphere of both
laughter and suspense in the play. The first act is light-hearted and comic, but
the second act deals with a serious issue. Bond’s deliberate attempt to
reconstruct the Restoration comedy results in provoking the audience to unearth
the hidden realities involved in Margaret Thatcher's politics of the Falklands
War. Though the play begins with a comic note, it meets its end in death and
disaster. In this respect, G.E.H. Hughes remarks in his “Edward
Bond’s Restoration”:

The best material out of which *Restoration* is fashioned is at first
sight that of Restoration comedy. Bond’s Lord Are is a version of
the familiar rakish aristocrat of the period and Lady Are is a version of the vulgar social climber. The mainspring of the plot, when Are kills his wife by mistake while she is disguised as a ghost, is typical of Restoration theatrical device. It is not the kind of incident that convinces us we are watching the real world, but it has its own vitality on the stage. (1983: 77)

The reality of the performance rests with its own staged reality besides the play’s allegorical illusion to the Falklands war. The play, as it historically alludes to the nineteenth century Falkland War, does not go in tune with the period of restoration in British history. But it has a close affinity with the theatrical tradition of Restoration comedy.

Bond makes explicit references to the representation and treatment of social classes here. Lord Are and Ann belong to aristocratic society. Bob, the servant of Lord Are, and Rose, the black maid of Ann, are the victims of the suppressive forces of the dominant classes. The conflicts arising out of the social classes lead to social injustice, which is Bond’s primary concern in the play. The narratives of Bob and Rose reveal their identity in the society. Bob claims that he is an Englishman, but Rose reminds him of his slave status.

Bond employs the technique of disguising the character Ann as a ghost who was later murdered by Lore Are. With farcical manoeuvres, Lord Are makes his servant Bob, the culprit of the incident. The events that follow are similar to what happened to the soldiers in the Falklands War.
Thatcher’s decision to sink the Argentine vessel, Belgrano is allegorically reconstructed here through the death of Bob. The severe attack from the British government led to the beginning of air and naval battles causing the death of several British soldiers.

As the play moves on with the elements of epic theatre, the incidents in the play provoke astonishment in the audience. Walter Benjamin, in “What is Epic Theatre?” elaborates on how the audience experience astonishment for the characters in epic theatre:

. . . the art of the epic theatre consists in producing astonishment rather than empathy. . . . instead of identifying with the characters, the audience should be educated to be astonished at the circumstances under which they function. (1999: 147)

The astonishment is created when the comedy in the play paves its way for tragedy. Besides employing the Brechtian devices of epic theatre, the play appropriates the theatrical tradition of Restoration comedy. The play also enacts an abrupt change in the theatrical conventions of Restoration of comedy, which causes astonishment in the actions of the play. Bond employs the devices of asides, monologues and biblical imagery to intensify the depth of ironies and moments of black comedy. Bob communicates to the audience in asides at the time of the execution of his sentence.

Music and songs contained in the play communicate to the audience the political message of the play. Songs function as public soliloquies because they
do not express the characters’ view of political awareness; they function as commentaries by the dramatist. The theme of the songs revolves round the defects of class structures. Many of the atrocities of the war are brought forward through occasional songs. The black maid, Rose sings a song, “Man is What He Knows,” resonating with the elements of war:

   Do the troops shoot
   To kill your stomach but not your head?
   They shoot to kill
   You drop down dead. (1977: 275)

In this struggle, the downtrodden find it helpless to move on with their life. The aristocrats of the society symbolically shoot the hungry and the powerless to destroy them permanently. In the play, the language of the songs is alien to the characters’ discourse. But it has correlation between the experiences of actors and the spectators. The songs keep up a formal unity and identity in communicating a common idiom to the audience. When the dramatic events are enacted in various contexts, the songs carry Bond's explanations, opinions, and generalizations of the meaning of the actions. As in an epic theatre, the function of the song is to communicate directly with the audience. The tone of the songs helps the audience to shift their focus to the dark undercurrent of oppression, treachery and violence within the play. Frank’s “Song of Learning” narrates his life experiences as a servant to the audience:

   For fifty thousand years I fought in their wars
   I died so often I learned how to survive
For fifty thousand years I fought battles to save their wealth
That's how I learned how to know the enemy myself. (1977: 194)

As a servant, he was crucified for his sincerity and honesty. The aristocrats forced him to admit a crime which he did not do. The “Song of the Calf” satirizes Bob's inability to comprehend his social circumstance by comparing him to the calf's inability to escape the butcher. Bond’s comic presentation of Bob culminates in his tragic death:

You take the calf to the slaughtering shed
It smells the sweat and blood and shit
It breaks its halter and runs through the lanes.

The hollering men run after it. (1977: 210)

The chasing narrated in the song communicates to the audience the way Bob has been treated by the Aristocrats in the society. As Bob’s position in the play, Gabriel, the blind swineherd, is a victim who lost his eyesight in the battle. Bond provides colorful costumes and scenery in creating a comedy which leads to a tragedy. The play suggests that the Falklands war was unnecessary. But Bond exploits the pathetic situation of the soldiers with his use of violence and cruel humor in the play. The war was not a battle for independence but for dignity and assertion that the Great Britain had great military force. Thatcher felt that the war showed Britain's strength. But the play serves as a form of protest against the war and against Thatcherite lifestyles.
Bond’s *The Woman* reconstructs the myth of the Trojan War. When Bond starts its performance, the members in the Headquarters of the Greek camp celebrate the death of Priam. Bond introduces offstage characters and their voices to communicate the death of Priam. This device adds to the theatricality of the atmosphere of the play by making the audience anxious to ascertain the identity of Priam in the history of Greek drama. The cheers and the shouting of the two Greek citizens, Thersites and Ajax, reveal that Priam was one of their enemies. The narrative of Heros communicates to the Greek camp its long waiting and stay for five years outside the city of Troy in the hope of its invasion.

The short scene titled “A Scene inside Troy” within Part One, Scene One takes place on the stage. But, as Bond carefully directs it, the performance of the events is to be imagined as occurring in Heros’ head. Thus, the audience gets a clear picture of the characters known to be Trojans inside the city of Troy through the imagination of Heros. This technique, as a play-within-a-play, enables the dramatist to express the aspirations and desires of Heros after the death of Priam in the Greek city. The events performed on the stage do not actually take place inside the city of Troy; rather, they are only the imaginative construction of Heros. This is a deliberate subversion of the actuality of events represented through fictional means.
As the play symbolically reconstructs the Trojan War, the events in the Scene inside the Troy function as the background of the battle. Hecuba’s Son, the next heir to rule the Trojans, comments that Hecuba’s behaviour to her people involves an act of playfulness: “You bully people by acting! She treats this city as if it was on a stage” (1978: 16). The son’s comment ensures the audience on the status of the representation of their actions as the performed reality. Bond deliberately alludes to the reconstructive strategy of his theatre events throughout the scene. Hecuba’s narratives reveal the history of the rulers of the city of Troy and inform the audience how the city is protected with a wall from its enemies. The scene functions as a dream/fantasy and immediately shifts its focus to the discussion of the people outside the city of Troy.

In “Notes on Acting The Woman,” Bond states that the production of the play is realistic. His aim is to narrate a story which leads to truth, rather than a mere recording of events:

Our production is real. It has its feet on the ground. It is not over-realistic (as some Chekhov productions are) for a particular reason: we want to tell a story or analyse the truth. We don’t want to record things but to show the connection between things, to show how one thing leads to another, how things go wrong and how they could be made to go well. (1978: 126)

Bond focuses on the exposition of the relation between different theatre events. Their relations are the means to identify the real status quo of events.
The portrayed realities on the stage are real in themselves, even though they pinpoint to the actions that can be taken by the audience in their daily life. Sean Carney, in “Edward Bond: Tragedy, Postmodernity, The Woman,” emphasizes that “like Brecht’s Epic Theatre, The Woman is primarily a form of dramatic storytelling (2004: 8). The contradictory elements of the real and the fictional suffuse Bond’s works. His storytelling corrupts the authenticity of narratives in the presentation of fictive elements.

Elizabeth Hale Winkler, in The Function of Song in Contemporary British Drama, emphasizes how the songs employed in the play resonate with the rhythms of human life: “The movement of the storm in the three stanzas is patterned according to the rhythms of human life, from childhood via mature sexuality to old age” (1990: 169). The lines in the song use onomatopoeic words resembling the movements of wind and lightning of thunder.

Girls. Wheeeeee!

Boys. (Sing.)

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Wind blows wheeeeee!

God panting on his woman

Crack bang! Crack bang!

Old man thunder
Broke his walking stick
And fell down in the sea!


Bond’s narratives anchor on chorus, theatre-song, music and play-within-the-play. The phrase, “God panting on his woman” points to the mature sexuality of human life. The thunder has been personified here through the Old man. Besides the occasional songs included in the play, Bond attaches in the appendix of the text, supporting materials like songs, commentaries, essays, stories and poems. These constituents are very essential for the comprehension of the play, as they interpret the actions based on the nature and behavior of the characters in the play. In an essay titled “History,” Bond comments on the nature of truth in history: “The architect knows that a roof is supported by the building’s foundations. …in history truth - like the physical laws of nature – comes from the foundations” (1978: 111). In order to know the real nature and the truth of events, it is necessary to ascertain the background of the characters and events in the play. His commentaries, stories, poems, songs and essays help to realize the subtexts of his play. With many co-ordinated factors that can enhance the comprehension of the play, Bond helps the audience to find the real relation between characters and their actions.

Bond’s plays portray different classes and gender distinctions through various theatre devices. Costumes play a great role in identifying the societal status of characters. His theatrical productions celebrate internalization of
violence, discrimination of classes, oppression of the marginalized, internal as well as external colonization, and the commodification of culture. Bond incorporates background sceno-graphs, colour, light, music, songs and landscapes to intensify the theatricality of his plays.

His stage techniques coordinate spatio-temporal dimensions with the division of the single stage into upstage, middle stage and downstage to highlight the contemporaneity of historical events. Even supernatural entities find a place in his theatre. Bond's theatre devices include theatre events enacted with aggro-effects. They help the audience to distance themselves from the characters in the convention of epic theatre. Epic style also underlines the historicity of time in his plays.

Bond’s reconstructive strategies include reconsiderations of traditional myths, redeeming the memory of artist figures in history, and appropriations of theatre traditions like Elizabethan tragedy, Greek tragedy, Edwardian comedy and history plays. His use of language and the dialectical differences of the various characters bring out the class divisions of the society. His imaginative reconstruction of historical events becomes the theatre events in his dramas. They portray the predicament of human existence in an atmosphere of threat, menace and violence.
Chapter VI

Conclusion

In the postmodernist view, a literary text is a cultural construct. The construction of a text is possible only through the linguistic process of narration. Narrative is related to representation and it is part of human life. Narrative is an indirect representation of reality. History is one of the forms of narrative. There were processes of historicization of events through the narration of stories, portrayal of picture-galleries, performance of history plays, filming movies, and so on. Traditional narrative strategies reduced the range and scope of its application to linear structures. But postmodernism has brought radical and wonderful insights into the nature of narrative. Postmodernism promotes a celebration of the decentred subjectivity and heterogeneous narrative strategies. Postmodernism exhorts the audience/readers to view a work of art from multiple points of view. A history play in the postmodern context does more than what an ordinary historian can do. Any director who concentrates on staging the historical events through narrative undertakes an added step to perform them in its historical context, imaginatively reconstructed. Whereas the narrative medium of historians only comments on the nature of events, a playwright has an added advantage of staging them together with its narrative elements.
Shakespeare’s history plays concentrated on portraying historical personages and events as they were or ought to be in linear narrative structures. His audience recognized the historical relevance of such dramatization of events in their objective reality. The truthfulness of such dramatized and historicized events was questioned by later generations. Postmodernism has lost its faith in grandnarratives, including History. The tacit claim of objectivity in narrative is ruptured to an extent to give form to fragmentation in experiences. The fragmented experiences of the writer or narrator are represented through fractured narratives.

Both history and literature are primarily narratives used to represent reality. The narrative aspect of history and literature erases the distinctions between them. They merge into a single narrative space when the postmodern is historicized in the text. The narratives reflect the identity of the writers, making language self-reflexive. Identity is a process of becoming: it is constructed from the matrix of similarity and difference. Identity is also continually renewed, redefined and rediscovered through the linguistic process of writing. In the textual construction of national identity, tradition/past is historicized in narratives. A society can acquire a unique identity through historicizing its past. Historicization of the past is essential for a social/political identity. The emergence of a postwar British society, for instance, is the outcome of the process of historicization. Every narrative is a manifestation of the self. Postmodern notion of the self celebrates fragmentation.
Postmodern narratives can truly reflect the fragmented subjectivity of the writer.

An audience’s sense of history can be developed by a dramatist through the portrayal of historical events to which the spectators have been witnesses. Every playwright incorporates an amount of facts into their narrative which is blended with fictional elements. Both the fictionalization and factuality of events serve to establish the politics of the playwright in staging such historical events. In the postmodern era, the dramatist’s responsibility is to provoke the audience to question the validity of staged events. Multiple focus and fragmentary narratives of actors/characters in non-linear structures enable the audience to approach a historical event in its multi-layered phenomena. This is a fact which traditional dramatists failed to communicate in their dramatization of events. The postmodern view of history as disruptive and discontinuous finds its significance in the application of the interpretation of theatre events.

History plays have been staged with innumerable strategies of imitation, appropriation, adaptation, redemption, parody, satire and so on. Different approaches to the historicization of events in the postmodern era point to the fragmentation of experiences. The playwrights’ treatment of historical issues is governed by the ideological motives apparent in their dramatization. Any ideological standpoint subverts the real conditions of life in its actuality and serves to various political interests. The truthfulness of a dramatized event is not the concern of postmodern dramatists. Rather, they focus on the effects of
dramatized events on the audience. They enable the audience to react positively to the issues presented in the play.

Edward Bond has been experimenting with the dramatization of historical events ever since he became a reputed dramatist in 1960s. Bond employs many narrative strategies in his plays for the reconstructions of the past as a medium of radical politics. His representations of historical myths are for social change. For him, historicization of events necessarily requires a process of re-discovery with the interpretation and imaginative reconstruction of the past. Contemporary means of reconstructing the past have explored the fundamental perceptions of the real and the virtual in narratives. The virtual simulations are a means of realizing facts. Poststructuralists point out that virtual simulations are realities of their own positions rather than any empirical reality. But Bond’s virtual presentation of historical events metaphorically functions as a critique of real historical personages or events. He deliberately reconstructs known historical figures to point to the gap they have created during their times. Thus, Bond’s dramatized history subverts the traditional notions of history and functions as a critique of mainstream history. Sympathizing with the working class and the marginalized groups, Bond symbolically enacts genealogical histories through his plays.

The process of historicizing the past has great political and cultural significance. It is closely related to the cultural identity of societies. A society gets its identity only through the process of historicization. The national
identity of a country can be determined only by writing a history of the nation. Unless there is no process of historicization, a nation, despite having a past of its own, struggles to find a political identity amidst other nations. This makes clear the inevitable role of historicizing the past for the present and the future.

A comprehensive analysis of the constituents of postmodern historiography reveals the nature of narratives. In the postmodern era, the expansion of historical imagination has paved the way for innovative techniques and practices. The postmodern notion of history, especially from the points of view of historians like Hayden White, Dominick LaCapra, Paul Ricoeur and Arthur Marwick, has witnessed the progressive blurring of concrete facts. Very often, readers/writers experience a problematic of the marginalization of literary as well as historical facts in postmodern writings.

There are many postmodern historians who deal with the problems of narrating history. They confront with the problems of representation and reality in their attempt to (re)construct their identities through narratives. Narration of history becomes problematic when viewed from a marginalized perspective. Since both historical and fictional narratives are considered literary artifacts, reconstruction of past/history is a literary device used for artistic and political purposes. Reconstruction of past/history leads to multiple interpretations of a historical event. It helps to approach a past event from multiple perspectives. This narrative technique makes historical and fictional text open-ended with multi-layered semantic/political structure. Reconstruction of past/history is a
narrative strategy used to examine the possibility of a totality of vision or a completeness of understanding in a text or a discursive practice. It is therefore, part of metanarrative.

Writers and historians re/construct the past/history in various ways and manifest it in their writings. Reconstructing the past/history transforms the cultural identity of a society and negotiates the political identity of the writers through their writings on the present. This reconstructive process is a means by which the devoiced/the voiceless can articulate their resentment and dissent. It also helps to analyze the voids and silences in the narrative structures of a text.

Reconstruction of past/history challenges the mainstream/emperical history and the dominant power structures represented in it. As literary histories of the colonial powers are author-oriented, the writers of the colonies are juxtaposed with the writers of the empire. Generally, it is the dominant group that governs the society gets represented in the mainstream historical narratives. The marginalized/subordinate groups also develop their perspective on historical events to subvert the hegemony of the dominant group and its oppressive measures. The different forms of genealogy are alternative and counter-hegemonic historical narratives. Poststructuralist concerns in the epistemological structures of genealogical history have considerably reduced the gap between the mainstream and the marginalized/devoiced societies.
Rewriting history and reconstructing history are two separate processes with different purposive actions. The rewriting of a specific history may update the available information on a specific event/person and attempt to bridge the gap between its fictive and factual accounts. Rewriting prompts a writer to appropriate the recent developments in a system of thought; the degree of its accuracy depends on the value of data either appropriated or misappropriated. But reconstructing history has a deliberate aim of manipulating politics behind it. It can actively reconstitute the foundations of its own constructions. It can also persuade the readers/audience to construct meanings dependent on the requirements of the subjective intentions of the author. Subjectivity in historical narrative is constructed through figurative language.

Reconstructing the past is a means to subvert the hegemonic structures in a society and to review history in the context of the present. Writers and historians engage in re-constructing the past/history for varied purposes. They develop a narrative suitable for adaptation, appropriation and fictionalization. This helps them to challenge the monolithic notion of history and the uniformity of historical narratives and leads to multiple interpretations of the narrated past. The narratives of real events are mere linguistic constructions when its meaning is considered. Historical narratives can never be matched with any extrinsic reality, but they always remain in the state of verbal images. Every reconstruction is a
linguistic construct with a political objective. A writer’s subjectivity is revealed to the readers/audience through his/her writings.

The past in itself has no significance or meaning unless it is connected to the present. Writing the past has become problematic in the present. There are many ways in which the concepts of history/past have been theorized and problematized in poststructuralist and postmodernist discourses. These discourses, both historical and fictional, often treat history in a complex way. Since historical and fictional narratives are linguistic constructs, they get entwined in the text, blending fact and fiction in the structure of the narrative. Both postmodern historians and writers represent the past/history figuratively, transforming the past event through the alchemy of narration. The imagination of the historian/writer alters the reality of the past through the transforming power of language and the politics of narration.

The postmodern historiography is a theoretical tool that can interpret the plays as visual narratives / presentation of histories. Bond’s plays are of historical significance in which the past is often a paradigm of the present or future. The select plays of historical relevance are *Early Morning, Narrow Road to the Deep North: A Comedy, Lear, Bingo: Scenes of Money and Death, The Fool: Scenes of Bread and Love, The Bundle or New Narrow Road to the Deep North, The Woman: Scenes of War and Freedom, Restoration: A Pastoral, Human Cannon, Coffee: A Tragedy, The Crime of the Twenty-First
Century and Born. Bond’s reconstructive strategies include reconsiderations of traditional myths, redeeming the memory of artist figures in history, and appropriations of theatre traditions like Elizabethan tragedy, Greek tragedy, Edwardian comedy and history plays. His expertise in the use of language and the dialectical differences various characters employ, bring out the class divisions in society. His imaginative reconstruction of historical events becomes the theatre events in his dramas. They portray the predicament of human existence in an atmosphere of threat, menace and violence.

Bond’s engagement with history problematizes the textual representation of his dramas especially in relation to the objectivity of historical narratives. Bond’s dramaturgy involves a synthesis of distinctive politics and aesthetics both in the writing and staging of his plays. His subjective review of the events of history through his dramatic imagination and innovative presentation leads to various ideological questions. He has a distinct perspective of the role of imagination in the construction of drama as an ideological superstructure. In Bond’s view, the creation of ideological superstructures is the result of “destructive imagination.” But “creative imagination” brings forward a rational culture of human values and its potential for growth. Bond’s theatre records the vicious impact of an irrational culture emerging as a result of the destructive imagination. He proposes a politics of humanness as a solution. But his theatre events and their manifestations exhort his audience the need for a rational culture based on creative imagination.
Bond’s plays portray different classes and gender distinctions through various theatre devices. Costumes play a great role in identifying the societal status of characters. His theatrical productions celebrate internalization of violence, discrimination of upper classes and middle classes, oppression of the marginalized, internal as well as external colonization, and the commodification of culture. Bond incorporates background sceno-graphs, colour, light, music, songs and landscapes as in the enclosure movement of Bingo, to intensify the theatricality of his plays. His stage techniques coordinate spatio-temporal dimensions with the division of the single stage into upstage, middle stage and downstage to highlight the contemporaneity of historical events. Even supernatural entities find a place in his theatre. Bond's theatre devices include theatre events enacted with aggro-effects. They help the audience to distance themselves from the characters in the convention of epic theatre. Epic style also underlines the historicity of time in his plays.

Postmodern theatre incorporates various strategies, devices and techniques in staging historical events. Narrative is one of the strategies that fulfils the tasks involved in the communication of ideas. While staging the history of an event, language and textuality become the only accessible forms of reality. Bond employs many narrative strategies for the reconstructions of the past as a medium of radical politics. The fabricated narratives of his plays are based on the reminiscences of traditional myths/histories. They are given additional metatheatrical commentary by means of prefaces, theatre songs and
notes to their dramatic methods. Bond adapts the devices of memory-theatre as
an alternative way to link the past to the present, constructing meaning of both
the past and the present. Memory suffuses theatre as an artifact and as a
manifestation of culture. With the presentation of events in the memory-theatre,
Bond redefines the conventional notions of culture by staging the problems in
the existing cultures. His plays move as a kind of postmodern documentary,
alluding to the contemporary issues of society. They construct meanings of the
past in connection with contemporary issues. They also help to review the
concerns of the present in the perspective of the past events (re)presented on the
stage.

Besides these history plays, Bond has also written many other plays
which can be classified and interpreted with the tools of literary historiography
in reconstructing/staging the past. By revisiting the past events in his plays,
Bond develops a contemporary, politicized, radical humanist perspective for an
authentic living in a modern age. For Bond, the theatre is a cultural space
where history is imaginatively reconstructed to stage contemporary reality.
Bond calls his theatre “the rational theatre,” where he finds solutions to the
rational means of human existence, devoid of injustice and cruelty. Violence,
real and imagined, punctuates history in the form of figures, events, myths and
memories.
As a postmodern dramatist, Bond skillfully blends fact and fiction to reconstruct the past/history in the visual (re)presentation of his plays. His plays engage with the problematic of textual politics in dramatic canons. He unravels the issues of writing the dramatic texts as verbal constructs. His politics of re-visionist history and the aesthetic of its imaginative reconstruction are creatively synthesized in his plays. As a historian, he engages himself in reconstructing the past in his radical theatre. But as a dramatist, Bond takes an added step in reconstructing and enacting the events of history in his dramas. He deliberately makes an artistic involvement in his reconstructive strategies. The process of reconstructing enables a writer to review the history in the context of the present. The reconstructed events often subvert the known facts of empirical history. For Bond, reconstruction is a means to subvert the past structured on hierarchical patterns of power. The past is (re)constructively represented based on the evidences available to him.

Bond develops a radical politics of humanness to represent human relations in the problematized contemporary world. He has appropriated, adapted and fictionalized history to explore the subtexts of humanness. Bond’s theatre can be located precisely within the historicity of the present. His orientation is to visually present the injustices of the present society and to show the humanity a way outside it through conscious political changes in the society. But the present world is teemed with the atrocities of cruelty and violence. Having depicted them amidst the crises of the postmodern society, he calls for
the establishment of a rational culture through his rational theatre of creative imagination. This, as Bond believes, can instill the values of humanitarian concerns and develop a society based on peace, justice and morality.