Preface

Seldom can one find historical narratives which are absolutely objective. Both subjectivity and politics often punctuate histories. This study emerges from an increasing awareness of the impact of subjectivity in the narration of historical events. The possibility of reconstructing/rewriting the past dawned to me when I had read Edward Bond’s play *Bingo* as part of my coursework. The conceptual framework of my M.Phil. dissertation also helped me to move further in this direction. My diligent readings led me to interesting parallels between history and literature as forms of narratives. I, therefore, explore the spaces of subjectivity and politics in historical narratives, especially in the representation of reconstructed historical events. The study is a meticulous analysis of Bond’s plays from the perspective of postmodern historiography: how he reconstructs the events to present them as both text and performance.

The first chapter of the thesis, **Introduction: Historicizing the Postmodern**, introduces the relevance of historicizing the postmodern. The process of historicization enables us to locate our identity in the cultural space. Identity is a process of becoming, constructed from the matrix of similarity and difference. History and literature merge into a single narrative space when the postmodern is historicized in the text. Edward Bond’s plays exemplify this mode of narration. Historicization of the past is essential to represent the social/political identity formation. The representation of the
emerging postwar British society, for instance, is the outcome of the process of historicizing the postmodern.

The second chapter, **History as Narrative**, makes a comprehensive analysis of postmodern historiography. It examines the postmodern developments in narrative strategies by presenting the problems related to narrative history as discussed by postmodern historians and literary critics. An analysis of the general nature of literary historiography helps to redefine history from the postmodern/poststructuralist perspective. This conceptual framework of a New-Historicist critique of the writing and rewriting of history highlights the epistemological concerns of genealogical history.

The third chapter, **Reconstructing the Past**, specifically analyzes the problematic of reconstructing the past/history. Reconstruction of past/history leads to multiple interpretations of a historical event. It helps to approach a past event from multiple perspectives. This process of reconstructing the past provides a means to subvert the hegemonic structures in a society and to review history in the context of the present. For this purpose, writers develop a narrative suitable for adaptation and appropriation. It is also guided by the political objectives of the writers.

The fourth chapter, **Textualizing Histories**, is a thematic analysis of the select plays of Edward Bond in the light of the theories of postmodern historiography. Bond’s dramatization of reconstructive strategies problematizes the conflicting views about the nature of history.
His engagement with the events in history is in concordance with the issues encountered by postmodern historians. The narrative of events reconstructed from his imagination exposes the politics in the representation of events. His textual and visual representation of historical events contradicts the objectivity of historical narratives. This, according to Bond’s perspective, results in a dialectic of creative and destructive imagination.

The fifth chapter, **Historicizing Performance**, critically assesses how he visually presents the reconstructed history/past on the stage. In order to reconstruct the past on the stage, Bond adapts a few techniques in his theatre, especially to bring forth the sense of historicity of time to his audience. Besides the employment of the conventions of epic theatre, he appropriates several genres of theatre traditions like Greek tragedy, Elizabethan theatre, Edwardian comedy and so on as part of his reconstructive strategies. Narratives of his characters subvert the elements of mainstream history and highlight the perspectives of genealogical histories. Bond never allows his narratives to degenerate to the level of restricted documentation of historical events. Rather, he takes an added step to enact and bridge the gaps and silences in the marginalized histories. Bond’s attempt to create a rational theatre results in the formation of the Theatre Events evolved through the imaginative reconstruction of historical events.

The sixth chapter concludes that Bond, in an attempt to reconstruct the past/history, skilfully blends fact and fiction in the verbal/visual
(re)presentation of his plays. Bond’s plays creatively synthesize his politics of re-visionist history and the aesthetic of its imaginative reconstruction. A conscious artistic involvement problematizes his reconstructive strategies. This enables him to stage the problems of irrational cultures. Having located his Theatre Events precisely within the historicity of the present, he advocates the cause of a rational culture for a peaceful living in the world. He believes that the crises of the postmodern society can be solved with his rational theatre of creative imagination. With the cultivation of the virtues of peace, justice and morality, Bond develops the concept of a rational culture through his theatre.

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