NAVIGATING THE THEATRICAL BATTLEFIELD: A MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE ON VIOLENCE IN EDWARD BOND'S RATIONAL THEATRE

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ABSTRACT

Violence and aggression have become pervasive in the modern world. This research paper sets out to examine the themes of violence and aggression in Edward Bond's rational theatre. What is most striking about Bond's plays is his representation of visible violence and insanity on an amplified scale and his refusal to accept the conventional limits in his critique of society through an unconventional structuring of the elements of violence and aggression. Bond's plays navigate through different forms of crude and macabre forms of violence. By managing such forms of violence on the stage, Bond's theatre for social change challenges diverse misleading rationalist and realist interpretations, myths, and fallacies of violence and dismantles them through unconventional treatment and interrogation of aggression and irrationality. The article draws on various theoretical perspectives on violence as set forth by Domenach (1981), Galtung (1981), Joxe (1981), and Freire (1970). This close reading of Bond's texts helps establish that the foundations of Bond's rational theatre are, in fact, laid on politics of violence portrayed in all its transgressive excesses, ambivalence, and graphic visuality. This alternative reading of Bond's political vision through a range of theoretical perspectives also helps appreciate the breadth and depth of Bond's political vision. The paper also conceptualizes the notion of Arts-Based Training (ABT) that delves into the application of improvisational theatre techniques within management development. Understanding a phenomenon through a theatrical approach proves to be effective for advancing management development by actively engaging managers in an in-depth exploration of problems and the creation of solutions.

Keywords: *Violence; Management; Politics; Irrationality; Gothic Impulse.*

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INTRODUCTION

Violence or aggression is generally perceived as omnipresent, a largely contingent phenomenon; one of the most enigmatic and, at the same time, most serious social phenomena as it takes extremely varied forms and may possess many different traits. This paper outlines, British playwright Edward Bond's (1934) unconventional treatment of visible violence and insanity on his stage presents his political gesture of defiance of the conventional interpretations of violence, and his critique of society. In his plays, Bond portrays diverse forms of violence ranging from its mild, casual, and subtle forms to its excessive and most extreme manifestations of cannibalism, genocide, and war. This paper argues that Bond challenges misleading rationalist and realist interpretations, myths, and fallacies of violence and dismantles them through unconventional treatment and interrogation of aggression and irrationality. Criticism of Bond's plays generally centers around his concept of rational theatre, his portrayal of crude forms of violence on the stage, and a dramatic realization of his political message. Major critical studies attempt to explore the relationship between onstage violence and Bond's political concerns. Bond's unconventional portrayal of violence through macabre subversive images, taboo objects, the visuality of violence and its dark mutations in his plays is an exploration of how violence and world politics are interlinked in the modern rational world and how varied forms of violence signify cruelty, injustice, political oppression, war, and destruction.

The article offers various biological, social, psychological, and political perspectives on violence as propounded by Domenach (1981), Galtung (1981), Joxe (1981), and Freire (1970), and finally focuses on Bond's political interpretation of it. It is important to understand Bond's perspective on violence, as it is central to his political vision. Despite its pervasiveness, it is still difficult to arrive at a single definition of violence (Ray 7; Mertens, 1981) as the phenomenon is elusive and open to many contrasting even contradictory interpretations. In order to comprehend the complexity of Bond's presentation of naked forms and the political message of change it carries, it is first imperative to understand different theoretical perspectives on violence and how it is defined and perceived differently.

The article also discusses various thematic violence traps that create misperceptions about violence and describes in detail the ways Bond dismantles these fallacies by presenting violence in all its naked and stark visible and dormant forms. It is, therefore, pertinent to discuss how biologists, philosophers, anthropologists, and sociologists define aggressivity, its causes, and its effects on humans and society.

The article then provides a brief overview of diverse forms of violence ranging from its mild, casual, and subtle variants to its excessive and most extreme manifestations of cannibalism, genocide, and war. It also builds on Heitmeyer and Hagan's (2005) theoretical framework of 'thematization traps' of violence and various societal and political fallacies that surround it as Bond's unconventional treatment of violence can better be understood in the light of conventional theoretical approaches to the phenomenon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical studies offer a relatively thin and conventional perspective on Bond's deployment of divergent forms of violence. Mainly concerned with the justification of violent situations, Worthen (1975) argues that Bond's use of violence is not to horrify the spectators but a dramatic strategy to shock them into recognition of themselves and their surrounding realities. Such a critique offers a uni-dimensional view of violence and aggression. Bond's treatment of violence, in fact, goes beyond shock value in that his portrayal of violence challenges conventional definitions of violence and its misleading interpretations. It would be useful to describe Bond's plays from a diverse theoretical perspective in order to understand the message that he intends to convey to the audience. Violence or aggression is generally regarded as an omnipresent, largely contingent phenomenon; one of the most enigmatic and, at the same time, most serious social phenomena as it takes extremely varied forms and may possess many different traits. Philosophers, intellectuals, and sociologists such as Domenach (1981), Galtung (1981), Freire (1970), Joxe (1981), Stanko (1960), Pierre (1981), and Tiger (1971) have defined violence from different biological, philosophical, ethical, psychological, and political perspectives. A brief overview of these perspectives on violence is integral to a discussion on violence as it will help contextualize Bond's works and will make clear Bond's significant departure from these conventional critical approaches to the phenomenon. Domenach (1981) and Stanko (2002) offer generic definitions of violence; the former calls it an ancient 'human phenomenon' which 'in cosmogonies, mythologies and legend' is presented as something linked to the beginning of history, always 'attendant upon the deeds of heroes and innovators' and the latter defining it as 'any form of behavior by an individual that intentionally threatens to or does physical, sexual or psychological harm to others or themselves' (Ray, 1981). However, what we today call 'violence,' Domenach (1981) adds, came to be understood from three main perspectives: (a) the psychological aspect which defines violence as an explosion of force assuming an irrational and murderous form; (b) the ethical point of view which defines

violence as an attack on the property and liberty of others; (c) the political aspect of violence as the use of force to seize power or to misuse it for illicit ends.

However conclusive the above-stated perspectives on violence may sound, it is still difficult to arrive at a single definition of violence (Ray & Mertens, 1981) as the phenomenon is elusive and open to many contrasting even contradictory interpretations. One social viewpoint is that nature provides humans only with the capacity for violence; it is social circumstance that determines whether and how they exercise that capacity. A somewhat similar perspective is that of the anthropologist Tiger (1971) who regards violence as a learnable trait but adds that only a minority of people engage in violent, anti-social behavior. Klineberg's (1981) view of violence, on the other hand, rejects the biological, anthropological, and philosophical standpoint by stating that violence is neither universal, inevitable, nor instinctive; 'there are individuals and groups that show a great deal of violence, and other individuals and groups that show very little'. Contrary to this view, Galtung (1981) and Freire (1970) take into account the social perspective in their definitions of violence and aggression. Galtung (1981) considers violence as an inclusive 'highly emotional' term, which 'unifies such disparate phenomena as wars, torture, homicide, etc.' He defines violence as 'anything avoidable that impedes human self-realization'. A similar perspective is offered by Freire (1970) in defining violence as any 'situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry'. All these diverse critical views on violence point to the problematics of defining it comprehensively as none of these definitions is inclusive enough to take into account all possible aspects of the phenomenon. Summing up these definitions, violence is linked to human history, regarded as a tool for social oppression, defined as an irrational harmful force, a learnable feature, and is also identified as a human capacity, but none of these definitions is all-encompassing. They focus either on one aspect of aggressivity or relate it, at the most, to another concept. These inconclusive definitions which point to the complexity, ambivalence, and elusiveness of the phenomenon leave room for further excavation of the concept of violence which is an integral part of human beings and human history. Modern civilization's sensitivity to violence and intolerance of it, Domenach (1981) argues, are recent phenomena and have recently acquired very significant dimensions. Violence, as discussed earlier, is intimately 'bound up with pain, security, transgression, and concept of the body and its placing in the social order' (Ray, 1981). As regards the impacts of violence and aggresssivity, there is, admittedly, a general consensus that it causes injury, harm, sometimes death, and results in varied other forms of destruction, so that 'there are always victims' (Ray, 1981). It is broadly seen as undesirable, 'as something to be rejected' (Galtung, 1981). In a word, violence is a

broad, 'all-embracing category' (Joxe, 1981). The broad connotations of the word also relate it to struggles, revolts, revolutions, and counterrevolutions. The possible forms, types, and characteristics of violence range from individual acts to the organized actions of groups or states and include rape, murder, cannibalism, torture, and verbal, and linguistic violence.

Domenach (1981) highlights the absence of critical debate on violence in Western philosophy when she argues that in the Western philosophic tradition before the nineteenth-century violence had never been taken as a theme in itself. However, the question and problem of violence, according to her, was taken up and represented by tragedy which portrayed violence in the shades of 'revenge, anger, and the many excesses of passion. But even in tragic tradition, violence is not isolated and considered for its own sake; it is the result of arrogance (*hubris*) or reckless behavior (*ate*), which are the concerns of the gods'. Hegel was the first philosopher to fill the philosophic vacuum on violence and establish that violence was a staple part, not only of the 'rationality of the history of societies but of the very genesis of consciousness' (Domenach, 1981). History of societies, human consciousness, and aggressivity, then, are interlinked. Rather, Hegel regards violence as the very basis of consciousness. Writing of the prevalence of the myth of violence and its significance in contemporary discourses, Joxe (1981) argues that the myth of violence is a far more 'effective myth than nuclear war because nuclear warfare is not taking place, whereas violence exists- and it exists everywhere'.

Viewed in the light of this discussion, the phenomenon of violence then emerges as an elusive concept more multifaceted than is usually perceived. It is at once fascinating as well as repulsive. It was, for instance, a form of entertainment for the people of antiquity- the Greeks and Romans with their penchant for violent Gladiatorial games of cock and quail fights, beast baiting, and slave fighting. 'Most of us are both fascinated and horrified by it. It is a fundamental ingredient of how we entertain ourselves (children's stories, world literature, the movie industry) and an essential feature of many of our social institutions (Imbusch, 2005). In short, the ambivalence and contradictions of the modern age are reflected in the 'ambivalence of violence and its self-deception' (Imbusch, 2005). Paradoxically, the twentieth century has witnessed devastating and harrowing levels of violence perpetuated by individuals, militant rebel groups, and states. Highlighting the present century's destructive potential, Heitmeyer and Hagan (2005) state that in Western societies, 'the dream of a non-violent modern age clashes with a reality that is massively overshadowed, if not totally plunged into darkness, by overt acts of violence and the potential for destruction'. The modern violent age with its capacity for destruction, therefore, poses a greater threat and challenge to humanity.

Aggression in modern times has, in fact, increased the fragility and vulnerability of the human world. 'Violence is,' Domenach (1981) argues, 'inseparable from the human condition' because of its ontological aspect. Although Domenach (1981) believes that it is abortive to condemn violence in 'moral pronouncements or political resolutions', she also realizes that it is useless to seek a categorical answer, in philosophy or ethics, to the problem of violence. Notwithstanding the centrality of violence in the human world and despite its significance no typology or classification of violence exists (Galtung, 1981). Despite the ambiguity of violence evident in the characterization and framing of its phenomena, the logic of its occurrence and possible escalation, supposed causal explanations, and its evaluation (Galtung, 1981), one undeniable fact about violence is that it is a staple aspect of human society. In the words of Domenach (1981): 'however respectable 'non-violence, maybe, I do not think that it can represent a coherent, tenable position in a world where violence is widespread and bound up with almost every aspect of human relationships'.

The conflicting definitions and contradictory viewpoints of violence point to the difficulty of any singular typology or classification of the phenomenon. Not only that, but they also underscore the impossibility of rationalizing violence within the bounds of everyday realism or nineteenth-century rational scientific progress as all these divergent discourses open for human beings many possible pitfalls. This calls for the need for another alternative or parallel framework that can explain and anatomize violence from an unconventional perspective in order to understand its operative dynamics.

Since violence can take many divergent forms, it may be difficult to trace its manifestations in its more elusive and enigmatic forms. Domenach (1981) stresses this limitation when she says: 'As a 'civilized' conscience develops that cannot tolerate the spectacle of violence, the violence is driven to disguise itself and to do so moves in two directions'. On the one hand, it turns inward and finds an unexpected and indirect form of expression in philosophical and critical discourses, and, also, in daily life, through the brawls and riots during which the pent-up violence of the common man is 'let out' in many different ways, expressed through vague feelings of aggressiveness, which all too often become focused on a chance antagonist. The lynching of a petty thief by an angry mob is one instance of how aggressivity can become focused on a random victim. The burning and looting of public property during riots is another example of how violence might find random, surrogate victims. But violence sometimes also turns outward, as Domenach (1981) argues, and becomes 'embodied in collective, anonymous forms designed for it by technology and political systems'. The oppressive, tyrannical regimes, and repressive societies that deny human beings basic human rights by using law and order and

technology to control people are examples of collective forms of violence that destroy human world. Domenach's (1981) viewpoint also highlights the limitations of a rationalist understanding of aggression which fails to take into account more subtle and modern masked forms of violence. Domenach (1981), therefore, calls for a radically new approach to the problem of violence and the solutions it calls for as the progress of philosophy and the development of technology have brought mankind to the point at which a new framework is required to develop real knowledge of this phenomenon.

Given the ongoing debate on the philosophical, psychological, and socialist views of violence, its causes, effects, and the problematics of classifying it, it can be argued that violence has always intrigued sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and writers. Classical writers took up the question of violence to interrogate human behavior, man's relation to gods, and his relationship to his surroundings. From the contemporary playwrights Bond has also theorized violence in his writings and dramatized its variant forms in his plays. Propounding his theory of violence in the author's note to *Saved*, Bond (1977) defines violence as an evolutionary 'biological mechanism' that has been 'inherited' by humans. Bond's definition echoes the social definition of aggression which defines it as a human capacity determined by social circumstances. He further argues that when animals are threatened, they resort to violence as a last defense to ensure 'the continuation of their species. But for human beings the opposite is true. Violence threatens the continuation of our species, at least in a civilized form'. Bond (1977) does admit human beings' potential for violence, but his main argument is about why they are aggressive. 'Human violence is contingent, not necessary, and occurs in situations that can be identified and prevented'. He further argues that the idea that humans are naturally aggressive and 'necessarily violent' is a 'political device' manipulated by the ruling classes to main structures of coercion. In this regard, Bond's definition of violence is quite similar to Galtung's (1981) and Freire's (1970) socialist perspectives on violence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article employs qualitative paradigms of research. The texts are analyzed using interpretive methods of research through the theories of violence. This qualitative literary study aims to produce new meaning in a text. It offers a close textual reading of the primary texts to explore and describe the concept of violence in the context of Bond's plays.

Data Analysis

Bond (1977) classifies violence based on its four distinctive features. 'One, it is used either to maintain injustice or, two, to react to injustice; and three, its users are either conscious of its

cause and significance or, four, unconscious of them'. Highlighting the enigmatic nature of violence Bond says that all 'four forms of violence may occur together, and that is one reason why there is so much confusion about the cause of violence and why so many mistakes are made in dealing with it' (Bond, 1977). Summing up the causes of violence, Bond (1977) says that it 'occurs in situations of injustice. It is caused not only by physical threats but even more significantly by threats to human dignity. In other words, Bond (1977) does not regard violence as a 'function of human nature but of human societies'. He views violence as a manifestation of man's irrationality, an impulsive force with a destructive potential. The author's preface to *Lear* Bond (1978) points to the destructive potential of aggression when he maintains that humans use 'much of their energy and skill to make more efficient weapons to destroy each other . . .'. Sartre (1963) presents a similar view of the enigma of violence on his stage: 'Violence creates its own society—a society that is the repulsive caricature of a society based on reason and love' (as cited in Domenach, 1981). Wars, conflicts, oppression, and use of force that are still prevalent in the modern world are but mutant forms of aggression that are ceaselessly reproducing themselves like monsters with the power of self-reproduction. Although violence itself is faceless, elusive, and complex in all its ambiguities, its effects are concrete. Bond's theatre interrogates and challenges the modern myths of violence and the ultimate limits of an irrational society by Gothicizing violence, aggression, and madness as discussed in detail later in this chapter. He dramatizes naked violence on his stage in order to make people understand its complex dynamics and to show clearly how violence operates and why it happens despite the civilizational and scientific progress of mankind. Bond's theatre uses the irrational to show the very processes of human reasoning. In short, 'violence, although intrinsically unreasonable, is bound up with the very process of reasoning. To quantify, organizing is already an act of violence (Domenach, 1981).

Bond's theatre with its portrayal of disturbing, graphic, and even elusive forms of violence is a response to Domenach's (1981) call for a radically new approach to the enigma of violence in the modern technocratic world. In his dramatic world, Bond exhibits the grotesque excesses of violence that transgress all social, moral, and religious boundaries, and articulates questions and problems that ensue. Bond's treatment of violence as the ultimate force of destruction in its excesses, extremities, and ambivalence can be placed within a Gothic structuring of violence or with a Gothic inflection. His dramatic corpus dramatizes divergent forms of violence ranging from its most casual unassuming forms to its most extreme manifestations. In such a representation of aggressivity and insanity Bond neither philosophizes about violence nor offers any idealistic, utopian solutions to the problems of humanity; he interrogates

aggressiveness as an irrationality to make a political statement about injustice and oppression. The foundation of Bond's rational theatre, in other words, is laid on the Gothic dynamics of violence that challenge the rationalist discourses by exposing the falsity of all misleading thematic, social, religious, and political traps and fallacies. The Gothic structuring of dark, subtle, sophisticated yet threatening forms of violence in Bond's world constitutes a Gothic discourse of monstrosity and barbarity underlying the veneer of civilization.

Writing of fallacious rational discourse of violence, Heitmeyer and Hagan (2005) argue that 'The notion that violence was more widespread in pre-modern societies,' and 'is only an exceptional phenomenon in modern societies' is a fallacious narrative involving significant misconceptions. The flawed linguistic assumptions about violence are, in fact, what Heitmeyer and Hagan (2005) call 'thematization traps of violence discussion' against which people must be cautioned in order to avoid being trapped by any simplification or premature generalizations of the phenomenon. A brief overview of these traps is particularly important before dilating on the Gothic dynamics of Bond's rational theatre of violence. One of the misleading traps, according to Heitmeyer and Hagan (2005), is the 're-interpretation trap' which arises when violence is exclusively 'personalized, generally pathologized, or even biologized because in such cases all socially causative relationships are disregarded. As a result, those in power might take this as a pretext for moral self-exculpation, on the one hand, and repressive administrative measures, on the other'. Another thematic trap is 'The 'scandalization trap' (Heitmeyer & Hagan, 2005) which takes effect when a dramatic vocabulary of violence is employed, in a climate dominated by the mass media, as a more effective or quicker way of obtaining a hearing.' The third snare is the 'inflation trap' that comprises expanding the discourse of violence in everyday affairs, creating the impression that there are 'virtually no remaining areas where violence is insignificant or absent, since it is lurking everywhere' (Heitmeyer & Hagan, 2005). The ethic trap or 'The 'moralization trap' is another conceptual dogma which arises on the basis of 'discourses of concern, with their simplistic perpetrator/victim structure and a morality that clearly identifies good and evil'. Another misleading concept, Heitmeyer & Hagan (2005) argue is the 'normality trap' that perceives and interprets the violence of particular groups as a 'normal' transient stage of development, or even as 'natural' thus involving the danger of 'trivializing violence'. The 'reduction trap' is another misleading reductive approach to violence that involves a 'withdrawal from the great complexity of the phenomenon of violence into simple explanatory analyses or the attribution of violence to the personal characteristics of individuals'.

Bond presents violence as an integral part of his plays to establish its relevance to contemporary challenges on the one hand, and to dismantle the prevalent myths of a modern non-violent progressive society, on the other. Bond warns his readers and his audience against the biological, scandalization, inflation traps, moralization, normality, and the reduction snares, which Heitmeyer and Hagan (2005) call 'thematization traps', and refuses either a simplistic black and white view of the phenomenon or a limited reductive rationalist approach to it. By dramatizing violence and interrogating its causes and repercussions through the Gothic structuring of aggression Bond leads people away from these conceptual traps thereby exposing all social, ethical, political, and psychological fallacies that surround this complex phenomenon. People are manipulated by a series of these misleading concepts, myths, and traps, which, by 'mythicizing reality,' as Freire (1970) terms it, attempt to conceal facts about the way humans exist in the world. Bond, on the contrary, demythologizes violence by interrogating and analyzing it in all its manifestations, and extremities to reveal the truth about human situation.

Bond constructs a parallel discourse of violence to raise questions about lopsided perceptions of the real world that human beings obtain from 'fictional representations' (Halloran, 1981). Bond (1977) is aware that 'Unless we seek understanding society is barbarous'. Bond's use of violence in his plays works as an intrusion as it breaks the continuous stream of facts and blanket impressions about violence as they are poured from philosophical critical discourses, media, or political forums. Bond's plays invite people to develop a rational understanding of the world through a study of violence from a different critical lens. As an artist, he firmly believes that humans have a moral obligation to understand. 'How we see depends on how well we understand' (Bond, 1977). It's through an exhaustive exploration of the phenomenon of violence, its causes, and its effects that humans can understand the challenges humanity faces today. In describing the role of an artist in society, Hirst (1985) says: 'The artist's task is thus straightforward but uncompromising'. Bond sees theatre as uniquely capable of validating 'human standards, ways of living, ethical decisions, understanding' precisely because it proceeds by 'demonstrating the relation of cause and effect in practical human life and not merely in concept or theory' (Hirst, 1985). Bond's theatre demonstrates violence as a sign of man's irrationality and as a conscientious artist Bond performs his task uncompromisingly. It is pertinent to raise a few questions here before dilating on the contours of Bond's portrayal of violence. How does an irrational society create and disseminate myths and traps about violence, aggression, justice, and freedom? What mechanism does a coercive society adopt to justify aggression? The answer is simple: 'To justify injustice reality is replaced with myths'

(Bond, 2003). An 'irrational society justifies its irrationality with myths. It teaches distorted beliefs, but they also distort each man's view of himself. No man can accept that he is irrational and inferior and then behave rationally' (Bond, 2003). It is precisely these generalized assumptions that Bond deflates through the extensive use of varied forms of violence in his plays. The Gothic element of violence serves as Bond's visual statement that despite the progress of civilization and modern technological advancement, violence is still a sinister and ever-threatening Gothic presence in human societies. In its refusal of conventional limits, violence in Bond's world functions as a counter-discourse that creates its macabre reality.

Presented as an irrational, ambivalent, and paradoxical Gothic impulse, violence in Bond's dramatic world is intertwined with other related Gothic tropes of madness, incarceration, oppression, and injustice that question the basis of modern civilization. In the Gothic canon, violence is defined as an evil- a threat, and 'evil' is often defined by the threat it poses to 'civilization' (Smith, 2007). Violence is also an 'interrogation of received rules and values,' an 'examination of the limits' (Botting,1996). As a staple Gothic trope, 'Violence is adopted,' Botting (1996) says, 'as a cautionary strategy' warning of 'dangers of social and moral transgression by presenting them in their darkest and most threatening form. It's an example of what happens when "the rules of social behavior are neglected'. Bond's rational theatre of violence exhibits characteristic features of Gothicism that center around the complexity, ambiguity, and paradoxical nature of violence. Bond's theatre Gothicizes violence through its visuality and physicality, its excesses that are reflected through cannibalism and self-rape, and its apparently unassuming game like guises, and above all the violence of technologies in all its sophisticated forms. Bond's treatment of violence can also be approached from Kristeva's (1980) theory of abjection as Bond's modified concept of a 'social corpse' as a site of abjection is quite similar to Kristeva's (1980) definition of a corpse. Besides these mutant forms, Bond also presents violence as a form of game and stage entertainment. These are the core contours of Bond's treatment of violence through which he challenges the fallacies that misleadingly magnify, mythicize, naturalize, trivialize, and reduce violence either to normality, a philosophical or moral concept only. Writing of these falsifying myths and misleading dogmas Bond (1977) says: 'An irrational organization needs myths to maintain itself'. These myths also include the dogma of original sin, and the dogma of original violence which establishes violence as a necessity of human nature and not just a capacity such as fear or pain. Violence, then, is presented as a phenomenon that either has apparently no rationally comprehensible causes or is shifted into the realm of the trivial or the inexplicable.

One of the most striking aspects of Gothicism of violence in Bond is its complex nature. Bond traces the rudiments of violence to the earlier stages of human civilization. Bond's play *The Woman* (1979) embeds the ancient roots of irrational aggressivity in war and the mass killing of humans. It is a palimpsest play as Bond rewrites the epic of the Trojan War to dramatize his fear of mankind's regression to primitive and barbaric stages of civilization if human beings do not stop being violent. The play begins on a note of death and killing, and the first act culminates in 'violence as the city is destroyed' (Hirst, 1985). Hecuba, Troy's queen, says that if the Trojan War continues, 'we will end as barbarians' (Bond, 1979). The first act ends in Hecuba's blinding. Although she cannot see the world like Lear in *Lear* and the blinded General in *We Come to the River*, she gains wisdom. Bond (2003) also connects the irrationality of war with other tropes of madness, hatred, and fanaticism. Ismene says: 'War breeds fanaticism faster than plague'. Violence, in short, destroys the rational ordering of a society. The repetition of keywords such as aggression, madness, and hatred in the play's classical Greek world initiates Bond's discourse on violence. He refuses simplistic interpretations of good and evil, and war and peace. In the author's note to *Saved*, he says that he will not substitute 'one absurdity for another' by claiming that although people are not innately evil, they are innately good'. In the play, violence in its extremely barbaric form of war reduces the city of Troy to ashes. Burning of the city is criminal and the continuity of this ancient practice in Bond's play shows the Gothic dimensions of aggression that have traveled from antiquity and still afflict humanity in the modern era. *The Pope's Wedding* is another play in which Bond presents the rudiments of latent aggressivity which constitutes a stark contrast to the naked violence of war presented in *The Woman*. The play's main character Scopey kills an old recluse Alen without any sound motive. This instance of motiveless malignity can be explained in terms of Domenach's (1981) idea of vague aggressivity on 'a chance antagonist'. She argues that the pent-up aggression of 'the common man is 'let out' in many different ways, expressed through vague feelings of aggressiveness, which all too often become focused' on a surrogate victim. Freire (1970) also regards this tendency of the oppressed to strike out at their fellow human beings as a manifestation of a 'type of horizontal violence', which can be defined as a form of violence of the oppressed against their own kind. Freire (1970) further cites the example of the 'astonishing waves of crime in North Africa' when 'the niggers beat each other up'. Although Freire (1970) gives the example of the aggressiveness of the colonized man against his own people, his main argument is that since the oppressed cannot clearly perceive their circumstances, they tend to strike at people of their own kind. It is interesting to analyze how Bond's plays integrate these ideas of horizontal, 'home-made' (Mertens, 1981), vague

aggressivity into a complex web. For Scopey, Alen is a chance antagonist on whom Scopey vents out his unmeasured fury. The absence of any lack of motive for murder is an instance of unreasoning violence as Scopey fails to find a reason for killing the reclusive man and yet he kills him. It is an act as irrational as the Greeks' attack on Troy.

As in *The Pope's Wedding*, the baby in the stoning of the baby scene in *Saved* is a 'chance antagonist' (Mertens, 1981) on whom the vague horizontal aggression is 'let out.' Likewise, Hatch's hacking of velvet curtains in *The Sea* is another example of dormant aggression. His attack on Colin's corpse later in the play is yet another example of how this violence is vented out on a random surrogate antagonist. In *The Crime of the Twenty-first Century* Sweden who himself is a victim of human violence releases his pent-up aggression on the poor mad woman Hoxton who has taken refuge on a wasteland. He slashes her arms, stabs her in the back, and finally slashes her breast. Like Scopey and the rowdy youths, Sweden also fails to find the answer to the question of why he killed her (Bond, 2003). In Bond's (2003) most recent play *Innocence*, one of the characters, the poor Ancient Crone, finds a baby in a carrier bag abandoned by the Woman, the child's real mother. She takes it out of the bag and when the Woman claims that it is her baby, the Ancient Crone refuses to give it back to her. Instead, she slashes the baby's forehead repeatedly. In short, random objects such as the baby, the velvet curtains, Colin's corpse, and other oppressed people are chance objects, 'surrogate victim[s]' or 'random victim[s],' as Castillo (1986) calls them, which allow the aggressor to vent out his ambivalent feelings of aggression, which may have been lying dormant in them, on other victims of the oppressed community.

Another concept that lends complexity to Bond's treatment of violence and is closely related to the ideas of horizontal violence and vague aggression is Hay and Robert's concept of 'displacement activity.' While discussing the deliberate ambiguity with which Bond treats the death of the Tramp in *Stone*, Hay, and Roberts (1978) argue that since the man in the play fails to direct his rage at 'the real cause for his sufferings and frustrations (his self-imposed burden), he turns against another victim like himself'. They term it a 'displacement activity' as the violence is directed against a chance antagonist, a scapegoat victim. This concept of 'displacement activity' is similar to Domenach's (1981) concept of 'chance antagonist' on which the common man vents out his aggression during brawls and riots. Although Hay and Roberts (1978) in their critical analysis refer only to *Stone,* such displacement activities are scattered throughout Bond's entire dramatic corpus. In *The Swing*, Skinner's aggression is

another example of this kind of displacement violence when his aggressiveness becomes focused on a chance victim Fred who, Skinner imagines, has raped Greta.

Bond's *Early Morning* (2003) also dramatizes the enigmatic and complex nature of violence. Set in a cannibalistic heaven, the play's world is inhabited by figures who are ceaselessly devouring one another, eating, and raping themselves apparently for any lack of motive. Bond sets into motion the impulse of violence by presenting cannibalism and rape as its most primitive, complex, and enigmatic forms, which establishes the relation of Bond's plays to the classical dramatic worlds of Euripides and Seneca. Like his early works, Bond's subsequent plays also reveal the same ambivalence and complexity of violence. In *The Pope's Wedding* Bond does not provide any finite answer to why Scopey kills Alen. Likewise, the unnamed protagonist in *Stone* kills the Tramp for no sound reason. He just vents his aggression on someone he encounters during his journey. Likewise, in *Lear*, *Narrow Road to the Deep North*, *The Worlds*, and *Jackets* he delineates violence in all complex manifestations of coercion, revolutions, counter-revolutions, and terrorism. The complexity and ambivalence of violence are nowhere more evident than in *The Swing* where Greta's rape is not rationalized and is left ambiguous. But the penultimate complexity of violence is exemplified in the scene where the alleged rapist Fred is tied to the stage platform and bulleted by the stage audience which applauds the incident as they participate in the shooting as a part of entertainment while the response of the live audience to the shooting of Fred remains ambivalent.

Violence in Bond's recent plays *Coffee*, *Innocence*, *A Window*, and *The Balancing Act* is equally problematic. Violence and aggression in these plays are presented as evil, as a threat to civilization as Smith (2007) argues, but Bond problematizes the issue of human aggressivity by raising questions about the origins of 'evil' within civilization. The scene in *The Sea* where Hatch hysterically attacks Colin's corpse under the delusion that Colin is an alien that has come to capture their earth graphically portrays the problematics of evil and the threat that it signifies. The menace that humanity is facing, perhaps, is not external but internal. Through Hatch's character Bond dismantles these thematic traps that hold conventional views of violence. Bond's treatment of the phenomenon in these plays demystifies the notional traps of aggression which misleadingly overlook its enigmatic nature. His plays exemplify the idea that there is no monolithic interpretation of violence and that it is misleading to reduce violence to simple definitions and dogmas and also that the threat that aggression poses to humanity is not from without but from within. As Heitmeyer and Hagan (2005) rightly argue the central paradox of the age remains: 'Whether it repeatedly devours its postulates of reason and cultural

achievements (in the form of processes of recognition, for example), and so constantly releases further violence that manifests itself in many different individual, collective, and state variants'.

Heitmeyer and Hagan's (2005) statement draws attention to another feature of violence in Bond's dramatic world: Its paradoxical dynamics, which lend violence all its complexity. Mertens (1981) states that the violence that is generally referred to these days and which makes the headlines is 'almost invariably that of the rebel, the 'desperado' but the "context of this violence" is generally 'not mentioned'. In reporting such violence, he continues, the media simply reflect 'the ideological stance adopted by the ruling power.' Mertens' (1981) main argument is that the violence of the dissidents is, in fact, often no more than a retaliation in response to 'prior violence, which, although less obvious, is as profound as it is insidious because it is embodied in an institution'. Mertens (1981) uses the term 'home-made violence of 'amateur' retaliation as contrasted with the 'professional' violence practiced 'by a regime which, by its abuses of power, has shown itself to be oppressive'. Bond's plays dramatize this central paradox of violence which presents acts of violence that can have different connotations and consequences in different social contexts and political systems. Many of his plays hinge on the central Gothic element of paradox. In *Early Morning* the central paradox is that the perpetrators of violence are its victims too. In *The Pope's Wedding,* the oppressed become the oppressors when they turn violence upon a defenseless old man. In *Lear,* the victims become tyrants when Cordelia overthrows the dictatorial regime of Bodice and Fontanelle and eventually becomes an oppressor like them. In *The Worlds*, Trench who is the perpetrator of economic violence against his workers becomes its victim when the terrorists abduct him. It is his encounter with the terrorists that shows Trench the true picture of a world where violence and terrorism are rife and where the poor are starving. The line 'The rich are getting ready to blow it up. Terrorists are threatened with guns. We do it with bombs. One well-heeled American with his finger on the button' (Bond, 1977) perfectly sums up the paradox of the victim/victimizer binary. Through the dramatization of these paradoxes of violence, Bond dismantles the institutionalized concepts of violence which portray violence either as a pathologized, personalized state or reality, or present it in a simplistic perpetrator/victim structure and morality that identifies good and evil.

Apart from its complexity and paradoxical ambivalence, the physicality of the experience of violence in Bond's plays is carried to Gothic extremes and excesses. Botting (1996) defines Gothic literature as 'a writing of excess'. Botting (1996) further says: 'violence is not only put on display but threatens to consume the world of civilized and domestic values' as it emerges

as 'the awful specter of complete social disintegration in which virtue cedes to vice, a reason to desire, law to tyranny'. Groom (2012) quotes an excerpt from the appalling tale of 'Lamkin' or 'Long Lankin' which tells of the cold-blooded torture of a baby simply to rouse his mother, the lady of the house: 'We'll prick him and prick him / all over with a pin…' // And the nurse held the basin / for the blood to run in'. This appalling extract from a ballad serves as an uncanny verse parallel to the visual act of stoning the baby in Bond's *Saved* (1977). The graphic horror of the killing of an innocent victim is uncompromising in its gruesome description:

BARRY. Is it a girl?
PETE. Yer wouldn't know the difference.
BARRY. 'Ow d'yer get 'emt'sleep?
PETE. Pull their 'air.
COLIN. Eh?
PETE. Like that.
He pulls its [Baby's]hair.
COLIN. That 'urt.
They Laugh. (p. 75)

The rowdy youths even throw the baby's dirty nappy in the air; spit in its face, hit, and punch it, and all the while they are giggling and laughing. The scene is steeped in the horror of unmeasured pain that the hapless child must have undergone:

MIKE. Still awake.
PETE. Ain' co-operatin'
BARRY. Try a pinch.
MIKE. That ought a work.
BARRY. Like this.
He pinches the baby. (p. 77)

Pete is the most violent of all as he punches the baby and jerks the pram violently, which knocks the grin off the baby's face. The horrifying visual images and corporeality of violence in pushing, spinning, pulling, and pinching the baby in the play as well as in verse narrative constitutes a form of unprovoked aggression that slowly builds but defies any clear, rational explanation- a haziness that defeats clarity.

FINDINGS

The textual evidence from the novel reveals that the visuality of scenes of violence in Bond's world is problematic as it defies conventional perspectives. In his plays cannibalism and self-rape emerge as not only the most complex and enigmatic but also the most visually amplified forms of violence. Bond's placement of cannibalistic activity in the heart of enlightened

England makes Bond's view of violence a visual statement about the dark side of modernity. The graphic nature of eating flesh and bones is an example of graphic violence. Likewise, gouging out of Lear's and Sweden's eyes, torturing of Warrington, Hatch's attack on Colin's corpse, the stoning of the baby, and slashing and hanging of the baby in *Innocence* are some more examples of Bond's graphic presentation of visible excesses of violence.

CONCLUSION

It can be argued that Bond's discourse on violence develops through its problematic presentation on the stage. It is through his dramatic portrayal of such disturbing forms of naked violence that Bond engages not only with rational fallacies that surround the phenomenon but also tests the limitations of his own rational theatre. In questioning the limits of reason and critical approaches to aggression, Bond affords another way to approach the problem of violence which can help the world understand its complexity and develop its typology. Bond's plays have a wider social implication as Bond presents acts of violence that can have different connotations and consequences in different social contexts and political systems. Bond's placement of cannibalistic activity in the heart of his plays, the stoning of baby in *Saved* present Bond's view of violence a visual statement about the dark side of modernity. Dark mutations of violence in his plays are an exploration of how violence and world politics are interlinked in the modern rational world and how varied forms of violence signify cruelty, injustice, political oppression, war and destruction at home, workplace and by extension the entire humankind's behavior.

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