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Dear Evie Filea,

I believe you are a student and a teacher. I hope these notes will be useful to both. I shall be interested in any comments and further questions you may have.

Drama is in crisis. Drama and democracy have the same root. (Compare the present state of drama to Trump Johnson and Truss.) For the earliest democratic Greek dramatists (Aeschylus et al) drama was a way of talking to the gods in an effort to make society moral.

My latest reflection on drama and society is *The Play Within the Play*. Its on my personal web site <https://edwardbonddrama.org>. Earlier this year a book "Edward Bond Drama and Young Audiences" ISBN 978-1-700-9 was published in America by Vernon Press. It has a number of authors. Some of the chapters are particularly useful – one by Kagan Kaya, who teaches at a university in Turkey, and one by Kate Katafiasz (Newman University) which among other things deals with the significance of the architecture of my stage sites – the sites are intended not to create an image of say the social situation the characters think they are in -- they are analytic of the human situation and are about the interaction of self and society in it.

I will quote a recent article in a Canadian magazine. Its written by George F. Walker. He is a significant playwright. Unfortunately, I have never met him. I quote the article not because it is generous about me but because it starkly sums up the situation of contemporary drama. He writes:

"To me Edward Bond is the greatest playwright of the twenty-first century. His early plays *Saved*, *Early Morning*, *The Sea* were received with the deep respect they deserve. His later plays, including *The War Plays*, were often described as "flinty." Devoid of sentiment. Or just too angry. To me they were as angry as they should have been. At that time the world Bond was living in had clearly declined. It *seems to me his response was as flinty as was needed to express this obvious truth*".

I remember little of my earlier plays. After reading the article (above) I read some of the War Plays. Immediately something strange happened. A wave rose up between me and the text in my hand. It was huge, untroubled, motionless, and serene. Nothing could pass through it. It was as still as a brick wall. Behind it were the war plays and all my other plays of that time. I realised they were written in an innocent time of victory over Auschwitz Hiroshima Nagasaki, multitudes of refugees wounded maimed starving, dead armies ruined cities. How could such a ruined world be innocent? – yet it was. The plays were written in a time – a world -- of innocence. We can never go back to it. It is locked behind the motionless living wave more solid than rock. Yet how could such a time be innocent? It was innocent because now we are destroying not cities but the whole world, not some populations and nationalities but the human race. Our power is colossal, and all power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. And in a world of cameras and screens and television we see and know what we are doing. Its images are in the mobile phones we carry in our pockets close to our hearts. I will not be flinty. I will say just one thing. A species of billionaires and starving billions cannot survive. It is against the logic outside the walls of Auschwitz. Against the logic of human reality.

I should explain. In my first series of plays (*The Sea* and so on) i used the dramaturgy of the past. It was a way of learning the craft of drama. In *Bingo* I made Shakespeare commit suicide over a grubby business deal he had actually committed. But I could have made him commit suicide over his ending of *Macbeth*. He invented a fake *deus ex machina* to end the play with a fake solution of its problem. After that Shakespeare wrote no more political plays. Instead, only romantic comedies.

It could all have been otherwise If Shakespeare had been born 40 years later than he was. He could have met Oliver Cromwell. Then Instead of a fairy tale fake king to end the play he could have cut off his head -- as Cromwell solved the same problem by beheading King Charles. Then our drama would be different. So would our politics and our society.

What is our theatres' response to the chaos of our time? To the biggest crisis humans have ever faced, perhaps the biggest crisis in nature? Its response is the entertainment industry, which is a betrayal of the audience.

Drama is less manipulative than politics. Economics is a way of life. Thatcher's puppet economics destroyed the core logic of drama – human responsibility. Inevitably this penetrated social culture. Humanity's destiny was to be decided by gambling on the stock exchange. Even before Thatcher this change was already in the air. After the second world war there was a new popular consciousness of social rights for self and responsibility for others. The old pre-war elite struck back -- like a corpse snuggling up closer in its shroud. To repeat, economics is a way of life. Thatcher declared war on society – it was a war against the principle of peace itself. My War Plays are an analysis of this social change. To be brief I can sum it up by reference to one man's career – Peter Hall. He founded the Royal Shakespeare Company. Watching a performance at The RSC nowadays is like watching a Punch and Judy show in a graveyard in the rain. You may think this remark is flinty. Read my web site account of my direction at the RSC of my play *The Company of Men*. (Below I will analyse "flinty" technically.) Hall went on to run The British National Theatre. His big ambition was to create a major Broadway Musical. So he staged *Guys and Dolls* on the Olivier stage. The National Theatre has never recovered.

To create drama we have to understand two things: A) the logic of reason. And B) imagination. The human mind begins its conscious tasks with reason. It can then create a relation to what has been imagined. The inter-relation of consciousness and imagination makes us human. Evolutionarily the origin of human consciousness, perceptive judgement, probably began in imagination in the form of an animal's awareness of what is dangerous to it and what is propitious. Imagination is a concept of awareness. Over eons this produces the human brain by reversing the relation of reason and imagination. Reason seeks to foresee the state of nature. It is absurd to imagine two and two are four. That knowledge is a product of reason. Imagination is on the border between human reason and animal apprehension. This means that the human mind is vulnerable to the toys and weapons of ideology, of gods, devils and ghosts -- the scum at the bottom of the human soul. The conventional Christian devil had the physicality of zoology – horns hooves and tail. So human beings exist in a danger zone. The most idealistic humans may use the basest imagination. Hitler called his foes animal vermin -- the Christian church used the devil, and the inquisition burnt its victims alive.

Humanness is based on reason prior to imagination. This creates the institution of drama. Drama openly uses the imaginary (actors and so on) to produce human truth, human reason. This is unique, it “overturns” all other human institutions. It openly uses imagination to reach human reason. Its ability, power, to do this is now in danger. Drama is trivialized to entertainment. Society is moving from the human biological to the technological. The Christian church created the devil, it used animal imagery to repress reason with terror. Present society is more subtle and more powerful. Capitalism doesn't depend on ideological imagery (devils and so on) but uses idealist imagery to produce mass consumption and profits – the shopping mall is now Utopia. Compare this to Biblical miracles feeding thousands with a few loaves of bread. Capitalism survives not by producing goods but by manufacturing weapons to destroy the enemies its economic structure and processes must create. That is the structure of the capitalist market. It reverses the humanising formula of “first reason then imagination”. Civilization has become ironic. Structurally capitalism must destroy itself. Global warming, destruction of the earth, sea, species and so on are early tremors of that destruction.

A SHORT ANALYSIS

To create drama we have to understand two things: A) the logic of reality and B) Imagination. Reason analyses, learns, the situation. Then imagination “spontaneously” sees a solution or consequence. Reason first and then imagination – that is the origin and process of humanness. It is reality's logic and the origin of drama. To be personal, it is the rock hardness of the wave that – in the account given above of reading the War Plays -- identified, shielded, innocence.

The structure of the entertainment industry is imagination first and then reason. In practice reason then becomes the price of the ticket.

A useful image. On one side the rock and its hardness – nature. On the opposite side fire – human beings. Rock and fire can't see each other. Between them a lagoon. The lagoon is the human site. How can it interpret the reflections of the rock and the fire that fall on its water? In entertainment-industry plays the actor invents tricks and gimmicks to ensnare the audience and probably himself. In drama the characters trust the dramatist who creates them. In performance the character passes on that trust to the audience. That assertion sounds almost like an attempt to be poetic. It isn't. Drama is as technical and practical as childbirth.