

## **FOUR LITTLE ESSAYS ON DRAMA**

by

**Edward Bond**

### **HOPE**

Its asked of a new play "Where is the hope?" The question misunderstands drama. You are in a room. The curtains are drawn. You do not ask "Where is the sky? – its gone." The sky is always there. You have a lottery ticket. You hope it will win. But do you hope that the number on the ticket will change so that it will win? The playwright must point to reality – to the number on the ticket. The hope is the audience.

### **DRAMA**

Drama is the text of democracy. When the Greek audience looked at the stage they saw themselves: "you saw you." Later Rome took over. The soldiers looked at you. Later the church took over. It said the great creative fictions of Greek drama were real, were vulgar facts. Zeus was fiction, God Almighty was a vulgar fact. Oedipus was fiction who killed his father, Christ was a vulgar fact and God his Father killed him. And so on through the Greek dramatic cannon and Christian scripture. God looked at you and the Inquisition looked over his shoulder. Then science took over. The scientist looked at you. You were a specimen. Now commerce takes over: TV and film. The eyes on the screen cannot look at you – they are blind. So you are blind when you look at them. (It's a bit difficult. It's a mutation. Think about it. The eyes are the organ of sight. They cannot be touched, heard, smelt, tasted. Film is fiction in a particular way: film is the wink of the blind.) The modern stage is parasitic on the blindness of the screens. When it looks at the audience the blind are winking at each other. The stage has never before been so corrupt. There must be a new drama. In it the audience will look at the stage and see itself. It will be revolutionary because it will be democratic.

### **POLITICAL DRAMA**

A recent article claimed "political theatre brings subjects into public and popular debate." The things people write in newspapers! The opposite is true. Theatre takes subjects that are already in public, popular debate. Its plays are not political. They are current affairs. We have no political theatre. Yet politics is the core of drama. Drama deals with the relation between self and society. How each creates the other. It is how we create our humanness. Political drama must look at the profoundest human paradoxes. Greek drama did this for us. All Western culture and religion are founded on this inheritance. It is our patrimony. We have exhausted it. Our theatre – our culture and politics – are dead. Post-mortem not post-modern. If we do not create a new drama we will be destroyed. Evolution will wipe us out. The times have never been so serious. It is a species crisis.

## **PURITY**

The Royal Court staged my second play half my lifetime ago. I was attacked as the ultimate degenerate vicious debased playwright. Last year the Royal Court told me my moral purity prevented me from making contact with an audience. My first play (also staged at the Royal Court) had a rural setting. There was a murder. The murderer was the good man. The complexities of humanness. Last year the Royal Court staged another play with a rural setting. In it there was a good man. He was corrupt (and a danger to his child) but he had a heart of gold. Mr Really-Nasty came along. He didn't murder Mr Good but badly beat him up. The play was written with panache. It combined *News of the World* morality with *Mills and Boon* sentimentality. What has changed? Let us now be serious and for a start change everything.

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