CHAPTER II

Violence in Action
VIOLENCE IN ACTION

Killings, eating of flesh, poking needles into eyes, stoning a baby to death, flogging the innocent are some of the typical scenes of violence presented by Bond in his plays. The important characters act vehemently or violently. The question is why is it that the leading characters are so violent? Bond explains:

"Violence is a biological mechanism which evolved before human beings evolved, and which has been inherited by them."1

By this, he means that violence existed before man's coming upon the earth; man inherited violence from his forefathers apes and their forefathers, the vertebrates. But there is a difference between animal violence and human violence. Human violence, since it has its origin in the psyche can be identified and prevented. The main reason as stated earlier is social inequality. No human society can be lasting or stable home for injustice. Class society is bound to be violent. In a class society, there is oppression that causes frustration, alienation and class conflict resulting in violence.

In this chapter we are more concerned with the other aspect, violence in action and how it affects other people and thereby the entire social group. One of Bond's earliest dramas The Pope's Wedding is set in and around a small town in rural Essex. The play shows in sixteen short scenes the growing obsession of Scopey, one of a group of young labourers with Alen an old recluse. Scopey becomes fascinated

1. Author's note on Violence on Page 9. (in the Preface to Lear)
with Alen's way of life and intrudes more and more into it. Finally, he kills the old man and takes his place. The reason of Alen's murder is perhaps the invitation Scopey wants is to share what Alen knows. But Alen knows nothing, and the play ends in tragedy. It is interesting to note how the feeling of violence arises in Scopey's mind and how he executes his plan.

In the beginning of the drama the labourers play a bag-game. This is not actually a friendly game but it shows their empty minds and useless violent actions. They get pleasure in violent harassment of Pat through this game. The another scene of the mob-attacking Alen's hut in the same play just due to jealousy for his aristocratic life style shows the violent actions of the group.

The group wrecks Alen's room as he rants - 'The Lord will curse you. He will strike you down between the night and the morning'. Scopey's contempt for Alen is also for himself now that the illusion is shattered and in the face of his anger, Alen quiveringly begins to sing a remembered hymn of agony, blood and sacrifice. Scopey makes one more attempt to extract something from Alen and is faced with confirmation, that the image he has so carefully built out of his need is false.

One of the labourers, Bill, tells his fellows, how he killed his mother -

"I just kicked'er teeth out, kneed'er in the crutch, set light to'er air, an' she died beggin' me, to forgive'er."¹

Later we find the mob attacking Alen's hut, those labourers throw stones, strike the walls and bang the doors. They cry to open the doors. Abusing the old man Alen they do all the destruction they can -

"A Stone strikes the wall.
Byo. (off) Open up boy.
Lorry. (off) Kick the bleeding door in.
Voices. (off) . . .
A stone strikes the wall . . . Laugh, shouts, stones, strike the wall . . .
Laughs. Shouts. A shower of stones strikes the Wall."  

All this is for nothing; only they get pleasure by doing so. Unnecessarily they torture Alen. Their laughs, shouts and shrieks reflect the wild pleasure in the violent act of tormenting Alen.

Scopey kills Alen without any serious reason. There are the three things to attract Scopey in Alen's hut, a great army coat, a stock of newspapers and a photograph of a lady standing in a shop. The great army coat creates a suspense in Scopey's mind that Alen might be a war-time spy, the stock of papers creates a suspense that Alen might be a spell-maker and the photograph of the lady suspects him that the lady might be an important person in Alen's life. He wants to know the story of Alen's life but atlast when everything proves to be common and useless, he gets furious and murders Alen.

Saved being the most violent play, created intense public discussion -

"Although a few critics spoke with some objectivity (Penelope Gilliatt, Ronald Bryden and Alen Brien prominent amongst them) most were hostile and a few hysterical"  

At the same time, the Chamberlain's office moved against the play and early in 1966, the theatre was charged with presenting Saved without a licence. The judgement delivered against the theatre in April, 1966, though on a technicality relating to the conduct of the club's organization of Saved, dangerously blurred the distinction between club and public performance.

2. A list of reviews found in the Companion pp. 79-80.
According to William Gaskill -

"One practical consequence for Saved was that it had to wait until Feb., 1969 for its first public, professional performance in the United Kingdom. By that time, there had been thirty three public productions abroad."¹

Gaskill further narrates most of the debate centred on scene six, where a baby is killed by some men in a park. The shock of one image in this scene became the focus for most of the rage directed against the whole play, and it consequently became transcribable in terms that guaranteed it notoriety and, equally, an almost total lack of analysis the perspective only changed when the play was given clearance again in 1969 at the Court followed by the European tour. By that stage, he writes,

"the shock value had already worn off. They all made that reassessment about the scene in which the baby cries (scene four) being the most horrifying scene in the play and that was quite a general reaction here and, I remember in Poland."²

In the play there is a continual alternation of loud sound and comparative quiet, of doors banging in the house and in the prison cell, of television and radio blaring out, of a child screaming, a tea-pot shattering, a park bell ringing incessantly, a balloon bursting, of voices shouting offstage, quarrelling on stage, of stones thudding into the pram: and there is the silence of boredom, of regrouping before

². Gambit. 17, p. 21.
renewing a quarrel, of the drugged baby and then of the dead baby, of intimate, of infrequent, ordinary conversation.

"In the final scene noise and silence change their function, for here the silence is watchful and neutral and noise is that of Len repairing the chair. These elements establish the characters as victims of their situation and the purpose of the play is to make this unsentimentally clear." 1

There is an extraordinary level of physical movement in the play, all to little purpose but defined to show the wasted energy involved in frustration and purposeless activity. The gang of men is characterized by its intense nervous energy, which finds release in larking about and then in killing, which begins not menacingly, but as a consequence of there being no other outlet. In the house there is a continual movement in and out of the living-room, and a steady trekking between table and sofa. It seems impossible for anyone to be still, apart from Harry whose stillness is retreat and accusation. Even in the final, virtually silent scene, the movement is unceasing, though at the last Mary and Pam do sit and Len rests.

But in scene six, when the young men of the group work up to the stoning of the baby, most of them at some point attempt to restrain one another. Yet all are driven publicly to appear unconcerned. There is a clear hierarchy to the group. Pete's status is enviable to someone like Barry, five years his junior, and Barry is frequently the object of derision from the others. Bond emphasises Pete's view of

himself by giving him a pipe. Barry tries to arrest his status by arguing his familiarity with killing while doing national service, but the group never takes him seriously. In this scene Barry's humiliation is complete and because he is usually routed, it is inevitable that he is who later instigates the terrible action in scene six. Into this comic scene comes Len as the outsider who by accident meets the group and is recognized by Colin as an old schoolmate. The rest of the scene shows the group focussing on Len as a novelty then they deliberately misconstrue his meeting the fifty year old Mary as meaning that she is the one he is to marry.

The silence between Mary and Harry speaks volumes and the scene is also conducted in terms of bursts of bickering.

Mary, Pam's mother is not satisfied with her husband Harry in her personal life. It is clearly visible in her quarrel with Harry when she becomes furious and hits him with tea-pots. She never cares for his tastes wishes and even for his position in the family. She not only hits him in the presence of his daughter Pam but also in the presence of Len, an outsider. The development of her relation with Len shows her sexual frustration with Harry. Certainly this frustration results in physical violence, when Mary and Len are ready to go to bed together, Harry comes and disturbs them. Mary hits him brutally, wounds him in his skull and many other parts of the body and goes to bed with Len.

Another event of Pam's neglecting the child at home, while watching the T. V. and reading the newspaper Radio Times also shows
the violent actions of Pam due to her mental tensions. She has given birth to Fred's child with the feeling that looking the face of the baby Fred will marry her and give his name to the baby as father. Unfortunately it does not happen; instead the result comes just opposite to it that Fred begins to avoid Pam. Pam wants success in her love in the form of marriage with Fred. Therefore she begins to neglect the child. She watches the T. V. with her father, mother and Len; meantime the baby cries in the other room loudly but she does not get up to calm the baby. When Mary asks her to go to the baby she throws the newspaper and tears it. She stays in the room. The baby gets tired of crying, stops for some time, but then again starts crying. At this time Len asks her for the baby. She gets up and smashes the screen of the T. V. instead of going to the baby.

Tearing the newspaper and breaking the screen of the T. V. by Pam are the violent actions denoting her violent thoughts due to her failure in winning the favour of Fred.

The scene six of the baby stoning to death draws a shocking influence upon the audience or readers because this scene is full of improbable violence. It is a question upon the eternal human nature. Is it possible that a group of young persons kill the baby just for amusement? The question is proper but it can be responded easily by observing the aim, style and status of the boys in the group. They are all mentally tensed and frustrated to their own wants and failures in life. They are jobless and penniless both. In this situation their minds are full of violent ideas. They get a kind of pleasure in violence either
in thoughts or in actions. All of them take part in the murder of the baby in a hideous way.

The movement into the last sequence, that of the stoning, is one which modifies the function of the men, from that of a collection of totally limited figures to that of a representative embodiment of the worst features of modern society. They become for that moment something other than naturalistic figures.

"Pete pulls the Pram from Colin, spins it round and pushes it violently at Barry. Barry sidesteps and catches it by the handle as it goes past . . . Pete pushes the Pram violently at Barry. He catches it straight on the flat of his boot and sends it back with the utmost ferocity. Pete sidesteps. Colin stops it."¹

Their acts are much more violent than in our day-to-day life. It seems that they are not human beings. They all enjoy punching the body, pulling the hair and breaking the fingers of the baby -

"Pete. Pull their 'air.
Colin. Eh?
Pete. Like that.
He pulls its hair . . .
Barry. Try a pinch.
Mike. That ought a work.
Barry. Like this.
He pinches the baby . . .
Barry. 'ere, can I piss on it?

Colin. Gungy bastard! . . .

Pete. Couldn't yer break them little fingers easy though?

Colin. Snap!"1

Bond began *Early Morning* is January, 1965, a few months after the completion of *Saved*. The play presents the unacceptable violence.

"At first the play was announced by the Court for production in January, 1968, but on 8th November, 1967 it was returned by the Lord Chamberlain's office, unmarked, and with the single comment that 'His' Lordship would not allow it. Quite apart from the use of historical figures in the play, the Chamberlain was presumably encouraged by the Government's announcement in the commons on 1st November that its bill to end theatre censorship would be dropped because of the pressure of other business. The Chamberlain was not to know that on 14th November, George Strauss (Chairman of the Select Committee which in June, 1967 had recommended an end to censorship) was to win a place in the commons ballot for the right to sponsor a Private Member's bill. Two day later, in consultation with the Home Secretary, he decided to introduce a Theatre's Bill."2

Nevertheless, the Royal Court was in real difficulties over *Early Morning*. The legal decision over *Saved* effectively meant that even a club performance was now liable to prosecution. Since *Saved*, the theatre was vulnerable and the Chamberlain had informed William

Gaskill that a club performance would result in papers being sent to the Director of public prosecutions.

"The Arts Council determined to withhold its grant from the theatre during the run of Early Morning. Partly because the production of the legal difficulties and perhaps because the production might adversely affect the movement towards the abolition of censorship. During the later months of 1967 and the first part of 1968, the English Stage Company was faced with the greatest crises of its short existence. It was compounded by the postponement of the proposed January production because Gaskill became ill with pneumonia."¹

The dates were re-set for three Sunday night performances on 24 and 31 March and 7 April. Not even this schedule was to be fulfilled. Early Morning was finally given for the first time on 31 Mar., 1968. The last play to be banned in its entirety by the Lord Chamberlain's office (Strauss's bill became law on 29th September) was performed, like The Pope's Wedding and like Saved, privately and unsurprisingly on view of the pressure exerted from outside the theatre,

"It was a triumph that the play was done at all. Bond returning from working on a film in Czechoslovakia (Michael Kohlhaas) gave an account of the production in a letter of 8th April, 1968, to his American agent, Toby Cole."²

The production of Early Morning was accompanied by the statement that it 'celebrates the twelfth anniversary of the 'English Stage

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Company. In May for both of these the most violent plays *Saved* and *Early Morning*, Bond was given the George Devine Award.

*Early Morning* is full of the series of Plots against Queen Victoria. Prince Albert and Disraeli have been planning a coup for five years. Both of them want Prince Arthur to join their conspiracy. Victoria, Sensing trouble, arranges a marriage between Prince George and Florence Nightingale, which would guarantee her popular support. The coup fails, Albert is killed, and Disraeli tries to persuade Arthur to sever himself from his brother and continue the rebellion. Arthur runs away, meets his father's ghost, who also urges the continuation of the fight against Victoria and encounters Glandstone who is busily organising his own rebellion. As all of the group meets, Disraeli is shot and Glandstone has a heart attack. Victoria, as always survives with her lover, Florence. Arthur becomes insane and arranges by a series of tricks to kill everyone except Florence, who accidently survives. The Ghosts of Arthur's victims rise up. Arthur drops dead, and he is carried off to Heaven, where everyone reassembles. In Heaven, everyone is a cannibal, but whatever is eaten grows again. Gradually Arthur, by refusing to accept his fate, and by articulating his love for Florence, moves towards his escape. Victoria traps him into a Coffin but while everyone else feasts, Arthur rises slowly from the Coffin.

In the first three scenes of the play we find everyone making a plan, a conspiracy and a coup against the other for gaining political power. It shows the violence of thoughts but from scene four we see it executed in action. Mental violence bursts in action.
The scene four of *Early Morning* is that of the trial of Len and Joyce on a charge of cannibalism. It, however, begins not with the trial, but with Albert's reporting to Disraeli the gist of the conversation with Prince Arthur which took place in scene two. Albert has the initial stages of the revolution clear in his head—

"... We close the ports and airfields, take over the power stations, broadcast light classics and declare martial law. The important thing is she mustn't recover she must be shot-dead. Disraeli. Well, shoot her more than once."¹

In scene sixteen, when all reach heaven, they cannot escape from violence then. The most violent thing is the eating of flesh of the bodies. Albert being the father of George and Arthur sticks a sword into Arthur—


*Victoria (Sniffs). Do I smell burning?*

*Albert. The verdict?*

*Foreman. Guilty and admitted to Heaven.*

*Albert cuts Arthur from George with the Sword.*

*There are loud shouts from the crowd at the pulley.*

*Len runs downstage carrying a leg. It is torn off at the thigh and*
still wears its shock and shoe. The stump is ragged and bloody.
Len chews it. The crowd fight round him like sparrows.¹

Everyone eats the other's flesh but because it is in heaven so it
grows again. They do not stop but go on eating always in anger.
Nothing which is violent can go beyond the violence of eating the
flesh-

"Albert takes a piece of body from the hamper.

Joyce. 'E's one a 'em (the mob stops).

Criss. Out the Same sty: (the mob surrounds Albert).

Joyce. Take' is bone away: Criss takes the food from Albert."²

Thus eating of human flesh is the most horrible kind of
violence. It shows the violence in thoughts and actions both. Though
the eating of flesh in the heaven is used as a symbolic action but it
presents the fact how violent human beings can be.

Bond's next play Narrow Road to the Deep North present
violence in action in different conditions. Basho goes to get
enlightenment and looks a baby wrapped in rags on the bank of the
river Fuji. He does not help it and goes forward on his path. He
leaves the baby at the mercy of God. He considers his success more
important than looking after an orphan child. As Basho's response is
that -

"this child's undeserved suffering has been caused by something

¹ Bond, Early Morning. (Eyre Methuen, 1968) S. ii. p. 199.
² Ibid. S. Seventeen, P. 205.
far greater and more massive - by what one might call the irresistible will of heaven. If it is so, child, you must raise your voice to heaven, and I must pass on, leaving you behind.”

To disobey the human rules of morality to be unkind and cruel is also a kind of mental violence which later turns into physical violence. The same thing happens in this play. After growing up that baby becomes the ruler of that small town near the river. Basho returns after 30 years' journey. He finds the city groaning with the tyrannies of the ruler named Shogo. At last Shogo is brutally killed, to save the town-people from his violence.

Bond began this play on 28th April, 1968, and wrote three versions of it quickly in two and a half days, which he drily noted was- "Not enough." When it went to William Gaskill, the Director for the performance, he suggested that "Jane Howell, the Associate Director should direct it herself." Before granting a licence the nearly Moribund office of the Lord Chamberlain required a number of cuts in the scenes of the play. The two objectionable lines are -

"How many testicles has God? (Part one scene Six) and - 'The genitals are intact'. (Part two scene Four). But Bond refused to delete these lines from the play, However a compromise was reached and later on the play was "Produced at the Belgrade theatre on 24 June, 1968." 

Basho's quest for enlightenment is set against his leaving a child

2. William Gaskill Gambit 17. P. 32. (A letter to Jane Howell the Associate Director to Royal Court Theatre, 8th May 1968).
abandoned by its starving parents to die. There is no means where by the audience may avoid the fact that the peasants and their child represent the reality as it is, and Basho's poetic vocation consists of ignoring that reality, thereby relegating his 'art' to the false and immoral. Basho does make charitable gestures. He gives the child what food he has. He tidies the baby's clothes and he leaves it to die. At the same time, he appeals directly to the audience to acquiesce in his description of himself as a 'great' poet, quotes his best poem as proof and evades any responsibility for what he sees.

Basho's criminal action in the opening scene, provides the basis on which he is to be judged throughout. Nothing he subsequently does should surprise others. The peasants abandon their child and have no choice. The wife wanders between hysteria and rationalisations. She on the one hand laments the situation and on the other takes an inevitable action forced upon her by poverty. It is a scene she is used to, after all, as she is used to the casual beating from her husband. In a scene of few minutes Bond outlines the world of the play so graphically that what follows seems inevitable. Yet Bond's estimate of critical responses must have been confirmed by some of the reactions to the Introduction.

"The review in 'Punch' worried that the audience laughed at Basho's 'Haiku'. Time Magazine saw Basho on a quest for enlightenment, 'a radiant shaft of wisdom that will have the direct luminous perception of one of his poems'. "Record American
saw him and old priest who also searches for enlightenment, but is trapped in ugly Politics."¹

Ironically, these views are those of Kiro in scene one of the play. Kiro, who is the same age as Arthur in Early Morning, was rescued by a priest after his parents died of starvation. Since Kiro is ignorant of Basho's leaving a child to die, he assumes Basho to be enlightened and begs to be his disciple. If Basho has not changed on his return, the place has; for now (thirty years later) there is 'a great city'. The basis of its development is shown by the soldiers leading prisoners to their death at the order of Shogo, an outlaw who killed the old emperor and built the city. What is apparent throughout the scene is Basho's arrogance and his self-centeredness, for amidst the killings, he wonders if his house and orchard are still where he left them. The condemnation of Basho continues in Scene one as he remarks that the northern tribes fed him when he was in need and that the net result of his journey is to realise that 'You get enlightenment where you are'. There are three separate strands here - Kiro's search, Basho's self concern and the world continuing around them. The next scene takes place two years later with Basho dictating his thoughts to an amanuensis.

The killing of the people of the city built by Shogo after the murder of the emperor and his sons continues unabated. So do Basho's poems Kiro has joined the seminary and, as he says in scene three, learnt nothing. As his comparison-priests get drunk and play hopscotch

¹ M. Hay and P. Roberts, Bond: A Critical study of his Plays, P. 91.
Kiro initially sits apart from them, until he is pulled by the rest of the group into joining them. The joking horseplay as they get drunk is comparable to the boys throwing Pat's bag about in the first scene of *The Pope's Wedding* and the gang's pushing the pram about in the early stages of scene six of *Saved*. As the horseplay centres around the sacred pot, the sudden silence as the priests realise what is happening is again analogous to comparable moments in the two scenes form the earlier plays. As Basho looks at Kiro, imprisoned within a thousand year old religious relic, he sees only the rightness of his decision not to take Kiro as a disciple two years before. It is a cleverly understated moment, with Kiro who has not learnt anything from the seminary standing centre stage with the pot hiding his head. It is also them of arranging that Kiro and the tyrant Shogo will meet in the following scene, for Basho determines that Shogo should solve this particular problem.

The violent acts begin when the city is taken and Shogo briefly resumes power in scene three. He is then faced with the irresistible extension of his own logic, as he looks at the five children abandoned by Basho. Without Basho to identify the Emperor's son, Shogo can act only in one way. Since the child must not again be used as a political weapon against him Basho impinges on Shogo's life throughout the play and it reaches its terrible crisis in this scene. Shogo kills the children and pushes Georgina into insanity. After the near hysteria of the decision, Shogo reverts to peremptory instructions to his soldiers about what is to be done. The picture of Georgina singing some parts
of a hymn alone and the heap of children's bodies provide a powerful account of the victims of the play. As Kiro returns from the north in response to Shogo's message (scene four), he is met with the reverse of his expectations, as the British once again and finally retake the city. The jolt provided by the fact that everything has again changed around is quite deliberate.

What Kiro sees is the opposite of what he expected to see and it leads him to despair. The commodore begins to take control because of Georgina's madness. He is aided by Basho, who becomes Prime Minister. Shogo is put on trial. As parts of it come over tannoy, Kiro on stage, reads some of Basho's poems as a kind of counter point to Basho's account of Shogo's birth.

Basho and the commodore whip up the mob and the butcher Shogo speak of it as an exorcism. Its revelation is deliberately delayed and is therefore, more shocking a moment of violent effect. Kiro now understands the puzzle why he and Shogo struggled by the river. He lapses into silence. The murder of Shogo is the result of his violent acts. But because Kiro shares much in his murder he has to die also. He at last commits suicide.

The whole play is a dialectical movement of violent acts of Shogo the outlaw and the priests Basho and Kiro. Shogo's violence is the result of the attitude of society towards him. It was harsh unkind and violent for that orphan baby found on the river bank.
The violence of Basho and Kiro in due to the release of the city from the tyranny of Shogo.

The message is that the reply to violence is the violence always. All those who take weapons die by their own weapons.

Bond's another play Lear shows violence in action. Lear is the first play in which Bond argues that direct action is channelled into practice. It is not an ideology made operational and it does not accept the idea of ends justifying means. The play continually demonstrates the nature and interaction of social and personal circumstances as the guiding determinant of subsequent action. In Lear Bond relates effect to causes as he had done in earlier plays but he also shows the growth of organised and developing resistance to a repressive government in the last scenes. The play's conclusion is a measured account of the difficulty of action in an unjust society but it also demonstrates that action is the only moral response in such a situation. It would be facile to suppose that any greater optimism than this could reasonably be shown at the end of such a sombre and realistic work.

Because of the critical hostility which greeted the earlier plays, particularly Early Morning in 1968, and again in 1969, and because of the general incomprehension and political objections symbolized by Lord Chamberlain's office which faced with Saved, Early Morning and Narrow Road to the Deep North, Bond's preparation for Lear was more extensive than for the plays before it. Narrow Road was partly the gesture of a serious writer whose work was not being treated seriously
and Lear became for Bond the play in which the basis of his position would be made clear and unequivocal. His irritation is still apparent two months after the play was performed for the first time when he wrote to his publisher about the "Author's Preface" to the printed version. The "Author's preface" to Lear is a compressed version of a long series of essays and notes, written between 22 Oct, 1969 and 4 June, 1970. Twelve days after concluding these notes Bond wrote the first draft of Lear.

Lear shoots the soldiers and orders for the postmortem in the very first scene of the play. He is building a wall for the safety of the kingdom. His actions are always violent because he is a king and has 'power', as power creates violence, he behaves arbitrarily and acts violently:

"Lear. Shoot him

Bodice. No. ?

Lear. This is not possible. I must be obeyed.

Warrington. Sir, this is out of hand. Nothing's gained by being firm in little matters. Keep him under arrest. The Privy Council will meet There are more important matters to discuss.

Lear. My orders are not little matters."¹

The daughters are also violent. They decide to marry the Duke of North and the Dike of Cornwall, Lear's sworn enemies. Lear gets angry and says about his daughters.

"You will throw old men from their coffins, break children's legs, pull the hair from old women's heads, make young men walk the street in beggary and cold while their wives grow empty and despair."¹

The most terrible violent scene of poking needles into Warrington's eyes, shatter us. Bodice's and Fontanalle's plans are failed and for the fear of being out they decide to kill Warrington, who knows all the secrecy:

"Soldier A and Fontanelle jump on Warrington's hands. Kill his hands! Kill his feet! Jump on it-all of it! He can't hit us now. Look at his hands like boiling crabs! Kill it! Kill all of it! Kill him inside! Make him dead! Father! Father! I want to sit on his lungs......... (Bodice) (She pokes the needles into Warrington's ears) I'll just jog these in and out a little. Doodee, Doodee, doo."²

Both enjoy the torture and killing of Warrington. Their acts show as if they were not human beings, made of flesh and not having hearts and minds. They do too much with Warrington what they can. They make him deaf and hit cruelly.

At the end of Act one we see the violence done by the Soldiers. Bodice and Fontanelle come into throne. They order to search for Lear who has run away from the castle. He gets shelter in the grave digger's boy's house, but the poor grave digger's boy and his

² Bond. Lear. (Eyre Methuen, 1971). S. i. p. 15.
wife Cordelia are tortured and destroyed by the soldiers fully. About their work the changed Lear says in anguish.

"O burn the house! You've murdered the husband, slaughtered the cattle, poisoned the well, raped the mother, killed the child - you must burn the house! You're soldiers - you must do your duty! My daughters expect it! O burn the house! Burn the house! Burn the house! Burn the house!"

But later when Cordelia comes into power she acts in the same way, arbitrarily and violently. Thus violence after violence continues.

The Sea although a kind of a comedy shows violence. The characters behave jokingly but even in their comic actions they are violent. In Lear Bond's concern is with different kinds of political oppression and the violence he shows, is exclusively political in nature. In The Sea, Bond shifts the focus and shows a more characteristically English form of repression - the operations and influence of a rigid class structure, which is carefully worked into the whole fabric of the play. It is the source of the strong thread of social satire that runs through it. Mrs. Raffi, the village dictator by virtue of her supreme upper middle class self assurance, is the Edwardian equivalent of the lady of the manner. Her entourage of genteel middle class ladies characterised as figures of fun are unaware of the emptiness of their posturings and the hollowness of their values. To mock their pretensions, Bond uses a more conventional comic approach than in any of the earlier plays, although there is a marked family resemblance.
between Mrs. Raffi and Victoria in *Early Morning* or Georgina in *Narrow Road to the Deep North*.

In *The Fool* a group of young labourers, unemployed and starving loot the priest beastly. They pinch in his flesh and enjoy it.

Bond takes as his main character the early nineteenth century poet John Clare. Unlike Shakespeare, Clare is more a victim of society than a transgressor. He suffers at the hands of a culture with no interest in his kind of art, which offers a critical comment on its values; he's taken up by polite society as a passing fancy and then casually dropped. He is unable to earn a living or to support his wife and family and when the strain of his position begins to affect his physical and mental health, he is committed to an asylum. Bond has Clare confront the conflicts in his life and try to resolve them. In order to show this, Clare is seen once more in relation to Darkie and Mary. After escaping from the asylum, Clare wanders on an open road at night. Like the snow scene in *Bingo*, the first part of the scene is a kind of hallucination; in effect it is set inside Clare's mind.

*Bingo* on one level is dramatisation of writer's inner feelings and function and on the other level his relationship to his society. There is inevitably a degree of autobiographical preoccupation consequent upon the conclusion of one series of plays and the beginning of another. The climax to the first part of the play is his outburst downstage from the hanged Young Woman, in which, like one of his play-characters, he is made to force conclusions home to himself. The vision of the
baited bear is terrible in its insistence upon the cruelty of the world and, like king Lear, he indicts the social structure of which he is a part.

Although it deals with the frustration in the mind of Shakespeare caused by his family members, yet it is the violent atmosphere which torments him more. As a result of the pressure of the external world he is morbid and violent at the same time. This is reflected in his treatment of his wife. He does not pay proper attention to his dying wife. It is his calm cruelty that provokes Judith to say;


Shakespeare (almost to himself). It's so cold now."\(^1\)

The effect of the attitude of society towards the writer is apparent in his action. As a remeb of this he misbehaves with other family members. The snow scene shows a kind of physical violence. Bond's treatment of the General in Act Two of We Come to the River is detectably harsher than his treatment of Shakespeare in Bingo.

"This may be due to the fact that the Opera is more overtly political than the play. In the final version Bond makes a strong and unequivocal statement about the overthrow of capitalism and the use of violence apparent in action."\(^2\)

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The General's violent action in the battlefield is justifiable. In war people act in heat and whatever they do is not calculated. But when an innocent person is tortured in cold blood, it is violence. The General's blindness, madness and depositioning by the new General appointed at his place is certainly an act of violence.

When the Assassins' knife has been drawn across the General's eyes, he is blind folded. As the blind fold goes on, the characters who were his victims in Part One appear. The remainder of the Opera belongs to them. The General's death is no more than a confirmation of what we already know. He is redundant, because he cannot bring himself to join the struggle for a more rational world. Lear had at least made his gesture on the wall; the General makes none and he is swept under by the mad people's imaginary waves. His death like his blinding, is ironic. He is destroyed by the madness he helped to create. The people kill him because they see him as a threat to their imaginary heaven on their island. It is truer to say that he and his kind are a threat to the very real and tangible world that his victims might achieve.

The play A. A. America, is set in a comic view but Bond subtly ensures that we also remember the viciousness and cruelty the characters represent; so he invents a new American festival - 'Nigger Foot Pie Day'. Gran enlists Sam's help by tempting him with all the riches of the world, but also through his stomach.

"Now I can give you all the Nigger Foot Pies you ever could eat."¹

¹ Bond. A. A. America. (Part-I) (Eyre Methuen, 1976) p. 44
committed by all of them. Although Sam fails to capture Paul's soul, it is frightened out of his body -

"Paul picks up his soul. It is a large black doll."¹

The representation of the fight and its eventual result are so violent that we begin to feel that they are less convincing. Gran, Uncle Sam and the Ladies give evidence of the monstrous cruelty that a bad society can breed, but they cannot be played as if the characters know they were cruel.

The play A. A. America presents racial prejudice as well as the violent attitude of a cultured, up-to-date society towards the undeveloped and uncultured society in the different parts of America. The torture of Negro boy Paul in the Part-I and the hanging of Fred's body with the swing in the Part-II show the violence in action.

In The Swing (Part-II of A. A. America), as in The Sea or the history plays, Bond looks at a society which is at a historical cross road;

"the roughness and rawness of the American frontier is becoming civilized and the result is a society which retains the irrational violence of the old frontier life."²

But it is with a new topdressing of culture which proves to be as spurious as the middle-class culture of Mrs. Raffi in The Sea, Greta's madness on account of being raped (if it is true), the hanging of Fred's body with the Swing and the riot in the end of the play are all examples of brutal violence. Hay and Roberts rightly say that -

"His [Pinter's] attack on rapid racism and the worst symptoms of America's devotion to the Consumer Society is made by showing it in such a violently exaggerated form that it becomes comic. Gran (who is in fact the Devil) is more bizarre than threatening; she 'brings herself in, in a wheel chair. She is a cross between whistler's mother and Grandma moses." 1

In Stone Bond uses two main theatrical Symbols to convey his parable about capitalist exploitation and the way in which an individual's talents and virtues can be corrupted by the kind of society in which only opportunists can survive. The Man's violent attack on the tramp and throwing him out, reclaiming his coins from the tramp's pockets stage the violence. The fight is described and must be staged for it shows a clear violence in the play. Actually The Man's attack on the tramp in the inn is an outburst of suppressed rage which since he is unable to direct it at the real cause for his sufferings and frustrations (his self-imposed burden), he turns against another victim like himself. Like Hatch's behaviour in The Sea, it is a displacement, and the analogy with Hatch is useful because it helps to explain Bond's treatment of the tramp's death in the subsequent Trial Scene. The question of who was in fact responsible for killing is left open. The police men's speech in defence of his own actions might appear to be self-incriminating.

"I've been kicking people all my life ... My kick is controlled." 2

Now if the accused is suggesting that he kicked a man and accidently killed him, that suggestion is palpably ludicrous. Bond has described his purpose in selecting the particular situations and actions in the play The Bundle which he puts before us as follows:

"My theatre is based on trying to define ideas, critical ideas about society and about human activity; trying to define those as precisely as possible not necessarily in verbal terms but in pictures."¹

The scene seven of a woman being punished for stealing cabbage leaves by having to support a heavy stone tied on her heck. The scene presents the violence in action -

"The woman, from Scene Four, sits on the ground with her husband. She wears a stone cangue closed with a bolt. Woman (Screams). Help! Tiger. Quiet! Or - (Threatens her husband with his gun)."²

No body sympathises with her.

The Worlds also presents violence in action. The factory owners and labourers struggle. The labourers revolt against the owners. In this revolution they do everything possible, violently.

Thus all the plays explore and investigate the nature of human behaviour as well as action in societies which like our own, inhibit and destroy natural human responses and turn people against each other. The violence takes many shapes in the actions of the characters. The most threatening, frightening and horrible violence, presented by Bond is real.

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